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IMPACT OF TELEWORKING ON JOB SATISFACTION AMONG SLOVAKIAN EMPLOYEES IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, which became a global crisis in 2020, has radically transformed people's normal lives in a matter of weeks. In addition to the health consequences, the virus has had a significant impact on the society and the economy, including the labor market. The present study aims to assess how traditional working has been transformed into teleworking in Slovakia. The study examines whether Slovakian workers are satisfied with teleworking. The questionnaire survey was conducted in December 2020 during the second wave of the coronavirus in Slovakia. Based on the obtained results, a significant relationship between teleworking satisfaction and salary satisfaction, supervisory support, and job autonomy was found. Based on the obtained results, teleworking introduced due to the coronavirus had a clear positive effect on job satisfaction of the examined Slovakian employees. As a result of teleworking, the relationship between manager and subordinate has improved, and work-life balance has also developed favorably.

Keywords

coronavirus, labor market, worker, job characteristics, telework

JEL Classification

E24, J28, J81

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as mandatory physical distance measures, are forcing many organizations to make a widespread shift from traditional forms of work to teleworking (working from home). This could also contribute to the wider use of teleworking in countries where teleworking has not been widespread so far. Such countries include Slovakia.

Government measures to stop the spread of the COVID-19 have facilitated the spread of teleworking among Slovakian organizations. The number of teleworkers is increasing, and employers are increasingly willing to allow telecommuting, even though it can have not only advantages but also disadvantages for an organization. Work flexibility creates a work-life balance for employees, so telecommuting contributes to job satisfaction and high performance, as well as to the overall development of the organization as a whole.

The main objectives of the study are (1) to identify the factors that can lead to teleworking satisfaction among Slovakian employees; and (2) to make recommendations to the leaders of Slovakian organizations that can help increase the job satisfaction of those working in the organization, and thus improve organizational performance.



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Conflict of interest statement:

Author(s) reported no conflict of interest

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

When people are dissatisfied with their jobs, it also has a negative impact on work outcomes and personal life. Some employees have real problems managing their job and family responsibilities at the same time, resulting in increased stress and anxiety due to overload. Teleworking can provide a solution to these few key problems, offering many advantages, but at the same time, its disadvantages are not negligible.

Teleworking is defined as a form of organizing and/or performing work using information technology, where work that can be performed away from the employer’s premises regularly (Solís, 2017). Nilles (1997) first used “telecommuting” as a term for ‘working from home’. Since 1970s, there has been no consensus on the exact definition of teleworking. This fact is also confirmed by the diversity of the spread of the concept. Teleworking is variously referred to as “telecommuting”, “working from home”, “virtual work”, “distance working”, and “flexible working”.

Teleworking is characterized by two factors: a) distance, as the teleworker works in a place other than the employer’s premises, and b) communication between the parties, for which IT-computer tools are essential today (Baruch, 2000).

The advantages and disadvantages of teleworking are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 confirms and summarizes the advantages and possible disadvantages of teleworking. Teleworking can be beneficial for all social actors. In addition to employers and employees, it has an impact on society as a whole. Teleworking is beneficial for employers because it allows them to reduce production costs, improve work ethic, reduce absenteeism, and help motivate employees (Madsen, 2003). For the individual, in addition to the fact that teleworking is more comfortable, there is no need to travel, thus saving time for the worker; teleworking also has a positive effect on work-life balance (Morgan, 2004.). Ammons and Markham (2004) view working from home as a mean of balancing work and private life because teleworking provides an opportunity for workers to spend more time with family members. At the same time, the disadvantages of telework should not be ignored, some of which are already presented in the introduction. Teleworking also has other disadvantages, e.g., increased isolation and other psychosocial problems that telecommuting can cause to workers (Jha, 2019). For organizations, the disadvantages of teleworking are those related to management. Teleworking can also trigger changes in the leadership of organizations, with control over employees often taking place only through personal relationships and physical presence; thus, teleworking can impede managerial control (Shapiro and Stiglitz, 1984). However, from another perspective, digitization can also lead to managers having access to broader data on employee performance, which can provide more information for effective employee control than is usually the case in a traditional office environment (Meier, 2017). Finally, telework-

Table 1. The advantages and disadvantages of teleworking

Source: Author’s elaboration.

