Post-Pandemic Transition and The Way Forward: A Narrative Literature Review of Onboarding

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Abstract
When the global COVID-19 pandemic strikes, the whole nation shakes! The pandemic has increased preexisting issues and created a slew of new ones for employees commencing new professions. Onboarding is a systematic and comprehensive strategy for acclimating a new hire to a company's culture - physically and mentally. The pandemic is affecting onboarding activities and has driven the system to improvise in accordance with the new norm. This paper's goal is to explore the body of literature on onboarding, the practices and future directions after the global Covid19 pandemic. Applying the narrative review approach, 16 articles that were traced via Scopus and Google Scholar databases were examined through the PRISMA method for this paper. The review of the previous literature resulted in three (3) key components: onboarding before the pandemic, the transition during the pandemic and the challenges of transition. For future research, further study should be conducted to explore a wider range of research concerns, to take into account a wider range of perspectives, and to learn more about the onboarding activities that might change prior to the pandemic.
Keywords: Onboarding, Covid-19, Post-Pandemic, PRISMA

Introduction
Onboarding is a concept used in the human resources field to describe the process of integrating a new recruit into an organization. It's an essential aspect of assisting staff members in understanding their roles and positions within teams and organizations, and it provides new hires with an understanding of company culture to facilitate a smooth transition. Prior to 2020, human resource managers and practitioners established onboarding strategies focused on new hires arriving at their place of employment physically. Face-to-face interactions with team members, social events, and even in-person required training sessions made up the majority of the onboarding process. It all changed dramatically as 2020 rolled around, and the globe was actually obliged to adopt remote working. Managers were

essentially forced to alter the process for onboarding new employees, whether they prefer it or not!

Onboarding in General

Onboarding is not a new concept. The term "onboarding" was first used in the early 2000s in the context of human resources management and management literature (Bauer, 2010; Bradt & Vonnegut, 2009; Caldwell & Peters, 2018; Gupta et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2015; Meyer & Bartels, 2017). Onboarding also was known as orientation, orienting, or, to a lesser extent, induction (Van den Broek, 1997), and these terms are still used as substitutes today (Klein & Heuser, 2008; Mestre et al., 1997; Smith, 1984; Wanous & Reichers, 2000). Onboarding is the process in which an individual gets the social knowledge and abilities essential to adopt an organizational job (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). It is known as organizational socialization which is the process through which a newcomer goes from being an outsider to an insider (Bauer, 2007). Onboarding is a crucial process that the organization uses to mould talents into the best possible employees. Processes for onboarding new employees are also intended to increase employee engagement and identify the capabilities that they bring to the firm and their positions (Saputra & Rahmatika, 2021). In addition, to ensure that new hires reach their full potential, onboarding offers the chance to gain a return on investment from the hiring processes. As a result, creating and managing an efficient onboarding process is a crucial human resource management task (Becker & Bish, 2021).

In the perspective of new employees, onboarding is a socialization activity where they as the newcomers will learn as much as they can so they can prepare themselves before commencing the new journey. And, all these were done physically and face-to-face. From the standpoint of the employer, onboarding is the first step in "welcoming" their new recruits and fostering a sense of belonging in the hopes that it will increase their enthusiasm and productivity. After being selected to work for an organization, new hires must go through the onboarding program as part of the measures applied in many organizations as a 'start-up' process. According to a recent Glassdoor research, effective onboarding can increase new hire retention by more than 80% and boost productivity by 70%. That makes onboarding as a crucial element in attracting the best employees - and most important, keeping them!

One of the issues that leads these new hires out of their professions is a sense of alienation, a diminished sense of community, or a lack of organizational belonging (Carucci, 2018). In this view, onboarding has been seen as the 'live saver' for the new hires as they will be prepared accordingly before they start their career in the organization. The effectiveness of the onboarding program seems important to the organization in attracting talent as it works as the first step for successful employees. Onboarding is not only part of the process in human resources but it could the stepping stone to boost the readiness and motivation of the new hires to work in a new work environment.

