

## VARIA

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### REMOTE WORK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

#### Introduction

Work is one of the basic and most important forms of human activity that has been accompanying us for thousands of years. Over the following centuries, the attitude to human work has evolved – it has been both despised (e. g. in antiquity, feudalism) and highly valued (today). It was seen in two ways: as a hard effort by man to obtain a livelihood, and as a pleasant and creative activity contributing to the subordination of the material world to human will<sup>1</sup>. In psychological terms, work is “a system of activities distinguished and directed towards the transformation of the environment, performed relatively constantly when its performer has the appropriate formal qualifications”<sup>2</sup>. Organizational and management psychology directly affects the lives of job seekers, interns, employees, managers, coordinators, or clients. In addition, psychology helps managers understand the diversity of people, both customers and employees<sup>3</sup>.

Until recently, the difficulties in attracting and retaining valuable employees in the organization were emphasized. Organizations were looking for the methods not only around active recruitment of employees, but also to create attractive employment conditions for them and offer various benefits. One of the amenities was the ability to work remotely. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, meant that for many employees remote work ceased to be just a benefit and became a necessity or a possibility to reduce the risk of infection with the virus<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, remote work is a threat to the performance of economic, social and development functions through work. The areas of threats may include the issues of potentially lower wages and the costs of labor incurred by the employee not considered by the employer, through threats to social relations and the risk

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<sup>1</sup> M. Król, *Teleworking and workaholism*, “Economic Studies” 148(2013), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> E. Wiśniewska, *Work in students’ hierarchy of values (on the example of the State School of Higher Professional Education in Plock)*, “Społeczeństwo – Edukacja – Język” 3(2015), p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> M.J. Broniewska, *Exploitation of Modern Trends of Psychology in Manager’s Work*, “Acta Universitatis Lodzianis Folia Oeconomica” 234(2010), p. 435.

<sup>4</sup> A. Dolot, *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on remote work – the employee’s perspective*, “E-mentor” 1(2020), p. 36.

of employee isolation, to difficult areas of self-fulfillment, both in the professional and personal sphere<sup>5</sup>. One of the main goals of teleworking is to reduce transport time. The attractiveness of remote work is especially important in countries struggling with the problems of urban congestion and time-consuming travel to work, which often translate into problems with the balance between work and family<sup>6</sup>. The aim of the article is to present positive and negative aspects of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research presented in the article was aimed at assessing changes in working conditions and starting remote work.

## Loss of job because of COVID-19 pandemic

The situation of job loss like any other psychological situation includes objective and subjective aspects. Objective factors include: the material and social situation of the person and their family, the mode of dismissal, the period of unemployment, the phase of life, the unemployment rate in the country and region, age, and gender. In addition to external factors, internal factors are responsible for the specificity of the response to job deprivation. These include certain temperamental traits, valuing and attitudes toward work, education, individual coping style, cognitive functioning, for example, attributional processes regarding reasons for job loss and opportunities for new employment, the place and importance of work identity to the sense of personal identity, and social support<sup>7</sup>. The most important psychological variables mediating the process of coping with job loss include: the problem of professional, social, and family identity, the feeling of loss of control over the environment, the attribution of the causes of events, the amount of input into the coping process and the associated balance of positive and negative consequences of coping actions<sup>8</sup>.

At the time of the outbreak of the pandemic, and especially in the period of the greatest restrictions, the professional situation of many people in Poland changed. The income side of many household budgets has changed. Based on the CAWI survey conducted in April 2020 on a sample of 1,000 respondents, the information was obtained that the loss of earning potential caused by the pandemic affects more than a quarter of the families of the surveyed Internet users, which constitutes 27% of the respondents. Moreover, a quarter of the respondents, i.e., 25%, were people who either had lose their jobs themselves (i.e., they were dismissed by their current employer or had to close their business) or had seen someone from their immediate family lost their job, which was the case in a greater number of cases. 2% of respondents were those most affected

