Influence of Working from Home Culture on the Effectiveness of Virtual Onboarding of New Employees

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Research Article

Abstract
The COVID-19 pandemic remains a global disaster with extraordinary consequences for corporations and their people. The stresses of working from home during a pandemic are heightened for newbies entering new occupations and organizations. To address the issues concerning the rapid adoption of virtual onboarding in employment relations and human resource management practices, the paper seeks to determine whether there is a positive relationship between online orientation and training and holistic support with virtual onboarding in the context of multinational companies operating in Bangladesh. A cross-sectional survey of 110 individuals of diverse profiles from various multinational companies (MNCs) in Bangladesh is undertaken using Google Forms. The data was analyzed using SPSS 26.0. It was discovered that online orientation, online training, and holistic support play an important part in carrying out a successful virtual onboarding process for newcomers working from home. It was also found that having a strong relationship with peers, and senior coworkers is a key aspect of obtaining the assistance that new employees require in the workplace as they start. It is expected that the managers in the MNCs may regain workers' trust by strengthening their virtual or onboarding operations as a whole. The frameworks offered can guide managers in better responding to employees' needs. The successful use of virtual onboarding among the MNCs in Bangladesh is a little-explored research domain. The study findings address the gap by highlighting its effectiveness and encouraging the implication of virtual onboarding of the employees working from home in the MNCs. The study does not rule out the potential of other factors influencing virtual onboarding effectiveness, nor focus on any particular professional groups. The online survey makes it difficult to provide information on the sample's representativeness. Further research and inquiry are required to confirm the findings.

Keywords: COVID-19, Multinational companies, Training, Virtual Onboarding; Work-from-home culture.

1. Introduction
Onboarding new staff is a critical component of a multinational company's (MNC's) operation. Recruiting a new employee is an expensive procedure for businesses since individuals must go through a 6- to 12-month learning curve before becoming productive. This learning curve is known as a "productivity delay"

(Sharma & Stol, 2020). To emphasize socializing inside the company, knowledge, and social skills are organized into activities such as orientation, training, and help.

The extent to which employees may adjust to job changes in the current pandemic scenario is critical for individual and organizational success (van Zoonen et al., 2021). Because of Covid-19 and its deadly consequences, several businesses have adopted flexible work methods since March 2020. Such integration of homes and workplaces results in a dearth of face-to-face connection. Most individuals are already adopting internet commerce, work-from-home (WFH), and digital enterprises during the COVID-19 crisis. Work patterns shifted in reaction to the crisis, and the WFH model expanded significantly (Zou et al., 2020b). In this study, the term "working from home (WFH)" refers to working from locations other than the firm's allocated office space. As WFH became more prevalent, especially among larger firms and corporations, its related adverse effects appeared. A freshly hired employee nowadays is unlikely to begin their new job without the opportunity to meet their colleagues or management in person and work side by side with them. This has an impact on the new hire's performance, which might have a direct or indirect impact on his or her decision to leave the firm (Chen, 2021).

To comprehend the effectiveness of the onboarding processes in firms, the study performs a quantitative analysis of the research related to the onboarding of new employees with any length of experience, taking into consideration among other things the aspects affecting the ways of WFH. Onboarding is the process of turning newly recruited workers from outsiders to productive members of the firm by facilitating information interchange, talent transfer, and the sharing of corporate culture for the employee to become a team player, resulting in socialization inside an organization. A well-designed onboarding process helps reduce costs, accelerates time to productivity, and enhances retention through increased employee satisfaction. Hence, the present research addresses the following question*: Does working from home (WFH) positively affect the effectiveness of virtual onboarding of new employees in Multinational companies?*

2. Literature Review
2.1. Virtual Onboarding

Virtual onboarding is an offshoot of digital transformation in an organizational setting that utilizes technology to obtain a competitive advantage and create value to boost business revenue (Bajer, 2017). It is the digitalization of the human resources management (HRM) process of onboarding via the use of digital technology to assist recruits in adjusting to and integrating into an organization (Maurer, 2020). Adopting digital technology for onboarding permits various types of dynamic capabilities that are appropriate for scenarios like an epidemic (Goodermote, 2020).

