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REMOTE ONBOARDING AND TRAINING PROCESSES FOR NEWCOMERS IN FAST GROWING COMPANIES: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Master's Thesis

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently

and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations to shift to remote work, resulting in a need for remote onboarding and e-training processes for newcomers in fast-growing companies. This study aims to explore the challenges and possibilities associated with remote onboarding and e-training processes for newcomers in fast growing companies. The research methodology selected for this study is semi-structured qualitative interviews. Interviews conducted by the participation of 16 interviews who 9 of them are remote newcomers and 7 or them are trainers/mentors/team leads.

The study's findings suggest that remote onboarding and e-training processes present unique challenges for new employees in fast growing companies. Challenges identified in the study include the not knowing the expectation of remote newcomers and not meeting those expectations, not having a well structured plan, providing too much information in a short time period and overwhelmed the newcomers, unefficent buddy systems, not considering the aspects of being fast growing company while designing the processes and lack of remorte socialization for newcomers. The study identifies several best practices for companies to improve their remote onboarding and e- training processes. These best practices include creating opportunities for remote socialization and informal learning, having well defined and strucruted remote onboarding and e-training plan, using technology to enhance the remote onboarding experience, creating productive remorte buddy systems, being careful about remote learning processes, taking consider people might have different learning pace, creating virtual shadowing environmet for learning and providing clear and concise communication about the process itself. Additionally, the author identifies the consideration remote onboarding and e-trainings processes are different from the traditional process which happens in office environments, therefore companies should design special processes for the remote environment for providing a successful experience and getting efficient results.

Keywords: online onboarding, e-training, new employee process

INTRODUCTION

Remote work options have rapidly increased significantly during Covid-19. Employees around the world have experienced and demand remote working options therefore remote jobs have become extremely popular. A majority of the 12,500 employed respondents in 29 countries who participated in an Ipsos study for the World Economic Forum said they wanted remote working to become the norm. And nearly a third (31%) said they would think about searching for a new position if they were required to return to the workplace on a full-time basis (Broom, 2021). These changing demands of employees force companies to list new job openings as remote options. Research shows that in the United States, just one in 67 paid positions back in March 2020 allowed for remote work. When we fast-forward to the end of 2021, the data reveals a significant rise, with one in six occupations being remote (Linkedin, 2022). Since these positions receive more than twice as many job applications as standard in-office positions, job seekers prefer to work from home or any place.

As remote work continues to gain popularity building remote teams has become increasingly common. However, creating highly effective and competent remote teams can be a challenging task, but it is crucial in the current global economy. Remote teams face more challenges than traditional collocated teams due to the lack of frequent face-to-face communication, which can lead to miscommunications and misunderstandings. In order to build a successful remote team, companies need to take extra steps to ensure effective communication and collaboration (Sthapit, 2022). This may involve implementing digital tools and technologies to facilitate virtual meetings and team-building activities. It may also require a shift in management style to emphasize trust, autonomy, and accountability among team members. To build highly competent remote teams, it is important for companies to recognize the unique challenges that remote teams face and take steps to address them. This includes providing adequate onboarding, training and support for remote workers, fostering a strong company culture that emphasizes communication and collaboration, and utilizing technology to facilitate effective virtual communication and teamwork. With the right strategies and resources in place, companies can successfully build and manage remote teams in the current global economy.

As many work processes, onboarding and training processes of new remote hirings have also adapted to electronic communication changes. Before COVID-19, the majority of onboarding and training sessions in businesses were held in person at physical locations like training rooms or workshop spaces (Cabrera, 2022). Traditional training methods are designed for face-to-face work models however changing working environments and the needs of new employees who are hired for remote teams require online electronic ways for the training process. In this context, e-training is a tool which makes training easy, inexpensive and result oriented. E-training may quickly minimize training expenditures, especially when hiring staff from around the world. (Akpoviroro & Adeleke, 2022).

Companies are increasingly using e-training methods such as seminars, webinars, onboarding and training. On one hand, this increases employee flexibility and reduces costs for the business, but on the other, it discourages social interaction and prevents genuine engagement among trainees (Litsova, 2020) Hence, remote onboarding and training processes must be carefully planned in order to yield positive results.

Even though e-training has some disadvantages, research shows that as long as companies keep supporting remote working environments, e-training for newly hired employees will take place and companies will keep using this method since it is effective and cost-saving (Papadopoulos, Papadia 2022). Akpoviroro and Adeleke (2022) state that for a company, online training is considered a new training possibility and as an opportunity to save time and money. However, most of the time, poor quality learning experiences and a high percentage of losses are observed. In terms of managing online e-training, newly hired employees who dislike and are not familiar with computers and online learning environments can have problems and eventually lose their interest in e-training. Previous studies have shown that the low performance of workers is the negative effect of not having a favourable atmosphere and adequate organizational facilities, including proper training (Adnan, Khalid 2021). A well-designed onboarding and training process indicates a strong company culture for newly hired employees. (Omar & Mahmood, 2020). The onboarding process is crucial because it enables the employer and the candidate to get to know one another, determine compatibility and expectations, and establish corporate socialization. If this procedure is carried out remotely, as an online onboarding, it becomes even more delicate (Petrilli, et al., 2022).

Therefore the problem that this thesis focuses on is that poorly designed online onboarding and e-training processes for newly hired remote employees cause inefficient results for both the employee and the employer. Especially in fast-growing companies, the fact that excessive and rapid change is not properly trained to remote employees leads to inefficient business processes, lack of information and waste of time.

The aim of this thesis is gathering knowledge about the current situation of online onboarding and e-training processes for newly hired remote employees in fast growing companies and propose a more efficient version of these processes for both the people who design and conduct them and the people who benefit from them.

To achieve this, it is crucial to answering the following research questions to understand the experience of both stakeholders:

1. What are the attitudes of newly hired remote employees towards the use of online onboarding and e-training?
2. How can companies adapt to the implementation of online onboarding and e-training for remote working to ensure a positive work environment for newly hired employees?

The first chapter of this thesis is an overview of the theoretical background of onboarding/online onboarding and e-training. As follows, the second part covers the methodology of the study and the interviews with both full remote employees who had remote onboarding and training and team members who are responsible for online onboarding and e-training design processes. As the last part of this thesis, the third part focuses on the study interpretation by understanding the expectations, strengths, and weaknesses of the process for both sides and the proposal for remote teams regarding online onboarding and e-training processes for newly hired employees.

The qualitative research method uses for gaining an in-depth understanding of the current situation from both employees' and employers' perspectives. To gain an in-depth understanding of current environments open-ended semi-structured interviews are conducted among employees who work for fast growing companies and had full remote onboarding and training and employers and team members who provide.

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1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The first chapter of this master's thesis theoretical part explains the concept of online onboarding and e-learning theories. It describes the relationship with the importance of them for newly hired employees. The following second chapter explains the design processes of them to make a clear differentiation between traditional methods and online methods. The last part describes the challenges and the key success elements of the online onboarding and e-training of newly hired employees in remote working arrangements.

1.1. Online Onboarding

The process of orienting new hires to their position, familiarizing them with the organization's objectives, values, procedures, and rules, and socializing them into the culture of the company is known as onboarding (Caldwell & Peters,2018). When employees join new teams, start working in new environments, and assume new responsibilities, onboarding helps them make a meaningful transition (Adler and Castro, 2019). The onboarding process is highly effective for new employees to be able to experience the company culture. The onboarding experience of new hires will determine their behaviour norms, commitment levels, and expectations, all of which will have an impact on the culture of the company (Adler and Castro, 2019).

Over the years many studies have covered general onboarding processes. Therefore there is significant literature about general onboarding. Klein (Klein, et al., 2015) state there are four distinct perspectives for the onboarding process: Stages; through which newcomers progress, Actors; involved with the onboarding of newcomers, Tactics; and practices employed by organizations for onboarding newcomers and Content; to be learned by newcomers during the onboarding.

All existing onboarding models were built upon Maanen and Shein's Model. Van Maanen and Shein (Van Maanen & Schein 1977) refer to onboarding as organizational socialization and categorize onboarding into six dimensions:
    1) Collective vs. individual socialization processes

2) Formal vs. informal socialization processes

3) Sequential vs. random steps in the socialization process

4) Fixed vs. variable socialization processes

5) Serial vs. dis. active socialization processes

6) Investiture vs. divestiture socialization processes

According to this model, due to the different onboarding methods followed by companies, new employees react to their responsibilities and their new job in different ways. This implies that organizations might assist newcomers by delivering essential information in various ways (Britto, 2017)

Jones' Model (Jones 1986) which builds upon Maanen and Shein's Model claims that there are two types of onboarding strategies: institutionalized and individualized. The first takes place when strategies are used in well-organized programs and newcomers are given formal group orientation and mentoring. The second occurs when newcomers begin working right away and must quickly absorb the norms, values, and expectations by working. While individualized onboarding is tied to informal techniques, institutionalized onboarding is related to formal methods.