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<sup>5</sup> A. Jeran, *Remote work as a source of problems in the implementation of work functions*, "Opuscula Sociologica" 2(2016), p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> D.G. Tremblay, L. Thomsin, *Telework and mobile working: analysis of its benefits and drawbacks*, "Work Innovation" 1(2012), p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> A. Suchańska, A. Świdkiewicz, *Psychosocial determinants of reactions to job loss*, "Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny" 2(2004), p. 248.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

by the epidemic. This is because both the respondent and a family member (at least one person) had lost their job in their household. The rest, i.e., less than three-quarters (73%) – this type of consequences of the epidemic did not apply. It is also worth noting that women (33%) were more likely to complain about the negative effects of the epidemic in employment than men (21%). Most often, people who declare the lowest per capita income (up to PLN 999 – 45%), as well as negatively assess their material conditions (52%) report the loss of a job in one form or another. This type of problem more often affects middle-aged respondents – from 35 to 54 (35–44 years old - 34% and 45–54 years old – 33%) than others. They are also minimally more likely to apply to respondents with secondary and vocational education (31% and 29% respectively), living in medium-sized cities (from 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants – 30%) and large, though not the largest cities (from 100,000 to 500,000 inhabitants – 32%). Among the socio-professional groups, people who were currently unemployed (69%) and those who were self-employed (54%) most often mentioned the loss of the current earning potential. Unskilled workers (37%), farmers (36%) and a heterogeneous group of housewives and others (36%) complained about it relatively more often than others. Among the people most affected by the epidemic who lost their jobs and lost their earning potential, the situation of families already affected by unemployment, in which someone else lost their job because of the epidemic (13%) seems particularly difficult. The most common situation is the loss of a job by someone from the respondent's household, less than a quarter of all respondents declare that due to the epidemic condition of their families, this type of employment reduction was affected (24%). Such a situation was mentioned by as many as three-fifths of the unemployed (60%), and the self-employed respondents (46%) indicated this option more often than others, negatively assessing the material conditions of life (49%) and declaring the lowest income per person in the family (41%)<sup>9</sup>.

Based on the research conducted by the Activation Foundation on people not working with disabilities, it has been shown that the largest group among the unemployed respondents are people with a moderate degree of disability (74.4%), then light (16.7%) and severe (8.9%). The in-depth analysis concerned the group of non-working people, i.e., 21.2% of the respondents. Among the unemployed, 34.6% mentioned the end of the term of a fixed-term contract with the employer as the cause of job loss. 21.8% of respondents cited the coronavirus pandemic as the reason for leaving work. The respondents who were unemployed on the day of the survey, most often indicated that this state lasted over 3 months (77.0%). For 16.6% of respondents, the period of unemployment was from 1 to 3 months, and for 6% – less than 1 month. People who indicated having lost their jobs because of the coronavirus pandemic were also asked to provide a more detailed answer on why they had lost their job. The vast majority (82.3%) indicated that it was a layoff by the employer due to economic problems caused by the pandemic. 17.7% of the respondents said that they had decided to dismiss themselves

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<sup>9</sup> CBOS, *Skutki epidemii koronawirusa w życiu zawodowym i budżetach domowych*, Warszawa 2020, p. 2.

from work for fear of falling ill<sup>10</sup>. Research conducted by International Labor Organization<sup>11</sup> showed that workers around the world have experienced many of the effects of the pandemic. One of the main consequences of COVID-19 has been the reduction of working hours and, in some cases, job loss due to pandemic fear and reduced mobility. According to research, the percentage of employee losses varied depending on the region and time, as well as time and extent of blockade. In Africa, only 34.6% of domestic workers were severely affected on March 15, 2020, but that figure had risen to 78.7% by April 15, 2020. In the Americas, where the number of new cases per day remains high, approximately 74% of domestic workers continued to feel a significant impact until June 4, 2020. In Asia and the Pacific, 79.4% of domestic workers experienced a significant impact on the workforce by the pandemic until May 15, 2020, but a much higher proportion (87.5% were affected in the South Asia sub-region). Finally, in Northern, Southern and Western Europe, the impact varied from 36.6% on March 15 to 50.1% on April 15, 2020. These numbers are significantly lower than in other regions, in part because more domestic workers have formal employment as measured by social security registration. 76% of respondents – domestic workers – were employed informally. This means that most domestic workers who had lost their jobs or experienced a reduction in working time were not registered with the social security system and thus were not have unemployment insurance. While several countries extended income support to informal workers during a pandemic, it was very rarely available to domestic workers. Loss of income, lack of access to social security and lack of income support have led many home workers and their families even further into poverty.

