



Singapore Healthcare Management 2021

Enhancing Team's Communication through Virtual Environment

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INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the team was unable to conduct face-to-face meetings due to safe distancing measures. Virtual huddles were used to replace conventional face-to-face huddles. At the same time, other new initiatives aimed at supporting the virtual huddles and improving remote collaboration were launched. The aim of the study assess the utility of virtual huddles and compare these new initiatives to conventional face-to-face methods.



OBJECTIVES

- Analyses how both virtual and conventional huddles affects team processes and outcomes.
- Identify the tools and strategies that can improve a team's communication.

METHODOLOGY

During pre-Covid period, the administrative team scheduled monthly face-to-face team huddles, lasting one to two hours per session. With requirement for safe distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, daily virtual huddles via a cloud-based video conferencing service replaced monthly conventional huddles. A shared online calendar was used to organize meetings, track and monitor work assignments status, and remind team members of deadlines and milestone events.

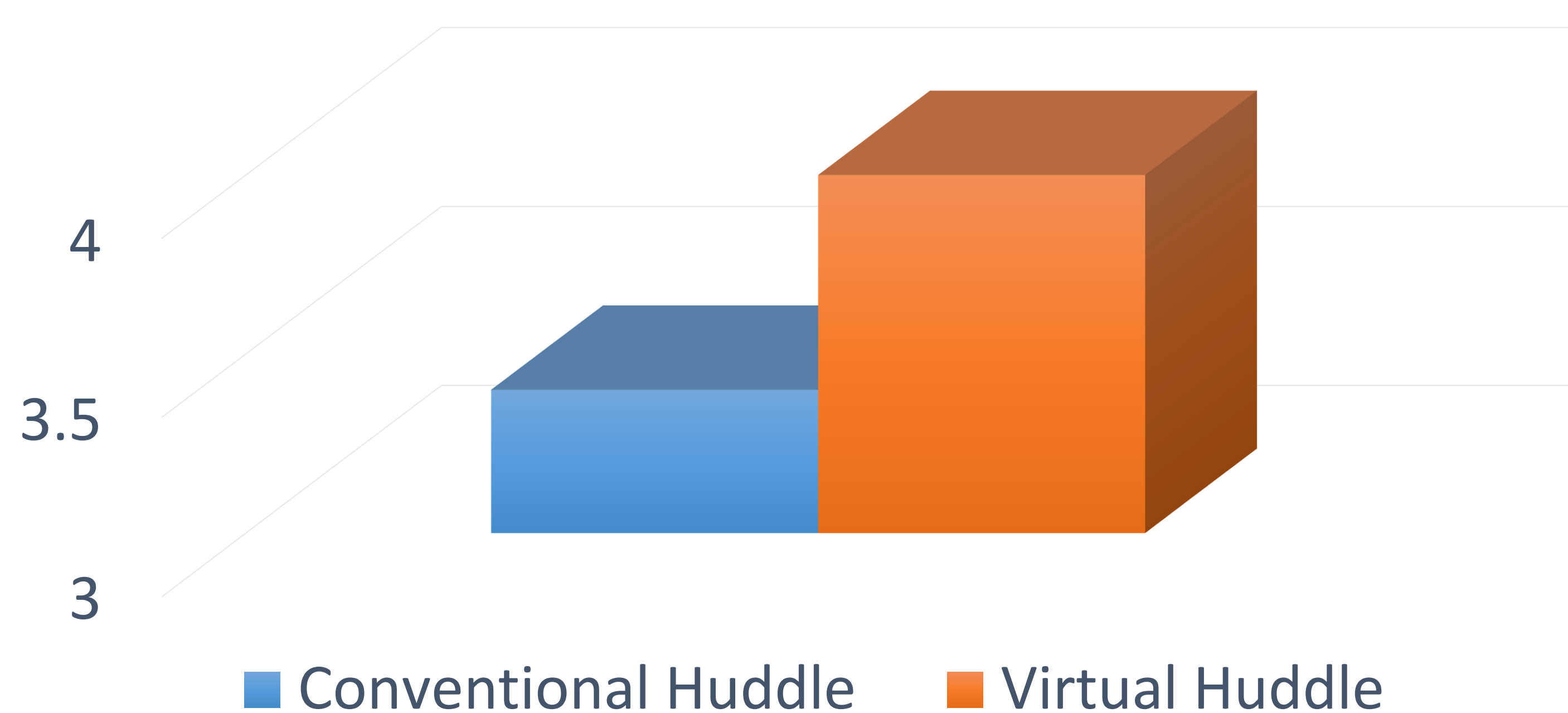


RESULT

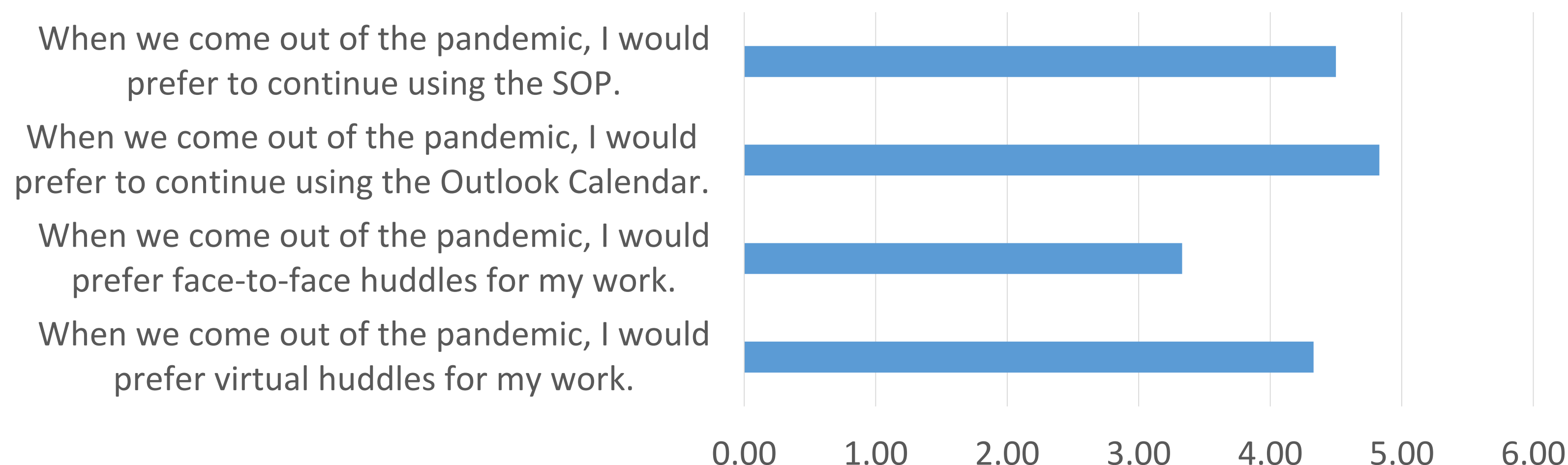