Bauer's Model (Bauer, 2010) which builds upon Jones' Model (Jones 1986) also mentions two dimensions of onboarding institutionalized individualized but explains them as formal (institutionalized) and informal (individualized) onboarding. The research that conducted by Bauer (Bauer, 2010) represents that companies use formal onboarding have more efficient employees than companies use informal onboarding. A shared set (which can be seen in Figure 1) of procedures, methods, strategies, and technology are used by businesses that successfully onboard new employees (functions).
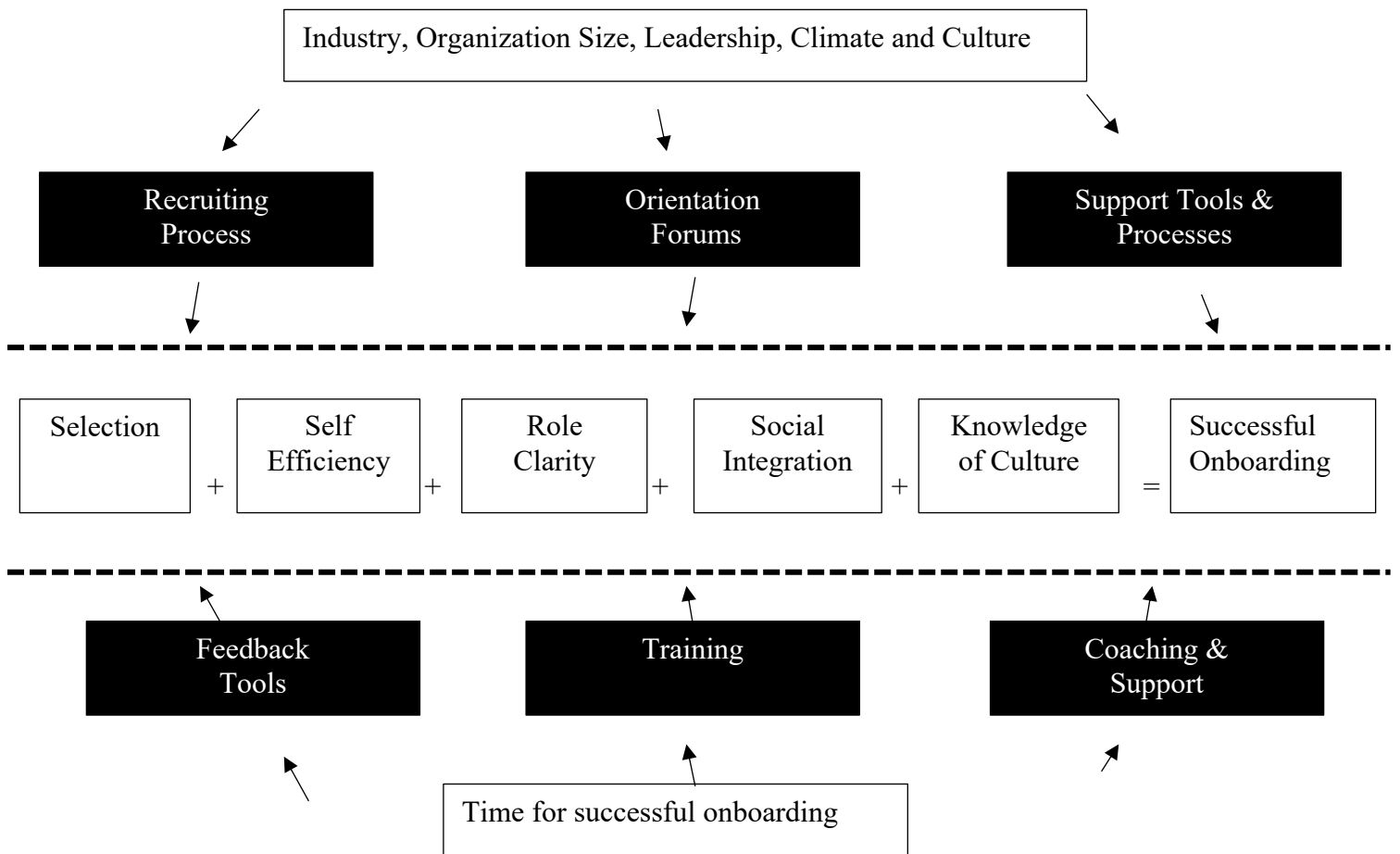
Industry, Organization Size, Leadership, Climate and Culture

Recruiting Process

Orientation Forums

Support Tools & Processes

Selection + Self Efficiency + Role Clarity + Social Integration + Knowledge of Culture = Successful Onboarding

Feedback Tools

Training

Coaching & Support

Time for successful onboarding

Figure 1. Onboarding model (Bauer, 2010)

Source: Created by the author based on Bauer (2010)

Based on Bauer's (Bauer, 2010) studies the Four Cs of onboarding Bauer claims that they are the foundations of successful onboarding, which are compliance, clarification, culture and connection.

Even though the growing numbers of remote teams and remote hiring, the majority of the literature about onboarding focuses on teams that work in face-to-face environments. Although regular onboarding has significant common similarities with online onboarding there are some special requirements of online onboarding. Therefore expanding onboarding research into online onboarding to include remote teams is essential given the increasing number of new remote teams and hirings in businesses, and in order to enable onboarding in remote newcomers, we must understand the information needs of all stakeholders (Hemphill & Begel, 2011). Unfortunately, general onboarding methods mentioned in the literature cannot generally use online onboarding processes. The fact that newly hired employees work off-site makes remote onboarding more

difficult than local onboarding (Rodeghero, et al., 2021) Therefore a different and special method should develop for the online onboarding of remote newcomers.

A recent study conducted by McDonald (2020) focused on remote onboarding from the point of view of the finance team. According to McDonald's paper, there are five areas to be able to perform a successful online onboarding. Those five elements are: organization, welcome package, introductions, communication, and expectations. Five elements of successful remote onboarding (McDonald, 2020):

1) Organization
2) Welcome package
3) Introductions
4) Communication
5) Expectations

Whitin the 'Organization' step, McDonald highlights the importance of providing all the necessary tools such as contracts, company networks, laptops, and documents for a newcomer. In the second element which is 'The welcome package' McDonald state welcoming gifts as a gesture for a newcomer which helps the newcomer to build a bond with the company. The third element, introduction, McDonald highlights the necessity of introducing newcomers to current employees. He claims this helps to create open communication between them and allows the newcomers to feel a part of the team. McDonald also presents the importance of providing all the communication channels to the newcomers in terms of their ability to ask questions. As a fifth and last element, McDonald indicates 'Expectations' which is extremely helpful to set and define them priorly to be able to make sure both employees and employers are in line.

During the onboarding process, new employees might be really stressful (Caldwell & Peters,2018). In addition to that being remote as a newcomer brings extra stress to the new employees. During online onboarding, new employees cannot experience regular interactions that new hires often have with coworkers in the office environment, such as small talk before a team meeting, stopping by a coworker's office for a quick query or chat, or spending lunch time together etc. This decrease in daily communication for new employees negatively impacts social relationships and disrupts onboarding (Hemphill & Begel, 2011).

As a nature of fast growing companies the employee turnover rates, therefore, hiring new employees ratio is extremely high (Bauer 2018). Over the years with the increasing number of remote job options people who are looking for remote jobs started to be selective as they have more alternatives nowadays. A successful remote onboarding process causes organizational commitment and lower employee turnover thus, it can be said that the online onboarding process is significant and it requires different strategies to build since it has different challenges than general onboarding (Bauer, 2010).

1.2. E- training for new employees

No matter their position or title, every employee in a workplace needs some sort of education or training. Training is necessary to stay up with the always evolving world of technology, concepts, values, and surroundings. Every company has to have training initiatives in place to raise the general quality of the work completed by all levels of workers (Mohammed, 2022)

Training is crucial to ensuring that newcomers have the self-assurance, clarity, and abilities necessary for their jobs. Newcomers might get training in both hard and soft skills to learn and perform their jobs. The kind of training newcomers receive is effective on how confident they are in their ability to perform the duties of the position (Britto, 2017). Training is highly important to be able to facilitate the adjustment of new employees, especially self-efficacy and role clarity.

Before COVID-19, the majority, if not all, of training sessions in businesses were held in person at physical locations like offices or training rooms (Cabrera, 2022). However especially after COVID-19 majority of in-person pieces of training have to be forced to change to online learning (Mpungose, 2020). Many groups and one-to-one training are reorganized to be performed online. In fact, some companies changed their training methods from in-person to online before COVID-19 because of cost savings and efficiency. In terms of training administration, tools and processes, participant motivation, etc., online training techniques operate differently from face-to-face approaches (Cabrera, 2022).

There are various terms used to indicate e- training including: virtual training, distance training, online collaborative training; web-based training; training by technological media (Moore, et al., 2011) By Abbood (Abbood, 2013) e-training has been described as "as using technology to deliver knowledge and skills from a trainer (instructor or teacher) to trainees (employee), through a

mediator such as the internet, or intranet environment". Another definition for e- training is "the Internet-based training that facilitates cooperation among trainers and trainees to improve education" (Farid, et al., 2015). It is also defined as "a training process aims to provide training contents through any medium of modern communication mechanisms as computers and the Internet to overcome geographical distances between the trainer and trainee; it is a training system between distant trainees and trainers in space and time to enable individuals to train and overcome time and space conditions" (Yamani, 2006).

