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Comparative Analysis of Employee Sensemaking across business units in a large organization: Implications for Organisational Sensegiving

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Comparative Analysis of Employee Sensemaking across
business units in a large organization: Implications for
Organisational Sensegiving

by

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A THESIS

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I come from a culture, where education is highly regarded, encouraged and a source of pride and status. However, this isn't always applied equally across our culture for men and women.

Expectations, allowances and support range and it can often be quite hard to forge through as a woman of colour, with an ethnic background, raising a family, and working a full time job. So my acknowledgements are extended to those who have helped not only support me, but helped shift the narrative in this regard.

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List of Abbreviations and Nomenclature

Abbreviations	Definition
WHO	World Health Organization
GMC	General Management Council
WEF	World Economic Forum
CR&SI	Corporate Relations and Sustainable Investment
CBD	Central Business District
ICT	Information Communication Technology
HR	Human Resources

Nomenclature	Definition
General Management Council	The Executive Committee in Anglo American, reporting to the CEO.
Hybrid work	Flexible working model where employees work partly in the physical workplace, and partly remotely – at home or from another workspace
Operational business unit	Operating unit in a business to which market revenues can be attributed, and which has dedicated personnel resources as well as assets
Corporate business unit	Support based business units that are not always revenue generating, but exist to support the operating units and deliver a service to them
Local communities	Communities that are around the mining site, within a certain radius or labour employment sending areas
Local employment	Employees that are hired from the local community
Mine sites/plants	Areas where ore or ore minerals are extracted from the ground and any other contingent land necessary to accomplish this function
Shift work	Any work schedule that falls outside the standard working hours of 7 am and 6 pm . Shift work can include evening, night, and early morning shifts, as well as fixed or rotating schedules.
Low or unskilled labour	Menial or repetitive tasks are typical unskilled labor positions. Jobs that can be fully learned in less than 30 days often fall into the low-wage labor category. Low-wage labor jobs may be held by individuals with less education or experience than others.
Band levels	Salary and hierarchical based levels in Anglo American
“We Care” program	Support programme to Anglo American employees to ensure good mental health and wellbeing

Abstract

The aim of this study is twofold: a) to compare employee sensemaking across corporate and operational business units within a large organization; and b) to examine the sensegiving role of the organization. The research is situated in the context of the transition to remote work prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It seeks to investigate how employees in different business units, specifically corporate and operational, have navigated the shift to remote work amidst the pandemic and the associated nuances and considerations.

Previous studies on remote work have predominantly focused on scenarios where only a fraction of the workforce operated remotely or with flexible arrangements, typically on an infrequent or part-time basis. The evolution of research on sensemaking has progressed from a solely retrospective process to one that incorporates prospective elements, as well as recognizing the organization's role as a sensegiver. However, there exists a dearth of literature exploring how the sensemaking process varies across distinct business units within an organization, how organizations effectively manage this variance, and what considerations are imperative as they undertake the role of sensegiver.

Given the significance of identity within the sensemaking process (Weick et al., 2005), it is essential to explore the potential disparities in how employees across various functional roles within a business engage in sensemaking, as well as the considerations organizations must bear in mind as they fulfill the role of sensegiver. The context of the pandemic presents an unprecedented opportunity to examine sensemaking due to its magnitude, intricacy, and volatile nature.

This research endeavors to contribute to the existing literature on remote work, sensemaking, sensegiving within organizational settings, and managerial practices pertinent to sensegiving in the workplace.

Keywords: sensemaking; sensemaker; remote work; virtual work; organizational change; sensegiving; sensegiver

Introduction

Comparative Analysis of Employee Sensemaking across business units in a large organization: Implications for Organisational Sensegiving

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. This declaration had far-reaching implications for the global community, as it was characterized not only as a public health crisis but also as an economic and socio-economic emergency (Wong et al., 2020; Doepke & Olmstead-Rumsey, 2021). In response, governments and organizations swiftly implemented policies, rules, and interventions to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 (Wong et al., 2020). One immediate measure to control the spread of the virus was to implement widespread shutdowns, profoundly affecting the operations of a majority, if not all, countries (Kaushik, 2020). This abrupt cessation of activity caught many organizations, businesses, and workers off guard, necessitating a rapid transition from traditional corporate structures to predominantly remote workforces virtually overnight.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the swift transition to remote work have not only impacted organizations and businesses, prompting them to adapt to new circumstances, but have also compelled individuals worldwide to make sense of this unprecedented situation. When confronted with crises or unexpected events, individuals engage in the process of sensemaking to seek understanding and derive meaning from their experiences (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a profound sense of uncertainty, with immediate ramifications in both personal and professional spheres, prompting individuals to grapple with its implications (Christianson & Barton, 2021). Existing interpretations and responses have become inadequate, necessitating individuals to reevaluate their surroundings and construct a new understanding of society, the workplace, and their roles within it (Stephens et al., 2020).

Sensemaking is not a novel or isolated process; rather, it operates swiftly, subtly, and continuously, involving both conscious and unconscious cognitive and emotional mechanisms (Cunha, Clegg, Rego, & Gomes, 2015). Often taken for granted in our daily lives, sensemaking entails a process of constant refinement and adjustment in response to evolving circumstances (Weick et al., 2005). It is not solely concerned with arriving at an absolute truth or correct interpretation but rather with the iterative formulation of plausible explanations that withstand scrutiny and critique (Weick et al., 2005).

The existing literature on organizational change and sensemaking is extensive and has evolved over time. Earlier research on sensemaking, by Harris, Louis, Starbuck & Milliken, all focused on the construct of sensemaking. Weick then developed a framework in the early 2000s on the processes and stages involved in Sensemaking. And later research, by Maitlis & Lawrence, Corvellec & Risberg, Zhang, Cunha, and Chreim, focused on sensemaking within the organisation. Despite the evolution of sensemaking as a topic, there is a notable gap concerning global crises, as fortunately, such events occur infrequently. However, when they do transpire, the lack of research, comprehension, and readiness often leaves us grappling for viable options and solutions. COVID-19 has undeniably rocked the world, prompting researchers to dub the ensuing lockdown as the most extensive psychological experiment ever conducted (Bussin & Swart-Opperman, 2021). This crisis presents an opportunity for collaboration between organizational scholars and practitioners to devise practical solutions that could instigate meaningful change (Stephens et al., 2020). Apart from the role of sensemaking in a global crisis, it is equally important to understand it in the context of organisational change; a process by which all organisations undergo continuously in their efforts to adapt, compete and stay relevant.

The foremost business transformation catalyzed by the pandemic is the widespread adoption of remote work (Kaushik, 2020). Although there exists a considerable body of literature on remote work, it necessitates reevaluation within the context of the pandemic (Wang et al., 2021). While certain insights from prior remote work research may prove relevant in understanding its impact on our workforce during the current crisis, it would be negligent not to revisit or undertake new research, given the unprecedented scale of this transformation, the distinct exigencies of this period, the profound psychological repercussions, and the contextual relevance to COVID-19 (Wang et al., 2021).

Exploring remote work within the current pandemic context provides valuable insights by framing it as a pervasive organizational setting, carrying significant theoretical and practical implications for organizations (Wang et al., 2021). These implications include managing hybrid work models, influencing organizational culture, and addressing talent acquisition and retention concerns. Many prognosticate that a hybrid model encompassing both remote and in-office work will become the prevailing norm (Cockayne, 2021), necessitating guidance for organizations on embracing, navigating, and adapting their strategies and workforce to ensure resilience and sustainability (Bussin & Swart-Opperman, 2021). This entails understanding how employees have navigated the transition from a predominantly face-to-face workforce to one operating fully remotely, and subsequently, to a hybrid model.

As organizations assume the role of sensegiver, the manner in which they communicate with and support their employees in navigating this change will directly influence employee experience, commitment, and well-being (Mihalache & Mihalache, 2021; Zito et al., 2021). It is imperative for organizations to discern the significance of information derived from various sources (Cunha et al., 2015), recognizing that what may appear plausible to one group could be

deemed implausible by another (Weick et al., 2005). Ultimately, an organization's sustainability hinges upon its adeptness in managing these transitions, understanding their repercussions, and demonstrating empathy and compassion towards its employees (Bussin & Swart-Opperman, 2021).

The primary objective of this study is to compare employee sensemaking across corporate and operational business units within a large organization and to scrutinize the sensegiving role of the organization. The research endeavors to comprehend how employees in distinct business units of the organization, specifically corporate and operational, have interpreted the transition to remote work amidst the pandemic. While these business units share certain similarities, such as operating under the same top management structure (referred to as the GMC – Group Management Committee), adhering to identical policies and high-level group processes, being subject to scrutiny from the CEO and the GMC, and receiving the same guidance during the transition to remote work, they also exhibit notable differences. These differences encompass geographic dispersion, business activities and tasks, levels of exposure, success metrics, employee skill sets, and societal connections. Hence, the study lends itself to a fitting comparison, as the overarching context and foundational elements (e.g., policies, processes, guidance) remain consistent, while delivery methods, success indicators, and employee demographics vary across units.

Furthermore, the research aims to investigate the factors influencing employee sensemaking and identify considerations for organizations in their role as sensegivers. This endeavor aspires to contribute to theory and management practices in two principal ways. Firstly, given the widespread adoption of remote work by organizations in response to COVID-19 since March 2020, coupled with efforts to integrate remote work into long-term strategic frameworks,

insights into employee sensemaking regarding remote work can inform and support organizations in shaping their future remote-working strategies. Secondly, the study will delve into the intricacies of employee sensemaking, taking into account factors such as identity, cognitive processes, emotional responses, bodily experiences, roles, and structural dynamics within business units. These insights will illuminate potential variations in employee sensemaking across these dimensions and offer guidance to organizations regarding pertinent considerations as they undertake the role of sensegivers.

Theoretical Development

Sensemaking

Sensemaking has been conceptualized in various ways (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), ranging from a cognitive process (Harris, 1994) to a socially constructed phenomenon (Gephart, 1993). Weick (2005) characterizes sensemaking as the endeavor to interpret and establish order amidst events, issues, and actions that are perceived as surprising or perplexing (Maitlis, 2005). Louis (1980) defines sensemaking as a recurring cycle of events unfolding over time, during which individuals formulate conscious or unconscious assumptions and predictions. Starbuck and Milliken (1988) delineate the multifaceted nature of the sensemaking process, encompassing activities such as “comprehending, understanding, explaining, attributing, extrapolating, and predicting”. While early research primarily focused on retrospective sensemaking (Weick, 1995), recent studies have increasingly examined prospective sensemaking (Zhang et al., 2010). Sensemaking, however, is neither novel nor unique; it operates swiftly, subtly, and continuously, engaging both conscious and unconscious cognitive and emotional mechanisms (Cunha et al.,

2015). Often, sensemaking occurs automatically and is taken for granted in our daily activities (Weick et al., 2005).

The process of sensemaking isn't about the truth or getting it right but rather about drafting and continued redrafting in an emerging situation until you reach plausibility, which stands in the face of criticism (Weick et al., 2005). Weber and Glynn (2006) add that the sensemaking process isn't just about gathering existing knowledge but also a process that creates new knowledge. Sensemaking is also used to gain back control and predictability in situations where one feels threatened (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Sensemaking seeks to create a level of understanding to effect the change; however, it is heavily influenced by the current context, time, and content. Zhang et al. (2010) define the goal of sensemaking as "a shared sense of meaning." Change processes, therefore, often require reframing, where the change actors focus on altering the meaning to change beliefs or behaviors through teaching and socializing (Huy, 2001). Insights from Wilson et al. (2022) demonstrate that sensemaking varies across groups within an organization. The researchers demonstrated this by focusing on creativity among teams, suggesting that in some instances, members face dilemmas associated with communication challenges that impact their effectiveness. Nevertheless, the authors suggest that sensemaking is experienced in the process of oscillation, which entails integrating the different perspectives and fostering coordination that minimizes the tensions that emerge from their differences. In a similar context, Stensaker et al. (2021) note that collective sensemaking is linked to the employee's responses to organizational change. Like Wilson et al. (2022), Stensaker et al. (2021) suggest that sensemaking within teams entails creating an integrated approach that involves the standardization of operational practices and effectiveness in the placement of personnel during the organizational change.

Sensegiving

Where sensemaking is a process that creates meanings, sensegiving is a process that intentionally tries to influence how others attribute meanings (Smerek, 2011). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) describe sensegiving as "a process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality". Within existing strategic management literature, sensegiving has been seen as a persuasion of strategic change initiatives (Smerek, 2011). It is often in play when managers or leaders attempt to influence the sensemaking process of members of the organization (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence 2007; Corley & Gioia 2004). However, Corvellec and Risberg (2007) claim that for sensegiving to take place, somebody needs to own "sense" to "give" it to someone else. They, therefore, prefer the term "mise-en-sens," which means "making sense for others rather than primarily for oneself or one's own organization" (Corvellec and Risber, 2007).

Employee sensemaking and organizational sensegiving

"Explaining how and why organizations change has been a central and enduring quest of scholars in management and many other disciplines" (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Karl Weick was an early and key contributor to this quest around the role of sensemaking in organizations. Many researchers have added to the literature on sensemaking and sensegiving in organizations. Sensemaking is a key organizational process, especially in a crisis (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), as it reduces ambiguity by creating order and new meanings for the members of an organization (Christianson, Farkas, Sutcliffe, & Weick, 2009). It facilitates other processes in the organization that create new comprehensions and routines (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014) such as strategic change (D. A. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; D. A. T. Gioia, Thomas, Clark, &

Chittipeddi, 1994; Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007), organizational learning (Christianson et al., 2009), and innovation and creativity (Jay, 2013). Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) stress the central role of communication in organizational sensemaking because “sensemaking is about organizing through communication.” During a crisis, individuals are eager to generate meaning and make sense of what is happening around them (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Employees turn to their organizations to help them make sense of what is transpiring, and this eagerness means employees have higher expectations for accurate, sufficient, and timely updates about what is happening in their organization (Heide & Simonsson, 2014).

Framing and reframing have been covered in some organizational change literature but not extensively (Chreim, 2006). Chreim (2006) explains that frames are templates that help us make sense of and understand events and are derived from an individual’s experience (Bartunek 1993 as cited in Chreim, 2006). Reframing is, therefore, a managerial activity that helps change the meaning or the interpretation of the experience of the employee. Hardy (2004), Palmer and Dunford (1996) (as cited in Chreim 2006) further explain that the wider discourse plays a significant role in an employee’s framing and the way that they interpret and make sense of an experience. Benford and Snow (as cited in Chreim, 2006) suggest that the “mobilizing potency of a frame is affected by experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity”. Experiential commensurability can be explained by the similarity of the frame and the experience of the employee, and narrative fidelity is described as the extent to which the frame resonates with cultural narrations.

As employees turn to organizations to make sense of what is taking place (Heide & Simonsson, 2014), the role of organizations as a sensegiver is critical in the narrative they tell, who delivers the narrative, and how that impacts both the organization and their employees.

Sonenshein (2010) developed a theory around how managers interweave narratives to implement strategic change. He states that strategic change involves altering employees' construction of meanings by using a discourse that sets a new direction for an organization. Although managers exercise control over formal systems, employees have agency whereby they can construct different types of meanings that can alter the meaning of a change and their response to it. According to Bartunek et al. (2006), the meanings associated with interpretations and experiences of individuals engaged in organizational interventions are often initiated by other people in the working environment. The researcher employed this contextualization in how nurses experience shared governance and sensemaking in a hospital. They suggest that sensemaking associated with organizational change is associated with the perceptions, emotions, and meanings ascribed to the organizational change. Insights from Christianson and Barton (2021) demonstrate that the collective approach toward sensemaking during the pandemic was influenced by the large amounts of information individuals had concerning the evolving COVID-19 situation. However, sensemaking was influenced by the fact that there is substantial diversity among people, and the pandemic had different impacts on different aspects of their lives. Consequently, there was substantial complexity in assessing how collective and personal factors influenced the organizational approach to sensemaking. Christianson and Barton (2021) suggest that there is a need to consider attentional capacity and fatigue when assessing sensemaking during the pandemic. Such considerations are important because the pandemic was novel, and the information that shaped sensemaking might have been fragmented or contradictory, which raised challenges in making appropriate interpretations.

Both Lüscher and Lewis (2008) and Huy (2002) draw attention to the importance of middle managers in organizational change and, therefore, the sensemaking process. Huy (2002)

states that middle managers are the intermediaries between leadership and the front line. Luscher and Lewis (2008) note that middle managers are not just 'conduits' of information but themselves need to make sense of change, even if tension or paradox exists. Middle managers also play a key role in framing and reframing, the usage of change language, and the choice of strategic narrative to help bring along the front-line employees and influence their experience and sensemaking. Employee sensemaking can be impacted if there is a misalignment between management and employees and can lead to misinterpretation, resistance, or even rejection from employees (Daymon, 2000). A study by Alexander et al. (2021) that explores organizational trauma and organizational posttraumatic growth (OPTG) highlights the disruption of organizational operations by traumatic events can have detrimental impacts on sensemaking and the potential of employees and the organization to adequately engage in the change process. Therefore, addressing the trauma associated with specific events at the organizational and individual levels is imperative for the successful implementation of change and recovery for sustained workforce productivity and improved organizational performance.

Remote working

Remote work can be described as flexible work arrangements where a set of two or more individuals who are organizationally or geographically dispersed are unable to physically work together on a day-to-day basis and rely on technology and communication platforms to accomplish their common goals (Ford, Piccolo, & Ford, 2017; Wang, Liu, Qian, & Parker, 2021). Remote and virtual teams have become a common phenomenon within organizations over the past two decades (Breuer, Hüffmeier, & Hertel, 2016) as a result of trying to solve two common problems, namely: 1) how to organize a set of individuals based on their expertise that crosses traditional organizational design clusters, and 2) how to address location-specific needs

without replicating the team in each location (Ford et al., 2017). Before COVID-19, some organizations offered remote or flexible work to a portion of their workforce part of the time; but a majority of workers had little to no remote work experience, with even fewer organizations having experience managing the majority of their workforce remotely (Wang et al., 2021). Remote work has been seen as a “luxury for the relatively affluent” (Desilver, 2020, as cited in Wang et al., 2021), with mostly high-status or well-paid individuals being in this position, and was also perceived as an opportunity for employees to slack off, take care of kids, or get stuff done around the house. This stigma has been reframed by the current pandemic, proving that remote work and working from home (WFH) can be economically effective and productive and offer work-life balance to an organization's set of employees if managed well (Kaushik, 2020). Traditional definitions of remote or virtual teams focused on the differences between face-to-face and virtual, while current literature focuses on teams along that continuum with a combination of both aspects (Fiol & O’Connor, 2005, as cited in Ford et al., 2017). However, most literature does not focus on the transition from face-to-face to remote and virtual work or on large scales across the organization.

