

Strategic Integration Of Remote Work In Human Resources Management: A Literature Review

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Abstract: The coronavirus pandemic hit the world with such speed and ferocity that there was no preparation for it. Governments, communities and businesses put in place short-term solutions that allowed them to continue to function while they figured out what a long-term response to the pandemic should look like. The aim of the work is to provide an overview of the most significant challenges faced by companies that apply the form of remote work when managing human resources. The paper presents an overview of the research results so far in the subject area. The key topics that have been identified as a determinant of remote work are: the personality characteristics of individuals, the physical and social environment of the household and the company organizational culture. Literature sources include scientific works published in scientific databases: EBSCO, Google Scholar, SCIndeks, Emerald, Jstor, Taylor and Francis and Wiley. The analysis method was used for the elaboration of the literature and the method of synthesis in order to systematically give an overview of the challenges and perspectives that remote work entails. The limitations of the work are reflected in the impossibility of accessing all articles dealing with the topic of remote work.

Keywords: remote work, human resources.

1. Introduction

The subject of the research is the phenomenon of remote work, which became a widespread business practice during the COVID-19 pandemic as a strategic response in human resource management to protect the health of employees and maintain business continuity [36]. The pandemic that swept the world made a large part of the workforce unable to travel to work. This resulted in the fact that employers and employees were forced to look for alternative forms of work. Due to the pandemic, most, if not all, workers have experienced telecommuting [40]. The aim of the work is to provide an overview of the most significant challenges faced by companies that apply the form of remote work when managing human resources. Today, work tasks are often performed from home with the help of skills and knowledge that employees have. In such circumstances, the role of human resources management, which is faced with new sudden circumstances and the transition to new forms of work, is not negligible [16]. The pandemic period crystallized inequality in terms of gender and the distribution of household chores. Namely, according to Kol and Kurt [15], it is difficult for women to balance between business and private life, considering that they have additional obligations regarding household chores for children and the like. In addition to these challenges, the entire world faced economic challenges in the health, manufacturing and education sectors, and the distribution chains, travel and hospitality industries were also disrupted [32]. According to Parent – Thirion, Biletta, Cabrita, Vargas, Vermeylen, Wilczynska, et al. [25] in 2015, 12% of employees in the European Union worked remotely, while according to a report by the United States Department of Labor, a quarter of employees worked from home in the same year, and in 2022, more than one third (34%).

2. Defining remote work

The coronavirus pandemic caused changes in the organization and way of managing human resources at many employers in the world, including in the Republic of Croatia. Many employees who until then worked in office jobs due to the pandemic of the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, then worked from home. Due to the increasing use of modern, telecommunication, information and multimedia technologies, this way of working is foreseen for many in the future as well [5]. Working from home has become an increasingly accepted practice globally. Given the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, this type of work organization has become very common. Working from home is associated with several physical and mental health outcomes [11]. Modern business conditions have crystallized work from home (WFH or remote work - RW) as one of the benefits offered to employees in the new turbulent working conditions. The coronavirus pandemic intensified the need to introduce this way of working and contributed to the actualization of this topic through a research