The technology revolution brings with it new obstacles, but it also brings with it new solutions. As a result, in this setting, e-learning emerges as a new training option that allows employees' training and qualification demands to be properly satisfied (Batalla-Busquets, & Martínez-Argüelles, 2014). Even though e-training has been adapted quickly but many of the companies due to the cost effectiveness and increasing numbers remote hiring there are requires important improvements. According to Amara and Atia (Naoual Ben Amara & Larbi Atia, 2016), the idea of e-training is still evolving due to the connection to cutting-edge technologies that are constantly growing and changing, as well as its connection to a virtual changing world. As the concept of e- training is still evolving, fast-growing companies' need for constant training is evolving as well. As Prof. Dr. Florian Bauer (Bauer 2018) states that company growth is associated with growth in employment size. As their numbers are increasing consistently the initial training of newcomers requires significant effort.

1.3. The importance and designing processes of online onboarding and e-training for fast growing companies

According to Coad et al (Coad, et al., 2014) there isn't much agreement in the literature on a specific definition of fast growing companies. The measurement of the percentage of fast growing companies in the economy and in the industry is still not well-informed by economic or management theories. However, there are studies and research that use different definitions for it. Kotter and Sathe (Kotter, J., & Sathe, V. (1978) describe fast growing companies as "companies that grow at an average rate greater than 20 percent per year (in number of employees) for at least four or five years in a row.." Over the years in many research, different terms have been used to define the concept of fast-growing companies such as gazelle, fast-growing firms, rapid growth firms, high-growth firms or high-impact firms (Maria, 2015). The research and definition of Eurostat-OECD fast growing companies can be defined as: "All enterprises with average

annualised growth greater than 20% per annum, over a three year period should be considered high-growth enterprises. Growth can be measured by the number of employees or by turnover." (Eurostat-OECD, 2007).

One of the common characteristic features of fast growing companies is constant change. According to Coad et al. (2014), periods of intense change are connected to the concept of fast growth. As they move forward in a speedy way this can cause stress, flux, and uncertainty among employees (Coad, et al., 2014).

According to studies, six out of ten new employees, do not feel satisfied and don't think their jobs live up to their expectations. Moreover, 25% of newcomers quit their work during the first year of employment (Harpelund, 2019). When the stress level of being a remote newcomer meets with the high-stress level of fast growing companies it is highly possible to quit their job for newcomers. Therefore providing a good design remote onboarding and training process is crucial in terms of keeping the new employees and setting their expectations correctly. In fact, based on Bauer's study indicate that when onboarding and training are done correctly it caused: Higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, lower turnover, higher performance levels, career effectiveness and lowered stress (Bauer, 2010).

As a nature of being a remote newcomer, they do not experience the perks of being in the same office. Such as; impromptu learning, observation of the working ways of their peers, and collaboration. Instead, they might experience a lack the close contact, and relationships. Not only for newcomers but also for the rest of them adapting to a remote newcomer might be challenging. Teams might find it challenging to watch, mentor, and evaluate remote newcomers throughout the onboarding process due to their invisibility (Hemphill & Begel, 2011). Therefore every company spent a great amount of time while they are designing remote onboarding and training processes.

Onboarding and training programmes have to be designed by every company with detailed and serious efforts. Since it's crucial to build and define the specific corporate culture of a business in order for it to constantly grow and evolve in a positive and healthy way (Teoh, 2022) every company should take consider the company values, culture and persona of their newcomers when it comes to designing remote onboarding and training (Srimannarayana, 2016). The classic induction components and the socialization components are frequently used in onboarding

nowadays. Socialization and the utilization of diverse strategies have grown in importance in onboarding over the past 20 years (Kowtha, 2018).

Formal onboarding and training activities are usually combined with informal activities such as team meetings and social activities involving the various colleagues within the organisation that the newcomer work with. Together with external stakeholders like important clients and customers, it also includes internal stakeholders like managers, team members, senior management representatives, human resource specialists, and mentors (Bhakta, & Medina, 2021). Usually, they provide newcomers with a high volume of information within a short period of time and that can be overwhelming, impractical, and impossible to digest in that amount of time. In compiling some other research indicate that some firms provided too few items that failed to appropriately prepare employees, while others supplied too few hard activities and knowledge for newcomers to realistically absorb (Srimannarayana,2016). Therefore finding the "perfect" balance is crucial to a smooth onboarding and training process (Caldwell & Peters,2018). When the onboarding and training processes have been moved to an online environment for remote newcomers has not changed only how and by whom give them. It is clearly necessary to focus and re-design the onboarding and training process as remote newcomers need (Jeske & Olson 2021).

In most organizations, the human resource department is responsible for designing and conducting onboarding and training processes. Mugo and Guyo (2018) point out that a well-designed procedure for newcomers' training should be obligatory and pursued by every section of the organization.

In the research conducted by Srimannarayana (2016), the process designer of 73 companies indicate that feedback from earlier participants of orientation programs and exit interview data are crucial for designing new ones. In addition to that some of the program designers mentioned how important the line managers' support is in terms of providing the proper input. These processes should be supported not only by line managers but also by the leadership. To be able to design successful remote onboarding and e-training processes, almost every employee of fast growing companies should work as a team.

1.4. Challenges of online onboarding and e-training in remote working arrangements

Even though remote onboarding and e-training for newcomers have some advantages including reducing commute time, flexibility and lower costs it also brings many challenges to newcomers (Litsova 2020) Table 1 indicates the main challenges of online onboarding and e-training in remote working arrangements based on the latest literature review.

Table 1. Overview of the main challenges of online onboarding and e-training in remote working arrangements.

No	Challenge	Characteristic	Sources
1	Feeling isolated	feeling invisible, alone and socially isolated due to the absence of face-to-face interactions	Hemphill & Begel, 2011, Baade 2022,
2	Information Overload	grasp a substantial amount of information in a limited period in order to thrive in their new position	Baade 2022, Rodeghero et al., 2020
3	Virtual communication	remote newcomers frequently deal with uncertainty about when, to whom, and how to discuss sensitive matters with their coworkers	Blöndal 2021, Rodeghero et al., 2020, Woo, et al., 2022
4	Lack of learning by observation	starting a new job in a fully remote environment restricts newcomers' capacity to watch and gather information	Hemphill & Begel, 2011, Baade 2022

Source: Table developed by author based on literature.

1.4.1. Feeling isolated

Although working remotely offers employees a great deal of freedom and flexibility, it also has drawbacks, including isolation, a lack of communication, and a sense of belonging. (Mehtälä, 2023). As a nature of remote working, social activities such as coffee breaks, small talks, asking impromptu questions, and having lunch together with colleagues happen less if ever compare to

the on-site working environments (Hemphill & Begel, 2011). There is significantly limited interaction among employees in remote environments. Due to their limited social connection, employees may experience feelings of loneliness. Due to the lack of in-person connections, people who operate mostly remotely may start to feel lonely and socially isolated. (Flores 2019). This negative feeling occurs not only for older employees who work remotely but also for remote newcomers. In fact, newcomers tend to experience feeling isolated more than current employees.

A study which is conducted by Baade (Baade 2022) represents that newcomers appreciate when their colleagues took the initiative to contact them, asking about how they cope with their new jobs and company and everything. This demonstrates that remote newcomers feel lonely and any effort to socialize with them is highly valuable to them. The feeling of isolation creates a barrier to newcomers' emotional attachment, identification, and affective commitment (Wang et al., 2020). It also creates bias between newcomers and company culture.

Feeling isolated not cause only less commitment and misjudgments about the company but also overworking for remote new employees. Research shows that remote employees who are feeling isolated and experiencing invisibility try to compensate for this feeling by working longer hours. As a result of overworking, they lose their motivation and commitment (Marzban et al., 2021; Pattnaik & Jena, 2021; Wang et al., 2020).

Companies have to create innovative new solutions to convert traditional onboarding and e-training processes into remote working environments.Hemphill & Begel (2011) conducted an empirical case study of a Fortune 500 software company and they invited each of the newcomers to arrange informal, scaffolded, one-on-one video conference interviews with a core group of colleagues who had been chosen by their managers in order to assist them to get over their incapacity to build face-to-face connections with their teammates. Thereafter, they stated that these conversations were very helpful in building rapport with their coworkers and comprehending the nature of the team's job.

A different study which is conducted by Rodeghero et al., (2020) and 267 professional developers at Microsoft joined that study who had recently been onboarded and trained remotely during the pandemic. This study represents 1:1 meetings with newcomers and both their teammates and manager were helpful in terms of feeling not isolated. Study shows that remote newcomers prefer short but frequent, one on one meetings during the week. To be able to create strong welcoming

feelings for remote newcomers Rodeghero et al., (2020) suggest having regular social activities for team bonding and, later, for maintaining social team connections for example virtual happy hours, a workout class such as yoga, coffee chats, or playing online games together. One of the other suggestions provided by the same study is the buddy system during the onboarding process. A buddy to help new hires find resources they need, connect the new hire with others within the company, and be a source for asking questions in order to make them feel not invisible and lonely.