Because of the rising use of virtual onboarding, especially in the MNCs, the HR managers must collaborate with line managers to provide a welcoming culture for recruits and to facilitate organization-driven socialization strategies and the "quality" information required to support new workers, even if that calls for using virtual or hybrid modes (Sani et al., 2022). The virtual onboarding process entails onboarding a new employee using an online platform or video conferencing technology and generally would include training, group interactions, 1:1 meeting with the new employee, orientation sessions, and administrative responsibilities. The HR manager navigates this process.

2.2. Theoretical Background

People who adapt to change in their environment benefit optimally. For example, those who are well-acquainted with WFH culture due to the pandemic experienced a reduction in the risk of microbe transmission. In response to the epidemic, numerous academics and human resource practitioners have started thinking about how to employ flexible work arrangements (FWAs), such as WFH, as a more acceptable way of working.

According to conventional stress theories, rapid changes in the work environment might cause anxiety among office workers due to several reasons. First, at the start of the epidemic, office workers put in a major

adaptation effort (Cohen et al., 2019) to modify their typical daily routine. Second, in the setting of a pandemic, WFH was not a voluntary decision for employees, but rather a compelled solution. Lastly, moving toward WFH may have disrupted or altered an employee's career aspirations and plans to preserve their psychological well-being (Chen, 2021).

Also, the new joiners' initial stages of working in a new setting increase stress and anxiety. The COVID-19 mutation has necessitated the widespread use of working at home by most employees during the pandemic. Several rapid adjustments in demand at work may be a cause of high stress for office workers with negative repercussions for well-being and quality of life (Orfei et al., 2022). This might have a direct impact on newcomer productivity. It is critical to examine the emotional element of the new employee during the orientation, training, and holistic support stages since it determines the amount of stress. As a result, stress theory / coping strategies (Ellis et al., 2015) would be used to steer the research framework.

2.3. Online Orientation

Online or virtual orientation entails onboarding a new employee using an online platform or video conferencing technology. It is pretty similar to traditional in-person orientation. It provides an overview of the firm, mission, beliefs, business goals, etc. — the only difference is that these meetings are done remotely. Newly employed individuals onboard virtually tend to experience stress and anxiety when they begin work in a new workplace. This might have an immediate impact on newcomers' motivation and prospective commitment and productivity. As a result, it is critical to assess the emotional component of the new employee during the orientation process, since this influences the level of stress.

The orientation would help them improve their work clarity and socialization and establish realistic expectations for the job, generating a greater level of job satisfaction. Therefore, a more forward-thinking approach would be to utilize online orientation to convey the organization's purpose and values to recruits, mold their values, and incorporate them into the organization's structure (Nosike, 2022).

According to Bauer (2010), to improve virtual onboarding effectiveness, a new employee should go through the four levels of choice connected to the organizational commitment that alludes to the amount of involvement and dedication that employees feel toward their particular roles and the firm. It also discusses the various reasons why professionals stay with their current employees rather than seeking new chances.

Level 1: Self-Efficacy boosts motivation, which leads to achievement and, ultimately, organizational satisfaction.

Level 2: Role clarity refers to a new employee's understanding of his or her employment role and responsibilities. This component is thought to improve employee happiness and corporate commitment.

Level 3: Employees' social integration, or the ability of an employee to integrate into the organization, is positively related to onboarding success and attrition.

Level 4: Having proper knowledge of organizational culture, aims, and values because each firm has its specified code of ethics, thus presenting and understanding this culture to the newbie is crucial and has a good influence on onboarding success.
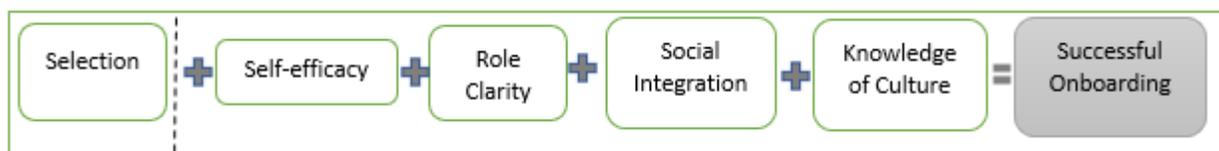

Fig. 1: Four levers to increase new employees' virtual onboarding success
Source: Bauer, 2010

According to Bauer (2010), a positive association exists between managing orientation activities and onboarding success based on previous research. Given the impact of work-from-home opportunities on online orientation programs, a positive association with the success of onboarding was expected. Based on the discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Online orientation is positively associated with virtual onboarding success.