focus. A large number of recent research in the field of remote work shows how topical the topic is. Remote work is not a completely new concept of work and its beginnings go back far before the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic. Namely, working from home was represented even before the industrial revolution, but it took its modern form with the advent of telecommunication solutions. Jack Nilles is considered to be the creator of the term "remote work", who used the original term "telecommuting" to work on a NASA project. After him, in 1983, Margarethe Olson replaced the term "telecommuting" with the term "remote work", which means work that takes place outside the organizational place and working hours [24]. During the coronavirus pandemic, starting in 2020, acclimatization to new working conditions began, which it seems will have long-term implications for human resources and management. It is considered that hybrid forms of work will inevitably occupy a significant place in the organization of work in the future [29]. Based on this, one definition can be highlighted that contains the common elements of the above and that remote work is a form of work according to which employees perform their work duties with the use of information and communication technology tools, in places that are physically distant from the employer's location and which these activities receive monetary or non-monetary compensation. Remote work is viewed in relation to the strategic management of human resources. Therefore, human resources management implies "an implementation managerial function whose goal is to select human resources that have been identified on all grounds through the managerial function of organizing, and through a wide variety of activities that in any way regulate relations between the organization and its human resources, create preconditions that engaged human resources are satisfied and highly motivated" [17]. Given that there is insufficient empirical research on the connection between remote work and strategic human resources management, this represents a part of economic reality where there is a research gap. In addition to the health consequences, the coronavirus pandemic left a deep mark on the emergence of innovative forms of work, which became common for many people around the world [22]. Given the emergence of new trends in the organization of workplaces, companies are forced to accept and understand remote work as an opportunity to improve human resource management strategies and policies, work atmosphere, and improve employee satisfaction and health [2]. There are numerous challenges faced by companies after the coronavirus pandemic. It is the same with the introduction of remote work, whose impacts and effects need to be identified, measured and understood. Globalization and internationalization of business has led to the development of global information and communication networks. Improving the results of remote work includes strong support from the governing structures of a country, organizational support and technological equipment of the company. The aforementioned factors represent the basis of employee satisfaction and promote their success and efficiency in performing work tasks [23]. Remote work has become a key organizational tool that enables efficient management of human resources in an increasingly competitive global market. Although this phenomenon was represented in more recent years, before the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, today it seems that it is becoming an unavoidable form of work and the "new normal" in modern organizations [16]. Remote work is a flexible form of work according to which employees work in locations that are physically distant from their offices or production facilities, where communication with other employees is based on the use of information technologies [3]. In 1996, the International Labor Organization Convention on Home Work No. 177, in which work from home is treated as work performed by a person who is listed as a worker at home, in his or her home or in another place of his or her choice, except employer's workspace; for work compensation; which results in a product or service specified by the employer, regardless of who provides the equipment, material or other means of production. Empirical research on remote work that has been conducted so far has focused on research conducted on employees from the education sector, the information and communication technology sector, healthcare, banking and finance, the manufacturing sector, and so on.

3. Key determinants of remote work

The analysis of the collected scientific papers gives an overview of the research results according to the key determinants of remote work and the challenges that they bring with them. Personality characteristics of individuals that represent the patterns, opinions, feelings and behavior of people have been identified as a significant factor in remote work (Diener, Lucas and Cummings, 2019). The examination of personality characteristics of individuals in the work environment was conducted by a group of authors in 2021. The research focus was on studying extroverted and introverted personality types in order to see certain benefits for the organization (Blevins, Stackhouse and Dionne, 2021). Hardy, Marcolino and Fontanari (2021) believe that employee productivity is related to the degree of socialization of the work group. Thus, a group of employees characterized by introversion will be less productive, but they can contribute to greater productivity to a group of individuals with an extroverted personality type. Understanding the personality characteristics of individuals represents a major challenge in the efficient management of human resources. Namely, measuring the extroversion and introversion of individuals enables managers to make easier decisions regarding organizing and managing remote work. When studying telecommuting as part of strategic human resource management, the

personality characteristics of individuals represent a very important challenge. Namely, it is necessary to look at the degree of extroversion or introversion of the employees, and measure them. Extroversion is characterized by traits such as sociability, assertiveness and cheerfulness. Extroverts seek challenges and excitement and enjoy being the center of attention. Extroverts thrive surrounded by people and feel energetic when interacting with others (Guy Evans, 2023). To measure these constructs, the Eysenck personality questionnaire developed by Hans and Sybil Eysenck is used to measure two broad dimensions of extroversion - introversion and neuroticism - stability, the so-called Eysenck's Personality Inventory (EPI) [34]. The questionnaire consisted of 57 statements that Eysenck, Eysenck and Barrett in 1985. revised and created the Revised Eysenck Questionnaire (EPQR-S), which has been widely used in research. In this regard, the indicators for measuring extroversion and introversion are: talkativeness and liveliness of individuals, desire to meet new people, relaxation and enjoyment of parties, taking the initiative and meeting new friends, contribution to a positive atmosphere when socializing, desire for an individual to stay away when social events, desire to socialize, enjoyment of crowds and excitement, reclusiveness when socializing, others think you are lively, and ability to organize fun [7]. Mohamad, Gale, Becerik – Gerber and Roll [18] examined the impact of the physical and social environment of remote employees on their productivity. The results showed that employees who have teenage children, who communicate more with colleagues and who have a special office for working from home, are more productive.