1.4.2. Information Overload

Beginning a fresh job can be an overwhelming experience for newcomers, as they are required to grasp a substantial amount of information in a limited period in order to thrive in their new position (Caldwell and Peters, 2018). Therefore the amount of information provided to the newcomers during remote onboarding and introduction training has to be a reasonable amount. When new employees join organizations, they are often excited about their new work and the organization, but they also experience feelings of uncertainty and fear. Organizations must accomplish at least two things in this regard. They must first reduce newcomers' worry and confusion. Second, they must capitalize on newcomers' excitement and enthusiasm and convert it into high levels of involvement (Albrecht, et al., 2015). Especially during the first couple of weeks, there is a lot of material offered to the newcomer both as onboarding and training material (Baade, 2022). Company culture, team structure, new tools, contracts, expectations, job responsibilities, current and previous projects and much more information are provided to the new employees. Therefore new employees can feel overwhelmed. While companies design the remote onboarding and e-training processes they have to consider the psychology of newcomers. For example, using visuals or having activities/games in different scenarios to learn about the organization is helpful to digest a load of information (Baade, 2022).

Not only the content of onboarding and e-training but also the speed of how its provided to the newcomers can cause the feeling of overwhelm. Companies need to support different onboarding and learning speed. Newcomers have different backgrounds therefore different experiences and different learning and adaptation curves (Rodeghero, et al., 2021).

To prevent the feeling of being overwhelmed, communication with remote newcomers requires being transparent in terms of defining the goals of e-training (Mohsin & Sulaiman, 2013). Knowing the steps, expectations and requirement of e-training make them feel they have control

over the process and it make them calm and less unattended. For example, a detailed remote onboarding and e-training handbook enables newcomers to be more independent in their information learning and adaptation pace and take their time learning the material (Baade, 2022).

1.4.3. Virtual communication

As the world continues to shift towards remote work environments, new challenges and communication barriers have emerged. With the rise of virtual communication, it has become essential for remote newcomers to understand how to navigate these new communication channels. Pavlina (2020) notes that the changing office environment has led to the creation of new communication ways, such as virtual ones. However, as Rodeghero et al. (2020) point out in their study, virtual communication stands for more than just connecting with teammates for scheduled and unscheduled meetings or chat messages. One of the biggest challenges for remote newcomers is asking questions or asking for help from colleagues. Studies show that remote newcomers often struggle with asking questions or asking for help due to the isolation between teammates, scheduling difficulties, and the lack of opportunities for informal communication, such as running into peers in the hallway (Blaising et al., 2019). This restricted access to information can intensify the uncertainty felt by remote newcomers, especially in the absence of face-to-face contact.

Compared to those who were socialized in physical office settings, remote newcomers require more aggressive communication attempts to handle relational uncertainty (Woo et al., 2022). Remote newcomers frequently deal with uncertainty about when, to whom, and how to discuss sensitive matters with their coworkers. These doubts may restrict the growth of relationships with coworkers and may make it difficult to obtain information from personal sources. To address this challenge, it is crucial to encourage open communication and ask for assistance to make sure that new hires feel comfortable reaching out to their colleagues remotely when they have a question, whether within the established timeframe or generally, depending on the colleague, manager, or team's availability (Blöndal, 2021).

However, virtual meetings are not enough to build meaningful communication among remote teams. According to Woo et al. (2022), virtual meetings are effective in terms of finalizing the project and tasks. Still, they may not be sufficient to foster team-building and establish relationships among team members. The authors suggest that companies should organize virtual small talk sessions between existing employees and newcomers to help them build a stronger team.

Such virtual meetings without a clear business goal replicate the casual interactions that would have in the office. In a study conducted by Woo et al. (2022) with 30 remote newcomers, except for one employee, the rest indicated that virtual small talk meetings helped them build team-building skills, increased their confidence, and provided clarity on uncertainties.

Therefore, it is essential for companies to acknowledge the unique challenges that remote newcomers face when it comes to communication and information sharing. Employers must take proactive measures to ensure that newcomers have the tools and resources they need to communicate effectively and feel comfortable asking for help when needed. By creating virtual spaces for informal communication, companies can help remote newcomers build relationships with their colleagues, reduce uncertainty, and develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their new roles.

1.4.4. Lack of learning by observation

Observation is considered to be one of the most effective tools when it comes to learning a new behaviour or adapting to a new situation. Through observation, newcomers are provided with opportunities to ask experienced members to explain how they performed the observed task in settings, facilitating experiential learning and tacit knowledge transfer (Armstrong & Mahmud, 2008). However, starting a new job in a fully remote environment restricts newcomers' capacity to watch and gather information as others carry out their responsibilities and activities in the present.

As a newcomer to social information in a company such as work environment, company culture, norms, and expectations, it is more likely that they will learn by making observations instead of reading about them. Since these elements are more difficult to explain and teach virtually, the ideal way to absorb them is by observing and experiencing them (Baade 2022). This concept applies not only to social information but also to job-related information.

Informal learning happens when the learning process has not been designed specifically. It can occur by listening to other colleagues' discussions, observing their actions, or mimicking their behaviours. However, in remote working environments, coworkers tend to share less information and expertise, thereby reducing informal learning opportunities. Due to the lack of an office environment and the nature of remote working environments, newcomers may miss the opportunity for informal learning. Particularly, informal learning is distinguished by how closely

it resembles actual workplace practice. In these circumstances, informal learning occurs while the task is being done rather than as a reflection activity after completion (Derrick, et al., 2022).

According to research, virtual shadowing has proven to be a successful and effective way to compensate for the lack of informal learning. This method requires remote employees to fellow coworkers who are currently working on important projects and tasks that match the new employee's profile (Varshney, 2022). This procedure ensures that newcomers observe and learn by acting as their colleagues' shadows.

Moreover, virtual shadowing provides an opportunity for newcomers to learn from experienced colleagues without the need for physical presence in the same location. This approach also offers the opportunity for the new employee to receive personalized and targeted learning that caters to their specific job responsibilities and work environment. The benefits of virtual shadowing extend beyond just learning; it also enables newcomers to build relationships and establish a sense of belonging with their colleagues and the company as a whole.

In conclusion, observation and informal learning are essential tools for newcomers to learn about their job responsibilities and the social information in a company. However, in remote working environments, informal learning opportunities tend to occur less frequently. Virtual shadowing is a promising solution to mitigate the effects of reduced informal learning in remote environments. By shadowing experienced colleagues, newcomers can learn through observation, receive personalized training, and establish relationships with their colleagues, leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study's methodology presents in the chapter that follows; this chapter has two sub-chapters. The first subsection describes the research design and sampling procedure applied and the second subsection describes the method and data analysis of the study.

2.1. Research design and sampling procedure

As Akhtar (2016) states research design can be thought of as the framework for research; it is the "Glue" that binds all of a research project's components; in other words, it is a proposal for the planned research effort.

The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges and possibilities of remote onboarding and e- training processes for newcomers in fast-growing companies. To achieve this objective, the author decided to use a qualitative research method, specifically semi-structured interviews. This method allows the author to obtain detailed information and insights into the experiences of participants in remote onboarding and e-training processes. Qualitative research approaches are used to respond to inquiries regarding experience, meaning, and perspective, typically from the participants' perspectives. Addition to that, semi-structured interviews seek opinions on a specific subject, as well as background knowledge or institutional viewpoints from important informants (Hammarberg, et al., 2016)

As the aim is to explore the challenges and possibilities of remote onboarding and e-training processes for newcomers in fast-growing companies the sample has been selected by adopting the criteria below:

1) Employees who had experience in full remote onboarding and e-training
2) Employees who started to work in a fast growing companies remotely
3) Trainers/mentors/team who works in fast growing companies and designed onboarding or e-training plan for newcomers

4) Trainers/mentors/team leads who onboard and trained a newcomer in remote environments

5) HR managers who are responsible for onboarding

The sampling procedure for this study involved selecting participants who have direct experience with remote onboarding and training processes in fast-growing companies. Therefore to be able to get a broader and deep knowledge, the author conducted interviews both with remote newcomers and the employees who designed and led the onboarding and training process for newcomers. The sample size was 9 employees who have full remote onboarding and e-training experience as newcomers in a fast growing company and 7 employees who are responsible for onboarding and training remote newcomers in a fast growing company environment. They were selected from different industries (Media, IT, fintech, e-commerce, advertising) and different levels.

The selection of participants also aimed to achieve diversity in terms of gender, age, job role, and industry. This ensured that the findings of the study are representative of the experiences of a diverse range of individuals who have remote onboarding and training processes in fast-growing companies. Before the interviews, participants were provided with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

As purposive sampling's major objective is to concentrate on particular features or experiences that are interesting to the author in order to best enable the author to respond to their research questions, the purposive sampling technique has been used as a sampling technique (Rai & Thapa 2015). Appendix 1 represents the table of participants who were onboarded and trained remotely as a newcomer to fast growing companies, and Appendix 2 represents the table of participants who were responsible for designing and leading remote onboarding and training processes for newcomers in fast growing companies.