After 6 months, a structured questionnaire was used to systematically collate feedback from administrative team members. Respondents rated both virtual and conventional huddles from aspects of team member engagement, communications, productivity, logistic ease, and promotion of work-life balance. Virtual huddles received higher scores compared to conventional huddles from all aspects rated.

	Mean Score for Virtual Huddle (SD)	Mean Score for Conventional Huddle (SD)
Team member Engagement		
Feel engaged as a team member during session	4.2 (0.45)	4.0 (0.71)
Communications		
Able to get my opinion across to others	4.4 (0.55)	4.0 (0.71)
Easy for team members to have shared understanding	4.6 (0.55)	4.0 (0.71)
Information and knowledge shared easy to understand	4.8 (0.45)	4.4 (0.55)
Productivity		
Able to make decisions easily	4.4 (0.55)	3.8 (0.84)
Able to cover agenda items quickly	4.6 (0.55)	4.0 (0.71)
Logistics		
Easy to get team members together	4.0 (0.55)	3.6 (0.89)
Work-life balance		
Resulted in better work-life balance	4.0 (0.71)	3.8 (0.45)
Preferred		
Method to retain post pandemic	4.0 (0)	3.4 (0.55)

Method To Retain Post Pandemic



Methods that the team will use when the pandemic is over.



CONCLUSION

Virtual huddles received positive responses, and were acceptable to the administrative team. Structured work processes (SOP), and a shared communication platform (online calendar) can facilitate team member collaboration, and mitigate the challenges of working remotely while observing safe distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.