## **The importance of remote work**

Remote work is defined in literature as “work carried out outside the employer’s seat, depending on the form: at the employee’s place of residence or elsewhere, sometimes on the move”<sup>12</sup>, for example, on the train, while traveling.

The characteristics of remote work include:

- the ability to perform professional duties from anywhere in the world,
- the necessity of Internet access,
- lack of daily contact with colleagues, especially in a direct form (“face to face”),
- working time, which depends on the needs of the enterprise employing a specific employee, as well as the speed and efficiency of the employee’s activities,

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<sup>10</sup> S. Daniłowska, A. Gawska, 2020, *Work and the coronavirus. Will people with disabilities lose their jobs?* <<https://aktywizacja.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Badanie-osób-z-niepełnosprawnościami-Praca-a-koronawirus.-Czy-osoby-z-niepełnosprawnościami-stracą-pracę.pdf>>, access: 30.01.2021.

<sup>11</sup> International Labour Organization, *Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on loss of jobs and hours among domestic workers*, <[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_747961.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_747961.pdf)>, access: 30.01.2021.

<sup>12</sup> A. Jeran, *Remote work as a source of problems in the implementation of work functions*, p. 50.

- flexibility,
- independent determination of working hours, sequence of duties<sup>13</sup>.

It is worth noting that remote workers can work not only from home, but also from other places, for example, from a café, a restaurant, a train. Additionally, the so-called co-working offices (in many shopping malls, for example in Cracow, Warsaw, Wrocław), the main feature of which is access to the Internet, a printer, a kitchen with a coffee machine, and the ability to exchange thoughts with other people working in such a place. Therefore, we can also speak of nomadic teleworking, the characteristic feature of which is constant movement, changes and moving from home to café, and from café to guesthouse in the mountains, etc.<sup>14</sup> Remote work is not a new phenomenon, as it began to develop already in the 1970s, although the dynamic increase in the number of employees performing their duties remotely occurred in the 1990s in the United States and in the first and second decades of the 21st century in Poland. In 1980, the number of remote employees in the USA was 100,000, while in 1990 it was already 2.5 million, and in 2006 as much as 30 million<sup>15</sup>.

The most important factors that influence the increase in interest in remote work include:

- factors on the part of the employee, for example: the desire for greater flexibility, the ability to reconcile professional life with the personal and family spheres, frustration resulting from the necessity to travel home-work every day; antipathy towards colleagues,
- factors on the part of the employer, for example: the desire to reduce the costs of work organization, adapt to the needs of employees, especially people from the “Y” and “Z” generation, as well as the need to act in accordance with global trends<sup>16</sup>.

It is worth noting that remote work is also determined by many factors related to the economic development of countries, as well as to globalization and dynamic changes in the field of the Internet and technological matters. In addition, positions and new professions are created that can be freely performed at home, and examples of such posts include programmer, UX (user experience) designer, copywriter, or computer graphic designer<sup>17</sup>. From an economic point of view, the positive effects include lowering employment costs, both for the employer and the employee. For example, a company does not have to provide a workplace, purchase a computer or laptop, and allocate space for an employee. In addition, in the case of remote work, subordinates less often decide on vacation or sick leaves, because they are anywhere else and can work from home or, for

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<sup>13</sup> K. Sęczkowska, *Psychosocial consequences of remote work*, “Problems of Humanities and Social Sciences. Theory and Practice” 2(2019), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> J. Wiśniewski, *The essence of telework*, “Studies in the Field of Law, Administration and Management at the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz” 5(2014), p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> M. Hauk, *JCM Model by Hackman and Oldham and job satisfaction among teleworkers*, “Education of Economists & Managers” 2(2012), p. 135.