2.2. Method and data analysis

In this research, in order to gather an in-depth understanding and collect data from participants semi-structured interviews have been conducted. The author chose semi-structured interviews to conduct because in this way participants had the chance to explain and discuss their own experiences in their own words with the frame the author set.

The author prepared related questions to ask during the interview and during the interviews based on the participants' answers the author asked to improvise follow-up questions in order to collect more valuable insights.

The author prepared 2 sets of questions, the first set of questions have been asked to the first group of the sample which consists of newcomers who have experience remote onboarding and e-training experience in a fast growing company. the second set of questions was prepared for the second group of the sample who designed and led remote onboarding and e-training for newcomers in a fast growing company. The first set of questions consisted of 25 questions (Appendix 3) and the second set of questions consisted of 21 questions (Appendix 4). Both question sets are divided into four main categories: general about their current work, online onboarding experience, e-training experience and challenges about the processes.

Microsoft Teams has been used to conduct interviews, the reason the author chose this tool is Microsoft Teams has a record and transcribe feature. Therefore the author used Microsoft Teams to create the transcribe of interviews. All interview transcriptions can be found in Appendix 3. Interviews were conducted in March and April 2023.

In the first minutes of the interviews, the reason for the research and interviews have been explained to the participants. The author got their permission to record the sessions and then confirmed their confidentiality. To protect the privacy of participants, they were mentioned as INT1, INT2, INT3 etc in the research results and analysis part.

The content analysis method was used to analyze the thesis data. Qualitative content analysis is an appropriate tool for analyzing interviews with various persons and groups (Gläser-Zikuda, Hagenauer, & Stephan, 2020). Content analysis allows the author to encode the intention of interviewees and infer between the lines by interpretation. Therefore the qualitative content analysis method is one of the suitable strategies for analyzing interviews (Lindgren, et al. 2020). Therefore the author was able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the answers to questions, as well as its entire organizational structure and/or the participants' thought processes.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The following section has been created to present the results which are collected as a result of the author's conduct. 9 remote newcomers and 7 trainers/mentors/team leads participated in the study in order to provide their own experience and insights. As this thesis aims to gather knowledge and insights about remote onboarding and e-training processes for newly hired remote employees in fast growing companies the questions were asked according to the interview guide. The interview results are shown in coded formation: INT1, INT2, INT3, etc. The focus of the analysis process was detecting the current challenges and key elements of remote onboarding and e-training for newcomers in fast growing companies with the perspective of two stakeholders.

The research results and data analysis section is divided into 4 subsections based on the findings from semi-structured interviews which are: 3.1 the effects of poorly designed remote onboarding and e- training processes on newcomers, 3.2 possible positive and negative effects of individual and group remote onboardings and e-training, 3.3 focuses to understand the efficiency of buddy systems, 3.4 point out various difficulties a remote newcomer face while learning the job and adaption the new information resources , 3.5 recommendation based on the interview results.

3.1. Having unstructured processes

In order to obtain important knowledge about remote onboarding and e-training processes, the study identified the current situation and past experiences of participants. The author is aware that a sample of 9 newcomers and 7 trainers, mentors, and team leads interviews may limit generalization. However, since qualitative research accepts interpretation from an epistemological perspective, the author's aim is not to provide any claim but to understand the current situation, and challenges, and identify the areas that might be improved.

Unfortunately, even before the pandemic, only 12% of newcomers strongly agreed that their companies performed a good job of onboarding. Poor onboarding and training experiences have been linked to lower work satisfaction, less effective performance, organizational inefficiencies, and eventually higher employee turnover. In the United States and the United Kingdom alone, the negative effects of poorly managed onboarding experiences cost businesses 37 billion dollars

yearly (Scott, et al.,2022). This proves a well-designed remote onboarding and the e-training process is critical in terms of remote newcomers' performance and loyalty.

Remote newcomers have expectations from the companies about their remote onboarding, training and probation processes just like the company has for employees. In addition to that remote newcomers would like to know what they should wait for their first day, week and month. (INT2): " Before I started, they sent me an email end explain what I should expect and what will happen during the onboarding process, they even explain what I should do on my first day, like how can I set up my computer or how can I download the tools that I am going to use. To be honest, seeing those emails made me feel calm, because I recently graduated, and this was my first job experience, so I was really nervous and I had no idea what should I do." Since benign a newcomer as remote can cause more stress level, letting know the newcomers what they will go through make them feel more comfortable and more open to accepting the process. (INT3) "(…)it's (having an onboarding and training plan beforehand) made me feel like comfortable because I knew that like what I should expect, and I was happy about knowing them beforehand." In order to make the newcomers feel welcoming sending onboarding and training plans beferehand is important, it is also a valid proof that company care the newcomers, make preparation for them, and made a commitment to the newcomer as company value them. Based on Bauer's (2010) studies one of the 4C's of a successful onboarding is clarification which is refers to ensuring that newcomers understand their new jobs and all related expectations.

The study revealed that not having a well-structured remote onboarding and not getting a proper e-training caused stress and highly negative emotions for newcomers. (INT6): "It was a bit chaotic because I didn't quite understand the sector that I was working in since I had no previous knowledge of it. And at first, they started explaining to me really fast. But they were busy, so they didn't have a lot of time to actually take the time to explain stuff to me because they were busy. And then I was kind of left with figuring everything out and like taking it in and then they give you tasks to do. But it was really nerve-wracking, to say the least. I have cried many times because I was just clueless on what to do and I was left alone and maybe that wasn't the case for other departments, but that was my experience when I first started as a full-time." Some of the participants of the study indicate that even though they did not have a structured plan they took initiative to meet their colleagues to get some training from them the results were not successful. (INT15): "When I asked if I would talk to someone, they said I had to arrange it. I approached 10

people for this purpose, but only 2 of them accepted it. There is another disadvantage when it comes to online: I don't think meetings are taken as seriously as they used to be."

On the contrary, a well-designed remote onboarding helped the newcomers in terms of adaptation, and learning and increase the desire for working for that company. (INT9): "And considering the COVID and all the uncertainty everything I've really liked how they did it. (…) My mentor did a lot. My manager did a lot, my teammates helped and then the regional managers helped and every one of them took their own kind of section of the job. They weren't like repeating themselves. They all knew how it's gonna be, and everyone was on the same page and they really showed their interest and their efforts in me succeeding in this onboarding training session. They wanted me to do like to be able to do the job well and to step in and do that role." (INT2): "In overall thanks to this well-designed onboarding time, I felt like they are really happy me having their company and team. One of the other reasons why I enjoyed it even though this is a remote job, I moved this country for this job and I felt like I could be friends with those people so it could be good both for my professional and personal life." Newcomers who participated in a well- structured onboarding and training programs were 69% more likely to stay with the organization for up to three years (Bauer, 2010). Therefore having and performing a well designed processes significant not only newcomers' perspective but also success of the compynies.

One of the critical outputs of the interviews related to the importance of trainers' experience in providing the information and onboarding. The majority of the interviewees did not find the chance to meet with experienced colleagues who have worked for the company for a long time. Therefore one of the first impressions about their company and job is created by the person who onboard and train them. In addition to that, newcomers select this person as their go-to person if they have a question or an issue on their minds. Because of that selecting trainers and giving them an efficient environment and tools are critical in terms of designing well structure processes. (INT2): "In my company there is a specific department that is responsible from training of new joiners and this team consists of mentors and trainers. The mentors provided the training to us. They were customer support specialists who were experienced in their field. The good part about it, before they became mentor and trainers they were working as customer support so they knew what kind of question we might have or what is the most challenging part of this job etc. They did empathy with us easily since they have been walked through the same path before." If the company does not have a designated team for remote onboarding and initial training some times team leads or senior colleagues be responsible for those processes. In this case, the team lead or senior employees'

workload might be increase and create some challenges for those people. (INT10): " (My biggest challenge) Not being able to teach everything to new joiners at the pace I want. I am an account manager not only a trainer so I have daily todos in addition to teaching, I'm not blaming to new employees, for some people it can take more time but it was a big challenge for me time to time I was behind my work schedule and late to my deadlines."

One of the interviewees pointed out that even though she got a proper onboarding and training due to the missing knowledge and experince of her trainers she did not feel confident in terms of how she performed her job. (INT4): "The person who was doing the onboarding to me, she was not in Turkey and she didn't know about the Turkish market. Hwever I will be responsible for Turkish market. She knew general things but she didn't know the Turkish market in general. For example, she didn't know the partners that my clients are working with, so that's why even the practical onboarding that I got from her was actually global client rules. She explained to me global finance processes but she couldn't explain to me like with this partner you are actually working in this way or with this partner you are actually working in that way. Because I didn't hear anything like that in the first month, for me everything was so theoretical, even the practical information was theoretical. That's why after one month, I didn't feel like I'm ready and then actually I realized that after I start working, I have pages of notes and I still don't know who is who, who should I send this email to."