2.2. Online Training

The person-vocation fit (P-V fit), which is a version of the P-E fit, applies more to professional skills match. As the employees are unable to adapt to the work environment to adjust to WFH culture, they require updated and specific skills to conduct WFH, such as software, application-based or digital communication skills. These are not the same abilities necessary for a job at the conventional office. HRM uses novel training methodologies and material for the WFH model, where work skills differ from traditional office requirements (Chen, 2021). For this purpose, innovative amendments in providing training modules are essential that would help to improve employees' abilities, keep them motivated, and reduce psychological stress (Gigauri, 2020; Zou et al., 2020a).

One such innovation can be reflected in online training. Employees who work from home might gain a variety of skills through online courses (Hamouche, 2021). The HR managers collaborate with other departments to construct online training courses to fulfill the demands of their continuous growth for the employees working from home. Online virtual classrooms may become the new standard for training in the era of the new pneumonia crown in the future (Alhat, 2020). As a consequence, the following hypothesis has emerged:

H2: Online training affects the positive impact of virtual onboarding.

2.5. Holistic Support

With the advancement of organizational learning, holistic support, and feedback are essential to ensure employees' and team members' effectiveness. The metrics for determining their performance are linked to organizational performance. Workers entering new jobs during the COVID-19 outbreak have unique hurdles that may have a negative influence on their health. Due to the epidemic, employee welcome gatherings and team socializing activities are similarly limited, socially separated, virtual, or nonexistent. These issues make it tough to socialize and form relationships with new coworkers.

The leadership culture is also impaired in WFH circumstances as managers become more concerned about how WFH may affect contracts and employee reputation. In contrast to typical office employment, this strategy lowers possibilities for personal psychological relationships while increasing face-to-face contact. While information and communication technology (ICT) can improve online engagement and cooperation with colleagues, the employees still feel detached from the business culture and work environment (Marzban et al., 2021; Wilson, 2021). As a result, an increased proportion of employees are encountering greater stress during this time of isolation and uncertainty.

An integral part of holistic support that requires enough attention throughout the onboarding process is sharing the value of the company with newcomers. The support activity during a WFH situation is characterized as online support, which includes help, support, feedback, and the chance to address any personal issue that may influence job performance, leading to increased self-confidence, motivation, and job performance, which may favorably improve onboarding success. Hence, effective onboarding serves as a moral and ethical commitment, since it supports new workers' mental health and well-being amid global and personal turmoil (Scott et al., 2022). As a result, the following hypothesis has been advanced:

H3: Holistic support plays an important role in bringing out an effective virtual onboarding.

The study adopts the theoretical model by Sharma and Stol (2020) that was crafted to identify onboarding activities such as orientation, training, and support and their impact on new employee onboarding

effectiveness while considering WFH. Using the same theoretical model, the study analyzes a different context. In this study, the onboarding steps such as orientation and training are also conducted virtually, and the "support" in this case means being holistic. The research model is depicted in Figure 2.
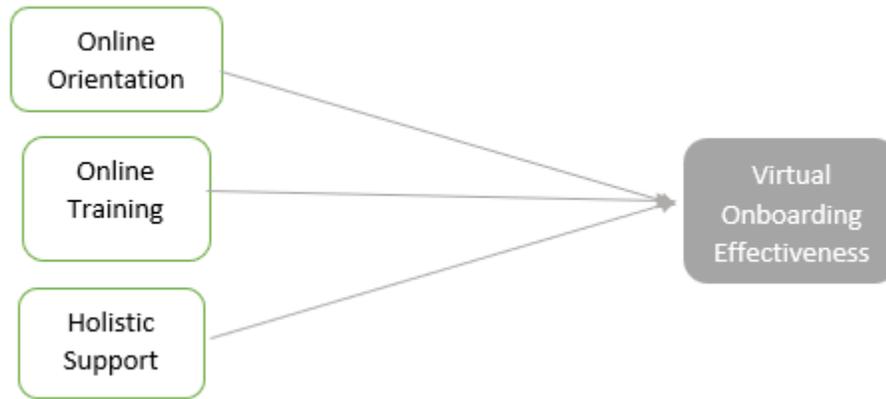