It is clear from the study that onboarding is essential to the new hires and from the employer point of view. Before 2020, it has been carried out physically and through various events involving the new recruits in the workplace. In an onboarding process, interactions and satisfaction from new hires are used to gauge effectiveness. Nevertheless, because of Covid19, onboarding must be altered in order to accommodate the new global working environment and its effectiveness is still up for debate.

Onboarding: When Covid19 Strikes

No one could have predicted how COVID-19 would substantially change how we lived in our society back in February 2020. To be entirely realist, we still don't know what the pandemic's long-term repercussions will be for us, our jobs, and our lives. The Covid-19 spread had caused unrest among the working populations all over the world. It prompted many organizations to modify their policies on allowing remote work, leading to new insights on what occurs when a substantial portion of the population does so (Varshney, 2022). During COVID-19, new hires are trying to establish themselves in their new careers and occupations and combine their concern with the numerous other psychological and health issues brought on by the ongoing pandemic. All employees affected by the pandemic experience the bad effects of isolation brought on by social exclusion and remote work, but for newbies joining in during these historic times, the effects are even more severe (Scott et al., 2022).

Pandemic has changed the norm. It creates new perspective and trends. It is worth noting that onboarding techniques have not always kept up with actual changes in work processes as the world of work develops in response to global changes and crises. Based on the literatures, many organizations continue to struggle with employee retention because they ignore these patterns, frequently missing out on opportunities to win over employees' commitment over the long and short terms. Costs, reputation of the employer, employee morale, and productivity could all suffer as a result (Jeske & Olson, 2021). Basically, the COVID-19 global pandemic has made the onboarding process more difficult, and it is a perfect example of a crisis that has a significant negative impact on organizations and has the potential to negatively affect both the onboarding system's effectiveness and the experience of new hires.

However, while the current scenario might seem like a barrier, it also presents an opportunity for organizations to expand and create new, evidenced based tools and resources to enhance the employee onboarding process (Scott et al., 2022). It is essential to reevaluate the different aspects of employee experience and implement new strategies and methods to deal with the problems presented by the changing workforce. According to the 2020 Global Benefits Attitudes Survey (GBAS) and Flexible Work and Rewards Study: 2021 Design and Budget Priorities, as flexible work arrangements grow even more prevalent over the next three years, many firms intend to evolve into hybrid workplaces.

From the review, the selected articles shared the view that onboarding was important even before the epidemic began, and that as the typical workplace environment evolved over time, so too must the onboarding techniques and trends. Because of the Covid19, employers must be able to adjust their rules to reflect the fact that new hires continue to depend on onboarding as the "start-up." or, the onboarding process could be flawed.

Methodology

This study used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) as its review methodology, and it used Google Scholar and Scopus as its two database search options. PRISMA is a minimal set of elements for reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses that is supported by evidence. PRISMA is primarily concerned with reporting reviews that assess the effects of interventions, but it can also serve as a foundation for reporting systematic reviews with goals other than assessing interventions. The three components of the technique are described in this section: the resources used, the systematic literature review procedure, and the data analytic strategy (Moher et al, 2014). The review approach for this paper included four steps: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion,

in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA; see Figure 1).

Resources

Google Scholar and Scopus were the two well-known databases used in this study. A free and open search engine that is accessible without a subscription is Google Scholar (Mukherjee, 2009). A wide number of publishing formats and subject areas are covered, and it may immediately index full text or metadata. Google Scholar has more than 300 million items from all over the world, including academic journals, books, conference papers, abstracts, technical reports, preprints, and other types of literature. It works with bibliography management programmes like BibTeX, EndNote, RefWorks, and RefMan.

One of the largest abstract and citation databases for peer-reviewed literature, Scopus, is a strong database that was employed in the review. Scopus includes environmental sciences, social sciences, and biological studies among the abstract topics it covers. Only institutions with institutional subscriptions can access Scopus, which includes 36,377 journals from 11,678 publishers worldwide (Elsevier, 2020). This review chose these two databases in order to capitalize on their unique capabilities, and this decision is crucial to the calibre of the outcomes.