To be able to design a well-structured remote onboarding and training process companies consider the background of newcomers. In addition to that the departments which are responsible for designing the processes collaborate with different teams in order to provide quality content. Especially during the e-training process customisation is extremely important to be successful and built loyalty between newcomer and the company. (INT15): "First, I was trying to understand the capacity of that employee. Is he technically strong? In which area is he most successful? Better communication skills or analytical side? I've been trying to figure things out from the very first meeting. A profile was forming in my mind. After that, again in the first week, I was trying to learn: What does he enjoy doing? For example, does he enjoy following a technical process from start to finish? Does he enjoy improving the steps of the mobile application? Or does he enjoy processes such as I find new suppliers and negotiate with people? I was trying to understand these kinds of things. So we were trying to establish a profile, so we were trying to see the areas where it would improve. Subsequent training sessions were shaped accordingly."

Getting different team managers' opinions is important not only content wise but also time management wise. If there is a specific team which is responsible for creating and designing those processes they should ask for a consultation to other teams regarding what kind of content they should provide and how much time they should give. (INT14): "So basically they asked us that, you know, how can you onboard your newcomers to your team, they asked about what's tools or what kind of PDF files and reports you want to show and how long will it take. So they ask several questions regarding our onboarding system and I believe they just collected all the information and they decided for this online onboarding system."

Based on the literature review, it can be said feedback from earlier participants of orientation programs and exit interview data are crucial for designing new ones (Srimannarayana 2016). Some of the participant mentioned that their companies did not ask any kind of feedback regarding the whole processes. (INT1): "And that's the thing I'm really shocked about because there are a lot of friends of mine who worked for this company before and when they're talking about this company before I work for there, they were always like 'they are so, so interested about your opinions' they always ask you how you feel and the human resources are the best, they always wants your feedbacks.' so on. But they did not ask me any of that kind of questions and even my director didn't ask me." (INT9): "Officially, formally, actually, no. There was no information as there were no surveys. My feedback, my experience, was not collected in a in a way that this information could be used in some research or data analyses. So no, formally, no. It was just maybe more informally from HR side, just about my feeling in general has been asked."

On the contrary other majority of participants mention that their company has a feedback system and they collect each and every step of the process in terms of improved the process. (INT 11): "Of course we do, we ask to fill out a survey to them, we are already curious about the feedback on our work. We're getting a return on that.(...) We would like to know how did they feel in that process, we measure whether they are satisfied or not. Based on the result we do some changes to the process. For example, this buddy system was one of the newcomer's suggestions, previously we did not have this programme but one of the newcomers mention that she has it in her previous job, and she suggest that to apply here and it became real." (INT16): "(...)we got feedback about this specific learning system that we use at the moment (for remote onboarding and e- training) that it's not fitting our needs. So at the moment, one of my colleagues is exactly working on that to set up criteria. So, like, a whole search process of actually getting a learning system that also

fits our needs." The study shown that there is a direct proportional between asking for feedback and providing convenient remote onboarding and e- training to newcomers.

It can be concluded designing a well-structured onboarding and e-training plan is crucial for both newcomers and companies.This process provides a great opportunity for newcomers to learn about the company, its culture, values, and mission. In turn, it allows the company to set the expectations, goals, and responsibilities for the newcomers. An effective onboarding and e-training plan can also improve employee retention and productivity. When newcomers feel welcomed and supported, they are more likely to stay with the company for the long term. Furthermore, a comprehensive e-training program can equip employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively, reducing the time and cost associated with learning on the job.

3.2. One-on-one vs group environment

Majority of newcomers who participated the interviews indicated they prefer to be in a group environment during the online onboarding and e-training session. (INT2): "I think it was better to onboard with other people as it creates a more social environment and I felt more included by adding up new people to my network. One of the other good things about being onboarded with groups I had chance to learn from other people's questions. And also I had chance to see my level compare to others, I mean I could be more stressed if I would be alone, in groups I see that I am not the only one feel nervous and there are other new joiners who also do not understand everything in fist time, this makes relax about myself." Being in a group environment helps newcomers in terms of feeling more comfortable as well as secure. (INT3): "And also I wouldn't prefer like having the onboarding alone, because when you're alone when you are asking questions, sometimes you feel like you're asking silly questions and but then when you are with other people, they're also asking questions and you know, like this is something normal and you feel more comfortable. And I definitely preferred it in this way. And I'm happy that we were a group." Asking a question or raising a concern are challenging steps for newcomers especially they are in a remote environment they feel more pressure of avoiding to ask small and simple questions because of they afraid of humiliating themselves.

On the other hand, the other some participants indicate that they prefer being alone during virtual sessions because they describe themselves as introverts. One of the interviewees pointed out the struggle of asking questions when they are in a group environment. (INT8) : "I mean, I would say I'm kind of an introverted person. So it was like a little bit hard for me to you know, I would say like asking questions virtually. It was hard for me because, in person face to face it's really easy for me to ask a question. But when you are in a Zoom meeting with over 20 people, you cannot ask. So for me it was kind of challenging."

Even though the majority of participants in the study prefer the group environment, one of the challenges they indicated was being in a group with people who has different learning pace. They mentioned that sometimes they feel either behind the learning schedule or far ahead. Based on the study results if they stay behind their remote onboarding and training group it creates stress for newcomers. (INT2): "Some days after my shift I was keep working and watching the training videos that I couldn't watch during my shift because of lack of time. And for some content watching that training videos only for one time was not enough to understand the topic, but when you watch them 2 times you went behind the program, so I was bookmaking them and watching them after my shift." In conduct to that if they feel they are ahead of the learning pace waiting for others can be boring and inefficient. (INT5):" But I think there is a difference when it comes to the speed of people and their understanding when it comes to new information. So I can say it was more fun (being in a group environment), but when it comes to the alone ones that I did by myself, they were more productive. (…) But when it comes to challenges. As I said, I think um when it comes to the speed of the understanding, it is differing from people. So it took us one month. But I think if I was by myself it will take less." This problem affects not only newcomers but also trainers. Based on one of the participants' answers who is working as an HR manager pointed out that (INT11): "I know the training team have some struggle due to different learning speed because some employees are more experienced than other, so they captured some information quickly than the other and they got bored etc."

One of the other results that this study revealed trainers/managers who are responsible for organizing the remote onboarding and e-training mostly prefer a group environment when it comes to conducting those processes. Interview participants indicated that when newcomers are in a group environment their engagement level is higher and learning and adaptation became faster. (INT12): "If they are an external remote hire, I would say it is the group one because they have

the chance to meet with people and so when the new members join the company, they need to learn a lot of stuff and it can be overwhelming for them. But seeing other people actually going through the same phases, it makes them feel better I think. So they tend to prefer group training and I tend to prefer group training as well." One of the reasons why trainers prefer group environments is because remote teaching in a group environment is easier to perform compared to one-on-one training. (INT13): "So I really like group training and, for long-term training like 3-4 weeks training, it's easier for the facilitator because imagine you just keep talking, talking, talking all day. Like interactive training with people, it's challenging. It's quite tiring for the facilitator as well. So it helps you to create small group activities, self-learning assignments and everything. And when people are engaging with each other, they tend to learn more."

Not only learning and adaptation wise but also in terms of remote socialization wise majority of the participant mentioned that a group environment is more convenient for remote newcomers. (INT16): "(…)so socialisation in this way, at least from my understanding, also like just already, like group works, social parts. Right. So we have a lot of activities within the facilitation. It's not just presentation and let's say frontal lecture type, anything like this, but really like activities where people need to work on certain topics and discuss things in groups. Compares and of course, we also have activities that are purely for the goal of them is purely just that the people get to know each other, to network, to socialise. So it's at the moment quite a mix of all of that." (INT3): "I actually didn't feel like lack of being social with other people because still like 8 hours a day, at least 7 - 8 people we were together in an online environment. We were like in the Zoom meetings and talking with a lot of people." (INT9): "I like that there was in a group I had to talk with people meet people and afterwards I already got some contacts that I could potentially use."

3.3. Buddy systems

Participants mentioned that they have a buddy system in their company for remote newcomers. Buddying at onboarding is the practice of assigning an existing employee to assist a new employee in settling in when they first start at a company. A buddy's responsibilities often involve providing practical assistance in orienting the new employee to the organization's people, processes, work environment, and culture. A pleasant onboarding experience seeks to promote employee engagement and reduce attrition as well as get the new employee up to speed quickly (White. et al., 2020)

Buddying is highly important especially for remote newcomers since they do not have access to all the employees and employers because they don't know them, therefore, a good buddy can be extremely efficient for the newcomers. (INT8): "Actually, I had a buddy in my team, and he was super nice to me, so we were doing 1:1every week I would say, and if I had a question, I would just like wrote to him and he would just like call me and or maybe like sometimes he would be in a meeting and he would say like, you know, hey, I'm in a meeting so I will get back to you later etc. So I wasn't feeling that lonely." (INT11): We have a project that we call "first friend". In this project, we assign the first friend to the person who has just started. It provides support in matters such as which team to work with, and who will actually work in the team. You can think of it more like a close buddy.