Level	Potential benefits/advantages	Potential challenges/disadvantages
Society	Environmentally friendly	Isolation from social institutions
	Better for individuals with disabilities	
Employer	Lower turnover	Increased IT demands
	Wider and more varied job offer	Security issues
	Less absenteeism	Not fit for every task
	Reduced overheads	The challenge to the possibility of control and motivation of teleworkers
	Greater productivity	Loss of teamwork
Worker	Reduced commuting time/costs	Added family–work conflict
	Higher autonomy	Working on holidays
	Higher job satisfaction	Social and professional isolation
	Lower stress	Missed opportunities
	Better work-life balance	

ing has an impact not only on the employer and employees but also on society as a whole (Harpaz, 2002), e.g. by driving less, the environmental load is reduced; people with disabilities are also given a chance to work, etc.

The development of information technology and the information society in recent decades has made an explosive contribution to the spread of the teleworking phenomenon around the world, which has also been helped by the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic and the introduction of strict government measures (Abulibdeh, 2020). It should also be borne in mind that, although teleworking has allowed some companies and their employees to better cope with the sudden shock caused by the coronavirus crisis (especially those who have used teleworking before), those who have not switched to teleworking quickly have faced difficulties (e.g., administrative work). However, teleworking is not accessible to everyone, especially in jobs where physical work is needed and where a physical presence is essential (Brussevich et al., 2020). Teleworking was crucial to sustaining production at the time of the crisis, but its impact on productivity is unclear. There are opinions in the literature that the rapid introduction of teleworking due to the COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on productivity compared to the pre-crisis period (Rahman & Zahir Uddin Arif, 2021; Morikawa, 2020). Teleworking can improve or inhibit the performance of organizations directly and indirectly (Dubrin, 1991; Martin and MacDonnell, 2012). In the direct mode, it affects organizational performance by changing workforce efficiency, motivation, and knowledge creation, while the indirect effect of telecommuting is that it contributes to cost reduction, thus freeing up additional resources for innovation (Lane et al., 2020). Teleworking can improve the performance of organizations by increasing employee job satisfaction and thus work efficiency, e.g., better work-life balance can lead to better work discipline or less absenteeism (Smith et al., 2015; Fonner & Roloff, 2010). However, it is also possible that teleworking reduces employee job satisfaction (Windeler et al., 2017; Duxbury et al., 1992), e.g., working alone, getting bored working from home, conflicting privacy and work, feeling isolated, etc. Furthermore, the lack of personal interactions can reduce organizational knowledge transfer (Taskin & Bridoux, 2010), i.e., the flow of knowledge between employees.

Innovation, and thus long-term productivity gains, can suffer from telecommuting when workers do not physically meet each other.

The concept of job satisfaction is defined as satisfaction with the agreement between a person and their position. It can be internal or external. Internal refers to the nature of work tasks as well as people's perceptions of the work they do, whereas external satisfaction is related to external motivating factors such as pay, work environment, conditions, etc. (Sun & Hwang, 2020).

Satisfaction can be described as an attitude or feeling about work, where a positive attitude means job satisfaction and a negative attitude means dissatisfaction with work (Ziegler et al., 2012). Building on this definition, George and Jones (2008) argue that attitudes to work are determined by attitudes toward various aspects of the job, such as working conditions, colleagues, managers, and pay.

According to Blum (1990), job satisfaction is the result of different attitudes of employees. These attitudes are work-related and refer to specific factors such as wages, leadership attitudes, working conditions, promotion opportunities, recognition of skills, social relationships in employment, fair treatment by employers, and other similar concepts. Therefore, if the employer meets the ideal working conditions, the employee will be satisfied.