There are many different eligibility and exclusion requirements and selected exclusion has been identified for this paper. Initially, only peer-reviewed journal articles containing empirical data are taken into account when determining the category of literature, therefore review articles, book series, books, book chapters, and conference proceedings are all omitted. Secondly, The papers selected are from 2020 because that is when Covid19 began worldwide in to monitor the advancement of research and associated publications. Finally,The keywords used in the articles' traces are comparable to those used in this paper's direct interpretation (See Table 1 for details).

Table 1

The inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Eligibility	Exclusion
Literature type	Journal (research articles)	Journals (systematic review), book, book series, chapter in a book, conference proceeding, research report, document, Early cite article, case study, expert briefing, executive summary, conference review, letter, erratum
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	Between 2020 - 2023	< 2020 (Note: Because Covid-19 began in early 2020, the papers chosen for review will only be those published after 2020).

Table 2

Keywords and Information Search Strategy

Database	Keywords
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (["onboarding" OR " socialization" AND ["Covid-19*" OR "Covid19" OR "Pandemic" OR "Post-Pandemic"])
Google Scholar	allintitle: "onboarding" OR "socialization" AND "Covid19" OR "Covid-19" OR "pandemic" OR "post-pandemic"

Literature Review Process
Identification
In February 2023, the first stage of the systematic review process began, which mostly involved choosing keywords for the information search. A workable set of terms linked to onboarding, socialization, Covid-19, and post-pandemic was provided by previous studies, thesauruses, dictionaries, and synonyms of keywords recommended by databases (refer to Table 2). In the initial phase of the procedure, 107 articles of literature from Scopus and 33 from Google Scholar were obtained. Valid papers were left after duplicates and unnecessary documents were manually removed (see Figure 1).

Screening
Screening in line with the inclusion and exclusion criteria made up the second stage of the systematic review procedure (see Figure 1). Initially, the timeline was limited to the three-year period between 2020 and 2023. Second, only peer-reviewed, journal-based research publications were chosen for inclusion; review articles, books, preprints, serials, theses, and conference proceedings were all omitted. The last criterion was language. Only English-language publications were included in order to overcome the language barrier and lessen the meaning being distorted by translation.

Eligibility
The procedure of manually including or excluding literature articles from the study while taking into account the research question and its aims is referred to as eligibility. In this case, only the articles that met all of the requirements were included after a comprehensive evaluation of all the retrieved articles. Before the remaining 75 relevant articles entered the eligibility process, a total of 28 duplicates and unrelated articles were eliminated. Articles were retained for the qualitative synthesis after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria and manually reviewing titles, abstracts, and complete texts (see Figure 1).

Quality Appraisal
The Appraisal Tool for Cross-Sectional Studies (AXIS tool) was used to evaluate the quality of the remaining 16 publications (Downes et al., 2016). A critical step in evidence synthesis and, consequently, evidence-based decision-making in a variety of disciplines is the literature analysis (critical analysis).As a result, the AXIS tool is special and was created in a way that it can be used by researchers from many fields to help include cross-sectional studies in systematic reviews, recommendations, and clinical decision-making (Downes et al., 2016). To evaluate the quality for this review paper, each article was divided into components for