However, companies must be careful and attentive when they are designing that process. Choosing an employee who recently started to work at this company can not be a good choice in terms of their knowledge about the company. (INT1): "...they told me that I have a buddy. I will have a buddy in the company and he will be introducing me that the way of working and the people that I'm going to work with basically it did not happen the way they told me that I was imagining differently, because I felt like my buddy did not like me, he was not like giving me all the details. I think he doesn't know everything because he just recently started work there as well." One of the other participants who is a manager and responsible for training mentioned that they have a buddy system but it is not effective anyway. (INT15): "We had a buddy system which was totally worthless, so management told me to assign to every new employee a buddy, and then HR told me who will be to whom buddy, but when I asked my team if they benefit from this system none of them did not say. I think that was something HR did only because it is a trend. Because I talked to one of the buddies and asked her if the HR gave her any kind of training or instruction as a buddy on what she should do she say no. The only thing they told her help the new employee if they ask for help. That's it."

Addition to none of the participants mentioned a feedback mechanism for their buddies. Even though both employees and trainers are not satisfied with how the buddy systems work none of the companies those 16 people work for haven't taken any action to make this system more efficient and productive. If companies include the buddy systems in their remote onboarding and e-training process, this system has to design as carefully as onboarding and training itself. When choosing the onboarding buddy companies have to be careful to create a good match. As Syed (2022) indicates in their study an experienced team member with relevant knowledge of corporate

and team systems and a desire to guide should serve as an onboarding buddy. Additionally, as Rodeghero et al (2021) advises the onboarding buddy comes from a different team within the same organization rather than the new hire's direct team. Onboarding buddies help remote newcomers by building a network outside of the new hire's team, discussing career advancement, and any concerns that emerge throughout the onboarding process.

3.4. Difficulties while learning the job and adapting the tools

The study revealed that remote onboarding and e-training processes have significant difficulties for newjoiners. Based on the study the must common one is feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information they have to learn. (INT5): "Because like when you start a new role, it can be pretty overwhelming and they try to teach you all the information that you might need within those like 4 weeks, so it is kind of overwhelming when it comes to the amount of the information. And I think the trainers or the like, the people who create the onboarding plan should be able to divide those pieces of information within the days like equally However, it will be more helpful for them and will be helpful for the joiners,in a way that would make it overwhelming for the people on the training." (INT9): "I definitely feel that when I remember that first period, first weeks, I felt like I was overwhelmed with information because there was a lot of training like pages online where I needed to go and read the information. And then also they sent me printed out materials like a guide book. Tasks with descriptions with examples and there was a lot of information and different new systems so I felt that really I had a lot to work with in the beginning just to learn and to comprehend that."

One of the methods that used by companies is providing pre-recorded and explanatory training videos. Even thoug those videos are more convenient for the company and trainers, the majority of the remote newcomers found them overwhelming, not easy to follow and efficient as supposed to be. (INT8): "I remember I was super overwhelmed because they were just like you need to watch this video. You need to watch this learning video. I mean, like by Wednesday by Thursday or by Friday. And they were like one hour long or like, at least 45 minutes long learning videos and you're just trying to understand the product itself. And it's just like hour long meeting. And they're just like in the meeting, it's a training video. They're just like, recorded it. And then in the training video, there are lots of people asking questions that I don't know. I was kind of overwhelmed because I was like, remember that I was trying to understand the product and then

someone was asking a question about the product and I'm like, what the hell! It was like, really overwhelming for me. Watching videos 3 or 4 hours in a day to learn the product or the technology behind the product was so overwhelming. I felt like there are some topics I don't understand and it caused me stress." One of the interviewee mention that the amount of information she supposed to get from vidoes and designated time to watch those videos was not well planned. (INT2): "Some days after my shift I was keep working and watching the training videos that I couldn't watch during my shift because of lack of time. And for some content watching that training videos only for one time was not enough to understand the topic."

One of the other common difficulties of remote newcomers is finding related information among resources and adapting the new virtual tools. All the participants who joined the study work or worked for fast growing companies, that means their team, the product/service they worked for chance rapidly. This means those companies have many files, systems, channels for information and some of them might be outdated due to the rapid and constant changes. (INT7): And the filing system was a little bit messy it was hard to find the related doc when I need it. For example, I wanted to look at the last year's social media planning file there was not any file regarding that. (…) unstructured information and getting lost among all the unorganized files overwhelmed me and took so much of my time to amend them and find my way." (INT8): "(…)we have like a communication tool. It works like Google, but it's for our company, so you can just like search by a keyword and you can find all the information, like Wikipedia I would call it that way, regarding the product you want to learn. I would say it was a little bit complicated at first, I mean, everyone was like really overwhelmed by it so because everyone was just like saying 'we have this huge information source, but it's really hard to understand like which communication doc is updated or outdated'." One of the interviewee mention that her company did not provide any kind of information resource in a language that she can speak. (INT6): "Everything is in German again. There are some internal websites that you can go to, but if you don't speak the language, then the information doesn't really tell you anything you have to know. Also you have to actively ask people if such a thing exists. I will again give an example from the benefits, I had no idea that the company had some agreements with other companies and you can just get discounts for clothing so on. It's a benefit thay I should be able to use it as a employee of this company but I had no iade about those discounts."

Except one of them, all the participants in the interview mentioned that they provide a special session to teach to remote newcomers how is the companies filing system, how they can store the

information and what is the best and most convenient ways to do look for a information through all the resources. The trainer who did not provide those confirmation mentioned they employees should find their own way. INT14: "Actually we didn't give them any guidance we just gave them their e-mail addresses and then we're using Microsoft Teams. So you need to sign up for this. So of course we are sending an e-mail that you need to sign up for teams. You need to create your e-mail etc but nothing additional. And, there are of course some folders like Google Drive folders. So there are some links. So of course they receive some links but there is no actual one on one meeting to explain them. So they should try to understand it and they should find their own way. I mean that's a problem for them of course. But we never thought that it's gonna be a huge problem."

Additionally iterviewees mention that they wish they had opportunity to do more practice instead of getting theoretical information only. Since remorte newcomers do not have observation learning opportunity they indicate thay working side by side in virtual environment would be useful for them. (INT20) : "I wish we had invested more time on practising what we learnt and dived more in details of the subjects we've talked about." (INT5) : " I think it would be better if they let us shadow senior colleagues for a little longer and also senior colleagues shadow our performance as well. I am aware that this is not feasible for the company and maybe not be efficient but we were working directly with end users when you made a mistake there was no turnback like working with internal teams. So more training like practical training would be better."

It can be concluded remote onboarding and e-trainigf have different difficulties compared to the office onboarding and training, and starting to a work in a fast growing company requires additional attention in terms of designing, performing and learning the remote onboarding and e-training processes.

3.1. Recommendations based on the study

The aim of the final subsection is to provide a summary of the main challenges and recommendations for remote onboarding and e-training processes for newcomers in fast growing companies.Author created a table which can be find in Appendix 1 the aim of this table is to collect

and offer all the key points which are provided in the interviews to be able to provide more insight about what current challenges and possible recommendations are to solve those challenges.

To conclude participants agreed that companies should take into consideration newcomers' working environment and companies' growing pace when it comes to designing and performing remote onboarding and e-training processes. The experience of being a remote newcomer is highly different from being an offline newcomer in terms of providing clarity about processes, customizing the processes based on newcomers' background, organizing remote socialization activities and what newcomers expect from companies. In addition to that fast growing companies should pay more attention to the way how they provide a high amount of information to remote newcomers. Overall in order to provide an excellent experience which can cause a low turnover rate, high engagement from newcomers to the company and high loyalty companies have to give considerable attention to the needs of remote newcomers during the onboarding and e-training.

CONCLUSION

Starting a new job often describe as a nervous, stressful and exciting event and it includes some challenges however starting a new job in a fast growing company as a remote employee cause different challenges than being at the office.

The advantages of being a remote employee and hiring a remote employee caused the increase in the number of remote teams. Especially after and during the pandemic lot of companies hiring new employees as remote. In many cases hiring a remote employee means onboarding and training them as remotely as well. This leads companies to a situation in which have to prepare and design new ways to onboard and train the newcomer in the remote environment. Hence it creates new challenges both for remote newcomers and the company.

The aim of this study was to obtain a better understanding the current challenges and the ways of performing of online onboarding and e-training processes for remote newcomers in fast growing companies and propose a more efficient version of these processes.

Therefore author developed the following research questions based on the research purpose and to get a better overview:

1. What are the attitudes of newly hired remote employees towards the use of online onboarding and e- training?
2. How can companies adapt to the implementation of online onboarding and e-training for remote working to ensure a positive work environment for newly hired employees?

To start, the author explored the online onboarding and e-training approaches, the importance of these processes and the challenges of newcomers in fast growing companies based on the latest empirical studies and research. Possible positive effects of well-designed and structured online onboarding and e-training processes and the primary challenges during the processes were identified based on theory and findings. To be able to gain deep knowledge and collect insights the author prepared semi-structured interviews. In order to collect information author conducted interviews both with remote newcomers and the employees who are responsible for holding remote onboarding and e-training such as HR managers, mentors, trainers, senior employees and team

leads. 9 newcomers who started working for fast growing companies and had remote onboarding and e-training experience and 7 employees who work for fast growing companies and hold online onboarding and e-training for newcomers were interviewed to collect the data. All the interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams during March and April 2023. The author used a qualitative content analysis method to analyze the responses.