There has been a big shift by organizations catering to more remote and flexible work conditions over the past decade, with the “remote/virtual team” becoming the norm (Ford et al., 2017). Already in 2019, a quarter of the U.S. workforce was working from home at least part of the time (WEF, 2020). Among ‘knowledge workers’, at least half were already working from home at least part of the time. Some of this has been driven by new-generation talent requirements and cost-reduction measures, but the recent impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have forced most if not all, organizations to move in that direction faster than planned. As of March 2020, most organizations have found themselves having to adapt overnight to cater to

remote and flexible teams. While organizations are currently dealing with the immediate impacts of COVID-19, the longer-term repercussions are yet to kick in. WEF has indicated that the longer-term impacts could be worse than the 2008 economic recession (WEF, 2020). As a result of this and growing pressure on organizations to offer higher levels of safety and precaution at work, organizations will have to continue their remote-based working conditions for the long term (WEF, 2020). Some tech giants have already publicly communicated this, such as Twitter, Google, and Facebook.

There are many benefits of remote and virtual teams due to their geographic and organizational dispersion, such as flexibility to draw on knowledge, diversity of language, culture, and perspective, a variety of cross-functional skills, and better coverage of time zones. This enables organizations to meet the demands of today's hypercompetitive global environment (Greenberg, Greenberg, & Antonucci, 2007). To support virtual work and unleash its potential, organizations are increasingly adopting new and innovative technologies for communication and collaboration to enhance performance within these teams (Greenberg et al., 2007). However, remote and virtual teams add other associated challenges, in addition to the ones experienced by face-to-face teams, such as increased complexity, reduced inclusion, language barriers, culture, and working styles (Ford et al., 2017), as a result of different location, time zones, cultural norms, and multiple reporting lines (Nydegger & Nydegger, 2010). Despite there being extensive literature available on how to manage in-person teams, there is far less literature, best practices, and understanding of managing remote or virtual teams effectively (Ford et al., 2017), especially at scale.

Employee Sensemaking and the Change to Remote Work

Crisis sensemaking is not that different from sensemaking in ‘normal’ situations (Seto, Johnstone & Campbell-Meier, 2018). The process is similar, but the intensity is what differs (Weick et al., 2005). A crisis provides “powerful sensemaking triggers”, which calls for a more intensive search for understanding, explanation, and action (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). The context of the pandemic offers a unique opportunity to study sensemaking due to its scale, complexity, and rapidly changing nature and explore theories that remain unexamined (Christianson & Barton, 2021). According to Nesse and Stensaker (2022), individuals within an organization can face substantial challenges when faced with a crisis, such as a terrorist attack that poses a threat to survival and can lead to mass casualties. By equating the terrorist attack phenomenon to the COVID-19 pandemic that also causes organizational crises with a substantial threat to survival and human life, Nesse and Stensaker’s (2022) study affirms the need for effective crisis management, especially for multinationals with different subsidiaries through a strategic approach that involves a three-phase model of acceptance, psychological flexibility, and commitment. Such consideration can be adequately assessed in the current study to establish the strategic initiatives in crisis management across the case studies that contributed to enhanced sensemaking and sensegiving. Furthermore, the current pandemic has transcended the cognitive sensemaking capacity of individuals and has leaned into emotional and bodily aspects of sensemaking, an area that hasn’t been explored enough through research, with many theoretical questions still unanswered (Cunha et al., 2015). In addition, COVID-19 has raised awareness of deeply entrenched and unequal social structures that exist within our community, workplaces, and family institutions (Jasrotia & Meena, 2021).

Sensemaking and Identity

The role of identity in sensemaking is critical: who we think we are as organizational actors influences how we interpret and make sense of situations, which affects what external individuals think we are and, ultimately, how they interact, communicate, or treat us (Weick et al., 2005). As a result, the impact of remote work has been disproportionate on certain groups of individuals (Doepke & Olmstead-Rumsey, 2021). These social inequalities often show up in the form of identities such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity (Jasrotia & Meena, 2021), and it was only after the economic downturn took effect, even in the wealthiest of countries, that these disparate effects and deeply entrenched social structures on certain groups got attention (Carlsten et al., 2021; Jasrotia & Meena, 2021).

When sensemaking is belief-driven, beliefs are “embedded in frames such as ideologies, paradigms, that influence what people notice and how events unfold” (Weick, 1995). Given the nature of the pandemic, the difference in impact on different groups, the transitions in the workplace, and cultural and religious beliefs, individuals' beliefs have played a large role in how they make sense of what is happening around them. In such extreme and volatile circumstances, individuals tend to curb cognitive sensemaking and lean more into bodily or emotional sensemaking, where low-order cognitions, gut feelings, and emotional information become preferential sources of sensemaking (Cunha et al., 2015). This has influenced how employees have made sense of COVID-19, as the impact has been both personal and professional. Organizations are learning to manage and deal with this change from a practical perspective. However, employee well-being and emotions have been one of the greatest challenges (Bussin & Swart-Opperman, 2021). As organizations play the role of sensegiver, how they communicate with and support their employees to make sense of this change will have a direct impact on

employee experience, commitment, and well-being (Mihalache & Mihalache, 2021; Zito et al., 2021). Organizations will need to consider that employees interpret situations differently due to their differences (e.g., identify), and therefore, it's important for them to consider the interplay between their support, strategies, and the different interpretations (Mihalache & Mihalache, 2021). Organizations will need to give varying attention to the information coming from different sources (Cunha et al., 2015), as what could be plausible for one group might be implausible for another (Weick et al., 2005). Ultimately, an organization's sustainability will depend on how well it can manage these changes, the associated impacts, and how empathic and compassionate they are to their employees (Bussin & Swart-Opperman, 2021).

Thesis overview

This thesis comprises three distinct yet interconnected papers investigating the phenomenon of employee sensemaking during the transition to remote work prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Two case studies form the foundation of a comparative analysis, while an integrative paper synthesizes diverse aspects of the research question. The research is situated within the organizational context of Anglo American.

Anglo American, a globally diversified mining business headquartered in the UK, operates key facilities across the UK, Southern Africa, Latin America, Canada, Asia, and Australia. The company engages in the production of various minerals and resources including diamonds (through its subsidiary De Beers), copper, platinum group metals, premium quality iron ore, metallurgical coal, nickel, and crop nutrients. With a workforce exceeding 90,000 employees dispersed across multiple regions worldwide, Anglo American's Group Head Office is situated in the UK, with its largest employee contingent based in South Africa. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Anglo American swiftly transitioned the majority of its workforce to

remote-based operations while maintaining essential personnel at operational sites to ensure business continuity. To facilitate this transition, the company implemented comprehensive measures and provisions for its employees, including: a best practice of working from at home guide, including full deployment and guidance of Microsoft Teams; a £400 stipend for UK employees to purchase ergonomic equipment to ensure safe working conditions; provision for all other employees to pick up ergonomic equipment from their offices; the We Care program which was launched for all employees and host communities and included aspects such as safe health practices, mental health support, living with dignity and community response plans; and additional temporary policies, rules and norms to help guide and manage this new way of working. The shift to remote-based operations was a reactive response to the pandemic's impact. Since March 2020, Anglo American has sustained remote work practices while offering in-person work as an alternative option. The company has communicated its intention to incorporate remote work as a permanent aspect of its long-term operational model, with plans for a hybrid work model to be established once the COVID-19 threat diminishes.

Anglo American comprises six main operational business units, namely: Kumba Iron Ore (South Africa), Iron Ore (Brazil), Metallurgical Coal (Australia), Base metals (copper, nickel, niobium, and phosphates) (Chile, UK, Peru), Platinum (South Africa and Zimbabwe), and Diamonds (Botswana, South Africa, Canada), through De Beers. In addition to the operational business unit, Anglo American has six corporate business units at the group level, namely: Corporate Relations and Sustainable Impact, Technical, Finance, People and HR, Strategy and Business Development, and Marketing.

Research Design

I have employed an inductive and qualitative approach within the case study framework. A qualitative methodology supports the construction or development of theories and the generation of propositions or hypotheses (Sofaer, 1999), facilitating a holistic understanding of the issues by contextualizing them (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2014). Qualitative research processes are more holistic and "emergent," with the specific focus, design, measurement instruments, and interpretations evolving throughout the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). An inductive approach is deemed appropriate for this research as the aim is to discern data patterns (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) and derive new insights rather than test existing theories (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The qualitative case study research approach is particularly well-suited for addressing "how" questions, allowing for a detailed exploration of the phenomena under investigation.

Research Question: "How employee sensemaking compares across business units within a large organization, and considerations for the organization in their role as a sensegiver"

Corporate Case Study

The first case study investigated a Corporate Business Unit within Anglo American, where corporate employees are dispersed globally, with a significant concentration at the company's dual headquarters in the UK and South Africa. Traditionally, these employees, largely office-based, traveled as needed to various operational sites. Some corporate offices had begun to introduce flexible and remote work options in the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic.

This case study aimed to examine how these employees navigated and adapted to the complete transition to remote work prompted by the pandemic. Specifically, it delved into the

organization's communication strategies, the support provided to employees, perceptions of this support and communication, sensemaking processes among employees, additional support requirements from the organization, and preferences for future work models. Additionally, an analysis was conducted across various demographic factors such as age, race, ethnicity, geography, family structure, role level, title, and tasks to explore how individual identity influences sensemaking.

While the transition to remote work posed challenges, corporate employees generally found it more manageable compared to operational staff due to the nature of their roles. Corporate employees typically possess high levels of skill, technological proficiency, and are classified as "professional" or "knowledge" workers. Much of their work is conducted via computers or laptops, and virtual connectivity with colleagues is customary. Moreover, corporate roles often involve staying abreast of global trends and interpreting the macro environment, potentially influencing the sensemaking process.

Corporate Case Study Sub Research Questions

- a) How have Anglo American CR&SI employees experienced and made sense of migrating to remote-working as a result of COVID-19?*
- b) How did Anglo American manage their role as sensegivers within the CR&SI business unit?*
- c) How does the organization's role as a sensegiver influence employees' sensemaking?*

Operations Case Study

The second case study focused on an Operational Business Unit within Anglo American, characterized by its frontline orientation, with the majority of offices and employees situated at mining operations. Each operational business is typically restricted to a specific geography based

on the resource in that Geography e.g. Anglo American Platinum is largely present in South Africa and Zimbabwe, due to the presence of Platinum in these two countries; whereas Anglo American Copper is based in Chile, due to the Copper mines being located in Chile. These operations are typically located in rural or peri-urban mining communities, within their respective geographies, marked by heightened political sensitivity, lower socio-economic status, and marginalization. Consequently, the experiences and responsibilities of operational employees differ significantly from those of their corporate counterparts. The impact of transitioning to remote work may have been distinctly felt by operational employees for several reasons.

Operational staff are often recruited for their technical expertise, frequently sourced from local communities to promote local employment, and are primarily based at mine sites or plants, typically working in shifts. The skill sets across operational business units vary significantly from those in corporate units, with a notable presence of lower-skilled or unskilled labor. This demographic variance shapes the composition of the employee base at operational sites. Moreover, operational roles typically entail frontline responsibilities with a focus on physical tasks, contrasting sharply with the virtual or laptop-based work prevalent among corporate employees.

While the majority of corporate employees were shielded from workplace exposure or risk of COVID-19, operational staff often faced such risks to ensure uninterrupted operations. Furthermore, operational employees may have encountered additional risks while managing and supporting mining communities through the pandemic. Their focus tends to be more locally oriented, with less emphasis on the broader macro environment compared to corporate staff.

Consequently, they rely heavily on organizational updates to contextualize and make sense of unfolding events in their immediate surroundings.

This research delved into these nuanced differences and examined their implications for employee sensemaking. By unpacking these disparities, the study sought to elucidate how operational employees uniquely navigated the challenges of transitioning to remote work and how their localized focus influenced their perception and adaptation to the evolving work landscape.

Operations Case Study Sub Research Questions

- a) How have Anglo American operational employees experienced and made sense of migrating to remote working as a result of COVID-19?*
- b) How did Anglo American manage their role as sensegivers within the Operations business unit?*
- c) How does the organization's role as a sensegiver influence employees' sensemaking?*

The literature underscores the pivotal role of identity in the sensemaking process (Weick et al., 2005), with the ongoing pandemic accentuating heightened emotional and bodily dimensions of sensemaking (Cunha et al., 2015). Both case studies interrogated a common set of inquiries, aiming to discern disparities between corporate and operational employees in terms of sensemaking influenced by identity, role, role functionality, and tasks. Additionally, the study explored parallels and distinctions in the sensegiving process across these two business units. I am unaware of how the organization had adjusted its communication, engagement, and policies for corporate employees vs. operational ones and whether these were just adjusted for language and role level or if it factored in the potential impact of remote work. I have assessed how this

has aided in the sensemaking process and what considerations an organization should be aware of when managing sensegiving.

A comparative case study is the most suitable for exploring this research. “The case study method “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2013). A comparison between two business units within the same organization will allow the exploration of a phenomenon with similar/the same external influences and governance, e.g., sector, organization, approach, policies, and market factors. I believe this will allow me to explore the areas of sensemaking and focus on the aspects that differ between the business units and how they contribute to the sensemaking process. “Comparative case studies involve the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences, and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal in a way that produces knowledge that is easier to generalize about causal questions” (Delwyn, 2014). It must be noted, that while a comparative study was conducted, there is a difference in geographical presence between the two business units. While corporate business units are global and have employees based in various regions and offices, operational business units are central to single geographic locations. I don’t believe this will impact the results and this has been factored in when conducting the study.

Data collection and sample

Data collection for this thesis primarily relied on interviews, a method chosen for its ability to provide the researcher with deeper insights into the choices, preferences, and decisions of the participants (Gordon, 2011). Interview participants were selected randomly, with the support from HR in each of the business units. HR provided the organizational structure, without

any names or demographic info. I had requested HR to assist in selecting employees, that covered a spectrum across demographic and role parameters, to ensure a good spread across genders, tenure, age, race, role hierarchy, and family status. Interviews also assist the researcher in interpreting the significance of the words expressed during the interview process (Saunders, Philip, & Thornhill, 2009). The research adopted a case study approach and gathered data through a series of semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions are utilized, enabling the interviewees to offer information in a flexible manner while allowing the researcher to pursue follow-up details (Leedy & Omrod, 2010).

For the Corporate Case Study, the initial round of semi-structured interviews occurred between August and September 2020, involving 16 participants from the Anglo American Corporate Relations team. These interviews aimed to elucidate employees' experiences following the transition to remote work in response to the pandemic. Subsequently, a second series of semi-structured interviews was conducted in Q2 2022 to delve into the dynamics of sensemaking.

In the Operations Case Study, a parallel set of semi-structured interviews was conducted among 8 participants representing the Anglo American Operational groups. Similar to the Corporate Case Study, the focus of these interviews centered on the effects of remote working within an operational business unit. Both case studies meticulously gathered demographic and situational data from each participant, intending to provide comparative insights into the sensemaking processes across the two distinct groups.

REB approval was obtained in July 2020 to cover qualitative case studies at Anglo American focused on the migration to remote work. This approval was in place until August 2022 for data collection purposes. Approval was also received from Anglo American to conduct these case studies internally for research and to fulfill the doctoral requirements.

The initial phase of data analysis involved immersing in the interview data to grasp emerging themes, as advocated by Leedy and Ormrod (2005). Following Strauss and Corbin's (1990) guidance, a coding system was employed to imbue structure and meaning into the raw data, facilitating the systematic exploration of relationships among emerging data categories. Initially, a set of codes was derived from the literature review and the proposed framework, with additional codes identified through ongoing analysis. Themes were then delineated based on the interrelations among these codes, as outlined by Leedy and Ormrod (2005). Furthermore, a comparative study was undertaken to juxtapose insights gleaned from both case studies. This comparison aimed to elucidate employees' sentiments regarding the transition, evaluate the comparative challenges and benefits, discern resultant changes, assess their capacity to fulfill work responsibilities, evaluate the support and communication channels provided, and ascertain their preferences for the future. Additionally, demographic insights were analyzed to augment the understanding derived from the data.

Integrative Paper

The primary objective of this study is to examine and compare employee sensemaking and organizational sensegiving within a large organization, specifically contrasting corporate and operational business units. Through an extensive literature review, this research investigates various factors shaping employee sensemaking, delineating their differential impacts on individuals. Additionally, it analyzes the organizational responsibilities and considerations inherent in the role of sensegiver. By delving into sensemaking frameworks and the diverse influences on employee sensemaking across various business units and teams within both the organization and sector, this integrative paper seeks to offer comprehensive insights into the subject matter.

The case studies conducted aim to enrich our comprehension of employee sensemaking dynamics within an organization, particularly within two distinct business and operational units. The integrative paper will primarily concentrate on comparing the employee sensemaking processes across these two units, elucidating the implications for the organization's role as a sensegiver. By synthesizing insights gleaned from the case studies, the integrative paper will underscore considerations pertinent to organizations functioning as sensegivers. The findings from the case studies will be seamlessly integrated into the integrative paper, providing either supportive data or presenting challenging considerations. Central to the integrative paper is the identification of organizational considerations in facilitating and guiding employees through the sensemaking process, recognizing the inherent variability in how individuals interpret and respond to crises and situations.

Corporate Case Study

The initial case study centered on Anglo-American corporate employees operating within diverse global corporate offices. This examination of sensemaking and sense-giving among corporate personnel is pivotal given their varied professional backgrounds and expertise, which significantly shape their interpretations of various contexts. Moreover, individuals within corporate spheres often possess advanced skill sets, demonstrate tech-savvy inclinations, and exhibit behavioral congruence with organizational cultures (Combes, 2021). Hence, the profound and swift transformations induced by the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the critical importance of sensemaking and sense-giving processes, serving as linchpins in their adaptability and resilience amidst upheaval. From this perspective, investigating the Anglo-American corporate business unit entailed focus on the following specific sub research questions:

- a) How have Anglo American CR&SI employees experienced and made sense of migrating to remote-working as a result of COVID-19?
- b) How did Anglo American manage their role as sensegivers within the CR&SI business unit?
- c) How does the organization's role as a sensegiver influence employees' sensemaking?