Rai et al. (2021), Sugiarto (2018), and Dachapalli (2016) confirmed the fact that job satisfaction greatly influences employee performance. It is a generally accepted fact that employee performance plays a crucial role in corporate success, and an employee who is satisfied with the job performs better than one who is dissatisfied.

Smith et al. (2015), Abilash and Siju (2021), and Golden and Veiga (2005) confirmed the link between teleworking and job satisfaction. Because most workers perceive the benefits of telecommuting, telecommuting has a positive effect on their job satisfaction, and increased autonomy improves their work-life balance.

In contrast, Cooper and Kurland (2002) argue that the positive benefits of telecommuting may be offset by a decrease in social interaction and

feelings of isolation. This results in a link between telecommuting and job satisfaction. Because of the separation of teleworkers from the office environment, the negative impact of isolation and reduced social interaction worsens the relationship of teleworkers with their managers and colleagues, which in turn can lead to job dissatisfaction (Yap & Tng, 1990).

Golden and Veiga (2005) showed a relationship between teleworking and job satisfaction, which may help to compare the above contradictory findings. The inverted U-shape of this curved line suggests that if the level of telecommuting is relatively low, job satisfaction increases. However, when the level of telecommuting is relatively high, the effects of losing interaction and feelings of isolation offset the benefits of telecommuting, with a negative impact on job satisfaction.

In conclusion, the impact of teleworking showed the most positive results in terms of job satisfaction. It is expected that the negative effects of telecommuting, such as deteriorating work relationships or feelings of isolation, would not outweigh the benefits of telecommuting in terms of overall job satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: There is a positive correlation between teleworking and job satisfaction among Slovakian workers.

2. METHODOLOGY

In the course of the study, a questionnaire survey was conducted among Slovakian teleworkers. The snowball method was chosen as the method of sample selection. This sampling procedure was chosen because it made it easier and faster to reach the desired target group. The target group includes employees of Slovakian organizations who are currently involved in teleworking. During the implementation of the snowball procedure, the questionnaire was sent to additional contacts at the suggestion of the people originally targeted, thus enabling to involve as many respondents as possible. Before sending the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with graduating university students. Their feedback was used to prepare the

final form of the questionnaire. The survey was conducted in December 2020, during which 709 evaluable questionnaires were received. This number does not include the questionnaires excluded from the survey due to incomplete completion. The questionnaire was completed anonymously, online. The obtained data were evaluated using SPSS software, and in addition to the general statistical data, a logistic regression analysis was performed to verify the hypothesis.

When selecting the variables and compiling the questionnaire, the workplace and organizational characteristics were taken into account. According to the literature review, these characteristics can have a positive effect on job satisfaction. Based on these, the main variables of the study were chosen.

The degree of job satisfaction was measured by the overall perceived satisfaction of individuals with their work. In the questionnaire, the degree of job satisfaction was measured by measuring a single item, answering the following question based on a 2-point dichotomous variable: *“How satisfied are you with your current job?”*. A single element was chosen to measure job satisfaction following the literature review (McGehee & Tullar, 1979; Wanous et al., 1997). Measuring job satisfaction in a batch is preferable to a multi-item measurement.

Several organizational characteristics were assessed during the survey. Based on the literature review (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016; Ashraf, 2019; Shkoler & Tziner, 2020), support for teamwork, empowerment of employees, managerial support, and the work atmosphere have an impact on employee job satisfaction. Respondents were able to answer the questions on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 – strongly disagree, and 7 – strongly agree with the statement.

Work-related variables were placed in the next category. The content of work, pay for work, work-life balance, communication, and autonomy at work can all be related to job satisfaction (Kawada, 2020; Belias et al., 2015; Žemgulienė, 2012).