quality reporting checklist under AXIS tool which are 1) Were the aims/objectives of the study clear? 2) Was the target/reference population clearly defined? 3)Were the methods sufficiently described to enable them to be repeated? 4)Were the basic data adequately described? 5) Were the results for the analyses described in the methods, presented? 6)Were the limitations of the study discussed?. The 16 articles were verified to be kept since they all fulfilled the checklist as stated under the AXIS Tool.
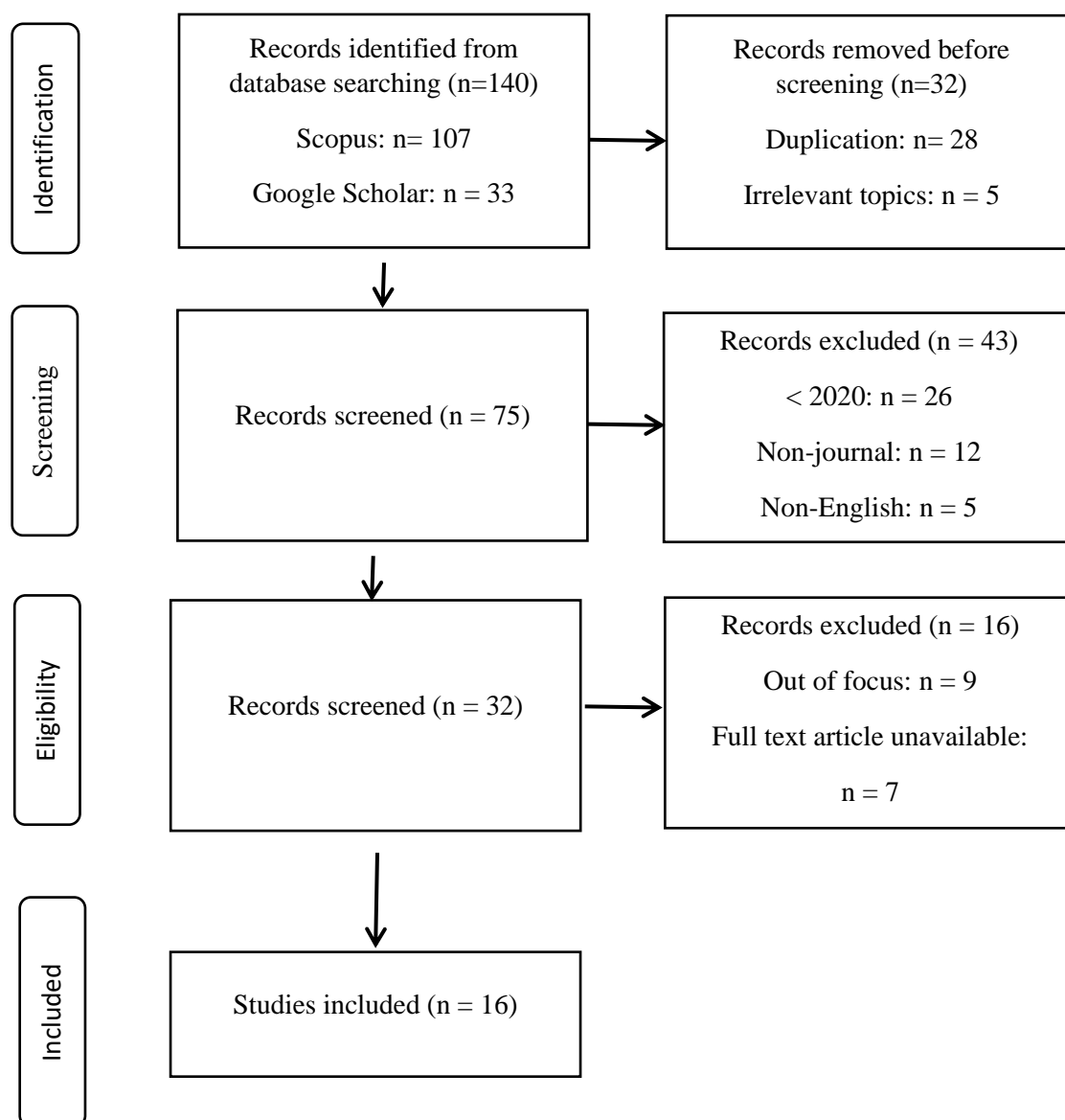

Figure 1: The flow diagram of the study (Identification of new studies via databases and Registers (Adapted from Page et al., 2021).

Data Analytical Strategy

The following analysis and discussion of the data is based on the evaluation and examination of the 16 articles. Three phases were involved in the data extraction process: examining the article's title, abstract, and full text in order to ascertain the data's relevance to the research

question. In this section of the review, researchers compared the data with particular research topics. According to Whittemore and Knafl (2005), a systematic literature review might include several study designs, such as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodologies, by employing content analysis to pinpoint the themes, theories/models, variables, and research frameworks. This made it possible to create a cause-and-effect framework for structurally analysing the theories, models, and conceptual frameworks used in earlier investigations.