<sup>16</sup> K. Lorenz, *Teleworking and the environment*, “Scientific Journals of the University of Szczecin” 27(2011), p. 153.

<sup>17</sup> K. Sęczkowska, *Psychosocial consequences of remote work*, p. 12.

example, from a hotel room. Employees, in turn, do not have to bear the costs of commuting to work or having meals in the office. There are also significant time savings, and the employee can live outside the agglomeration, thanks to which his living costs are lower<sup>18</sup>. However, the most important are psychosocial benefits, which relate to various spheres of the employee's functioning. First, flexibility of working time is important, as it gives the employee greater possibilities of reconciling private life with the professional sphere. Instead of a conflict between spheres of work and home, the phenomenon of facilitation may appear, i.e., facilitating everyday functioning, may emerge. In addition, the balance between the two most important spheres of life has an appropriate effect on the emotions and behavior of the employee, because he can freely contact his family, he has time for his spouse, children, and himself. Another important benefit is the awareness of the possibility of performing the work in hours adjusted to your activity, as well as your chronotype. For example, an individual prefers to sleep until noon and work in the evenings, has such an option and does not have to explain his preferences to anyone. In the case of parents, the ties with the child (especially those requiring constant care) are not temporarily severed because of going to work<sup>19</sup>. It is also recognized that, thanks to remote work, it is possible to experience a higher level of satisfaction with work and life<sup>20</sup>. Lower stress and setting up your daily schedule make the job satisfaction increase. Another important point is commitment to work, which can be higher, as also loyalty to the employer. A person who is satisfied with the job, the conditions, and the fact that they can perform their duties remotely will most likely be more loyal to their employer and recommend them to other candidates to a greater extent<sup>21</sup>. It can happen that remote work becomes a factor that positively affects social life as the employee has more private time. Remote work can also definitely improve the state of physical and mental health since the employee has more time for physical activity and own hobbies. The flexibility of working remotely can be associated with a greater sense of control as well as greater satisfaction with life. Another decisive advantage is the lack of noise and noise in the workplace, which can improve concentration, increase creativity, and make the performance of duties much faster and more efficient<sup>22</sup>.

In 2005, a study conducted by Merkevičius showed that companies in Lithuania lack the skills to effectively organize virtual work. According to a study published by Raišiene in 2013, only 9% of 560 surveyed employees had the opportunity to work remotely. The results of research conducted by Nakrošiene and Butkevičiene in 2016 showed that remote work arrangements do not tend to spread rapidly in Lithuania – the percentage of teleworkers remained almost unchanged between 2013 and 2015. Moreover, results of a survey conducted by

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<sup>18</sup> K. Lorenz, *Teleworking and the environment*, p. 153.

<sup>19</sup> K. Sęczkowska, *Psychosocial consequences of remote work*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> K. Lorenz, *Teleworking and the environment*, p. 153.

<sup>21</sup> A. Ślęzak, *Review of research on teleworking*, "Studies and Works at the Faculty of Economics and Management" 30(2012), p. 221.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 221.

Eurofound in 2017 showed that Lithuania has one of the lowest percentages (13%, EU average being 18%) of employees working remotely compared to other EU countries. However, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic has led to a massive relocation of jobs to workers' homes, and many companies around the world introduced mandatory teleworking. In Lithuania, a national decision on teleworking has also been adopted. On March 14, 2020, quarantine was announced in the Republic of Lithuania due to COVID-19. During the quarantine, public and private organizations faced an urgent need to digitize their activities: educational activities at universities, schools and kindergartens transferred to virtual space, e-commerce and electronic mail delivery flourished on the market. Then, about 40% of workers in Lithuania started working from home. So far, the teleworking initiative in Lithuania has come from employees, during the quarantine period, the company's management began to understand the advantages of teleworking in terms of resource management and business<sup>23</sup>.