Individual characteristics variables were selected as well. In this category, general questions were evaluated: gender, age, position, educational level, and work experience.

Private enterprises were present in a larger number in the sample, with the largest share of those operating in industry accounting for 55.9% of the total sample. In terms of organization size, multinational companies accounted for the largest share of the sample – 39.1%. In terms of gender, 54.4% of respondents were men, and 45.6% – women. In terms of marital status, 67.1% of respondents were married. The respondents belonged to the young age group: 30.7% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 30, and 29.9% were between the ages of 31 and 40. 88.3% of those surveyed were subordinate, and the remaining 11.7% held a lower-level leadership position. In terms of graduation, those with an MSc degree predominated, representing 45.8% of the sample. In terms of work experience, the majority of respondents fell into the category of 2-5 years of work experience, with 32.7%.

3. RESULTS

In the course of the study, the proportion of teleworkers in the sample before COVID-19 and the proportion of teleworkers introduced in the sample as a result of the pandemic was assessed. The focus was also put on the question of whether they had worked using telecommuting before the COVID-19 pandemic. It is clear from the responses received that 87.5% of those surveyed are currently involved in teleworking due to telecommuting being introduced as an emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These data also confirm the findings of Abulibdeh (2020), and Nguyen and Armoogum (2021), who stated that one of the benefits of the coronavirus epidemic in the workplace was the spread of teleworking.

The proportion of regular teleworkers in the sample was 75.7%, the number of times in the week category was 12.8%, once in the week – 9.4%, and the ad hoc teleworker (who participates in telework on a monthly but irregular basis) was 2%. It was crucial to find what the benefits of telecommuting were according to the respondents (Table 2). In order of the statements received, high autonomy comes first, followed by job satisfaction, better work-life balance, and less stress. At the end of the line was less distraction from co-workers and reduced commuting time.

Table 2. The benefits of telecommuting, according to respondents

Source: Author's elaboration.

Advantages	Rank	Percent
Higher autonomy	1	28.1
Higher job satisfaction	2	19.3
Better work-life balance	3	16.1
Lower stress	4	11.3
Reduced commuting costs	5	10.2
Less distraction from co-workers	6	8.2
Reduced commuting time	7	4.6
Other	8	2.2

In correlation analysis, it was examined whether there was a correlation between each factor or not. In the correlation relationship, clear correlations between job satisfaction and supervisor support, with a moderately weak relationship, were found (Pearson correlation coefficient: 0.290, $p < 0.01$). This is caused by the fact that managerial control in teleworking is milder compared to traditional work, but at the same time, it may even be more effective (Morganson et al., 2010; Martin & MacDonnell, 2012; Silva-C et al., 2019). Among the work characteristics, medium or weak correlation coefficients were found in connection with work satisfaction in several cases, all of which are positive advantages that lead to job satisfaction even in the case of traditional work, so this result supports the findings of Nilles (1994), and Khoshnaw and Alavi (2020). Among these positive factors, job autonomy should be highlighted. Even before the coronavirus, in the case of new generations, it was observed that job autonomy plays an important role in the job satisfaction of these young generations. This is because a significant part of current young generations chooses a job where job autonomy can prevail, and this factor can even be used as a serious motivational tool in their case. The value of the Pearson correlation coefficient between job satisfaction and job autonomy was 0.232 at a $p < 0.01$ significance level.

In this study, a logistic regression model was used to model the variables in the hypothesis test. Table 3 presents the logistic regression analysis.

Table 3. Logistic regression model on job satisfaction

Source: Author's elaboration.