Findings

Demographics

The research encompassed a diverse cohort of participants from the Anglo-American corporate unit, exhibiting a broad spectrum of demographic characteristics and professional backgrounds. Gender representation was well-balanced, facilitating equitable engagement between male and female respondents. The age distribution spanned from 20 to over 51 years, encapsulating a blend of youthful vigor and seasoned expertise within the organization.

Participants' band levels ranged from 3 to 8, indicating hierarchical diversity and enabling the gathering of insights across different organizational strata. Geographically, the participants hailed from diverse office locations such as Carlton House (UK), JHB HO (South Africa), Moqegua HO (Peru), and Brazil HO, reflecting a global representation essential for comprehending the nuances of sensemaking and sense-giving experiences across varied cultural contexts. Tenure at Anglo-American varied considerably, with respondents boasting anywhere from 1 to 15 years of service. The total years of employment ranged from 3 to 43 years, underscoring the breadth of career trajectories among participants and its significance in shaping organizational dynamics. Furthermore, participants' family structures varied, encompassing individuals who are married with or without children, as well as those who are single, engaged, or living alone. This diversity in personal contexts provides a comprehensive lens through which to examine the influences of familial dynamics on remote work experiences. The diverse profiles of the participants facilitated a nuanced exploration of the challenges and advantages associated with the transition to remote work within the company, enriching the study with multifaceted perspectives. A summary of the respondents' demographic characteristics is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of Anglo-America Corporate Unit employees

Participant	Gender	Age range	Band level	Years at Anglo	Total years of employment	Family status
P1	Male	41-50	5	1	19	Married, no kids
P2	Male	31-40	6	5	11	Married, with kids (school going)

P3	Male	41-50	4	15	28	Single, stays alone
P4	Male	20-30	6	1	3	Single, shared apartment
P5	Female	31-40	5	8	15	Married, no kids
P6	Male	31-40	4	8	16	Single, stays alone
P7	Male	31-40	5	3	20	Married, with kid (no school yet)
P8	Male	41-50	4	9	20	Married, with kids (school going)
P 9	Female	20-30	5	1	8	Married, no kids
P10	Male	31-40	5	13	13	Married, no kids
P11	Female	41-50	4	13	23	Married, with kids (school going)
P12	Female	41-50	3	10	26	Married, with kids (school going)
P13	Female	31-40	6	2	9	Single, stays alone
P14	Male	20-30	5	4	7	Single, stays alone
P15	Female	51 and older	8	4	25	Single, stays alone
P16	Female	51 and older	6	3	43	Married, with kids (school going)

Thematic analysis

The researcher conducted initial interviews with 16 respondents followed by 12 follow-up interviews, yielding a substantial corpus of qualitative data. The audio recordings were

transcribed and organized utilizing NVivo qualitative analysis software. A thematic analysis approach was employed to discern trends and patterns within the data, specifically focusing on two predefined themes: sensemaking and sensegiving, aligned with the research inquiries. Through thematic analysis, interconnected sub-themes surfaced, elucidating the fundamental conceptualizations derived from the data, encapsulating the experiences of both employees and the organization throughout the phases of the transition to remote work. The ensuing sections provide a comprehensive and evaluative discourse on the principal themes and subthemes extracted from the data, harmonizing with the research questions outlined for the case study and literature review.

Sensemaking

Work cadence before COVID

The theme of work cadence before COVID-19 demonstrates a diverse range of responses from the research participants that reflect on the various intricacies in their work schedules and behaviors, including the implications previous experiences had on the transition to remote working. From the responses, the respondents had adhered to standard schedules, working fixed hours within the office space. The traditional approach to work is attributed to the prevailing organizational culture and managerial expectations that underscore the rigidity of their work cadence. The findings on work cadence highlight a shift from a primarily office-based work culture to a more flexible remote working approach during COVID-19. Although the office-based model was dominant at Anglo American, work cadence was influenced by various factors, including individual circumstances and workplace dynamics. For instance, despite the prevalence of office-centric work models before the pandemic, employees often traveled to different locations for various purposes. Furthermore, the global workforce dynamics of the company are

exemplified by headquarters and offices in different locations coupled with cross-functional communication and collaborations that involve different individuals across different locations.

“If I want to leave earlier, I wouldn't feel comfortable because of our culture.”

“I had quite a quite a tricky boss, who is the kind of person who doesn't agree with people working from home. He wants people in the office - You know, at your desk right on time.”

“I would go in because that was the expectation, and it was the expectation I had too and everything that was work-related happened in the office.”

Practical considerations and personal preferences also influenced the respondents' work cadence flexibility. For instance, focus on a flexible approach to work is demonstrated by respondents who sought to address challenges with long commutes daily commutes of about 2-3 hours. In South Africa, a flexible approach that included remote working was adopted due to safety concerns emerging in Johannesburg CBD. Preference for the work environment took precedence in the participants' work cadence decisions due to rotation systems, routine travel, office space, and resource shortages. For instance, a respondent from the UK highlighted that a shortage of office desks encouraged the adoption of a rotation system, which reflects the flexibility and adaptiveness that existed in the company before COVID-19. Furthermore, the respondents hint that limited ergonomic support across different offices influenced the access to resources and the practices in how individuals engaged at the workplace were tailored to meet the workforce needs emerging in particular locations.

“So, for the last three years, I have extensively traveled and spent most of my time outside of the UK. And when I was in the country, I usually would work from home mainly two days a week.”

Pre-COVID work cadence is also reflected in the organizational culture characterized by effective communication, transparency, collaboration, and accountability in the traditional working environment. Nevertheless, the standardized framework presents nuances among workers, considering some respondents demonstrated a higher preference for working from the office due to enhanced team interactions. In contrast, others have adopted remote working strategies. The preference for an office-centric approach echoes the shared values within the organization for effective collaboration and teamwork. The phenomenon is also demonstrated in sentiments that the traditional work environment had limited flexibility in work arrangements. However, some offices had implemented remote work options in the years leading up to the pandemic. Suggestively, before COVID-19, remote work in the company was not widespread or standard practice across all corporate units. However, the respondents affirm that the company had adopted new technologies, which were effectively used by the highly skilled and tech-savvy workforce. Therefore, the reliance on modern technologies before the pandemic shows that some workers were familiar with using ICT to meet their occupational obligations in the relatively tech-enabled office and remote work environments.

Transition to remote work

The transition to remote work theme emerged from a complex account that echoes a spectrum of emotions and experiences among the workers in the multifaceted transition to remote work. In this context, a dynamic interplay between professional and personal factors highlights the diverse approaches in which individuals and organizations grappled with the changes influenced by the pandemic. Insights from the respondents show that for some workers, the transition to remote work was a long-desired approach to increased flexibility at the workplace that could be instrumental, especially in reducing the strain associated with frequent

travels, administrative challenges during the initial stages of the pandemic, and a means to exploit opportunities for professional growth and achievement of personal objectives such as work and family life balance.

“So, I'm a single female who lives on my own. So it's very difficult to push back on the disrespect of my time because I don't have or I can't say that I need to go feed the kids or school someone or I need to look after dependents. And so, my time is not my own. You know, people want to set up meetings at 7 am or, you know, have a call quickly at 7 pm, you know, you're not putting kids to bed or you're not doing anything. So, I have struggled with being quite strict around, you know, the credibility of my personal time is just as well. And as you know, who you know what I do with my personal time is just as important.”

“I actually think that this has accelerated and broken a lot of myths and a lot of stigma around flexi working and remote working, but I think that it is also exposed us in our culture of how we treat individuals unequally or, and, you know, in terms of, I need to have a kid to justify going home at five o'clock or switch off, you know that kind of thing.”

The responses show that the transition to remote work was enhanced by the flexibility that existed in the company and the preparations that had been put in place with the adoption of modern technologies. These insights suggest that before the pandemic, the company and the workforce had a trajectory to enhance flexibility driven by new technologies and alternative work models. In this context, the tech-savvy workforce indicates technological readiness, contributing to a smoother transition to remote work.

The participants reported that the transition brought relief as it reduced the physical strain associated with excessive travel and managing the complex office-centric work environment. However, the respondents show that the emotional and mental toll was substantial during the transition due to the impact the change in the work models and other detrimental aspects of the pandemic had on individuals. For instance, respondents raised concerns over mental health, quality of life, job security, and social isolation, among others. With time, individuals discovered the potential for success in remote working strategies, including enhancing traditional work environment concepts such as team cohesion and productivity. Despite the challenges faced at the initial stages of the transition, the workforce leverages technology, their experiences in the office-centric work model, global shift to remote work, company and personal resources, and relationships with different stakeholders, including family and friends.

“I’ve had a very efficient year working remotely, apart from feeling the lack of networking with my colleagues”

“For me personally I can work a lot more efficiently and effectively without interruptions. I have less stress now.”

The rapid shift influenced by the pandemic and the need to sustain productivity in the company encouraged the acquisition of tech-savvy skills that integrated professional and personal needs. For instance, individuals were required to enhance their communication strategies using tools such as MS Teams for proactive engagement using different channels with different stakeholders. In this context, the company was instrumental in fostering a two-way communication process that created a sense of inclusion and engagement among the workers adopting remote working. The transition was also fueled by the increased support and agility

from HR, which involved adopting a crisis-response approach that reflects the company's and its workforce's adaptability.

The respondents demonstrate that personal and professional identities also shaped the transition to remote working. For instance, the transition appealed to an introverted employee who felt that the new approach aligned with the need for safety during the pandemic, which enhanced the sense of purpose and commitment to the company. The positive outlook on the transition was also linked to personal achievements such as becoming a parent during the pandemic. Resilience and adaptability emerged in different personal narratives among the respondents as they faced different challenges and new responsibilities in the work and home contexts. Support from colleagues and senior management helped individuals develop a positive attitude by offsetting professional challenges with benefits associated with remote working, such as spending more time with the family. Furthermore, the company had established support mechanisms to aid in the transition and remote working initiatives such as the "We Care" program, home safety care packs, and ergonomic support for home offices. The company also recognized the need to focus on mental health and a holistic approach to meeting the remote workers' needs during the transition. These efforts demonstrate the company's commitment to employee well-being and a genuine alignment of the company's role with the organizational values of care and respect during the transition.

Communication and information sources

The theme of communication and access to information sources from various perceptions and practices during the transition and subsequent remote working strategies. There was a consensus among the respondents that effective communication between the company and the workforce was integral to their sensemaking capabilities during and after the transition. With the

organization playing the role of sense giver, employees achieved sensemaking through effective communication and information under a clear rationale and aligned the messages with their needs and values. The participants perceived improved communication during the transition and subsequent adoption of remote work. In this context, the improvements in communication were beyond the quantity of information, considering the increased focus on diverse channels, involvement of different stakeholders, and two-way communication. The diversity in communication methods included using different formats such as text, audio, and video depending on the objectives, people involved, and technologies used.

The increased connectivity across the organization led to the establishment of informal communication structures that reduced the bureaucracy and hierarchical barriers that often limited interactions among different people. As a result, the participants perceived a sense of openness and transparency in the communication processes. The two-way communication features enhanced the company's ability to gather employee feedback and respond to their concerns, needs, and interests.

“It's just easier to get hold of people. And so, it just means that things are done a lot quicker and a lot more efficiently than it was before because I was chasing people and I wasn't hearing back from them.”

Therefore, employees felt they were actively involved in decision-making processes, reducing the resistance to change and enhancing their ability to align professional and personal objectives.

Effective communication and access to information were imperative for individuals to make sense of the pandemic's implications on their roles in the organization. The respondents demonstrated that understanding the changes experienced was critical for engaging

in the transition and developing new practices amidst the uncertainties associated with the pandemic. The information offered by the organization influenced how individuals perceived their control over the transition. Positive attitudes associated with communication and access to information are also linked to the company's provision of resources and support. For instance, employees who received assistance setting home offices with resources that fostered a holistic approach to communication felt that the company was committed to enhancing their remote work experience. However, the factors driving effective communication varied among respondents considering the role played by organizational leaders and managers.

The leaders and managers were considered critical sources of information and involved with different stakeholders. Accounts from one respondent show that directly engaging with the managers was essential for their participation in decision-making while facing changes that affected their professional and personal lives. The leaders and managers were perceived to create a conducive environment where individuals could be heard by actively listening, creating connections between teams and business units, and improving accountability and trust within the organization. Additionally, the leaders and managers offered clarity and crucial information by being direct and straightforward, which enhanced sensemaking and led to a positive experience for the employees. The tone and language used in communication exhibit a blend of safety, care, and support. The respondents identified different leaders within the organization as unique in their approaches, considering their contribution to the evolution of communication from a relatively less supportive tone to a more understanding manner over time.

“Initially we were more focused on helping out the communities right before it came to us. And then it took a good six weeks to start saying, Listen, while we are responding to our communities, including our actions, what about our employees?”

Additionally, the engagement between the stakeholders was aligned with organizational values such as care and respect that reinforced and embodied transparency, honesty, safety, and health during and after the transition. Despite the positive trends in communication and access to information, changes characterized by the increased reliance on online platforms raised negative attitudes among some individuals. For instance, increased reliance on emailing and difficulty in having quick informal engagements without the formalities of scheduling calls or video conferences were perceived to impede productivity.

“I think it's become more informal. And I think that's a good thing... more empathetic. more understanding, more human.”

“...meeting walls and office doors have melted away”

The remote working environment

The remote working environment is a theme that offers insights into the dynamics of home workspaces, functionality, and the challenges faced by employees in adapting to a prolonged remote work scenario. Many respondents stated that they had a dedicated workspace at home, attributed to the availability of a home office, a guest room, or an unused room. However, a noteworthy subset shared their workspace with multiple family members, highlighting the dual challenges of personal and professional boundaries in shared remote working environments. Suggestively, various factors influenced the functionality of the home workspace, including ergonomic effectiveness and work and family life balance.

“So, my husband has the desk which is in our living room. I've got the dining room which is in the kitchen. And the kids were doing home schooling and not like 'homeschooling' homeschooling, but remote learning through their school at home and they had desks in their bedrooms”

“I’m by myself in a two-bedroom apartment. I have a desk in one of the rooms, in my guest bedroom.... and I find that my desk in the spare bedroom is quite small and therefore the space doesn't feel conducive for working well.”

The findings show that having a dedicated workspace did not imply increased productivity. For instance, some individuals considered their home workspace non-functional due to a lack of proper equipment, such as an ergonomic chair, desk, or appropriate lighting. Furthermore, many respondents expressed that the unexpected duration of remote work caught them unprepared, leading to makeshift setups that were not adequate for enhanced productivity. The company tried to address such challenges, as exemplified by the provision of ergonomic equipment. However, not all employees utilized the stipend offered by the company to retrieve the necessary equipment from the office. Others had to use their funds to purchase the equipment and technologies necessary. These findings demonstrate a gap in support or awareness of the resources offered by the company to enhance the employees' remote work experience. For instance, the demographic attributes among the participants show that respondents from the Carlton House UK office had a higher home workplace functionality, highlighting the localized nature of specific support initiatives compared to those from other regions.

The HR department was agile and supportive of employees engaging in remote working. The HR role during and after the transition was critical considering the geographic dispersion of employees and the multifaceted challenges faced due to the pandemic and changing work models. The respondents show that the HR fostered policy adaptations responsive to the ongoing changes and promoted engagement in supportive and enabling remote working environments. Along with providing essential resources for the home offices, HR also bolstered the skills

necessary to adopt technologies such as MS Teams for seamless connectivity in virtual workspaces. Employees also had access to home safety care packs, demonstrating the company's commitment to their well-being. However, some respondents raised concerns over the potential risks the changes experienced had to the organizational culture. For instance, there were concerns about onboarding new employees in the remote work model due to difficulties maintaining cultural integration in the virtual workspace. From another perspective, the organizational culture was enhanced by introducing the hybrid approach to work that aligned with the cultural orientation that had emerged before the pandemic. Therefore, the sensemaking among the respondents reflects that the company maintained a positive and supportive approach towards remote working environments, which enhanced the workers' ability to understand and react to the changes experienced.

Challenges and benefits of remote work

Benefits

The respondents presented many benefits and challenges associated with the transition to remote work. According to the respondents, the urgency imposed by the pandemic and the online nature of remote work boosted their productivity. This was attributed to an enhanced capacity to collaborate and engage with colleagues by leveraging the efficiency of different communication channels with increased autonomy. The participants highlighted that working from home contributed to their productivity due to increased focus in the serene setting with fewer distractions and personalization of the workspaces.

“The office just brings lots of distractions and things that you need to be involved in and it creates a lot of stress in your life, which actually you don't need. Yeah. You know, when you're at home, it's easier to block it all out and just do your job.”

Although some individuals found better concentration at home, family responsibilities distracted others. The move to remote working brought forth newfound flexibility among the respondents. Such benefits were realized with the increased autonomy in structuring workdays and integrating personal preferences in their approach to work.

“Sometimes we have to lunch in the middle of my meeting, and she looks at me angry because she can't make any kind of noise”

“I think I've seen lots of members of our team, working from different locations that aren't necessarily at home. And seeing that as a positive, you know, people going to visit family and working from there for a period. And, you know, allowing that flexibility that I don't think people felt authorized to do in the past, if that makes sense...And so I think that's been a real positive about acceptance. The need to be flexible and allowing people to define how it works for them to work. For some people, that means still working normal office hours in a normal office setting, for other people, that means they want to be able to, you know, work 6 till 12 and then 4 until 10...And I think that's good. It's only to get the best out of people, treating people like adults and letting them define their best processes”

Furthermore, the respondents demonstrated that improved time management and reduced commute enhanced their work-life balance. In this context, sensemaking demonstrated that individuals had more time in the absence of daily commutes, which allowed them to focus on personal priorities such as social life and family while having more time to concentrate on their professional tasks.

“I have more time available, whether it's for doing something for work, for me or to see to my kids and engage with them or just to exercise by running. I think there are more

positives out of this. I think in my view, lets say that tomorrow COVID disappeared from the earth and everything is totally back to normal, I think I wont go back to that normality in terms of work. I will continue working from home probably at least two or three days a week, if not more.”

There was a consensus that improved communication in remote work increased collaboration due to easy inclusion in routine meetings. Collaboration was achieved within teams and across the business units, which resulted in increased team productivity and organizational performance. The improved connectivity led to enhanced discussions and decision-making, fostering agility in individuals, teams, and organizations engaged in business operations and changes experienced. Improved communication and collaboration enhanced sensemaking at the individual, team, and organizational levels during and after the transition to remote work. The respondents acknowledged that the transition to remote working was beneficial in accelerating the organizational initiatives to adopt alternative work models, which align their workplace with changes in the labor market and other industries.