### **Negative aspects of working remotely**

Remote work also has negative psychosocial consequences and risks. First, the small number and low quality of contacts between colleagues is crucial<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, communication is carried out by various means of distance communication, such as: instant messaging, e-mails, employee forums and telephone calls or video communication. On the one hand, such communication can be a source of much needed and specific information, for example listed in points, but on the other hand, the lack of face-to-face contact may cause certain communication problems, including misunderstanding the other person, or ambiguity. Extroverted people who need daily contact with other employees may experience a drop in energy with this type of communication, as well as an aversion to their daily duties. In this case, the solution may be to intensify family or social contacts. Another important negative consequence of working remotely is workaholicism. An employee who can independently shape his working time, as well as decide on additional orders for higher earnings, may fall into a so-called a vicious circle of work and, instead of spending time resting or with the family, option for continuous work<sup>25</sup>. The employer also has no control over the employee and therefore a mutual distrust or loyalty may arise. There may also be low productivity results, which may be related to lower remuneration for the group of remote workers. Another psychosocial consequence may be a reduction in the level of concentration, as there can be many distractions in the home environment, as well as the desire to perform additional typical household activities. It is for

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<sup>23</sup> A.G. Raisiene, V. Rapuano, K. Varkuleviciute, *Working from Home-Who Is Happy? A Survey of Lithuania's Employees during the COVID-19 Quarantine Period*, "Sustainability" 12(2020), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> A. Jeran, *Remote work as a source of problems in the implementation of work functions*, "Opuscula Sociologica" 2(2016), p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> K. Sęczkowska, *Psychosocial consequences of remote work*, p. 12.

this reason that the employee can be less creative or perform his duties “at the last minute”. It is worth noting, however, that a lot depends on the personality and professional experience of a given employee<sup>26</sup>. A common problem in remote work is the difficulty of reconciling the comfort of home with professional activities. Often employees complain that other household members interrupt their performance of specific tasks or make it difficult to achieve the appropriate level of concentration, their attention is distracted. Employees are often left to themselves in the context of creating appropriate conditions in which they perform work. By this, we mean especially the ergonomics of the workplace, the selection of equipment and work environment equipment (selection of chairs, lighting, taking the wrong position during work, etc.). These difficulties significantly translate into lack of comfort at work, which, after a few hours of work, causes the feeling various ailments (including back pain, shoulder pain, headaches and dizziness, wrist pain). The phenomenon of dehumanization of work can be generally defined as a system of working conditions that constitute an undesirable burden on the body or as a discrepancy between human capabilities and needs, and broadly understood environmental working conditions. The classic effects of dehumanization of work for the organization may be a decrease or low level of productivity and quality of work, high absenteeism and turnover of staff, low level of motivation to work, an increase in the number of various accidents at work, negative economic effects, mainly in the form of an increase in the costs of operating the organization, but also not taking advantage of development opportunities. Negative results of the lack of work dehumanization for humans include various diseases and behavioral disorders (e.g., disproportionate reaction to the stimulus, lack of concentration, destruction of equipment, alcohol abuse), excessive fatigue, mental malaise. These factors often result in a deterioration of the employee’s relationship with both superiors and colleagues. Ultimately, all the above makes the work itself less and less interesting for the person providing it. The main reason is that it becomes a set of tasks that we want to perform as quickly as possible and forget about them, and thus significantly reduce commitment<sup>27</sup>. Remote work cannot be performed in all professions. IT specialists and network administrators, academics, service technicians, sales representatives, translators, and journalists are best suited for remote work<sup>28</sup>.

Karolina Karbownik has that among the most important disadvantages of remote work are:

- lack of full control, which may translate into a lower level of effectiveness,
- failure to develop a standard that may affect the longer achievement of the set goals,
- conducting private conversations at the employer’s expense, which may increase the costs of employing such an employee,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> K. Jach, *Success in remote work is possible*, “Work Safety” 2(2016), pp. 6–7.