What we have learned from the interviews is employees' expectations and needs are different due to the remote environments. Even though being a remote newcomer has some advantages the majority of the participants indicated that they prefer to be in the office environment. Not only the newcomers but also the trainers and managers prefer to be in the office environment during the processes. Based on the study results companies plan to move this process to the offices if ever they haven't done yet. However unfortunately for some companies, this is not an option. Therefore remote onboarding and the e-training processes will use as long as remote hiring happened. Thus, improving these processes is critically important for higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, higher performance levels, career effectiveness, lowered stress of newcomers and lower turnover rate.

The study revealed that if they have to be entirely remote the newcomers' attitudes regarding online onboarding and the e-training process are positive if they can see the effort of the company. Newcomers might have some bias towards the remote process especially if they had a previous bad experience however when they experience remote-specific activities and approach such as virtual coffee breaks, remote-based designed buddy systems, and interactive remote group environment they indicate that they benefit from those processes better.

The author's proposal is focusing on the designing and structuring process in order to perform successful processes and get good results. If fast growing companies would consider the challenges above mentioned they can build new remote onboarding and e-training processes. While they are planning these processes each and every team member should do some contribution to define how is the most convenient way to explain to a remote newcomer what their team works and how they work, designer of the process should consider the possible social anxiety of newcomers caused by being remote and set meeting behalf of them with stakeholders. In addition to that organizing some fun, remote social activities such as happy hours, and trivia games might be good to increase the team and company engagement of newcomers. Buddy systems should be redefined to adapt to the remote environment, and the company should prove a guideline and plans to the buddy regarding how they can build a meaningful connection with newcomers. One of the other suggestions of the

author is to be careful about remote learning differences. To able to avoid information overload time frame should be prepared carefully. The study also represents that collecting constructive feedback is one of the important steps in building a successful remote onboarding e-training process. Therefore the author suggests implementing feedback mechanisms for each step of the processes.

Based on the study above, the author believes that the research questions have been answered and the thesis's goal has been fulfilled. Based on this work, we have more knowledge and insight about remote onboarding and the e-training process in fast-growing companies, possible challenges and what possible solutions and approaches are needed to succeed in these processes. This study represents the current situation, and challenges of being remote newcomer as employees and makes recommendations to companies. For further research, it would be interesting to examine the perspective of companies/employers and their challenges within these processes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Table of key challenges and guidelines

Challenges	Recommendations
1. Not knowing the expectation of remote newcomers and not meeting those expectations	• be transparent about the whole steps and processes • send emails beforehand • explain how they are going to feel and why it is normal to feel in that way • ask newcomers expectation from those processes • set clear expectation for newcomers
2. Not having a well structured plan	• design the process with whole steps by considering remote newcomers • get consultation from each departmen, design as company • customize the processes based on newcomer background, skills and department • let newcomers know who will be their internal stakeholders • arrange intro meeting for newcomer with internal stakeholders • organize both group and one on one remote sessions • constantly ask for feedback
4. Unefficent buddy systems	• provide a guide about how to be a remote work buddy • chose the buddy from long term employees • choose the buddy from different team within the same organization • build a feedback systems to improve the process
5. Not considering the aspects of being fast growing company	• have a well structured filing systems that everyone can reach regardless their location • prepare a guideline for company filing systems

	• make sure all the resources are up to date • create a specific information resouce/channels for newcomers to follow all the fast changes
6. Lack of remorte socialization for newcomers	• plan remote socialization activities • encouge the other employees to build social communication with newcomers • explain how they can use company tools in terms of socilization

Source: Author's summary based on the interviews

Appendix 2. Table of interviewed remote newcomers

Interviewee	Profession	Industry	Method	Date	Duration (minutes)
INT1	Senior client executive	Media	Microsoft Teams	15.03.2023	39
INT2	Card dispute and chargeback agent	Fintech	Microsoft Teams	22.03.2023	48
INT3	Customer support Agent	Fintech	Microsoft Teams	04.04.2023	52
INT4	Brand supervisor	Advertising	Microsoft Teams	04.04.2023	59
INT5	Team lead	Fintech	Microsoft Teams	05.04.2023	42
INT6	Associate	Consulting	Microsoft Teams	05.04.2023	65
INT7	Marketing Manager	SaaS	Microsoft Teams	07.04.2023	28
INT8	Client solutions manager	Tech	Microsoft Teams	10.04.2023	36
INT9	Account manager	I-gaming	Microsoft Teams	17.04.2023	57

Appendix 3. Table of interviewed employees who held remote onboarding and e-training

Interviewee	Profession	Industry	Method	Date	Duration (minutes)
INT10	Account manager	Media	Microsoft Teams	16.04.2023	29
INT11	HR Manager	E-commerce	Microsoft Teams	03.04.2023	42
INT12	Team leader	Fintech	Microsoft Teams	09.04.2023	39
INT13	Onboarding trainer	Tech	Microsoft Teams	14.04.2023	55
INT14	Head of performance marketing	E-commerce	Microsoft Teams	14.04.2023	37
INT15	Business development manager	Retail	Microsoft Teams	15.04.2023	42
INT16	Learning and development specialist	Fintech	Microsoft Teams	15.04.2023	56

Appendix 4. Table of interview structure and questions for remote newcomers

Introduction
- Introduction of myself and the purpose of the interview
- The reminder of interview time (up to 45 min) and asking for permission to record
- Conforming the confidentiality
General question about current works
1. Which industry are you working for? And what is your job title?
2. What is the employee turnover rate in your company? Do they hire new employees frequently?
Online Onboarding
3. When you get this job did your company explain any kind of onboarding plan beforehand?
4. How long did it take for your online onboarding?
5. Were you alone during the onboarding or are there other new employees? How did it make you feel?
6. During the remote onboarding have you had a chance to meet with your other colleagues? If yes, how did you meet them? Who initiated the meetings?
7. Did you enjoy from this onboarding and why?
8. Do you think did you get all the information you need?
9. Do you think if you would participate in this onboarding at the office what kind of difference would be? Please answer both content and social wise.
E-training
10. After the onboarding process, when you join the team what kind of e-training did you get? Were they to improve your soft skills or hard skills?
11. Who did you provide this e-training to? Your manager, senior colleagues etc.?
12. How did you feel during the training?
13. If you get those training at the office, do you think what kind of difference would be?
Challenges
14. During the online onboarding and e-training what kind of challenges did you experience?
15. Did you feel comfortable asking any questions of yours during the remote onboarding or e-training?

Appendix 4 continued

16. Were you comfortable with having virtual communication (using tools, starting communication etc) with your team and the rest of the company?
17. Do you think the information amount for your onboarding and initial team training was easy to digest? How did you feel about your learning pace?
18. Do you think your manager/trainer was aware of those challenges?
19. Did you use any kind of digital tool during onboarding or training? If yes, was it easy to use and how did it make you feel to use this tool?
20. What positive aspects have you experienced about online onboarding and e-training?
21. Do you think it would be more efficient or easy to adapt if you would be at the office during onboarding and training?
22. Did your company plan any kind of remote socialization activities during your onboarding?
23. During your onboarding and training processes, what would you wish your company had done differently?
24. How would you describe your feelings and expectations during the process of onboarding and training? Were they different before and after the onboarding and training processes?
25. Did your company ask you for feedback about the process? If yes, how did they collect those feedback?

Appendix 5. Table of interview structure and questions for employees who held remote onboarding and e-training

Introduction
- Introduction of myself and the purpose of the interview
- The reminder of interview time (up to 45 min) and asking for permission to record
- Conforming the confidentiality
General question about current works
1. Which industry are you working for? And what is your job title?
2. What is the employee turnover rate in your company? Do they hire new employees frequently?
Online Onboarding
3. In your company do you have a standard onboarding plan for remote newcomers and which department is responsible for it?
4. How long it takes to onboard a new remote employee?
5. What do you do to introduce new employees to the rest of the team remotely?
6. What kind of social activities the online onboarding includes?
7. How is this online onboarding different from regular onboarding which happens in the office environment?
8. While designing the online onboarding process do you make any customization based on team, job title, department etc.?
E-training
9. How is the e-training process different from office training? What do you do differently in the online environment?
10. Do you prefer to give the training in a group of 1to1?
11. How do you be sure that the new employees learn all the pieces of information?
12. If you give training at the office, do you think what kind of difference would be?
13. About the e- training process, what were the biggest challenges for you?
Challenges
14. During the preparation of all the steps of online onboarding and e-training what kind of challenges have you experienced?

Appendix 5 continued

15.   Do you use any kind of online onboarding, e-training or some kind of learning management system to be able to give those training? If yes, why this tool?
16.   According to your experience, what are the biggest challenges of remote onboarding and training for newly hired employees?
17.   How do you manage the time during the remote training?
18.   To onboard and train newbies do you prefer a remote or office environment?
19.   If you have a limitless budget and resources, how would you design differently in those processes?
20.   Do you think after the remote onboarding the newcomer feels comfortable meeting all the team members and socialising with them?
21.   How do you decide if onboarding and training were successful or not? Do you collect feedback?

Appendix 6. Transcribed interviews

Link to the transcribed interviews:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YiNXwA77Kx9QbcqPHvnQPvNus7p-fL9H?usp=share_link

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