In addition to the physical environment and the social environment of households, it has its significance in the study of remote work. It represents a set of functional and quality relationships between individuals, such as the ability to provide help or support [36]. Numerous studies were conducted during the pandemic coronavirus, and many factors affecting remote work were observed, but on the other hand, the effects of remote work on various factors were also taken into account. One of those factors that are affected by remote work is the social environment of employees, that is, mutual family relationships [41]. Namely, spending free time with family, the balance between private and business life, and socio-demographic characteristics of employees who apply remote work, such as: gender, age, marital status and level of education, were considered. The results of research into the connection between the physical and social environment of employees and remote work showed that increased employee flexibility and reduced travel time to and from work contribute to the positive effects of working from home [43]. Stone and Ozimek [37] also empirically analyzed the relationship between the social environment and remote work, and came to the conclusion that flexible working hours enable spending more time with the family, but also that it increased the birth rate in the United States among women with higher level of education and higher average monthly income. The results of this study can serve as a recommendation to state institutions that advocate their support for marriage unions and pro-natal policies, to support work flexibility in order to strengthen the demographic image of a national economy. In addition to positive effects, remote work also has negative consequences. This was shown by the results of research conducted in 2022 in China. Namely, it has been shown that remote work has a negative effect on interpersonal relationships in the family, thereby reducing well-being at the workplace [42]. In their research, Perry, Carlson, Kacmar, Wan and Thompson [27] deal with the influence of household members on stress and the effects of remote work. Namely, they believe that constant work interruptions caused by household members are triggers of stress and that this reflects on the emotional state of the employee and his work productivity. The physical environment represents a set of spatial and ergonomic dimensions that must be ensured in order to be able to implement remote work in the household [20]. In 2023, a group of Italian authors developed an instrument for measuring the convenience of the physical environment. It is a five-point Likert-type scale. The identified lower-order constructs are: Acoustics of the space - the indicators of which are: the silence of the room, the degree to which sounds from the environment are heard; visual comfort, and its questioning attitudes are: sufficient illumination of the workplace, satisfaction with lighting, availability of natural light in the room; the quality of the furniture will be measured by the following questions: quality-made furniture in the room where remote work is carried out, the work surfaces are made of quality materials that ensure durability and resistance to damage; the safety of the physical environment will be measured by sitting indicators: free movement in the room, the possibility of movement without tripping over other objects, freedom of movement in the room; the usability of the space will be measured by questioning attitudes about: having all the necessary equipment that is necessary for remote work, satisfaction with the equipment that is available in the given physical environment where remote work is carried out and the possibility of performing work tasks comfortably [20].

Along with the physical environment and the social environment, it has its own importance in the study of remote work. It represents a set of functional and quality relationships between individuals, such as the ability to provide help or support [36]. The social environment, as a construct, is measured by a scale developed by Morgeson and Humphrey [19] in 2006 called the Work Design Questionnaire (WDC), and the questionnaire attitudes used to measure the social environment are: friendliness of colleagues with whom I work, possibility of developing camaraderie with colleagues and concern superiors for employee health [36].

Furthermore, Huff [13] defines the organizational culture of a company as a set of symbols and rituals, that is, as a psychological property of the company, historically determined and constructed by society, which is difficult to change. A strong organizational culture creates employees who are dedicated and committed, and reduces employee turnover and strengthens their connection [29]. The most significant organizational factors that influenced work productivity were: independence and encouragement of employees, independence and a stimulating environment [26]. Research conducted in Malaysia treats organizational support as an acknowledgment of the organization to the employee in the context of valuing his contribution and engagement [21]. The paper focused on the work environment and technological support, as important organizational factors that determine the work productivity and well-being of employees who work remotely [31]. The research that was conducted in the territory of Palestine examined the influence of organizational factors such as management support, available technological infrastructure and employee education on their productivity during remote work [38]. In 2020, Khan, Tarofder and Azam [14], among the organizational factors they observed, include reward systems, employee training and job security, and analyze their relationship to motivation and work productivity. In 2006, Cameron and Quinn developed an instrument for measuring the organizational culture of a company called the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) [35]. The measuring instrument for measuring organizational culture contains six dimensions, and each of them has 4 statements to which 100 points are distributed, according to their applicability to a specific organization. These dimensions are: the dominant characteristics of the organization, whose questionable attitudes are: the status of the organization, organizational leadership, which will be measured with a questionable attitude about: leadership characteristics, employee management, which will be measured with questionable attitudes about: employee freedom, achievements and employee safety, attachment to the organization is measured questioning attitudes about: loyalty and trust of employees in the organization, achievement of goals, organizational rules; strategic potential will be measured by questioning attitudes about: high level of trust in employees, sense of competition, control and stability among employees; and success criteria that are measured by questioning attitudes about: teamwork, employee innovation and cost reduction [33].