Fig. 2: Research Model
Adopted from Sharma & Stol 2020

2. Methodology

The study uses a quantitative research method. The components and elements of the framework used in this study were derived from existing literature. A questionnaire is designed to collect data. The first section of the survey defines the objective and purpose of the investigation. The following section of the questionnaire asks questions regarding the study variables, namely Online Orientation (OO), Online Training (OT), Holistic Support (HS), and Virtual Onboarding Success (VOS). The variable constructs were developed based on literature. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, two experts in the human resource management domain performed an initial assessment of the research instrument. The questions are graded on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. Followed by Nunnally (1978), all of the constructs in the framework are checked. Each of the constructs has found to have Cronbach alpha values greater than 0.7. Hence, all of the instrument's components are retained.

To estimate sample size requirements Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) proposed a formula: $N > 50 + 8m$ (m = several independent variables; N= Sample Size). On the other hand, the minimal sample size, according to Hair et al. (2010), should be 100. Following the aforementioned guidelines, a cross-sectional survey of 110 participants from diverse MNCs from various geographical regions (in Bangladesh) with varying profiles is undertaken in this study. Given that bigger samples may yield better results, this study considers a sample size of 110 with a model of four components to deliver a valid result.

The data was collected using Google Forms. The respondents were contacted via social media sites and their corporate email addresses with the permission of the company's human resource division. The demographic details included questions on gender, age, educational level, work field location, and service length. The participants' ages were separated into four categories to include all working-age groups: 20-25, 26-30, 31-35, and 36 and above. Additionally, the educational background of the employee was categorized as either undergraduate or postgraduate. Marketing, engineering, finance/accounting, management, human resources, and other positions were also considered.

The data collection period lasted around one and a half months.

3. Findings and Analysis

3.1. Demographic details

The overall number of participants was 110, with males (67%) having a greater proportion than women. The geographical location of the employees in this survey has been identified with a focus on Bangladeshi nations, with the bulk of respondents hailing from Dhaka (58%) and Chittagong (32%), with the remainder hailing from Khulna (3%), Rajshahi (2%) and Sylhet (5%). Out of the 110 participants, 60.8% (68 people) were aged 20-30, 24.1% (27 people) were aged 31-35, and 15.2% (17 people) were aged 36 and over. The age groups 20-25 (34 people) and 26-30 (34 people) had the same number of participants; these two age groups had the highest percentages, accounting for roughly 61% of all participants.

Knowing the participants' educational level was regarded crucial for this study. Participants might choose between two levels of education: undergraduate and postgraduate. A higher percentage of undergraduate degrees was predicted because the bulk of participants was between the ages of 20 and 30. The majority of respondents (63.4% of the population) said they had an undergraduate degree, while the remainder 36.6% (41 people) said they had a postgraduate degree.

The majority of persons (39 people) had 1-3 years of work-life service, 25% (28 people) had 3-5 years, and 21.4% (24 people) had less than one year. The lowest percentile for individuals who have been marking for more than 5 years is 18.8%, or 21. Given that the majority of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30 and had only earned their bachelor's degrees, the markups were made logical. The work fields of the individuals who participated in the poll inside their firms were also recorded, with 12.8% in marketing, 10.1% in teaching, 6.4% in HR, Finance, and IT, and the remainder in others.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

In this study, statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 26.0. In the table below, the mean and standard deviation values for the constructs are provided, where N is the total number of participants.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Online Orientation (OO)	3.9327	.53314	2.40	5.00	-.048
Online Training (OT)	3.7982	.67375	2.20	5.00	-.164
Holistic Support (HS)	3.9309	.54415	2.60	5.00	.100
Virtual Onboarding Success (VOS)	3.8873	.63508	2.40	5.00	-.169
Online Orientation (OO)	3.9327	.53314	2.40	5.00	-.048
Online Training (OT)	3.7982	.67375	2.20	5.00	-.164

3.2. Correlation and Regression Statistics

As the correlation coefficient, Spearman's correlation coefficient will be used. This is a non-parametric statistic that will be used since the data violated parametric assumptions, such as not being normally distributed (Field, 2009).