Findings
According to the review's findings, there are significant issues and challenges that could be summarized during the implementation on onboarding after the pandemic that affected the activities and procedures for the new hires. The list considered in this investigation is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Articles Summarization

Author	Industry/ Sector	Method (x: Qualitative) (y: Quantitative) (z: Mixed)	Unstructured onboarding tools & platforms	Process Inefficiency	Unpreparedness with the changes	Below expectation & confusion
Baker et al (2020)	Pharmacy/ Private	z	√	√	√	
Buchan et al (2021)	Technology/ Private	x		√	√	√
Gregory et al (2020)	Technology/ Private	x	√		√	√
Goodermote (2020)	Medical/ Private	x	√	√	√	
Britto et al (2020)	Telecommunication/ Private	x	√	√	√	
Bhakta & Medina (2020)	Medical/ Private	x	√			√
Jeske & Olson (2021)	Various/ Private	x	√		√	√
Rodeghero et al (2021)	Technology/ Private	y			√	√
Czopek & Kazusek (2021)	Administration/ Public	y	√	√	√	
Fletcher et al (2022)	Libraries/ Public	z	√	√	√	
Shahane & Fernandes (2022)	Hotel/ Private	x	√	√	√	√

Author	Industry/ Sector	Method (x: Qualitative) (y: Quantitative) (z: Mixed)	Unstructured onboarding tools & platforms	Process Inefficiency	Unpreparedness with the changes	Below expectation & confusion
Craft et al (2021)	Libraries/ Public	x	√	√	√	
Morrison (2021)	Academic/ Public	x	√	√	√	
Woo et al (2023)	Various/ Private	x	√	√	√	
Sani et al (2023)	Service/ Private	x	√	√		√
Yarbrough & Salazar (2023)	Various /Private	x	√		√	√

Based on Table 3, the following can be listed as the summary of the papers' reviews:
1) The most frequently cited difficulties and problems with the execution of onboarding during the post-pandemic period relate to unstructured onboarding tools and platforms.
2) Significantly, according to the reviews of the articles, the degree of unpreparedness of the adjustments leads to the highest point.
3) The majority of the review papers used qualitative research methods, and the majority of the findings also focused on the private sector.

Onboarding Before The Pandemic
In most circumstances, hiring practices and onboarding procedures are closely related in the most sectors. Even some businesses have begun their onboarding procedures at a young age. During the company's summer courses, most companies will provide young professionals with technical training within the recently completed bachelors from the local institutions. This gives the applicants real job previews and a job offer (Britto et al., 2017). This effort enables companies to find the right employees earlier and gives applicants early information about their dream employers (Forbes, 2022).

According to Gregory et al. (2020), onboarding is not a "one size fits all" policy and will change as circumstances change. Even before the pandemic began, it had already begun to transform. Previous research found that depending on the onboarding situation, onboarding practices vary from firm to business and are semi-formalized. This indicates that while some onboarding procedures are carried out locally at the site level, others are centralized. It was discovered that, in some cases, different sites use distinct onboarding processes in projects that are geographically dispersed (Britto et al., 2017). Only 32% of businesses give new hires a structured onboarding process, despite the fact that how well they are integrated into an organization can affect both their short- and long-term success (Baker et al., 2019). Depending on whether new hires learn about their new position on their own or by adhering to coordinated policies, procedures, and company-set actions, companies may use formal or

informal onboarding processes (Zahrly& Tosi 1989; Louis et al., 1983; Lynch & Buckner-Hayden, 2010).

In the perspective of the newcomers, a structured procedure and management tool for the onboarding process seemed to enhance the experience. The onboarding tools outlined expectations for members, improved communication between new hires and the department, and offered mentorship to new hires. From the literature, most of the onboarding tools were designed for face-to-face interaction. It has several significant implications, one of which is that central management cannot always project and regulate the outcomes of onboarding. The expectations communication, and training before his or her first day on the job (Baker et al., 2019). This was the status quo before the pandemic. Although there isn't a single standard onboarding procedure, the face-to-face approach was widely employed throughout the system.

It is reasonable to expect that, in comparison to other professional groups, certain profession may have unique onboarding demands. Understanding the best ways to improve onboarding tactics to more clearly explain the development opportunities give them a sense of independence as soon as feasible is an essential subject for future research (Britto et al., 2017). The allocation of big and spread duties in the early stages of the onboarding process, team instability, and distance to mentors should all be taken into account while planning for onboarding to suit the different demand and expectation (Britto etal., 2020).