“I think we had to adapt to the fact that we needed to trust each other in a new way, because we've never worked remotely before. And we've, we had to learn a new way to trust each other”

The experience influenced by the pandemic promoted the use of IT solutions in the company, leading to consistent use and streamlined processes that enhanced their skills and capacity to meet organizational goals. These insights align with sentiments that adopting remote work contributed to cultural improvements. Although some participants raised concerns over culture erosion, many indicated substantial improvements in the organizational culture as reflected in improvements and efficiencies in team engagement, use of ICT solutions,

communication, autonomy, and collaboration, among others. Furthermore, the transition created an opportunity to strengthen organizational values, and individuals felt a genuine sense of shared purpose and identity.

“It just shows, again, that the values was not pandemic or otherwise based. It's something that has been, you know, inculcated in us as employees of this business”.

Challenges

Several challenges were highlighted by the respondents in their shift to remote work. Most respondents suggested that the blurred boundaries between work and home responsibilities impaired sensemaking. Although remote working was not a novel experience for some workers, the rapid changes influenced by the pandemic and new work dynamics presented new challenges that individuals had to overcome to remain productive. Increased workload led to extended workdays, which had detrimental impacts on physical and mental well-being. Respondents faced difficulties sharing spaces for work and personal activities in the home setting. In contrast, others perceived a lack of discipline to switch from work responsibilities, compromising their work-life balance. Additionally, increased workload implied that individuals had to spend more time in meetings and have more extended workdays, which caused fatigue, stress, and limited social and family time. From this context, the urgency caused by the pandemic heightened the workloads with unsustainable expectations on the delivery and productivity of the employees.

“I still having too many meetings. I mean, there have been some days where I'm sitting in front of the screen from 8 am until 6 pm. And then said, Oh God, I haven't even walked or done anything. So yeah. So now I'm trying to manage that but it's still a lot of meetings.”

“..still cases of people who are working too hard (because) their managers are asking too much...Understanding that people in the company are probably working too hard

for too many hours. At first we thought it was going to be a couple of weeks and then a couple of months and now it just seems to be status quo”

Some workers faced challenges due to interruptions and distractions from home activities and family members, mostly at home during the pandemic. Ergonomic issues were also prevalent among many employees due to a lack of dedicated workplaces, ergonomic equipment in their home workplace, and appropriate lighting. Notably, not all employees had access or awareness of the ergonomic support offered by the company. The respondents also referenced digital strain, associated with prolonged use of digital technologies and the lack of movement when confined in their homes for work or as part of the COVID-19 management regulations.

Other challenges in the sensemaking context are linked to cultural vulnerability that emerged with the transition to remote settings. For instance, the respondents were concerned that onboarding new employees while working remotely might limit their grasp and internalization of organizational values, compromising the established culture. The respondents noted gaps between the espoused organizational values and the actions of some managers and employees engaged in remote work.

“Culture is something that only really gets established when people start to interact in person. have experiences shared experiences, and I think it's very hard to instill a culture remotely. Also, you know, the fact that people with relationships, you only get that social capital thing in person interaction. Yeah. So for me, having spent this amount of time in the organization, that's fine. But you know, somebody that's new, I do think it, it's much harder”

“I think it is easier to communicate. But I think we now spend more time ironically, just trying to communicate with each other. I think where this comes from is trying to

show everyone that we are indeed busy because you know, you don't have that visibility anymore.”

“They leave that discretion with your line managers. But then it's difficult because some line managers don't believe people working from home and then others do. So there needs to be some kind of fairness. Like, because what you do find is Anglo American. are not very good at looking at those line managers that run their offices more like a dictatorship as opposed to caring about what their employees”

Therefore, there were challenges in aligning leadership behaviors with the organizational values, as exemplified in unsustainable expectations on employee delivery with the increased workloads. Although employees appreciated the hybrid work model, there were challenges in maintaining a productive collaboration culture considering the impact of the digital drain, limited access to organizational resources for remote work, and other social and economic issues emerging in the transition to the home workplace during the pandemic.

“We do a lot of things to tick box, but we don't actually do what we say we're going to do...So, we're doing all of these things around bullying and harassment and anxiety management and stress courses. And, you know, ‘make sure to push back’, ‘manage your time’, ‘take a lunch break’, it's easy to say all these things. But if you're not enabling people with the right kind of balanced workload, and the right resourcing and support that enables that, we're never going to achieve that. Yeah. And I, you know, workload is one thing, but resourcing is a root cause that impacts workload and impacts the ability to practice those mental well-being tools.”

Sensemaking process

The theme of the sensemaking process offers an integration of the different experiences and perceptions that emerged in the dynamic and evolving journey as employees transitioned to remote working. The respondents demonstrated that various factors influenced sensemaking, including organizational communication, team dynamics, family support, and personal coping mechanisms. Understanding the implications these factors had on individuals, teams, and the organization shaped the corporate unit employees' adaptation, resilience, and collective effort in navigating the complexities of remote work during the pandemic. Initially, the respondents perceived remote work as a temporary measure to address the challenges caused by the pandemic.

“When we went to a 21-day lockdown, I just took my laptop and thought, well, it's going to be a few weeks, we'll be fine. So, I need to actually go back to the office and get my chair and get a screen. Because I think that that will help a lot”

However, with time, they realized the need to transition to remote work, leading to the reorganization of work dynamics, including the use of remote workplaces. Although there were some limitations in the transition process, understanding that remote work was the new reality brought a sense of calm among the employees. The effectiveness of communication and transparency during the transition enhanced productivity by aligning personal and professional objectives.

“I think the company has made a big effort in order to support us with a very good internal communication campaign in order to reinforce safety and health dimensions. They focused on mental health, right. And when we have had those discussions with

Anik and the broader team, I think there has been a genuine concern by the company in order to support the employees during these challenging times.”

Working remotely made employees feel valued, considering they were actively engaged while protected from the pandemic and its associated challenges. Adopting new technologies fostered increased communication and enhanced decision-making with the engagement of different stakeholders, which motivated individuals to continue participating in remote work.

“They are clearly listening to what people have to say, you know, and they are acting on that accordingly. So, you know, they're trying to do their best to sort of reassure people to look after people to make sure that they're comfortable to make sure that they're catered for. Um, yeah, I feel that they've handled it all really well actually.”

The respondents demonstrated that understanding the implications of remote work on work-life balance was instrumental in improving their productivity within the home workplace setting and using the time available for social and family activities. Such considerations helped address the challenges associated with the new approach to work and identify opportunities that could be pursued for the mutual benefit of themselves and the company. From this context, sensemaking influenced a reevaluation of work culture as remote working becomes a persistent aspect of the company's operations.

Sense giving

Organizational support

The organizational support theme encompasses the organizational factors and company-led initiatives influencing the respondents' perceptions and attitudes concerning the transition to remote work. Corporate support fostered a sense of giving by enhancing the employees' capacity to adapt and build resilience in the change process. The theme shows that the organization's role

in sense-giving shaped the respondents' perceptions, experiences, and responses to the changes experienced. In this context, organization support was viewed as a contributor to sensemaking because the company enabled individuals to attribute meanings to the changes experienced through sense-giving.

The findings show that sense-giving emerged in the company's role in facilitating effective communication and access to information. There was a consensus among the respondents that the company made efforts to bring them on board in using new ICT tools such as MS Teams and ensure they were well-informed about the transition. The respondents highlighted that communication and information shared had a clear rationale and aligned with the organizational values.

“Anglo is a big old company that is still got a lot of strange, hierarchical old fashion habits. Plus, it's got, you know, 510 different, different cultural overlapping, you know, the Anglo South Africa versus Anglo Brazil's versus Anglo London is not the same culture. So, I think it's something interesting. It's about making everyone need to be a bit more informal and feeling a bit more shared and pulling in the same direction by a shared experience. That certainly has affected the work culture in I think, in a positive way.”

These insights imply that sense-giving fostered clarity, transparency, and consistency in the communicative processes. Furthermore, the communication strategies fostered a two-way feedback mechanism that allowed individuals to discuss and participate in decision-making. At the same time, the company gathered feedback that could enhance operations.

“I think working from home has exposed those employees who are actually taking us for a ride and has also exposed the incredible workload that some of us on the other side of the continuum are sitting on.”

Therefore, sense-giving was a collaborative effort, considering the employees' opinions and interests were acknowledged, and there was intensive cross-functional collaboration. In this context, sense-giving was also enhanced by team engagement that fostered a sense of connection and support that helped individuals navigate the challenges associated with the remote work model and the pandemic.

“...more connected between functions, more joined up and more in tune with what's happening in various areas. And I think it's fundamentally changed how we work. In my mind, I think that there has been a new level of collaboration and connection”

The HR department's agile approach to responding to employee needs during the transition reflected sense-giving through organizational support. The findings demonstrate that the strategic approach taken by HR fostered sense-giving by enhancing the employees' adaptability to the changing situation. The company offered technological and ergonomic support that allowed individuals to set up remote workplaces. It was also committed to the employees' mental health, considering the stress and emotional strain associated with the transition and the pandemic. This demonstrated the company's value of care that goes beyond the professional roles.

“we have moved quicker; we've adapted to new technologies much faster. For example, I used to do music, record podcast, and that would be basically a major production, we would get a sound engineer, and we'd have to book the room, we'd

have to make sure everybody was really quiet. And now we've got this amazing software, which means I mean, at one stage, we had a guy on from Chile, a guy on from South Africa and a guy on from China. We interviewed everybody all at the same time. I made the podcast and it worked. And it was amazing. You know, so technical, technology advanced and stuff happened really fast. It's been great"

However, the findings also highlight some shortcomings in sense-giving, highlighted by the limitations associated with organizational support during the transition. Aligned with the limited access to organizational resources such as ergonomic support for all employees, the respondents suggest that the company could have been more effective by taking proactive measures at the initial stages of the transition. Sense-giving could have also been improved with increased personalization of the home safety care packs and support for home office ergonomics by seeking adequate information about the resources each individual could use to meet professional responsibilities. The respondents also expressed that organizational support could have enhanced sense-giving by strengthening values that promote collaboration, transparency, and accountability, considering that some individuals were not fully committed to their responsibilities and roles in teams.

"When I first started at AA. To me, I was like, God, this feels very gimmicky. But actually, it's totally authentic. And I think I felt them (the values). You know, I felt that people are true throughout."

Alternative work models

The theme of alternative work models highlights the diverse considerations that emerged from the experiences, perceptions, interests, and practices during and after the transition to remote working. In this context, sense-giving is underscored by the company's influence in

developing flexibility, adaptability, and resilience in adopting remote work and the subsequent hybrid work model. The organization is committed to aligning future working modes with employee preferences and perceptions. The majority of the participants expressed a preference for a hybrid working model that combines the office-centric and home-based approaches. Through its role as a sense-giver, the company recognized and accommodated these preferences, characterized by increased employee autonomy when choosing to work from the office or at home.

“I find it much easier to cope with, simply because we have some degree of freedom that we can enjoy”

Such achievements involved ensuring clarity in communication for employees to understand their responsibilities and objectives in their tasks and enhancing access to support systems such as training, technology, and equipment. However, there were mixed reactions, given that some employees preferred working from home after eliminating the stigma associated with such practices, fewer distractions, higher productivity levels, and flexibility that improved work-life balance.

“Leaders are now tackling issues like this, you know, the four pillars of the We Care program including mental health and gender-based violence. These were sort of, what you would bucket as, taboo issues that people didn't really talk about. And all of a sudden, you know, all of the GM's are like, Yeah, absolutely – we need to do something about it”

Another subgroup demonstrated interest in a hybrid system where they mainly worked from the company offices due to the perceived importance of in-person collaboration and social interactions. From this perspective, the facilitation by the company enabled individuals to realize

their strengths in adopting the hybrid work models, which enhanced satisfaction in how they approached their responsibilities at the workplace.

“When I think about that decision, I can't think in isolation of the team because I lead a team you know, so I would say, I definitely see that there's, there's an opportunity developed, there's no way any of us would go back to the old way of working. Definitely not. I do see us being able to have the flexibility and understanding of how we want to manage productivity.”

“I think we should not go back to the formal way and say Monday to Friday from eight to five everybody in the office. I think that will never work”

“I would probably still go into the office, but not every day. I would probably coordinate going into the office around maybe when my team are going in so that I could see them. And maybe when I have meetings that I thought would be useful to have them face to face. So, it would probably be, you know, one or two days a week.”

“I would try to schedule any office time around, being able to help with sending kids dropping kids picking up kids, etc. And so that as a prep as sort of first point, I would also, I would probably also say, I'd want to maximize my time at home and minimize the time at the office.”

“My preference would still be to go back to the office, at least on a part time basis, I think. I think it's really easy to get a bit lazy, like lacking motivation.”

The respondents demonstrated that openness to innovation can enhance sense-giving associated with adopting hybrid work models. The findings show that employees are interested in flexible and innovative working conditions, which requires the engagement of company leaders and managers in interpreting feedback and reacting to expectations emerging among the

workforce. Therefore, sense-giving is necessary for individuals to understand the organizational capabilities, such as the resources available to fulfil some hybrid work requirements.

Additionally, the respondents highlighted the importance of training and skill development as a contributor to sense giving. Such considerations were necessary for developing a desirable work ethic, time management, proficiency in ICT, and other skills that enhance hybrid working.

Discussion

The corporate case study findings show an intricate relationship between sensemaking and sense-giving influenced by various organizational and personal factors experienced during and after the transition to remote working. The insights gathered align sentiments. Weick (2005) expressed that sensemaking attempts to create meaning from unusual circumstances. In this context, the unusual circumstances were an outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic that triggered the closure of businesses and influenced the increased adoption of remote work and hybrid work models (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). The unprecedented changes experienced by the organization and the workforce raised novel challenges, especially for individuals with no remote work experience. Therefore, individuals needed to engage in sensemaking and the organization to facilitate a transition through sense-giving initiatives. The mixed reactions in how respondents perceived the transition to remote work affirm that sensemaking is not static. Instead, it entails drafting and redrafting to achieve success (Zhang et al., 2010). Although some individuals had previously engaged in remote work, the rapid changes influenced by the pandemic presented new challenges that made it necessary to engage in sensemaking and seek appropriate solutions. These findings align with accounts from Weber and Glynn (2006), who state that although existing knowledge is vital for sensemaking, it also entails a creative approach to understanding better. The findings established that sensemaking enabled individuals to develop coping

mechanisms and gain control of their situations, reflecting insights by Maitlis and Christianson (2014) that making sense of a situation enhances predictability and how individuals prepare for change. The enhanced communication and teamwork experienced by the workforce during the transition show a shared sense of meaning, which, according to Zhang et al. (2010) and Huy (2001), influences the development of new behaviors and beliefs. Suggestively, sensemaking can be a driver of organizational change.

The findings show that the organization achieved substantial success as a sensegiver despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and the diversity of employees' interests and preferences. Anglo American implemented effective communication strategies and support mechanisms that fostered sense-giving in the employees' sensemaking journey. Sensemaking and sense-giving emerged in the nexus of management strategies, an individual interpretation of the organizational change. According to Helpap and Bekmeier-Feuerhahn (2016), the alignment of management and employee conceptualizations of change is essential in managing resistance and misinterpretations that might compromise organizational success. Furthermore, Bussin and Swart-Opperman (2021) highlight that an organization's sustainability depends on effectively managing change, including acknowledging and interpreting diverse identities and contexts. From the findings, remote working was previously perceived as a luxury, and remote workers faced stigma in the organization. However, the COVID-19 pandemic raised the need to change such perceptions, including developing the relevant skills and connections to engage in remote learning. Subsequently, the company had to support the transition, and the employees had to develop adaptability and resilience. These efforts enhanced the realization and actualization of benefits associated with remote work, such as flexibility, collaboration, and inclusion in decision-making. Therefore, sensemaking in the Anglo-American corporate unit reflected the

conceptualization by Weick et al. (2005) that it influences how different stakeholders react during crises. Christianson and Barton (2021) expressed similar findings stating that the COVID-19 pandemic was a powerful trigger for sensemaking, considering that it not only forced organizations to change but also encouraged individuals to have an intensive search for understanding in the changing social and work dynamics.

The company's responsibilities to the workforce were a critical influence on the achievements made at the organizational and personal levels. According to Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), sense-giving is an intentional process influencing the attitudes and meanings that emerge among the stakeholders. A similar context emerges in the corporate unit at Anglo American, considering the commitment of company resources and the engagement of leaders and managers in sense-giving. Notably, through sense-giving, change was experienced across all facets of the organization. For instance, the company deliberately increased communication, which fostered cross-functional collaboration and set the basis for developing sensemaking among groups and individuals. The cross-functional collaboration exemplifies the interplay between sense-giving and sensemaking fostered by improved communication and support structures such as the We Care program. The personalization of organizational support also influenced how each individual made sense of their experiences under the home care packs and ergonomic support frameworks. Furthermore, individuals with limited access to organizational support, such as ergonomic equipment, had a negative attitude toward the transition process. From another perspective, the feedback mechanisms established by the company led to increased engagement of different employees in decision-making, which created a positive attitude and promoted commitment to the transition. These changes were anchored in the identities developed by the workforce in their professional and personal spheres. Doepke and Olmstead-Russey (2021) suggest that although

change might be disproportionate for some groups, an organization's strategic approach can be instrumental in addressing the inequalities that lead to negative attitudes in a diverse workforce. For Anglo-Americans, making sense of the diversity entailed adopting alternative work models that aligned with the multifaceted preferences among workers and the identities they developed from their work cadence during the transition and adoption of remote work. The hybrid work model that emerged was, therefore, effective in facilitating the transformation of the workforce and organization despite the challenges associated with the pandemic, workforce diversity, and limited resources.

Operations Case Study

The second case study delved into the experiences of Anglo-American operational employees working within South African mines. The implementation of remote working strategies in this context held significant importance, particularly given the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the South African mining sector. Various governmental and industry-led initiatives were enacted to curb the spread of the virus, reflecting the sector's vulnerability to disease transmission within confined spaces where interactions among workers are commonplace (Msosa, 2023). Moreover, as highlighted by Nunfam (2021), individuals employed in the mining industry are predisposed to heightened mental health challenges due to the physical and social adversities inherent in their work environment. These challenges often strain their well-being and interpersonal relationships with colleagues, communities, and family members. Consequently, the changes spurred by the pandemic prompted diverse reconceptualizations of how mine workers engage with organizational objectives. Anglo-American's operations in South Africa primarily encompass underdeveloped regions and involve a heterogeneous workforce comprising both locals and expatriates. This demographic diversity implies that experiences among workers within the operations may differ significantly from those in other countries or business units. Understanding these divergent experiences is crucial for discerning the nuanced impacts of remote work strategies within the mining sector context.