<sup>28</sup> K. Lorenz, *Teleworking and the environment*, p. 157.



- lack of willingness to work, which also reduces employee potential,
- slowness, which can also reduce the level of effectiveness and the development of a standard<sup>29</sup>.

Research conducted in April 2020 by AGENDA<sup>30</sup> showed that 35% of employees see an inconvenience in the lack of an ergonomic desk, monitor or printer in their homes, while 29% would like to have more contact with their supervisors and team members. A significant obstacle in the effective performance of work is also the need to maintain a high level of self-discipline (28%), which is not so simple due to the large number of distractors in the home space (18%), sometimes also other household members (16%). The conditions in which we work are difficult – for everyone. Parents do not know what to put their hands into, they are worried about the future of their children (exams, baccalaureate). Singles stay at home all day – alone with their fears about the future, work, and health. Most of the respondents declare having equipment and tools for work provided by the employer. It is worse, however, in soft training areas. From the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been talk of its negative impact on the global economy. Meanwhile, now (as of April 15), some companies have not taken any action yet. Some of them either increased the scope and number of duties towards employees or fired them<sup>31</sup>.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, surveys were conducted using a computer assisted Web interview technique that involved sending out links with access to a survey questionnaire and collecting data electronically. A total of 215 people participated in the survey, with 201 people providing remote work during the pandemic period, or over 93% of the recipients<sup>32</sup>. The biggest inconvenience of working remotely indicated by respondents was a lack of social interaction, and the least inconvenience was a decrease in motivation. Respondents indicated that the decrease in motivation had the least impact of all the inconveniences presented on their comfort with working remotely, with the decrease in engagement itself especially noticeable in the vigor dimension. The analysis of the data obtained allowed us to conclude that employees of public enterprises more often felt inconvenienced while working remotely due to the lack of direct communication and cooperation (almost 74% of indications) than employees of private enterprises (less than 43% of indications in this group)<sup>33</sup>. This phenomenon can be explained using more advanced communication solutions by private companies, which were

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<sup>29</sup> K. Karbownik, *Benefits and threats resulting from employing employees in the form of teleworking*, “Scientific Journals of the Częstochowa University of Technology” 20(2015), pp. 163–176.

<sup>30</sup> Insight Lab, *Research on the opinions of employers and employees on the functioning of companies during the epidemic*, <[https://biznes.newseria.pl/files/\\_uploaded/dp\\_2020\\_05\\_11\\_0943\\_INSIGHT-LAB-BADANIE-FUNKCJONOWANIA-FIRM-W-OKRESIE-EPIDEMII.pdf](https://biznes.newseria.pl/files/_uploaded/dp_2020_05_11_0943_INSIGHT-LAB-BADANIE-FUNKCJONOWANIA-FIRM-W-OKRESIE-EPIDEMII.pdf)>, access: 30.01.2021.

<sup>31</sup> *Research report on remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic*, <[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/praca\\_zdalna\\_w\\_czasie\\_pandemii\\_covid-19\\_raport\\_anna\\_dolot\\_all\\_1.pdf](https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/praca_zdalna_w_czasie_pandemii_covid-19_raport_anna_dolot_all_1.pdf)>, access: 30.01.2021.

<sup>32</sup> K. Mierzejewska, M. Chomicki, *Psycho-Social Aspects of Remote Work: The Results of Research Carried Out during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, “Zeszyty Naukowe” 3(2020), pp. 31–44.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 41–42.

a better substitute for direct relationships. More effective process architecture and an associated organizational culture focused on efficient task execution may also have been a significant factor<sup>34</sup>.