There is no one size fits all policy, as was previously stated, and as there were no limits due to the pandemic before, the onboarding tools and procedure could be modified accordingly. To build the optimal onboarding process, the onboarding tool will need to be further improved and analyzed (Baker et al., 2019). Results showed improvements in the new onboarding process as well as areas for development. In general, using an onboarding tool led to a greater. The onboarding tools outlined expectations for new employees, improved communication between new hires and the department, and offered mentorship to new hires. These may assist organizations in choosing from a wider range of onboarding approaches than they were previously aware of and provide direction for their successful implementation, together with organizational efforts for implementation (Buchan, MacDonell & Yang, 2019).

The Development During Pandemic

All industries experienced the same operational and financial concerns when Covid-19 struck without warning. All industries must change how they conduct business in order to adapt to the unexpected. Private and public sectors encountered the same issues in the fight against the coronavirus, limiting the range of services offered and delaying administrative deadlines. Organizational operations have undergone a significant transformation as a result of the pandemic. Recruitment and onboarding procedures should be included in the necessary adjustments to the applied procedures (Czopek & Kazusek, 2021).

According to Medina (2020), a new member's reality during COVID-19 can be challenging due to locked doors and employees working off-site, making it difficult to accept a job offer without an in-person interview. Employees face difficulty building a strong social connection due to remote work.. Building a solid social connection with their colleagues becomes one of these new workers' major hurdles as a result (Rodeghero et al., 2021). A practitioner from the University of Nebraska at Omaha addresses the difficulties in onboarding and educating a new employees amid the coronavirus outbreak. Training in best practices is made successful by using virtual interaction and multitasking abilities (Morrison, 2021). However, reviews

indicate that not everyone can accept the updated changes and that some people experience disconnection during onboarding.

The pandemic has forced the industry to be creative in order to find ways to adapt to the rapidly changing operational trends and conditions. One of the most affected industries is the hotel business. They had to set aside sufficient funds while suffering a significant loss of revenue in order to execute efficient training programmes. As a result, the housekeeping department is prepared to apply the new operating norms, and a robust training programme and SOPs are available to onboard new hires (Shahane & Fernandes, 2022).

Even if new employees are working remotely, it's vital to understand that this is different from typical remote work, before COVID-19. For instance, the onboarding methods outlined in the literature are mostly useless for remotely onboarding programmers. The term "remote" is frequently used to refer to a programmer who works outside of their physical office (Hill et al., 1998). The concept behind remote work is that a new employee can effectively contribute to a team while working from any place of their choice. Because new hires typically work off-site, remote onboarding differs from local onboarding in terms of the difficulties that must be overcome.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck out, the conventional workplace abruptly changed (Chowell and Mizumoto, 2020). Employees switched to working remotely (WFH), unless they were classified as necessary workers by the government (like respiratory therapists). Before the lockdown, most big companies like Microsoft hired a large number of developers, but they had not yet begun their new jobs. Most of these new hires through a remote onboarding procedure before beginning their work, which they did without ever entering the office or even seeing their team in person. They propose that they address the new difficulties that arise while onboarding remote team members and working with legacy systems (Britto et al., 2017).

Due to the social isolation restrictions of people being quarantined to homes for all but essential workers as a result of the Covid-19 Crisis, telework has been forced to become the major means for conducting business in the modern world (Goodermote, 2020). It is difficult to onboard and train new employees via remote methods. Human resources teams have to concentrate on having lots of human connection with new hires as a result of the growing use of digital onboarding, even if this necessitates using a hybrid strategy. In order to foster a welcoming culture for new recruits, encourage organization-driven socialization strategies, and provide the "quality" information required for helping new employees, human resources personnel must make sure they collaborate with line managers. To practise good communication and match their aims and values with those of their employer, new hires must acknowledge the changing digital landscape in addition to learning the digital skills that are crucial in the workplace (Sani et al., 2023).