Data were gathered from eight respondents employed in the South African operational units, yielding a significant corpus of qualitative insights pertaining to their experiences with remote work and the ensuing sensemaking and sensegiving processes amidst organizational changes. NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, facilitated the systematic management and analysis of the collected data. The interview transcripts underwent meticulous coding and

thematic analysis, leveraging initial codes and themes derived from the insights garnered during the literature review process. This rigorous analytical approach enabled the extraction of meaningful patterns and themes from the qualitative data, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences within the organizational context. Other codes and themes were also developed from the respondents' accounts to build a comprehensive understanding addressing the following sub research questions:

- How have Anglo American operational employees experienced and made sense of migrating to remote working as a result of COVID-19?
- *How did Anglo American manage their role as sensegivers within the Operations business unit?*
- *How does the organization's role as a sensegiver influence employees' sensemaking?*

The following sections offer the definition and evidence of the themes and an inductive account that demonstrates their relevance to the study's objective and the research questions. The section is followed by a discussion, which offers a critical account of the findings of previous studies, concepts, and theories.

Findings

Demographics

The researcher conducted interviews with eight participants as part of the operational unit case study. The table below provides a concise overview of their demographic profiles. Analysis of the demographics indicates that all respondents met the sampling criteria and possessed significant experience within the company, enabling them to provide pertinent insights into the research area. The majority of respondents were aged forty or above and had familial responsibilities. Interestingly, factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, band level, and years of

experience did not appear to significantly influence how individuals responded to the transition to remote work. However, the hierarchical position within the company seemed to shape individuals' access to information and their ability to influence others during the transition. Participants occupying managerial roles, for instance, had the responsibility to communicate effectively and motivate their teams through the changes. Family structure emerged as a crucial factor influencing individuals' resilience, their ability to create dedicated workspaces, and their overall perceptions of remote work. The interplay between organizational position and family structure elicited varied reactions among participants, underscoring the complexity of their experiences, which will be further explored in the thematic analysis.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics

Participants	Gender	Age range	Ethnicity	Band level	Years at Anglo	Total years of employment	Family structure at home
Participant 1	Female	41-50	White	4	3.5	17	No kids
Participant 2	Male	41- 50	Black		14	23	Three kids
Participant 3	Female	51 or older	Indian	4	24	27.5	One kid
Participant 4	Female	41 - 50	Black African	5	21	21	Two kids
Participant 5	Female	41 - 50	Black African	4	4	24	Sibling
Participant 6	Female	31 - 40	Black African	5	3	14	Four kids
Participant 7	Female	41 - 50	Colored	6	20	20	Single parent, co-parenting two kids

Participant 8	Male	20 - 30	Black	D1 – D2	5.5	9.5	Two kids
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Thematic analysis

The findings derived from the operational unit case study were organized according to their relevance to the research inquiries, resulting in two principal concepts: sensemaking and sensegiving. Within each concept, pertinent themes were identified based on codes that resonated with insights provided by various respondents. By adopting this methodological approach, this section provides a detailed examination of how employees of Anglo-American within South African operational units interpreted sensemaking and sensegiving in the context of remote work during the pandemic. Furthermore, it sheds light on their experiences and preferences regarding contemporary working strategies and environments.

Six themes were identified in sensemaking: work cadence before COVID-19, transition to remote work, communication and information sources, the remote working environment, challenges and benefits of remote work, and the sensemaking process. The sensegiving identified themes: organizational support, alternative work models, and change and continuous improvement.

Sensemaking

Sensemaking alludes to the employees' ability to make sense of the environment using the information available to ensure reasonable decision-making. Drawing from the responses offered, sensemaking in the operational units emerged in the context of work cadence, which highlights the difference in experience between the previous working environment, the transition, and the new conditions after the change; the employee's experiences and feelings during the transition to remote work; the availability and use of communication and information sources; the experience and feelings associated with the remote working environment; the

perceived challenges and benefits associated with remote working. The integration of these factors fosters the sensemaking process, which demonstrates how individuals understand the changes and processes involved.

Work cadence before COVID

This theme explores the employees' experiences before COVID-19 concerning their participation at the workplace, focusing on travel frequency and office attendance frequency. Before the pandemic, the work cadence among the research participants was characterized by a broad spectrum of experiences reflected in a diverse tapestry of routines and expectations at the workplace. The employees adhered to the traditional culture of office-based working and physical presence in organizational and team activities. For instance, one of the participants stated that they were "*always in the office*," demonstrating their commitment to the physical workplace. The responses show that although there were nuances in the conventional office-centric working environment, employees recognized and valued the facilities offered by the company and the activities that fostered the achievement of organizational and personal objectives. Some roles involved extensive travel to specific sites and for long durations. Others were required to adequately balance office work and periodic site visits, demonstrating their capacity to handle different work requirements. From another perspective, some workers enjoyed flexibility in their work arrangements pre-pandemic with the opportunities to work from other locations, although they were frequently required to visit sites in South Africa. Therefore, a section of employees in the company have experience with dynamic work environments and arrangements.

“Requirement to go to work every day. That’s how you proved you did work, by physically being there. No virtual meetings. All meetings in person.”

The unwavering commitment of some to working from the office shows that the company fostered a conducive environment for their productivity. Maintaining productivity was important to ensure organizational performance was sustained during and after the transition. Although virtual meetings were scarce, working hours were rigid, and physical attendance was necessary in most cases, Anglo American could adopt remote operating strategies, and some employees were relatively ready for such changes. The diversity of the responses on work cadences underscores the notion that sensemaking is inherent in how individuals understood and accepted the changes that led to a transition to remote working and how the company executed a transformative change. The theme also shows the challenges and opportunities emerging from the work culture before the pandemic, which is critical in understanding how the transition was achieved and the potential for remote working to become part of the organizational culture.

Transition to remote work

The transition to remote work theme offers an overview of the employees' experiences with the increased adoption of information and communication technologies-based work solutions. The participants demonstrated a different experience during the transition, considering their unique circumstances and responses to the internal and external reactions to COVID-19. In some cases, the transition to remote working was precipitated by the lockdowns in South Africa in March 2020. Consequently, an unprecedented change mandated them to work remotely, limit travel to site locations, and seek essential work permits to access the workplace. The participants felt that there was an urgency to adopt remote working, driven by the need to limit the spread of the virus based on government regulations and actions taken by the company. Nevertheless, some transitioned to remote work in late 2018 and early 2019, although they had a significant

physical engagement in the offices. Such individuals indicate the existence of traditional and flexible working practices in the company.

For most participants, the transition to remote work was from March 2020, but their experiences varied, with some having a structured and relatively smooth transition while others struggled with different challenges. For instance, some workers expressed gratitude that the company was prepared and that they had access to the necessary tools and a dedicated home workspace. Such individuals easily adapted to the changes due to the preexisting privileges and experience.

“Before remote work. Still in corporate – cornerstone offices. Traveling quite a bit. Already had flex work.”

Conversely, some employees experienced challenges in adopting the hybrid work models characterized by issues in adhering to rotation schedules due to difficulties in work-life balance. However, one respondent suggested that benefits such as maternity leave set their transition to remote working, highlighting the organization's flexibility to meet the work requirements based on individuals' circumstances. Despite the different experiences, the respondents acknowledged that remote working was viable for work and collaboration using solutions like Microsoft Teams. From this theme, sensemaking among employees varies and might take time based on their circumstances and the characteristics of the change they experience. Where the organizational changes are reasonable and can be accommodated by the employees, there are increased chances for success.

Communication and information sources

This theme focuses on sensemaking by addressing how employees gained information about the transition and how communication shaped their understanding. The participants

presented varying perspectives and motivations to transition to remote working during the pandemic. The majority felt the transition was necessary for safety during the pandemic based on the prevailing information concerning lockdowns, travel restrictions, and social distancing. Such information emerged from their interests and the company. For instance, employees considered it safer to align with company interests in mitigating the risk of spreading the virus and ensuring physical safety by moving from urban office settings to locations where they could work remotely. From this context, the safety-oriented interests of the employees and the company emerged from the genuine concern for their well-being and that of their colleagues and community, upholding the values of care and respect.

“...even though it was somewhat unfair for some because we would see a breadwinner of 50 plus immediately been given a section online.”

Nevertheless, some employees felt that the transition was relatively unfair. Such individuals faced various hardships related to the pandemic that the company had not addressed to ensure they could continue working effectively and efficiently. From the responses, the transition can be perceived as acting on the changing global trends, considering that individuals were aware of remote work and hybrid work models and the potential benefits of such practices, including more family time and reduced costs.

Although the communication regarding the shift to remote working within the company varied in how the information was delivered and timing, there was substantial awareness among workers. Personal circumstances influenced how individuals processed and reacted to the information. Those who acted based on the information from government announcements on national lockdowns or other restrictions had a brief period to adjust their working strategies. In contrast, individuals who acted in response to communication and information from company

meetings, email notifications, or interactions with their managers had an opportunity to convey their concerns and influence a more structured approach to the transition. Despite this, the need for communication from the company raised anxiety among some workers, considering they had to ensure they were logged in at specific times and plan for virtual meetings and other forms of digital communication.

“Endless meetings. It was all-consuming. It didn’t help that you couldn’t leave your house. Stress, mental and physical perspective -not easy, very tough.”

However, the employees valued the communication used by the company. For instance, one participant highlighted that involvement in the crisis management process allowed them to better understand the communication channels' decisions and effectiveness. In the sensemaking context, the diversity of the communication methods used by the company demonstrates its flexibility and adaptability in disseminating information, which is critical for remote work and enhancing employee engagement despite their varying interests and preferences influenced by their circumstances.

The remote working environment

The remote working environment theme focuses on sensemaking by addressing the physical and emotional aspects of the work, including the home setting and access to resources. The participants had varying experiences and preferences regarding work arrangements and dedicated workplaces. While some individuals have fully returned to the office, others have maintained engagement through remote and hybrid working models. The considerations made by employees are influenced by their achievements during the transition to remote working influenced by COVID. Most participants implied they had achieved substantial comfort after working remotely. The participants perceive that a dedicated workspace is critical for their

productivity in the home setting, with access to essential resources such as devices and a reliable internet connection. Also, the home setting should be conducive to enable them to separate work from disturbances associated with family responsibilities. Similar considerations emerge among those who have embarked on a hybrid work model.

“Kumba did a good job in helping me set up my home office. IT was available to help us set up at home. “

The decision to work from home was influenced by personal preferences and the desire to achieve a work-life balance. Nevertheless, some participants highlighted unique challenges in establishing and maintaining a workspace at home. The issues included limited space characterized by the need to share space with others or work in inadequate areas used for other family activities. Despite this, the respondents demonstrated adaptability to the available space and resources.

The dynamic spectrum of experiences and preferences among the participants reveals that sensemaking fostered the transition and continued use of home workspaces and resources through creative adaptations. Furthermore, the respondents intended to improve and optimize home and work environments for a sustainable transition and enhanced productivity. Understanding the work requirements in the home and office settings shows that workers are dedicated to enhancing their productivity by establishing clear routines and pursuing a work-life balance. For instance, one of the participants demonstrated sensemaking by highlighting the importance of personal work ethics and maintaining productivity. The respondent identified the peak hours when they could deliver effectively despite initially feeling sluggish and unproductive when engaged in remote work. The development of healthier remote working habits suggests that employees have realized the need for a routine and effective tool when

engaged in remote work to achieve productivity comparable to when they work at the office. Therefore, employees who prefer working at the office, remotely, or in a hybrid model have made sense of the factors that should be met to achieve higher productivity and are actively engaged in influencing changes that align with their professional needs and comfort.

Challenges and benefits of remote work

This theme highlights employees' challenges and perceived benefits after transitioning to remote work. The participants identified challenges and benefits associated with changes that led to adopting remote work. The respondents' continued participation in remote work can be attributed to their realization of the benefits the approach presents compared to the traditional office-centric model. Many employees acknowledged that remote work offered more freedom and flexibility in meeting their responsibilities while allowing them to achieve a work-life balance that was difficult in the traditional working model. Limited travel saved time and money while creating opportunities to concentrate and be more productive. Such improvements led to increased satisfaction with their work and overall well-being. However, they also perceived some challenges with the change to remote work, including an increase in the need to keep up with communication and information, which led to an overload in the number of meetings they were involved in; a lack of boundaries between work and personal life, which includes work overload on some employees; lack of effective communication and cohesion between teams; alienation and loneliness especially for those who engage in remote work away from their families; limited face-to-face interactions, which compromises stakeholder engagement. The participants' benefits and challenges varied, demonstrating that sensemaking concerning the change to remote working was subjective and influenced by various factors beyond the employee or the organization.

Sensemaking process

The sensemaking process theme demonstrates the strategies and influences employees used to make sense of the transition, reflecting on their experiences and identities before, during, and after the pandemic. There are varying accounts among the respondents on the emotional, physical, and mental reactions to the changes experienced in remote working. These insights demonstrate a complex sensemaking process among the employees despite them acknowledging there were efforts by the company to achieve better outcomes. Despite this, the participants could recognize the advantages and challenges emerging from the changes. Therefore, the sensemaking process was characterized by an assessment of actions taken by the company and the best possible course of action to elevate the strengths while working on the weaknesses. For instance, most respondents reported a decline in physical interactions and events, but through the company's input and facilitation, they were constantly engaged with regular check-ins and developed personal connections that helped them align with work requirements. The perception that the company was unfair to some employees led to dissatisfaction, but individuals understood the circumstances influenced by COVID-19, allowing them to appreciate the change and its influence at the workplace.

Understanding the factors that led to change and influenced the outcomes, such as remote and hybrid working models, was integral for a seamless transition for most employees. This is reflected in various instances where the respondents reported effective communication and flow of information, participation in decision-making, collaboration with colleagues and other stakeholders, and healthy relationships at the professional and personal levels. Furthermore, some respondents acquired new roles with the transition to remote working, influencing how others made sense of their experiences. Most employees implied that although there were

challenges during the transition, their engagement at the workplace after the transition reflects a sense of fulfillment and stability. Suggestively, there is increased confidence in the organization's flexibility and adaptability, considering it can accommodate their interests and preferences in different circumstances.

The leadership and managerial practices also contributed to the sensemaking process. Furthermore, some participants reported direct engagements with their managers and gradual improvements in their engagement in decision-making, including activities that offered a better understanding of actions taken by the company. The respondents stated they were engaged in regular virtual meetings and took the initiative to establish connections with other workers. Such actions alleviated the emotional challenges associated with the transition while offering an opportunity to pursue work objectives.

“At the office – I was told that we were moving remotely and told we would log on at specific times. Return to site: A phone call from the direct manager. No further information was given. Just told about it.”

Despite this, the limited opportunities to contribute in the virtual meetings highlight the importance of sensemaking, considering the limitations associated with the change and the need for alternative solutions to enhance their experience, such as adopting hybrid work models. Furthermore, the findings show that the new approaches to work required higher maturity, trust, and accountability to effectively deliver with limited supervision and self-management of time and contributions to tasks. The respondents also reported changes in professional and personal identities that came with changes in their roles and circumstances.

The support offered by the company and the pressures from the changes experienced emerged as key influences in sensemaking. Further support emerges from finding solace in their

relationships with family members and friends. In this context, sensemaking helped to separate the personal and professional identities. The company's organizational culture and leadership supported these developments, as exemplified in subsidiaries such as Kumba, which offered a more positive remote working environment than the employees expected. The facilitation by the company that allowed the workers to transition to a hybrid work model also demonstrates sensemaking, considering parents had more time to engage with their family members while maintaining their professional roles.

The multifaceted influences and experiences of the respondents during the transition to remote working show that sensemaking is influenced by facts and perceptions that shape adaptations to the required change. The findings show that the employees must be more creative and innovative in adjusting to change, including using limited resources to meet work objectives. Fundamentally, the participants resolve to relate their experiences during the pandemic to those of others and the organization. With such understanding, the employees can sustain productivity and embrace remote and hybrid work models as alternatives to office work. Therefore, the ability of individuals to adjust to change and the company to influence the necessary behavioral changes among workers highlights the relevance of sensemaking in the organizational setting.

Sense giving

Sensegiving entails the efforts taken by an organization to enhance sensemaking among the stakeholders. The data collected demonstrates that sensegiving was accomplished through organizational support, which covers the strategies employed to foster access to information and knowledge that can enhance their involvement and comfort in the transition process; the alternative work models highlight how individuals understand and perceive the need for change and the appropriate solutions that should be considered; the changes and continuous

improvements highlight how the organization has fostered and supported the insights and skills gained by the workers to accommodate their needs to promote performance and productivity.

Organizational support

The role played by Anglo American in sensegiving was reflected in the theme of organizational support, which explores the support provided by the company and its impact on employees' sensemaking. The theme aggregates the role played by the company in different contexts that enabled workers to have a better experience despite the unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19 while pursuing improved outcomes in the different work models. The responses from the respondents show there were various instances in which they received support from the company to enhance their productivity and make sense of their situation during the transition. The communication and flow of information from the company facilitated by different managers and representatives through different channels demonstrates efforts in considering the relevance of such measures in achievements made by individuals in the transition to remote working during the pandemic.

Leadership in the company played an important role that reflects sense giving by fostering and sustaining communication in the transition process. The respondents identified individuals with various roles and relationships contributing to their sensemaking processes. For instance, some employees received information from executive-level leaders, direct managers, or colleagues. The efforts to help in sensemaking are further reflected in the use of various channels that were adequate for each individual. Such considerations were inherent for convenience and effectiveness in understanding and using the information for effective transformation. The findings show that the circumstances influenced by the COVID situation led to abrupt communication changes, potentially limiting employee engagement and decision-making roles.

Nevertheless, there were cases where employees had substantial involvement and collaboration, including engagement in crisis management, that fostered a deeper understanding of the actions taken and their roles.

“I was fortunate. I was key in terms of team-leading crisis management. I was part of the process, which made it easier to understand.”

Individuals who felt were part of the process were engaged in decision-making, implying that their interests and recommendations were taken into account in the corporate activities.