Anxiety over the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted employees' mental health. Prolonged elevated stress levels, coupled with continued remote work, can result in disrupted employee well-being. According to a Hays Poland survey, one in three employees experienced mental health deterioration because of the pandemic. The pandemic period and a variety of negative experiences in the personal and professional spheres have made employees more susceptible to a decline in well-being. Mental condition determines not only the overall life satisfaction, or the results achieved at work, but also the body's resilience, which is extremely important during a pandemic. The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which it is possible to make full use of one's abilities. A person who enjoys good mental health is better able to cope with stress, solve problems and can take the right actions, making them a productive employee. Taking care of the mental health of the workforce is therefore beneficial to both the organization and the individuals within it. The manager's lack of direct contact with team members makes it harder to spot potential problems employees may be facing. Even when a team leader takes a deliberate approach to building engagement while working remotely, stays in constant contact with subordinates, offers them the support they need, and holds regular, informal online meetings, it's harder to spot an employee's health issues in this situation. After all, it's easier for a person who's facing a downturn in well-being to stay positive during a 20-minute video call than it is to stay positive during an 8-hour workplace visit. This is one of the reasons why the pandemic negatively affects the mental health of employees<sup>35</sup>.

## Conclusion

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have lost their jobs. However, some companies have given their employees the opportunity to work remotely.

The presented research shows that remote work makes it possible to reconcile professional and personal duties. Remote work can, therefore, be one of the benefits for the employee, as well as contribute to generating savings for the employer.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has also caused the occurrence of a significant number of factors that made it difficult to perform daily professional tasks. The most difficult difficulties were the lack of social contacts and isolation. Elevated stress levels, coupled with continued remote work, can result in disrupted employee well-being. One in three workers suffer from mental health

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<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 42.

<sup>35</sup> *Pandemic affects workers' mental health*, <<https://www.hays.pl/blog/insights/pandemia-wplywa-na-kondycje-psychiczna-pracownikow>>, access: 01.04.2021.

deterioration and the beginning of remote work. A mentally healthy employee is better able to cope with stress, solve problems and can take the right actions and is also more productive. With this definition in mind, taking care of the mental health of human resources is beneficial to both the organization and the individuals within it.

An important element of building a remote work model should therefore be systematic communication between the employer and the employee, maintaining contacts not only aimed at achieving goals and professional tasks, but also maintaining social relations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a large proportion of people with children have reported having difficulties working remotely due to the need to care for them. Another negative aspect of remote work is the feeling of being constantly at work, which in turn leads to a feeling of constant exhaustion, both physical and mental exhaustion, and even professional burnout. One of the most difficult remote jobs is the lack of social contacts and isolation, which translates into the lack of proper functioning of the employee in the organization. Given the global impact of the pandemic, it could also be noted that home workers who were in confinement and who had not previously been registered with the social security system were at greater risk of losing their jobs and income and thus significantly affected. On the other hand, they encountered domestic workers who were closed but were registered with the social security system less risk of job or income loss during a pandemic. An example of a change in attitude to remote work is the situation in Lithuania. Previously, the teleworking initiative in Lithuania came from employees. However, during the quarantine period, the management of many companies began to understand the advantages of teleworking in terms of resource management and business.

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## REMOTE WORK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### SUMMARY

The beginning of the COVID-19 virus epidemic is having an impact on radical changes in the labor market. The difficult economic situation is a challenge for employers, candidates, and recruiters. In recent months, the recruitment market has seen a decline in the work forces, redundancy, and a reduction in salaries. As a result of this situation, some workplaces have introduced the remote work model. The possibility of remote work can be a good solution for many employees, but in some cases, it can be a significant inconvenience, especially for employees who have underage children and perform their work duties at home. The aim of the article is to present the positive and negative aspects of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research presented in the article was aimed at assessing changes in working conditions and starting remote work. The positive effects of changes in workplaces include saving time, adjusting work to personal needs, and work-life balance. The disadvantages of taking up remote work include lack of direct contact with co-workers, blurring of boundaries between private and professional life, the necessity of maintaining a constant presence at work, lack of social ties and isolation, which have been identified as the most significant obstacles to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the negative aspects of working remotely, the respondents more often declared their willingness to work remotely also after the pandemic ends.

**KEY WORDS:** workplaces, COVID-19 pandemic, model of remote work, employment number