Construct a virtual workday that closely resembles being at an actual office. A learning plan was developed that started with the required training modules to comprehend working in a new environment and the need to prevent them from being overloaded with too much knowledge at once (Goodermote, 2020). In the pandemic, however, a structured and intentional preboarding, orientation, and onboarding programme may be lacking, and newcomers may not be assigned mentors to specifically address this early time frame. Instead, mentors might be chosen after members have settled in. Preboarding, orientation, and onboarding mentors who act as links and representatives to all facets of the university are more important than ever for new employees (Rodeghero et al., 2021).

The Challenges of the Transition

New hires had difficulty connecting with their team and communicating with one another, and 1:1 sessions with new hires can be helpful. Consider that the trainer is the Google driving voice that the new employee hears every time they need to make a turn, or in this case, complete the stage in the process. Because it was quite confusing to the new hire when correcting the instructions as they were being provided, it became necessary to think through and write down the lesson before attempting to teach it (Goodermote, 2020). According to the survey's responses, new hires had trouble connecting with their team and communicating with one another (Rodeghero et al., 2021). Flexibility and ingenuity were needed to respond to the pandemic and the difficulties of adaptation, but stress and uncertainty persisted throughout the process. Onboarding remotely or in a hybrid environment was generally agreed to be challenging for everyone and employers need to do a better job of embracing pandemic-era personnel and offering suitable training materials (Fletcher et al., 2022).

It is interesting that onboarding adheres has not always changed to keep up with significant changes in work processes as the world of work pivots in response to global changes and difficulties. Numerous businesses continue to implement generic programmes that are not adapted, personalised, or properly connected to other human resource management techniques (Jeske & Olson, 2021). COVID-19 radically upended the conventional interview techniques. Since March 2020, there is still a great deal of uncertainty surrounding hiring and onboarding new personnel. Recruitment for candidates looking for work during COVID19 has probably looked extremely different. For applicants, not having an in-person first or even second interview can be difficult (Kajal, 2020). Flexibility and innovation were needed to respond to the pandemic and changing obstacles. Based on Czopek & Kazusek (2021), in the wake of the coronavirus epidemic, more than 46% of respondents said that onboarding procedures should only be conducted in person.

Onboarding and evaluation of new hires are among the Covid19's most challenging tasks, according to research conducted by UserGuiding in 2022. According to the study, 21% of managers responded that when the pandemic ended, one of their top three fears will be onboarding new employees. When it comes to remote hiring during COVID-19, 51.7% of managers identify candidate involvement as the most challenging problem. When working remotely, 41% of employees indicate they don't feel connected to their coworkers. The study indicates that some virtually onboarded employees are thriving with, and some are challenged by, the communication shortcomings of the remote experience (Yarbrough & Salazar, 2023).

Conclusion

Onboarding process is an excellent chance to demonstrate to new hires how inclusive the company is. Research and common sense, both support the need for an effective onboarding procedure by considering the costs that organizations need to bear to find, screen, hire, and train the new employee. Nevertheless, Covid-19 significantly changed the environment. Even while there is no a one-size-fits-all approach, it has gotten harder with the distance and engagement of technologies that, as we know, don't allow for much in the way of physical interaction for new workers. According to the reviews, there are four (4) key concerns and challenges that have been summarized in this paper's and the thorough findings from the chosen publications are (1) unstructured onboarding tools and platforms (2) process inefficiencies (3) unpreparedness with of the changes, and (4) below expectation and confusion.

The findings have a number of real-world impacts on onboarding development both before and after Covid-19. Firstly, human resource departments or practitioners should think about the problems and difficulties associated with the transition of onboarding initiatives during the post-pandemic period, emphasizing the need for a hybrid implementation where tasks could be carried out virtually by selecting appropriate resources and platforms in accordance with the nature of the business. The post-pandemic adjustments, which have had a substantial impact on both the processes and the expectations of their new employees, must be accepted by the employers if their goal is to enhance their reputation.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations
A narrative review method was applied in the research. Consequently, this study has a few shortcomings. The inclusion criteria for papers to be evaluated, in the first place, take into account the experiences of the researchers. Second, there are few post-pandemic publications available, and there are few in-depth reviews either. Third, most articles use qualitative methodologies in their research. A mixed-methods approach to future research would be advantageous. More research is suggested to be done on the situation following the pandemic because it has evolved since Covid-19 and the effectiveness of the activities could vary before the pandemic.

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