Therefore, workers felt as drivers of the change experienced in the company. Employees who had firsthand involvement with the company had a clear perspective and were more receptive to the messages communicated. The findings demonstrate that the company's leadership was meaningful in sensemaking processes, as there was greater authority and weight in the engagements with senior individuals such as the executives and managers. In this context, quality relationships witnessed between the leaders and employees contribute to sensemaking in a more meaningful way. The employees demonstrated that the communication was distinct despite being clouded by other changes in the company, such as restructuring; considering that the communication from the company was not uniform for all employees, its contribution as a sensegiver varied and was influenced by the communicators' roles, relationships, and manner of delivery.

Sensegiving is also demonstrated by the opportunity offered by the company in the context of remote and hybrid working, which created a chance for them to reflect and engage with colleagues, family, and communities as they have never experienced. Working remotely exposed the employees to the sentiments and experiences of other people. Such connections were instrumental in making sense of their situations by exchanging ideas and coping strategies that

informed how they could adequately deliver in their respective roles in the company. For instance, respondents in middle management and other leadership roles used their experience at the time to help their teams in sensemaking. Their contribution in such cases required them to overcome their challenges and feelings to influence a more positive experience, which directly reflects their influence through sensegiving. Despite this, not all respondents engaged with others in making sense of the transition, considering they assumed that everyone felt comfortable or was not interested in discussing their challenges. Consequently, the lack of communication and support might have compromised how company representatives contributed to sensegiving.

Sensegiving was also reflected in organizational support in the tone used in the communicative processes. Some respondents suggest that the communication was authentic, empathetic, and optimistic, which enabled them to have a realistic experience of the changes. In other contexts, the employees felt comforted by the company's commitment to facilitate the transition and alleviate the challenges faced by paying salaries and stipends that gave them a sense of safety and stability. However, some individuals felt that the communication was forced and lacked support. For instance, a respondent considered it a "bitter pill to swallow," while others did not consent to the changes. Consequently, the negative perception among some employees concerning the tone used by the company implies a limitation in its role as a sensegiver. Furthermore, some individuals felt confused and considered the communication to be ambiguous. In such cases, the employees found it difficult to comprehend the implications of working remotely, affecting their contribution and utilization of the support systems. Aligned with these findings, sensegiving by the company is also reflected in the support that includes providing relevant technological solutions such as internet connectivity, equipment, ergonomic chairs, financial support, and mental health support.

Alternative work models

The theme addresses sense-giving by the organization by addressing the working model and changes in systems or processes due to remote work. The respondents show that the organizational changes experienced fostered a transition to full remote and hybrid working models integrated with the traditional office-centric approach. The responses show that the company played an integral role in helping the employees navigate the substantial challenges of shifting to remote work and hybrid work arrangements. The company proactively offered the necessary resources and support, exemplified by financial aid, technology, and mental health services. From this context, the company acted as a sense-giver by acknowledging and addressing the practical and emotional needs of the workforce. Many respondents highlighted the relevance of the consultative approach initiated by the company rather than imposing new policies and responsibilities. Suggestively, employees had substantial autonomy in using the available resources, and the company acknowledged the diversity of the needs and requirements of different individuals to remain productive during and after the pandemic. However, there were mixed feelings concerning the company's success in supporting the workers, considering that some individuals felt the company could have done more and there was unequal treatment of employees from different units or levels. The accounts from this context show the dynamic contribution of the company as a sense-giver but highlight the need for a strategic approach that addresses the concerns of all employees for the successful transition and sustainability of new work models.

“Initially, remote working felt very unproductive and sluggish. I got into the office of going on certain days. I have learned to establish a better remote work routine. Use tools. Healthier habits.”

The transition to remote work influenced various changes in the company's systems and processes to accommodate the preferences of different employees. The respondents reported increased interest in working remotely or in hybrid systems, although some still prefer working full-time from the office. In the context of sense giving, a respondent highlights the shift to hot desking, which entails allowing employees to share office spaces, which demonstrates efforts by the company to facilitate flexibility and efficient use of resources. It also allows employees to overcome challenges faced during the pandemic, such as alienation and loneliness, while creating an opportunity for enhanced communication and collaboration, improving productivity. The company's actions also accommodate varying work styles and preferences, reflected in reports of reduced visits to physical locations. Changes in how the company operates have increased reliance on remote working tools while maintaining a degree of in-person interactions. Furthermore, sentiments emerging from the respondents show that the transition experienced demonstrates the company's adaptability and responsiveness to the evolving work arrangements. Therefore, sensegiving by Anglo American has contributed to sensemaking, limiting resistance to change and increasing employee autonomy.

Changes and continuous improvements

This theme highlights how sensegiving in the company contributes to organizational success and influences continuous improvements in new work models. The findings show that the response to remote work by the employees and the company influenced significant changes that are likely to remain. There was a profound contribution by the company in the context of sensegiving, demonstrated by how the company trusts employees to deliver through the remote and hybrid work models. The respondents felt more empowered and motivated to develop skills and acquire products that improved their efficiency, such as technology-based tools. Sensegiving

also influenced behavioral changes as participants highlighted greater acceptance and flexibility when engaged in remote and hybrid work models. In this light, the organizational changes supported by sense-giving and sensemaking have led to successful outcomes for the company and its employees. Such achievements include adaptability and excelling in challenging work arrangements and requirements; boosted confidence and trust in the relationships between individuals and between the employees and the company, leading to a shift from micro-management; enhanced problem-solving capabilities; positive work-life balance; enhanced use of modern information and communication technologies. From this perspective, the sensegiving efforts demonstrate the potential for continuous improvement for the employees and company that can lead to the realization of personal and professional goals while pursuing core business objectives.

Discussion

The findings derived from interviews with Anglo-American employees in the South Africa operational unit reveal the multifaceted nature of sensemaking and sensegiving processes during the transition to remote work prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The unprecedented impact of the pandemic on both individuals and the company introduced a plethora of opportunities and challenges, particularly in maintaining productivity within the competitive mining industry. The insights garnered from the findings underscore the diverse array of challenges confronted by employees amidst this sudden shift. These challenges include a lack of preparedness for remote work, communication ambiguities, overwhelming workloads, difficulties in fostering team cohesion, and personal issues that impeded their ability to navigate challenges and fulfill work responsibilities effectively. Sensemaking and sensegiving emerge as pivotal mechanisms through which participants navigated challenges and capitalized on the

advantages presented by new work models. Furthermore, these mechanisms played a crucial role in the organization's success in sustaining productivity and addressing the varied needs and preferences of employees throughout and beyond the transition period. As a sensegiver, the company provided vital support through effective communication channels and access to resources such as financial assistance, mental health support services, technological tools, and ergonomic equipment. However, the outcomes of sensemaking and sensegiving efforts highlight a range of sentiments among employees, indicating a mixed reception to the initiatives implemented by the organization.

The insights gleaned from the case study resonate with sentiments expressed by Weick et al. (2005) regarding sensemaking, which involves individuals' efforts to comprehend and make sense of unexpected or crisis situations. The sudden need for respondents to transition to remote work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic indeed constituted a significant event, fundamentally altering workplace dynamics. Consequently, in order to maintain productivity, employees were compelled to grapple with the implications of remote work, adapt to the changes, and augment their contributions. The diverse array of experiences and responses to the remote work transition underscores Weick et al.'s (2005) conceptualization that sensemaking does not necessarily entail arriving at definitive conclusions but rather focuses on optimizing outcomes within the given circumstances.

In alignment with these insights is Starbuck and Milliken's (1988) assertion that the sensemaking process involves a systematic endeavor to comprehend, interpret, explain, attribute, extrapolate, and predict. The findings of the study demonstrate a systematic approach adopted by employees in responding to and navigating organizational changes. For instance, individuals sought information from various sources, including the company and interpersonal networks, to

comprehend and interpret the evolving situation. Engaging with colleagues, company leaders, as well as family and friends, facilitated understanding and decision-making processes. Employees attributed diverse factors influencing the transition, such as acquiring necessary resources like internet connectivity, ergonomic furniture, and dedicated workspaces. This was followed by extrapolation, wherein resources were aligned, and behaviors adjusted in response to the changes. Consequently, employees could anticipate the ramifications of the transition and identify measures to sustain productivity in the remote work environment.

Moreover, as highlighted by Maitlis and Christianson (2014), sensemaking serves as a mechanism to restore control and predictability in situations where individuals feel unsettled. In the context of the study, the looming threat to job security underscored the imperative of sensemaking during the transition, as employees sought to demonstrate their value to the company amidst challenging circumstances. Additionally, the sensemaking process was influenced by individual contexts, timing, and content, thereby accounting for the variations in experiences and responses observed during the transition period.

Substantial collaboration and engagement were observed among employees and various stakeholders in developing an understanding of the transition to remote work. These observations resonate with Zhang et al.'s (2010) suggestion that sensemaking is a shared endeavor aimed at establishing a collective sense of meaning. Employees who actively engaged with company representatives and received social support from friends and family demonstrated greater adaptability to remote work. Conversely, individuals who harbored negative attitudes towards such interactions encountered more challenges and experienced prolonged adjustment periods to the new work arrangements. Similarly, Panda (2022) corroborates these findings, emphasizing

that sensemaking is a proactive process that entails engaging with others, gathering information, and collectively determining the best course of action.

However, Cristofaro (2022) posits that sensemaking can also be a personalized activity, requiring individuals to analyze and respond to their unique circumstances. Such considerations were evident among respondents, as the transition to remote work held varying degrees of personal significance for employees. Some relied heavily on support from the company, teams, and external networks, while others navigated the transition primarily through personal reflection and decision-making. These nuanced approaches highlight the multifaceted nature of sensemaking processes and underscore the importance of recognizing individual differences in adapting to organizational change.

The sensemaking dynamics observed among the respondents in the case study underscore its role as a process that generates meaning, wherein sensegiving emerges as a deliberate mechanism to shape attitudes and interpretations (Smerek, 2011). The findings highlight the company's role as a sensegiver, employing communication and support mechanisms to facilitate the transition to remote work and sustain it within hybrid work models post-pandemic. These observations resonate with the assertions of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), who contend that organizations, as sensegivers, wield significant influence over sensemaking and meaning construction processes.

Moreover, the company facilitated communication through its leadership channels and platforms, while select respondents took it upon themselves to engage in sensegiving by providing guidance to their teams based on their experiences and insights gained from organizational communications. However, the findings also illuminate instances of shortcomings in the company's sensegiving efforts. Employees occasionally voiced concerns regarding

communication ambiguity and perceptions of unfair treatment. Einwiller et al. (2021) argue that the multifaceted challenges posed by the pandemic made it arduous for organizations to streamline communication and address individual employee needs effectively, citing factors such as financial constraints, workforce diversity, and limited readiness to embrace new technologies.

Contrary to the assertions of Christianson et al. (2009) regarding sensemaking's capacity to mitigate ambiguity and foster order and new meaning, the experiences of some employees in Anglo American present a nuanced perspective. These outcomes can be attributed, in part, to the company's inconsistent approach to communication and its limited understanding of individual employee needs during the transition period. Thus, it becomes imperative for organizations to adopt a more cohesive and tailored approach to communication and support, ensuring alignment with diverse employee needs and preferences throughout transitional phases.

The findings reveal that prolonged engagement in remote work contributed to heightened employee acceptance and integration of hybrid work models. These outcomes resonate with the insights of Maitlis and Christianson (2014), who assert that sensemaking serves as a catalyst for organizational change by fostering the development of new processes, understandings, and routines. As employees grappled with the transition to remote work, they acquired essential skills, adjusted behaviors, and obtained the requisite tools and equipment to effectively engage in remote work environments.

Consequently, the company has embraced opportunities to offer flexible work arrangements, including remote work, hybrid models, or maintaining a traditional office-centric approach. These findings underscore the significant influence of sensemaking and sensegiving in driving organizational changes, albeit with the caveat that alignment between company objectives and employee preferences is crucial. Heide and Simonsson (2014) emphasize the

pivotal role of organizational commitment to sensegiving, as employees expect timely and adequate support during transitional phases.

The narrative emerging from sensemaking processes enables employees and organizations to garner support from stakeholders, thereby mitigating resistance to change and fostering cooperation in achieving the desired objectives. By fostering a shared understanding and commitment to change, sensemaking facilitates smoother transitions and enhances organizational adaptability to evolving work paradigms.

The insights derived from the case study conducted within the Platinum operational unit of Anglo-American reveal a significant engagement in sensemaking among employees, with the company serving as a key sensegiver. However, the varying degrees of success achieved in both sensemaking and sensegiving suggest a deficiency in strategic approaches to managing organizational change. The diverse experiences reported by research participants underscore the multitude of challenges faced by the company in its role as a sensegiver, while also highlighting the crucial role played by employees in sensemaking processes.

Based on these findings, several key recommendations emerge:

1. Establishing and sustaining clear communication strategies across all levels of the organization to mitigate issues of ambiguity and mixed messaging.
2. Promoting flexibility and adaptability among both employees and the organization itself to address challenges related to work-life integration and enhance productivity across different work arrangements.
3. Balancing support provided to employees to ensure fairness in the distribution of resources and opportunities.

4. Prioritizing mental health initiatives, acknowledging that some employees may face emotional challenges despite the company's efforts to support them.
5. Revisiting management approaches to better accommodate employee preferences in remote and hybrid work models.
6. Investing in technological competence among employees to maximize productivity in remote and hybrid work settings.

By addressing these recommendations, the company can foster a more supportive and conducive work environment, better equipped to navigate the complexities of remote and hybrid work arrangements while promoting employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

Comparative Analysis and Recommendations

Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to investigate employee sensemaking across various units within a large organization and its role as a sense giver. To achieve this, two case studies were conducted focusing on the corporate business and operational business units of Anglo-American, a multinational mining company. These case studies provided a unique opportunity to address the research objectives and respond to the research questions, given the organization's size and diversity. Anglo-American, being a leading mining company with a global presence, features diverse departments, roles, and a significantly varied workforce. The diversity within Anglo-American facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the experiences and challenges associated with transitioning to remote work. This exploration allowed for a holistic understanding of how individuals from different departments, roles, and geographic locations perceived and responded to the circumstances. The choice of Anglo-American was appropriate for this investigation as both units fall under the Group Management Committee (GMC), the top management structure. Thus, it was pertinent for the researcher to compare and contrast the experiences of different management units based on common organizational policies and processes that influence a standardized approach towards Human Resource Management (HRM) and establish the foundations for transitioning to remote work during the pandemic.

The integration of insights derived from the case studies is essential for evaluating the inherent differences between the corporate and operational units, taking into account influences stemming from geographic spread, business activities, exposure, success measures, organizational values, employee skills and knowledge, connections to family and the community, among other factors. These aspects were systematically examined through a series of interview

questions focused on the concepts of sensemaking and employee sensemaking. The gathered insights not only shed light on the company's transition to remote work during the pandemic but also illuminate its adaptive response to the evolving nature of work in alignment with trends observed across various industries. Consequently, the two case studies conducted at Anglo American provide valuable reflections on how large organizations navigate the transition to remote work, encompassing both short- and long-term strategies and identifying improvements that can enhance remote work practices. This exploration is particularly significant as remote work continues to emerge as a critical aspect of work dynamics in the modern work environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed significant changes across industries, notably marked by the widespread adoption of remote and hybrid work models (Kaluthanthri & Aluthgedara, 2023). Christianson and Barton (2021) underscored the pandemic's influence on the work environment, characterized by complexity, novelty, and rapid evolution, offering a distinctive lens to examine sensemaking within organizations. Consequently, the upheaval prompted a nuanced exploration of the cognitive processes and practices governing how employees at Anglo American interpreted and adapted to the abrupt workplace changes. The delineation of two distinct case studies significantly contributed to a comprehensive understanding of sensemaking and sensegiving from multiple perspectives. The first case study centered on the corporate business unit, predominantly comprising tech-savvy office-based workers in managerial roles, while the second focused on the operational business unit, primarily comprising frontline employees directly involved in mining operations. These case studies aimed to unravel how the diverse workforce across both units experienced the transition to remote work, emphasizing various factors including the impact of communication strategies and

organizational support on their sensemaking and sensegiving processes. Additionally, demographic factors such as age, race, ethnicity, and role were considered in shaping the sensemaking process. The insights gleaned further elucidated the distinct challenges encountered by these groups during the transition and scrutinized the organization's role as a sense-giver within the units, thereby highlighting the specific needs of the socioeconomically diverse population. This thorough examination sheds light on the intricate dynamics at play and provides valuable insights for organizational adaptation and support strategies amidst unprecedented disruptions.

The accounts from the two case studies are synthesized through an integrative approach to establish the broader implications for the employees and the organization in the contexts of sensemaking and sense-giving. The narrative under each context draws from the research findings and literature to demonstrate the perceptions employees have concerning the transition and the significance of organizational support when faced with such changes and disruptions. The analysis contributes to the growing body of literature on sensemaking and sensegiving and proposes a framework that can be employed in a diverse organizational setting. While the findings are specific to the transition to remote work due to Covid-19, sensemaking and sensegiving are processes that take place during organizational change practices and therefore the findings and recommendations can be applied to broader organizational change considerations. With regards to the generalizability of the findings, I feel these findings can be generalized to organisations of similar size, structure and hierarchical processes as Anglo Americans.

Demographics

All participants involved in the case studies were employees of Anglo-American, representing stakeholders in the transition to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The

case studies encompassed a diverse population, varying in demographic characteristics, work experiences, and family structures, among other factors. As a result, the investigation achieved a well-rounded representation of the company's workforce across different locations, ages, genders, and band levels.

Given Anglo-American's operations across various countries, a broad geographical representation was imperative, influencing resource availability and the impact of COVID-19 policies and response strategies on workforces in different sectors (Bastas & Garza-Reyes, 2022). Furthermore, the case studies underscored the diversity in family structures, providing a nuanced understanding of how the transition to remote work affected aspects such as work-life balance, socio-economic factors, and resilience to changes in work dynamics.

Findings from the corporate unit revealed that demographic factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, band level, and years of experience had limited impact on individuals' responses to remote work. Conversely, within the operations unit, employees' positions within the company significantly influenced their experience during the transition, particularly regarding access to pertinent information and their ability to influence others.

In both case studies, family structures emerged as influential factors shaping individuals' engagement in remote work and their access to psychosocial support outside the traditional workplace. Additionally, family structures determined home workspace arrangements and overall perceptions of remote work. This multifaceted examination highlights the intricate interplay between individual characteristics, organizational dynamics, and external support systems in navigating the complexities of remote work transitions.