Organizational characteristics	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Team work	-.152	.085	3.215	.073	.859
Empowerment employees	-.106	.081	1.716	.190	.899
Supervisor support	.197	.078	6.362	.012*	1.217
Work atmosphere	.129	.069	3.536	.060	1.138
Job characteristics					
Satisfaction with pay	.283	.095	8.837	.003**	1.328
Work-life balance	.235	.097	5.887	.015*	.791
Job autonomy	.263	.077	11.761	.001**	1.301
Satisfaction with communication	-.212	.101	4.384	.036*	.809
Satisfaction with workload	.206	.100	4.261	.039*	1.229
Individual characteristics					
Age	-.288	.103	7.789	.005**	.750
Gender	-.054	.063	.722	.395	.948
Educational level	.033	.089	.136	.712	1.033
Work experience	.063	.083	.572	.449	1.065
Constant	.250	.573	.191	.662	1.285

Note: * means $p < .05$; and ** means $p < .01$.

Table 3 shows the coefficients and their significance levels for the significant variables and interactions. In addition, it shows the significance, degree, and coefficients (B) of each variable with standard deviation. From Table 3, it can be concluded that job autonomy, salary satisfaction, satisfaction with the workload, and work-life balance are the factors that have the greatest impact on the telework satisfaction of the surveyed Slovakian workers. The results are consistent with the literature that showed positive correlations between job satisfaction and these variables.

Table 4 shows the Cox and Snell R squares and the Nagelkerke confidence coefficient. The lower the statistical value of the logarithmic probabil-

ity function is, the better the model can predict the variance of the dependent variable. The values of the coefficients range from zero to one. A value greater than 0.15 for these coefficients indicates that the model fits properly. Hosmer–Lemeshow test was performed to determine how well the model fits. Based on this test, since the significance level is 0.244, more than 0.05 significance level, in this case, it can be stated that the model fits well. Thus, it is suitable for research.

Table 4. Model summary

Source: Author's elaboration.

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	755.319 ^a	.177	.185

Note: a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

The sudden switch to telecommuting caused by the COVID-19 did not significantly affect employee job satisfaction, and in organizations where job characteristics and organizational factors were appropriate, employee job satisfaction was also at an appropriate level. Based on the obtained results, the hypothesis is approved, i.e., the positive factors of teleworking have a significant effect on the job satisfaction of employees in Slovakia.

The fact that a significant proportion of respondents – 89.2% – would like to continue teleworking after the COVID-19 is probably due to Slovakian employees recognizing the benefits of telecommuting, including greater freedom and the increased autonomy it affords. It should be noted that if the COVID-19 crisis has a positive impact, it is perhaps that it has accelerated the spread of teleworking and made it known to workers who have not been involved in this type of system before.

CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed to assess the impact of teleworking introduced due to the coronavirus epidemic among Slovakian employees. Based on the study sample, the COVID-19 resulted in a 7-fold increase in the number of those currently engaged in teleworking. In the course of the study, a significant relationship between teleworking and its implementation and job satisfaction was shown. The benefits of teleworking also have an impact on job satisfaction among employees in Slovakia. A significant proportion of the workers surveyed would maintain teleworking even after the coronavirus had ceased.

According to the obtained answers teleworking need to be seriously addressed at the organizational level for higher productivity and a better work-life balance. In addition to the positive effects of teleworking,

management must also pay attention to the negative consequences, such as the development of feelings of isolation, barriers to the transfer of information and knowledge, the loss of individual career opportunities, etc. Therefore, stakeholders need to find a balance between the positive and negative aspects of teleworking and use new innovative technologies to create a work environment that meets the psychological needs of individuals for autonomy, motivation, and work atmosphere.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Peter Karácsony.
 Data curation: Peter Karácsony.
 Formal analysis: Peter Karácsony.
 Funding acquisition: Peter Karácsony.
 Investigation: Peter Karácsony.
 Methodology: Peter Karácsony.
 Project administration: Peter Karácsony.
 Resources: Peter Karácsony.
 Software: Peter Karácsony.
 Supervision: Peter Karácsony.
 Validation: Peter Karácsony.
 Visualization: Peter Karácsony.
 Writing – original draft: Peter Karácsony.
 Writing – review & editing: Peter Karácsony.

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