The organizational culture of the company represents a very important dimension of remote work. Namely, Polzin [28] identified three components of organizational culture that determine the productivity of remote work, namely: connection and communication between employees, value system in terms of expectations from employees and employee behavior as guidelines for encouraging desirable behavior when working remotely. The result of such an organizational culture of the company, establishing clear and unambiguous values, encourages employee engagement and productivity [28].

There are numerous challenges that arise when introducing remote work as part of strategic human resource management. One of these challenges is understanding the characteristics of introverted or extroverted personalities of individuals who are employed in various jobs and who work from home or in any other place. Some will be more and others less inclined to work remotely, that is, to contribute differently to the productivity and economy of the company.

4. Effects of remote work

The effects of remote work are reflected in an excellent way for employees to better organize their flexible working hours, which can increase their motivation for work, productivity and decrease costs. On the other hand, a significant challenge for company management is the lower intensity of communication between employees, as well as the fact that not every employee is capable of effectively performing work tasks remotely. In this regard, hybrid forms of work are being considered in order to reduce the costs and, possibly, the negative effects of remote work [6].

Research on the relationship between employee personality characteristics and their productivity was conducted in Germany in 2022. In doing so, a direct connection between these two constructs was observed without moderating variables [8]. Numerous studies have examined the effects of employee personality characteristics on productivity, where the styles of extroverted and introverted personality types have been described [39].

Companies are forced to build new strategic concepts that would enable the acceptance of new technologies. In this context, remote work appears, which enables companies to respond more flexibly and quickly to consumer demands, as well as changes in markets that would allow them to increase their productivity and economy. All of the above was the basis for the development of new forms of communication and new forms of work [30].

The research that was conducted in the territory of Palestine examined the influence of organizational factors such as management support, available technological infrastructure and employee education on their productivity during remote work [38]. In 2020, Khan, Tarofder and Azam [14], among the organizational factors

they observed, include reward systems, employee training and job security, and analyze their relationship to motivation and work productivity.

Furthermore, in table 1, a systematic overview of the sources of literature that deals with the identified key determinants and effects of remote work is given.

Table 1. Key determinants and effects of remote work

Key determinants of remote work:	Effects of remote work:	Literature sources:
Employee personality characteristics	Productivity	[8], [12], [39]
Physical and social environment of the household	Productivity	[18]
	Employee flexibility and reduced travel time from and to work	[43], [37]
	Interpersonal relationships in the family, well-being at the workplace, household members, work productivity	[27], [42]
Organizational culture	Productivity	[26], [28], [31], [38]
	Organizational commitment, employee turnover	[29]
	Organizational support	[21],[38]
	Reward systems, employee training and job security, motivation and work productivity.	[14]

From table 1, it can be clearly seen that the subject of numerous studies was remote work, the factors that determine it and its effects. They are mostly observed in the context of productivity. This can serve to provide guidelines for further research in this area.

5. Conclusion

The rapid progress of modern technology as well as the digital transformation of workplaces are the main drivers of the creation of a working environment that enables the connection of workplaces around the world. The coronavirus pandemic forced employees from various sectors to adapt to new working conditions. This adjustment brought with it numerous challenges, but it also left long-lasting consequences on the organization of work and business results. Based on the review of the literature, it can be concluded that the effects of remote work are more than positive.

This form of work has not only attracted attention during the coronavirus pandemic, but has also been researched for a long time in connection with topics such as work flexibility, digitization and changing values. The central issues surrounding the organizational and social phenomenon of telecommuting are related to the resources and efforts of employees. This has direct consequences for the leadership and management of human resources. Numerous challenges brought by remote work were discovered, such as economic challenges, then challenges to the health, production and education sectors, and distribution chains, the travel and hospitality industry were also disrupted. The manager's role is to respond to all challenges and overcome them in order to improve the productivity and efficiency of human resources management. The paper provides a systematic overview of the key causes of remote work: the personality characteristics of individuals, the physical and social environment of households and the organizational culture of companies. Also mentioned are the effects of remote work: increasing productivity and economy. The limitations of the work are reflected in the impossibility of accessing all articles dealing with the topic of remote work. In this regard, recommendations for further research would be to look at employee job satisfaction, motivation and position of employees in the organizational hierarchy as mediating variables that would act between remote work factors and its consequences. It would be useful to conduct empirical research and look at the effects of remote work in the context of increasing work productivity and economy, given that these constructs were included in many recent studies that dealt with this topic. It is also recommended to include the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents as an explanatory variable that would affect both the dependent and independent variables. The work is intended for managers when considering the introduction of new forms of work, the academic community and government institutions.

6. References

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