The amalgamated findings from the case studies provide valuable insights into sensemaking and sensegiving, drawing from the diverse profiles of the participants. These

multifaceted insights resonate with the primary objective of the study by illustrating how individuals from varied backgrounds navigate and adapt to significant changes within multinational organizations. As such, the thematic analysis of the two case studies yields a framework for comparing and contrasting the experiences of employees across different groups, employing a tailored approach to sense-giving that fosters sensemaking within the unique contexts of each organizational unit. The major themes identified in the two case studies, namely sensemaking and sensegiving, are intricately aligned with the primary research questions. Through the exploration of these themes, the study sheds light on the nuanced dynamics of organizational change, offering valuable implications for theory and practice in understanding and facilitating adaptation processes within complex organizational settings.

Findings and recommendations

Sensemaking and sense-giving emerged as crucial conceptualizations for understanding the evolving work structures at Anglo American. The profound changes experienced by the organization and its employees during the transition to remote and hybrid work models were reflected in responses to the semi-structured interviews and the comprehensive thematic analysis of the two case Studies. The findings show the intricate dynamics of sensemaking and sense-giving during the pandemic and after the transition to alternative work models. In this context, sensemaking was inherent in how employees across the two organizational units grappled with the transformation of work cadence, communication strategies, and the remote working environment, which offers a comprehensive understanding of the adaptive nature of their interpretations. The organization's role as a sensegiver was embedded within organizational support structures, which highlights how Anglo America engaged in shaping the employees' perceptions, behaviors, and the overall success of the transition.

Sensemaking

The exploration of sensemaking across the corporate and operations units at Anglo-American focused on the participants' experiences before, during, and after the transition. In both case studies, work cadence before the pandemic was characterized by varying degrees of physical presence, travel commitments, and a strong allegiance to traditional office-based work structures. The complex and multifaceted work cadence emerging among the research participants set the foundational elements for comprehending the impact the transition and new work models had on the workforce and the organization. Based on the work cadence, sensemaking was reflected in responses that highlighted the need for organizational flexibility and adaptability to align the company with the evolving work dynamics. Furthermore, respondents from the two case studies affirmed that remote working had gradually been introduced in the company as reflected in travel to sites or offices in other locations and working-from-home practices. Nevertheless, a key similarity between the two units was the office-centric culture that included fixed office hours and physical participation at the workplace before the pandemic for most employees. The rigid adherence to standardized schedules influenced how individuals perceived the value of physical presence during team interactions and access to resources necessary to achieve their occupational obligations. Despite this, the findings demonstrate the reliance on modern technologies for communication and collaboration across the organization was a reflection of a degree of preparedness for adopting remote work and alleviating the challenges that come with such practices.

However, the contribution of work cadence in sensemaking was divergent between the two case studies. The findings from the corporate unit revealed that there was a higher travel frequency before the pandemic compared to those in the operations unit who were largely

engaged in site visits. Consequently, the corporate unit presented a large degree of flexibility in remote work options in a more diverse range of work environments, compared to the operations unit which required strict adherence to the office-based work schedules. The case studies also differed on the organizational approach with the corporate unit demonstrating a more hierarchical work culture that emphasized managerial expectations, while the operational unit demonstrated a stronger commitment to the physical workplace due to a high reliance on the resources and facilities provided by the company. Sensemaking and readiness for change were also different among the two groups considering that the corporate unit revealed a greater openness and preparedness for adapting to remote work, while the operations unit was more interested in maintaining the traditional work culture. Therefore, the operations unit was more likely to experience challenges in the transition, while there was minimal resistance to change in the corporate unit. These insights highlight the need for a strategic approach to organizational sensegiving that can be tailored to address the needs, expectations, work cultures, and levels of preparedness that exist in each unit. According to Redeker et al. (2012), acknowledging the differences that emerge among a diverse population of employees is critical in developing flexible and inclusive remote work strategies that appeal to all stakeholders and minimize resistance to change, which enhances organizational resilience and adaptability. Promoting sensemaking through sense-giving strategies is also critical in enhancing cognitive processes when employees are faced with a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Weick et al., 2005; Christianson & Barton, 2021).

The two case studies revealed that the transition to remote work was a complex undertaking with varied experiences among the respondents. The urgency to implement remote work strategies was influenced by various factors including government regulations and

organizational directives aimed at maintaining productivity and performance (Desilver, 2020; Kaushik, 2020; WEF, 2020). Consequently, Anglo-American employees experienced a sudden shift and they had to promptly adjust to remote work. Findings from the two case studies show that sensemaking during the transition was influenced by a myriad of professional, personal, and organizational factors. Additionally, even employees who had previously engaged in remote work faced new challenges despite their readiness and existing supportive measures. These findings show a consensus with previous studies that highlight sensemaking during transitions is subject to the cognitive and emotional processes as reflected in the diverse experiences, attitudes, and perceptions among the employees in each unit (Seto et al., 2018; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Zhang et al., 2010). In both case studies, technologies such as Microsoft Teams played a critical role in facilitating remote work as they fostered effective communication and collaboration. The flexibility in work models that existed before the pandemic contributed to enhanced capacity to adopt remote working. The transition was further enhanced by organizational support that included offering the necessary equipment, mental health resources, and flexible work arrangements based on individual needs and preferences across the units. A comprehensive assessment of the findings from the corporate unit shows that the transition focused on increased personal benefits for the employees such as reduced travel, flexibility, and improved work-life balance, while the driving force for the transition in the operations units emphasized external factors such as the lockdowns and government policies for managing the pandemic. Therefore, the motivating factors that promoted the adoption of remote working strategies varied within the units and were influenced by preparedness and the occupational responsibilities of each group.

Employees in the two case studies reported various challenges and benefits associated with the transition to remote work. In the corporate unit, the major challenges included blurred work-life boundaries, mental health issues, and social isolation, while in the operational unit, employees found it difficult to adjust to the remote and hybrid work models and maintain a work-life balance with the changing work dynamics characterized by rotational schedules. The diverse experiences and motivations emerging in transitions show that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective, which raises the need for flexible and customizable solutions in the adoption of remote work. Furthermore, the findings from both case studies showed that although some employees acknowledged the benefits of remote work such as flexibility and improved work-life balance, they raised concerns such as the functionality of their remote workstations, digital training, extended workdays, and inadequate support offered by the organization that compromised the capacity to adapt and achieve occupational objectives. Respondents from the two case studies demonstrated that the transition to remote work was coupled with a heightened workload and changes that might be detrimental to the organizational culture. The initiatives taken by the company to enhance the employee skills and knowledge were instrumental in improving their capacity to respond to change and achieve better outcomes. Similarly, Boyatzis et al. (2022) state that coaching is an imperative undertaking in organizations that strengthen leadership. The findings from the case studies aligned with suggestions made by Boyatzis et al. (2022) that effective coaching should consider focusing on the desired outcomes, employing effective processes and mechanisms, and the diversity that exists among people. From the case studies, training, coaching, and other skill and knowledge development initiatives exemplified focus on specific objectives such as onboarding and leading virtual teams; used appropriate processes and mechanisms such as Microsoft Teams for effective communication with all

people; embraced the diversity of cultures, gender, and context premised on traditional organizational values such as respect and enhanced access to organizational resources for the different parties involved.

The benefits associated with the transition to remote working varied across the units based on the employee's experiences and perspectives, which reflects the dynamic nature of sensemaking in Anglo American. Respondents from the corporate unit suggested that collaboration and communication had a positive impact during the transition, whereas those from the operations unit had mixed views stating communication overload and isolation with the increased reliance on technology. In both cases, the increased engagement of leaders and managers through remote working enhanced communication and involvement in decision-making. However, respondents from the corporate unit cited a disconnect between leadership behavior and organizational values. In both cases, the need for resource allocation challenged productivity, although gradual changes that addressed such limitations enhanced adaptability and resilience.

Addressing the challenges faced and maximizing the benefits that emerged during the transition required sensemaking, which was fostered by effective communication and access to appropriate information sources. Findings from both case studies show that there was a paradigm shift across the organization as modern technologies led to increased two-way communication, diversity of channels, and increased involvement of leadership at different organizational levels. The respondents affirmed that open, transparent, and inclusive communication was the cornerstone for their enhanced productivity as they adapted to the remote and hybrid work models. The diversity in communication and information resources was critical in catering to the different preferences and circumstances experienced by individuals. Therefore, the

communication and information elements had a positive impact on sensemaking despite challenges such as information overload and communication fatigue. However, respondents from the operations unit raised concerns that there are inconsistencies and unfairness in the communicative processes. Consequently, some individuals took time to understand the rationale behind the transition because the management was ineffective in addressing their specific needs coupled with limited involvement of employees in decision-making processes. The phenomenon emerging among the two groups is reflected in sentiments expressed by Weick et al. (2005) who suggest that what is plausible for one group might be implausible for another, which makes it important for the organization to take strategic approaches when communicating with employees from different levels for enhanced sensemaking. Nevertheless, the company used a variety of communication channels and information formats to reach the different employee segments based on their preferences and convenience. Furthermore, Cunha et al. (2015) and Caligiuri et al. (2020) show that information gathered from different sources can impact sensemaking as an emotional process, which makes it imperative for organizations to enhance access to information during crisis and avoid challenges that might emerge from out-of-work stressors. With the information offered by the company, the employees had an opportunity to seek further insights from government, media, and social circles. The feedback gathered by the company from the different communication channels contributed to improvements that supported the transition and enhanced productivity, especially among employees in the operations unit considering there was a more deliberate and structured approach for those in the corporate unit.

Sensemaking in both case studies was also associated with the perceptions and experiences of the remote working environment. The respondents emphasized the importance of having a dedicated workspace for productivity when working remotely. These workspaces

ranged from dedicated home offices to shared spaces with family members. Although the company offered resources for establishing dedicated workspaces such as ergonomic equipment, stipends, and home safety care packs, some employees from both units stated that they had no access to or awareness of such provisions. However, the findings show that HR played a critical role in promoting employee engagement through policies and strategies that optimized work-life balance, flexibility in time management, and improvement of remote working environments. Such strategies were important for an effective transition considering accounts from Stephens et al. (2020) that individuals who are likely to face most challenges during transitions are those in need of help, underserved, and disadvantaged. Gathering feedback and enabling individuals to understand the implications of working remotely enhanced their capacity to perform by aligning personal preferences with the available resources and organizational objectives. Furthermore, the adoption of strategic measures such as hybrid work models and rotation schedules increased the flexibility of work arrangements, which offered individuals an opportunity to alleviate the challenges and limitations associated with their remote working environments.

Findings from the two case studies revealed a dynamic and adaptive approach to the sensemaking process among the workers. The changes in practice and perceptions concerning remote work were influenced by different factors that include technological adoption, support, communication, leadership practices, and organizational culture that made sensemaking a continuous process. Although personal attributes that include experience and circumstances in the remote working environment took precedence in sensemaking, the team and organizational dimensions were also prevalent in how individuals developed resilience, and how they perceived and adapted to changes at home and in their professional identities. The multifaceted nature of

sensemaking enabled individuals to deal with existential problems that caused resistance to change by understanding their personal and professional identity implications (Bridges, 1986; Chreim, 2002; Reger et al., 1994). The importance of engaging with teams and other stakeholders in sensemaking is further highlighted by Christianson and Barton (2021) who describe it as a socially constructed process that requires people to interact with their environments and others to create meaning and take appropriate actions. Therefore, the team dynamics, family, and organizational support were critical in how employees developed coping mechanisms and adapted to the new work dynamics through sensemaking (Cunha et al., 2015).

Sensegiving

Aligned with sensemaking, the findings from the two case studies also highlighted the inherent role played by organizations in sensegiving during the transition to remote work. The insights gathered demonstrate an interconnectedness between sensemaking and sensegiving by highlighting the importance of organizational support and reevaluation of organizational and work culture in the transition to remote work and the adoption of alternative work models. The diverse accounts from the respondents in the two case studies show that organizational support can significantly influence how employees interpret and navigate change during a crisis due to its impact on their experiences and perceptions. These insights are aligned with an array of other studies that demonstrate sensegiving by organizations influences the employees' experiences and acceptance of change (Mihalache & Mihalache, 2021; Zito et al., 2021; Bussin & Swart-Opperman, 2021; Cunha et al., 2015). For instance, there was a consensus among the groups from the corporate and operational units that transparency and consistency of communication from the organization was inherent in understanding and acting on the changes experienced. Fundamentally, effective communication and access to appropriate sources of information

aligned the employees' expectations with the rationale for remote work by enhancing how individuals adjusted to new working conditions. Such considerations are reflected in the context of framing and reframing during sensemaking considering the impact communication and information have on identity, beliefs, and cultural influences when adjusting to change (Chreim, 2006).

Sensegiving also emerged in the role the company played in providing the necessary support for individuals to be productive in remote work. In both case studies, respondents cited support that included technological inputs, ergonomic equipment, and mental health care. Although not all employees had adequate access to or awareness of such offerings, the company demonstrated sensegiving by offering solutions that enabled individuals to realize the change in work dynamics and the new requirements for their effective delivery of team and organizational objectives. The support offered reduced stress among workers who faced new challenges in their professional and personal capacities considering the social-economic impact the pandemic had on families across the globe. In the sensegiving context, the support offered by the company facilitated a smoother transition, which might have not been realized if employees relied on personal resources to establish the remote working environment while addressing family issues and other challenges associated with the pandemic. Similarly, Mihalache and Mihalache (2022) found that organizational responses during environmental disruptions are critical in addressing negative consequences that employees might face including decreased productivity and compromised well-being. Therefore, the company initiatives targeting mental health, work-life balance, and increasing access to job-related resources helped to address prevailing and potential challenges as individuals made sense of the changes experienced. Organizational support also contributed to sense-giving by fostering strong team dynamics and collaboration in the remote

environment with the introduction of effective technological solutions such as Microsoft Teams. Regular communication by company leaders and managers enabled employees to understand the company expectations in remote work and enhanced interactions between band levels that enhanced decision-making for the company and individuals. Notably, Zito et al. (2021) state that the approach taken by organizations to communicate with and support the workforce has a direct impact on their attitudes and strategies in the change process.

Leaders and managers in the company had an imperative role as sensegivers throughout the change process. From the responses, the leaders and managers had access to valuable information that they dispensed to other stakeholders and were involved in decision-making processes that shaped the practices and strategies adopted during and after the transition to remote work. Suggestively, the leaders and managers acted as intermediaries and framers who promoted positive attitudes and perceptions in the change process (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Huy, 2002; Corley & Gioia, 2004). For instance, team leaders were instrumental in offering information, advice, and support that enabled other members to cope and adjust to the changes. Through such strategies of sensegiving, the leadership enhanced collaborations and cooperation that were necessary to meet organizational objectives. From this perspective, sense-giving led to an employee-centric approach that prioritized the continuous improvement of skills, knowledge, and processes to enable individuals to navigate the complexities associated with remote and hybrid work models.

The employee-centric approach influenced by sensegiving strategies is reflected in the increased autonomy in how individuals engage at the workplace. The company facilitated diverse preferences by increasing the flexibility of work arrangements to accommodate the interests of all stakeholders depending on their responsibilities and professional identities. For

instance, the work models adopted by the company range from fully remote, hybrid, and office-centric. The flexible and adaptable approach demonstrates that the company acknowledges the diversity that exists among workers, and offers them an opportunity to exploit what they deem best for their enhanced productivity. Therefore, the workforce understands that the company is committed to adjusting work processes based on their circumstances and interests. Such considerations were inherent during and after the transition considering insights from Cockayne (2021) that the pandemic was likely to exacerbate the negative aspects of working from home especially where the work arrangements were not voluntary. Furthermore, the respondents in the corporate unit highlighted that the commitment by the company to supporting alternative work strategies eliminated the stigma that was associated with remote working as more people came to realize the benefits.

Findings from the two case studies also highlighted some shortfalls in the role of the organization as a sensegiver. Despite the increased autonomy fostered by the transition, employees from both case studies highlighted the need for a consultative approach that involves their increased engagement in the decision-making processes to address issues of dissatisfaction with the solutions offered by the company. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that there were inequalities in the distribution of organizational resources and information, which created a sense of unfairness, creating negative attitudes toward the transition to remote work. According to Zito et al. (2021), organizations can reduce discomfort, uncertainty, and negative attitudes toward change using a well-designed communication process that not only keeps the employees informed by also increases their involvement in shaping the organization's future.

Sensemaking and sense-giving framework

The insights on sensemaking from the two case studies highlight some key considerations in the reevaluation and application of Weick's organizing framework of enactment, selection, and retention. According to Weick (1995), enactment focuses on how individuals directly engage with unfamiliar situations to generate information that can help them understand the unfolding events. In the Anglo-American context, enactment during the transition to remote work was affected by several factors with communication and access to information sources having a substantial impact on the decisions made by individuals. From this context, prompt organizational change requires agility, consistency, and timely communication across the organization to ensure that all stakeholders have access to valuable information concerning the unfamiliar situation faced by the company. The selection phase of Weick's (1995) framework entails individuals making attempts to simplify their experiences based on previous experiences. Limiting the challenges faced during selection requires a focus on preparedness through risk management strategies that include skill and knowledge development to ensure employees can effectively act, respond, and adjust to change with high efficiency in how they interpret the situations. For instance, individuals who were more prepared for the adoption of remote work were more effective in adjusting to the changes experienced with limited confusion on how they should engage with the technologies and processes. The retention phase in Weick's (1995) framework focuses on the prevailing interpretations individuals draw from the entire process that enable them to select the most viable approaches. From this account, sensemaking requires the organization to take a tailored approach to meet the specific needs and preferences of the employees across the different units. Such an approach can guarantee that each individual understands the change and the suitable and productive approaches in the work environment.

Enhancing retention requires continuous communication, addressing the weaknesses in the change processes, and maximizing the strengths realized among groups and individuals.