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient Measurement Scale

Constructs	VOS	OO	OT	HS
Virtual Onboarding Success (VOS)	1.000	.792**	.801**	.726**
Online Orientation (OO)	.792**	1.000	.874**	.693**
Online Training (OT)	.801**	.874**	1.000	.779**
Holistic Support (HS)	.726**	.693**	.779**	1.000

Linear Regression is shown in the following tables:

The H1 tests if online training carries a significant impact on virtual onboarding success. The dependent variable VOS (Virtual Onboarding Success) was regressed on predicting variable OO (Online Orientation) to test hypothesis H1. OO significantly predicted VOS, $F(1, 108) = 23.81$, $p<.001$, which indicates that the OO plays a significant role in shaping VOS ($b = .154$, $p<.001$). These results direct the positive effect of the OO. Moreover, the $R^2 = .811$ depicts that the model explains 81.1% of the variance in VOS.

Table 3: Linear Regression (OO)

Hypothesis	Beta Coefficient	R²	F
H1	.425	.811	23.811

H2 tests if online training carries a significant impact on virtual onboarding success. The dependent variable VOS (Virtual Onboarding Success) was regressed on predicting variable OT (Online Training) to test hypothesis H2. OT significantly predicted VOS, $F = 22.420$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that OT can play a significant role in shaping VOS ($b = .415$, $p < .001$). These results direct the positive effect of the OT. Moreover, the $R^2 = .712$ depicts that the model explains 71.2% of the variance in VOS.

Table 4: Linear Regression Result (OT)

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R²	F	p-value
H2	OT → VOS	.415	.712	22.420	<.001

H3 tests if online training carries a significant impact on virtual onboarding success. The dependent variable VOS (Virtual Onboarding Success) was regressed on predicting variable HS (Holistic Support) to test hypothesis H3. HS significantly predicted VOS, $F = 24.472$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that HS can play a significant role in shaping VOS ($b = .540$, $p < .001$). These results direct the positive effect of HS. Moreover, the $R^2 = .792$ depicts that the model explains 79.2% of the variance in VOS.

Table 5: Linear Regression Result (HS)

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R²	F	p-value
H3	HS → VOS	.540	.792	24.472	<.001

4. Discussion

Even though the survey results showed how happy newcomers are with their work and how well they fit in socially, the generic observations indicate that onboarding activities are nearly as important as online orientation and support a higher score than online training - additional research into other conceivable components and firms building successful tailored methods to newcomers is encouraged. To support and guide the study findings, a review of previous work on onboarding in firms is undertaken in this study to build a theoretical perspective model. The arguments and findings of previous onboarding research have been reported. A theoretical empirical study model has been constructed to identify onboarding activities, such as orientation, training, and holistic support that are crucial to onboarding effectiveness (Sharma & Stol, 2020). Previous relevant onboarding studies and research were evaluated and appraised in this study to better understand the issue. All theories have been accepted.

H1 is supported by the data, which reveals a favorable association between online orientation and virtual onboarding success. In general, online orientation indicators take into account both social and objective factors.

With p 0.001 and b=0.415, the finding for H2 demonstrates a favorable relationship between online training and virtual onboarding success. The primary purpose of the training is to ensure that newcomers can perform their tasks properly. In contrast to the findings of Sharma and Stol's (2020) study, which was conducted in a normal environment, the findings of this study, which was conducted in a pandemic context, suggest that online training has a favorable influence on newcomer onboarding.

The last hypothesis suggests a link between extensive assistance and the efficiency of virtual onboarding. This hypothesis is confirmed further (p0.001) by the fact that online orientation, training, and holistic assistance are the most important factors in onboarding success. Providing continual assistance to newcomers is likely to boost onboarding efficiency since it makes them feel supported. Businesses must create an environment in which newcomers feel welcome and have no reservations about seeking assistance. More than 68% of respondents said they were not ashamed to ask a superior, supervisor, or mentor for assistance. More than 69% of respondents think their employers are nice and open to them. Yet, around 23% of the comments are found critical. This research implies that increased openness and readiness for assistance within an organization's culture may benefit the seamless onboarding of newcomers.