The findings from the two case studies show that the interconnectedness between sensemaking and sensegiving can be considered in developing a strategic and constructive framework for organizational change in large organizations with different units. Taking Weick's organizing framework of enactment, selection, and retention into consideration, sensemaking can be improved by integrating the concepts of framing and reframing to enhance the role of organizations as a sensegiver. According to Cornelissen and Werner (2014), framing alludes to how individuals and organizations present information concerning events or issues and how it is perceived by other stakeholders. It requires a focus on selecting and emphasizing the important aspects of the situation to ensure effectiveness in how others interpret, understand, and react. Reframing is described as the change process based on how the situation is presented and interpreted to alter the prevailing conditions and practices. Reframing fosters a shift in perspectives and context through the different meanings that emerge from the information offered. Therefore, framing and reframing are important aspects of sensegiving because they influence sensemaking at the personal and group levels and the subsequent response to changing circumstances. While framing can be implemented solely, reframing is important to influence constructive adjustments in how individuals and groups understand and adapt to change by altering the meanings attributed to the situations faced (Watzlawick et al., 1974). Therefore, an integrated framework for sensemaking and sensegiving in organizational change based on the two case studies of the corporate and operational units of Anglo-America includes:

Enactment

In this context, individuals and organizations assess unfamiliar situations or events to gather information that can be used in sensemaking. Firsthand information emerged as an integral aspect of ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the actual experiences and avoiding miscommunication, and misinformation. From the case studies, enactment was experienced when the different stakeholders at Anglo American were directly engaged in the transition to remote work by taking actions to navigate and understand the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on their professional roles. During the transition to remote work, framing was evident in both organizational units considering the initiatives taken by the company in demonstrating the necessity of the change. For instance, the company enhanced the flexibility of work arrangements and highlighted how the use of modern technologies aligns with the evolving nature of work in the digital age. As a result, employees from all units had a shared meaning that remote work was inherent to address the unfamiliar situation caused by the pandemic by setting up workspaces at home and maximizing digital technologies. Reframing played a critical role in addressing the challenges that emerged from the enactment during framing such as limited communication and access to adequate information. The company focused on establishing seamless communication through different channels and formats, which aligned the communicative processes with the specific needs, preferences, and circumstances faced by the employees. These insights show that organizations can strategically frame the transition to remote work by selecting and emphasizing certain aspects, influencing how employees perceive the situation. A smooth transition requires effective framing during enactment by presenting information that aligns with organizational goals and the specific needs and preferences of the audience. According to Argyris (1993), a double-loop learning approach can be instrumental in

how organizations assess the potential impact of the communicative processes and adjust them through reframing for better alignment with objectives and understanding of the changing situations. Therefore, large organizations with multiple units should consider a strategic communication approach for framing during enactment to ensure that the information offered has a positive influence on the interpretations and perceptions of the required changes. Adopting an adaptive learning culture can enhance organizational preparedness by using reframing as a tool of enactment necessary for continuous adaptation to dynamic and changing business environments (Kuntz et al., 2017).

Selection

Selection in Weick's (1995) framework involves individuals using past experiences and established frameworks to simplify their current experiences. Simplifying the situation fosters sensemaking by enabling individuals to focus on specific elements such as communication strategies and work procedures drawing from experience and cognitive frameworks. Framing in the selection context was reflected in the preparedness among some employees who had previously engaged in remote work and had established remote workspaces in their homes. Furthermore, the respondents in both case studies highlighted that the company had gradually adopted new technologies, which made it easy to adopt digital platforms during the transition to remote work. Positive attitudes were more prevalent among employees who were previously engaged in remote work compared to those who transitioned due to the pandemic. Reframing in the selection phase entailed measures for skill and knowledge development to develop capacities that could enable employees to make sense of the change and adjust appropriately. The company achieved this by gathering feedback from employees and deploying appropriate resources based on their individual needs. These insights demonstrate that organizations can frame the selection

process through preparedness and risk management strategies. Such initiatives can include using the established communication channels, skills, and knowledge to promote preparedness for projected and rapid changes as part of the risk management practices. Reframing during selection can focus on the feedback gathered from the diverse employee population to assess the effectiveness of strategies and make appropriate changes that align with the employees' needs and preferences.

Retention

According to Weick's (1995) framework retention focuses on how individuals retain and integrate the interpretations made in the sensemaking process. Retention enables individuals to adopt the most viable solutions based on the intensity of the requirements and challenges faced in the change process. Retention is achieved through the consolidation of interpretations and understanding in the enactment and selection processes. For instance, following the enactment and selection processes, employees from the two case studies demonstrated a preference for hybrid work models. However, the findings highlight that retention requires structured approaches to meet specific needs and preferences based on the occupational responsibilities in the different organizational units. For instance, an office-centric approach was more desirable for individuals working in the operational units because their physical presence is required to deliver on organizational objectives, while employees in the corporate units had more flexibility in choosing the work models. Framing in retention is important for continuous adaptation, while reframing facilitates appropriate adjustments in interpretations, addressing weaknesses, and maximizing strengths that promote an adaptive learning culture. Therefore, framing and reframing in the retention phase should focus on inclusive tailoring of communication and information taking into account the diverse needs of the different units.

Table 3. Summary of comparative analysis for the case studies

Theme/subthemes	Similarities between cases	Differences between cases
Work cadence before COVID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings show that employees in both cases valued and engaged in the traditional office-based work culture that was prevalent before the pandemic. In both cases, employees adhered to fixed office hours and had a physical presence in the office with limited flexible work arrangements. • Employees in both case studies highlighted challenges and opportunities that emerged with the transition to remote work whereas respondents in the corporate case highlighted complexities in the shift from primarily working in the office-based approach, while those in operations demonstrated concerns over the need to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The difference in work cadence dynamics is that employees in the operations sector were more concerned with the challenges faced in the adoption of flexible remote work approaches, while those in corporate demonstrated a broader spectrum of experiences that enabled them to appreciate the flexibility of remote work. • The variations in work cadence also emerge in the findings that respondents in the corporate case study experienced more frequent travel to different locations, which highlighted their ability to overcome challenges of remote work as key aspects of productivity. Although

	<p>maintain productivity during and after the transition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In both cases, sensemaking was instrumental in how individuals understood and accepted the changes experienced with new working arrangements that called for high levels of adaptability.	<p>workers operations were also traveled frequently, they were more committed to engaging in the physical office setting as the key measure of their productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work cadence was also influenced by the organizational culture that prevailed. In the corporate space, the respondents had established effective communication and collaboration strategies due to remote working strategies that existed before the pandemic. However, the respondents from the operations highlighted the need for the company to foster a conducive remote working environment because they were unfamiliar with the new approaches adopted, which suggests that they were
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		<p>relatively unprepared for remote working compared to their counterparts in the corporate sector.</p>
<p>Transition to remote work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents from both cases demonstrated technology savviness and many had dedicated home workspaces that enhanced their capacity to transition to remote work. • The transition to remote work was marked by all employees being proactive in sensemaking and adaptation. In both cases, some individuals immediately adjusted to the new work models, while others gradually integrated into the new processes and strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The differences in the transition to remote work emerged in how the change process was initiated. In the corporate context, the desire for change was driven by the need for increased flexibility, opportunities for professional growth, and the administrative challenges influenced by the pandemic. In the operations teams, the transition was largely influenced by external factors such as government regulations, lockdowns, and the urgency to adopt remote work created by the pandemic. • The adaptation and challenges faced varied across the cases.

		<p>In the corporate sector, the participants raised concerns over emotional and mental health, social isolation, and job security. Contrastingly, respondents in operations expressed gratitude that the company was actively engaged in addressing challenges faced with high levels of preparedness and provision of necessary tools to facilitate the transition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With time respondents in the corporate sector gradually adapted to the changes with support programs such as “We Care” while those in operations realized the overwhelming challenges associated with the hybrid work model and rotation schedules, which highlighted the need for additional support and adaptation.
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<p>Communication and information sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents from the two cases expressed the importance of effective communication between the company and the workforce during the transition to influence enhanced sensemaking. • The participants appreciated the diverse communication strategies introduced and acknowledged that they were necessary for adaptability. • All respondents recognized the important role of organizational leaders in the communicative processes and their engagement in decision-making through open dialogue and feedback systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings show that participants in the corporate case perceived that there were improvements in communication during and after the transition to remote work that was characterized by the engagement of different stakeholders in two-way communication enabling them to engage in sensemaking. However, respondents from the operation case noted that communication was affected by the variation in the sharing of information among different stakeholders and their involvement in the communicative processes was subject to personal circumstances such as the anxiety associated with adjustment to virtual meetings
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		<p>that replaced physical interactions.</p>
<p>The remote working environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants in both cases showed preference for a dedicated workspace to increase their productivity while working from home. Therefore, they all acknowledged the importance of separating work from family responsibilities. • Respondents in both cases demonstrated adaptability and sensemaking in how they adjusted to their remote working environment by optimizing their workspaces at home to be more productive. • In both cases, employees expressed a strong desire to achieve a work-life balance as they engaged in remote work by establishing clear routines for work responsibilities while maintaining personal well-being and healthy social relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were differences in workspace arrangements across the case studies. The corporate respondents indicated that they struggled to acquire the right equipment and resources despite the efforts made by the company. The operations teams were more concerned about the impact family responsibilities had on their productivity and valued the support offered by the company in setting up home offices and ICT resources. • Participants from the corporate teams highlighted that there was substantial support from the HR and organizational policies, which is a phenomenon that was inherently missing in how

		<p>individuals in operations made sense of the support offered by the company.</p>
<p>Benefits and challenges of remote work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were benefits and challenges realized in the transition to remote in both cases. The respondents reported increased flexibility, work-life balance, savings in operation costs and time with reduced commute. • The challenges emerging in both cases were blurred boundaries between work and personal life, ergonomic issues, communication overload, social isolation, and challenges in maintaining the organizational culture and cohesion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The differences emerging in the benefits and challenges faced by respondents in the two cases are reflected in the subjective experiences of each respondent. For instance, ergonomic challenges differed between those who had established home workspaces before the transition and those who relied on the company to set up their home offices.
<p>Sensemaking process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a consensus among the respondents in the two case studies that the success of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The differences in sensemaking between the respondents in the case

	<p>sensemaking during the transition was reflected in the assessment and outcome associated with strategic undertakings such as communication, collaboration among different stakeholders, and the revaluation of personal and professional identities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In both cases, sensemaking was also subject to the impact the organization's support systems had on individuals and teams. • Sensemaking was also influenced by the value individuals associated with family and social relationships with their adaptability to the remote work model. • Sensemaking was associated with increased creativity and innovation in how individuals and teams adapted to the change. 	<p>studies emerge in their initial perceptions of remote work. The respondents in the corporate sector perceived it as a temporary measure to address the pandemic-associated challenges. However, the findings show varying emotional, physical, and mental reactions among employees in operations, which demonstrates a complex approach to sensemaking compared to their counterparts in the corporate case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the corporate case, the respondents showed that there was a reevaluation of work culture with their increased involvement in decision-making, but those in operations suggested that there were limited opportunities for them to
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		<p>participate in the decision-making processes that could have improved sensemaking.</p>
<p>Organizational support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In both cases, the respondents noted that organizational support contributed to the company’s role as a sensegiver. These findings are demonstrated by the implementation of effective communication strategies, increased access to information, technological and ergonomic support, mental health support, and financial assistance. • The respondents also reflected on how leadership at different organizational levels contributed to a better understanding of the change by shaping the employee’s perceptions and experiences. 	<p>Organizational support varied across the case studies and among individuals. For instance, the findings show that employees in some locations such as the UK had access to more resources compared to others. Additionally, some participants were aware of the resources offered by the company, while others had to make investments to remain productive during the transition.</p>

<p>Alternative work models</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In both cases, the participants highlighted that the company had an important role in facilitating the transition and sustaining the alternative work models. • Most respondents in the two cases demonstrated a preference for a hybrid work model and the need for adaptability with continuous improvements based on the employees' preferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While more respondents were preferring the hybrid work model in the corporate sector, many in the operations expressed that meeting their work responsibilities required physical presence, which implies more presence at the office compared to working from home.
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Limitations

Firstly, the study pertains to the smaller sample size, which may not fully represent the entire employee population within the organization, thus raising concerns regarding the generalizability of the insights gathered. In addition, this research was conducted specifically within the Corporate Relations and Operational business units at Anglo American, and therefore, may not fully reflect the sentiments of the broader organizational landscape. However, it is noteworthy that the respondents involved provided a substantial volume of truthful and unbiased data.

Secondly, despite efforts to achieve a relatively balanced spread of participants across demographic areas such as gender, band level, office location, and family status in both the

Corporate and Operational Case Studies, any demographic assessments are indicative rather than conclusive.

Thirdly, while the researcher engaged a diverse research sample and encouraged participants to provide accurate information based on personal experiences, reliance on memories to respond to research questions might introduce limitations associated with data accuracy and quality. Despite achieving saturation, the researcher acknowledges the challenges in capturing real-time sensemaking related to migrating to remote work versus sensemaking associated with the broader impacts of COVID-19. Additionally, the interviews for the Operational Case Study were conducted at a later stage, with interviewees asked to recall their feelings from 12 months prior. Although the substantial volume of data facilitated an in-depth understanding of sensemaking and sense-giving in the corporate unit, not all respondents engaged in the follow-up interview. Nevertheless, engaging the majority of respondents ensured that the data's quality was not compromised. However, it should be noted that the insights emerging from this case study may not fully represent the entire Anglo-American corporate workforce.

Despite these limitations, the findings and insights identified in this study, do contribute to the existing research in the field and can be strengthened through further investigation. The following research suggestions can help strengthen the research contribution on sensemaking and sensegiving:

1. Employing quantitative methodologies focused on gathering and analyzing statistical evidence to develop generalizable results;
2. Multiple case studies across different departments, organizations, and industries can provide a broader perspective.

3. Qualitative studies can explore how sensemaking and sense-giving are influenced by behavioral intentions among employees and leaders in adopting new technologies, policies, and procedures affecting work arrangements.
4. Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches through mixed methods can further enhance the understanding of sensemaking and sense-giving using diverse sources of data and analytical methods.

Conclusion

The profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and organizations worldwide precipitated significant and enduring changes. Among these changes, the widespread adoption of remote work emerged as a prominent strategy for maintaining productivity and fulfilling occupational responsibilities while mitigating the risks associated with the pandemic. The transitional experiences during this shift provided a fertile ground for exploring how employee sensemaking varies across business units within a large organization, as well as examining the role of organizations as sense-givers.

The present study conducted in-depth interviews with employees of Anglo American, a multinational mining company with diverse departments, to investigate these dynamics. The research sample comprised two distinct case studies: the corporate unit and the operational unit. Through interviews and subsequent follow-ups, a substantial volume of data was collected to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Thematic analysis was employed to discern the factors influencing sensemaking and sensegiving within the organization, elucidating the intricacies of employee perceptions and organizational responses amidst the transition to remote work. This approach enabled the identification of nuanced insights that contribute to the broader understanding of organizational dynamics in times of unprecedented change.

The findings from the case studies reveal a significant consensus among respondents regarding sensemaking and sensegiving during the transition to remote work at Anglo American. Sensemaking emerged as a central mechanism through which individuals navigated the evolving work arrangements and sustained productivity amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic. Respondents from units with prior experience in remote work and established remote working

arrangements before the pandemic exhibited a smoother transition to working from home. However, some employees encountered difficulties during the transition, primarily due to a lack of adequate information and resources to set up home workstations effectively. Despite these challenges, the transition to remote work brought about various benefits, including enhanced work-life balance, increased productivity, and savings in time and costs. The role of the company as a sense giver was underscored by its provision of appropriate resources to support remote work and its efforts to align employee interests with the new working arrangements. Effective management and leadership within the organization played a pivotal role in this process by providing relevant information and inspiring individuals to overcome the challenges imposed by the pandemic. Improved decision-making and communication strategies facilitated by management and leadership further contributed to mitigating the impacts of the crisis and fostering a sense of stability and adaptability among employees.

The insights gleaned from the study underscore several key issues that warrant attention for enhancing sensemaking and sensegiving within multinational organizations like Anglo American. While these findings were derived in relation to a global crisis and major organisational change, sensemaking and sensegiving takes place continuously in an organisation, amongst individuals and within teams. Organisational change in general, regardless of the scale of impact, consists of processes such sensemaking and sensegiving, whether conscious or unconscious, in order for it to be successful. Therefore these considerations are recommended, not only for global crisis management or large change, but for general organisational effectiveness and change as well. Such considerations include:

Enhance Communication Strategies: The findings of the current study underscore the pivotal role of communication in both sensemaking and sensegiving processes. Initially,

inadequate communication posed significant challenges for employees during the transition period. However, as access to information improved and diverse communication channels were adopted, the situation evolved positively.

Equity in organizational support. The respondents across various units highlighted disparities in access to organizational resources, which were contingent on individuals' positions within the organizational hierarchy or their geographic location. Such discrepancies significantly influenced how individuals perceived and adapted to the transition, ultimately impacting their productivity levels. Efforts to promote equity in organizational support are thus essential for fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

Foster flexibility and autonomy in the work arrangements. The study findings underscore the importance of fostering flexibility and autonomy in organizational work arrangements. Aligning with the promotion of a culture of continuous improvement, organizations must ensure that policies and work structures are adaptable to accommodate the diverse preferences of employees, many of whom express a desire for hybrid work models. Such considerations can empower employees and contribute to improved work-life balance, ultimately enhancing overall organizational effectiveness.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Set of questions explored each Case Study:

- What is your understanding of why Anglo American transitioned its employees to remote working?
- How did you first learn about the decision to shift to a remote working setup?
- How did you emotionally, physically, and mentally react to migrating to remote working?
- In your current role and team, how did you feel through the transition to remote work and how did you make sense of this?
- Apart from your role and function, are there any other professional or personal identities, role or title that influence how you felt or made sense of migrating to remote work?
- Has the shift to remote working impacted your ability to do your role? And how?
- Who was the main person that communicated the messages around transition to you? What role or relationship do they have to you? And how did this influence your sense making process?
- Were you able to engage with anyone else to make sense of migrating to remote work? And how did that influence your sense making process?
- What type of language and tone was mainly used in the organization when communicating the migration to remote work?
- What are the main challenges and benefits related to remote work?
- What support did the organization provide that assisted with this shift?
- What do you think is the role of the organization in helping employees make sense of this?
Do you think Anglo American did a successful job at this? Why?

- What is the status of the working model at the moment (fully remote, hybrid)? How do you feel about this and how have you made sense of this working model?

Appendix B: Themes and nodes that emerged during coding

Remote Work	Organisation	Sensemaking	Sensegiving
Benefits	Organisational support	Communication and Info Resources	Roles and influence
Challenges	Communication	Sensemaking process	Working models
Work pattern prior to remote	Decision Making	Transition to remote work	Changes and continuous improvement
Work setup since remote	Future Work Options	Influence on sensemaking	
	Values		