5. Managerial Implications

Employees play an important role in moving the firm ahead, thus HR managers in diverse organizations must focus on regaining their workers' confidence by strengthening their virtual or onboarding activities as a whole. Based on the information acquired from its survey respondents, the managerial implications of this study's findings include the efficacy of online orientation, online training, and holistic assistance from employers. The three structures stated above not only help people thrive, but also assist businesses in obtaining insight into how to achieve their goals more effectively. The structures offered in the study can assist managers in better understanding their employees' needs and desires, allowing them to perform more successfully in the future. In this era of optimization, if an employer is unable to service its employees properly, it may as well close its doors, as a staff is desperately required everywhere to accelerate. The structures are built to assist staff performance growth and employee motivation, which will influence the company's profit maximization.

6. Conclusion

A well-designed onboarding process is critical when introducing new workers as part of a company's talent acquisition and retention strategy. The purpose of this study is to compare the traditional referral process with the virtual referral process to evaluate the impact of WFH on the virtual referral process of novices in new settings. The disparity in findings between previous research and Covid-19 might be attributed to the influence of work-from-home scenarios, in which newcomers have the highest need to communicate with

colleagues and coworkers. In the lack of direct contact, their support careers. Hence, this study also highlights the importance of social relationships within the workplace when working from home.

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

First, this study does not rule out the potential of other factors influencing virtual onboarding effectiveness. While short-term activities such as virtual orientation and training occur early in an employee's working day, holistic support tends to emerge over time, regardless of whether the employee is new or existing. Second, the survey was conducted online using Google Forms contacting them through social media sites and corporate email addresses. As a result, providing information on the sample's representativeness is impossible. Finally, unlike prior studies that targeted certain professional populations (Sharma & Stol, 2020), this study is not limited to any single professional or category as long as they are serving MNCs. Findings could vary rank-wise. Therefore, further exploratory and empirical research and inquiry are required to conform to the findings and outcomes.

Nevertheless, the vacuum in the literature needed to be filled to assist companies in understanding what activities may affect the success of the onboarding approach. Hence, it is expected that this study will add to the body of knowledge on virtual newcomer integration and act as a useful turning point for future research.

Author Contributions: Nusrat Hafiz and Asadul Islam conceived the idea and designed the framework; Zarin Tasnim collected and analyzed the data; Nusrat Hafiz reviewed the paper; Zarin Tasnim wrote the paper.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix
Questionnaire

Section A

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agre	Strongly Agree
Online Orientation*					
I attended an orientation program with other new hires					
I was made aware of the organization's regulations and practices.					
I was allocated a buddy/mentor to assist me in settling into my position.					
I was informed of the potential challenges/difficulties in my career and how to deal with them.					
There were structured events (such as ice breakers or virtual coffee breaks) where I could engage with my new colleagues and elders.					
Online Training*					
I participated in a formal training program targeted to my professional function.					
I got work-related training to help me grasp the internal systems and operational procedures required to do my job.					

I received particular training on the technology/tools that I used for my job.					
I had a point of contact/online portal that I could utilize if I ran into any training problems.					
The training program and content were helpful to me.					
Holistic Support*					
If I get stuck on a task and can't figure it out, I can ask my senior/supervisor/mentor for assistance.					
In the following circumstance, I will not feel weak or embarrassed to seek assistance.					
If any personal concerns are interfering with my professional performance, I can chat with my supervisor.					
I did not hesitate to ask for help from my team members whenever I needed it.					
The initial orientation program made me feel less nervous about starting a new job.					
Virtual Onboarding Success*					
The initial orientation program made me feel less nervous about starting a new job.					
During my onboarding, I learned a lot about the organizational culture.					
I am fully aware of my job's expectations and responsibilities.					
I feel confident in my ability to thrive in my job.					
I can say I am socially integrated into my workplace.					