Consequences of the COVID pandemic: Factors of employee satisfaction with home office, with a special focus on organisational communication, in the light of a survey conducted in Hungary[1, 2]

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The aim of the paper is to demonstrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on satisfaction with working in home office and with organisational communication. The authors' hypothesis is that significant differences can be identified concerning the satisfaction with working in home office, depending on the demographic background of the employees. A further hypothesis is that satisfaction with the organisation's communication significantly and positively influences the satisfaction with working in home office. During the research, 600 Hungarian residents, aged 18-64, who had worked in home office for at least three months, were contacted with an online questionnaire. The survey was carried out at the end of the 3rd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, in May and June 2021. The findings were that satisfaction with home office primarily depends on the home office experience, and not on the demographic attributes of the respondent. The research revealed that satisfaction with organisational communication and satisfaction with work are closely correlated. The findings make it clear that employers must have open and transparent communication in place so that employees see home office positively.

Keywords: atypical work, home office, remote work, satisfaction, COVID-19.

JEL codes: J24, J29, M12, M54.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a major shock to the global economy and has very serious socio-economic consequences (EB 2020). One of the pandemic's direct consequences was the closedown of onsite workplaces in several sectors. Thus, the examination of home office as an atypical form of employment became topical and especially important.

Home office as an atypical form of employment had been rather rare in Hungary before, but the concept was introduced to everyone during the pandemic, even to those who had never worked from home previously. Experts have started to examine which work organisation methods enforced by the pandemic will be kept by the companies and what techniques are worth applying in the future (Siklósi 2021). From an employee perspective, future work may also be considerably affected by how the labour force experienced working from their homes during the pandemic. If they are satisfied with it, they may like to work this way also in the future; in fact, they might demand this kind of flexible work. The exploration of employee satisfaction with working from home provides employers with important information, as one tool for attracting and retaining talented labour force may be the provision of this kind of flexibility (Venczel-Szakó 2021).

Internal organisational communication is a tool for strengthening the relationship between the organisation and the labour force, with the primary aim of creating internal cohesion, integration (Borgulya 2014). Communication is the lifeblood of organisational culture that integrates the staff and the units and is present in every aspect of the life of the organisation (Klein 2009). The quality of communication determines the efficient operation of the organisation, and its channels and mechanisms even affect the characteristics of the management structure (Bakacsi 2002). Thus, the quality of communication is of vital importance in the life of an organisation, and it is even more important in the management of crisis situations. Looking at communication as a tool for strengthening human relations, it played an unquestionable role in adapting to the changed working conditions, in ensuring a flawless operation and in overcoming the problem of social distance during the pandemic.

With all these taken into consideration, the research question is whether there is a correlation among the demographic features of employees, organisational communication and satisfaction with home office?

The level of satisfaction with working from home was measured in a sample of 600 persons who had at least 3 months of experience with home office. For defining satisfaction with home office, an individual research framework and a satisfaction index (SI) were created, built on the factors identified during literature review. The relationship between the SI, demographic factors and communication satisfaction was analysed using the method of OLS linear regression.

In the first part of the study, the focus is on the factors impacting work satisfaction and on the respective elements of communication, based on relevant academic publications. This section is followed by the definition of hypotheses, the description of research methodology and hypothesis testing, the presentation of findings together with their managerial implications as well as research limitations and future research directions.

Theoretical framework of the research

The frameworks of the research are set based on the literature review of scientific theories explored by the research (home office, employee satisfaction, communication), looking at the most recent research findings in these fields. On the basis of previous research findings, the theoretical concept of the paper is defined, and the hypotheses are stated.

Home office and remote work as atypical forms of employment

The concepts of remote work and home office are often taken as synonyms, with blurred interpretations (Ásványi et al. 2021).

Remote work is "…a form of employment that is made atypical by the non-conventional place of working and the non-traditional tool of work" (Bankó–Ferencz 2015. 58). As remote work is flexible in time and space, it is one of the most up-to-date work organisation methods (Jarjabka 2010). Remote work can also be taken as the working form of modern times (Bankó et al. 2003). Omondi and K'Obonyo (2018) put it very simple when they said that remote work is when an employee works far from his/her workplace. In the view of Makó et al. (2003), remote work means that employees use both computers and internet during their work. The term *remote work (telecommuting/telework)* was defined by Jack Nilles in 1975 (Nilles 1975). Since then, several synonyms have been developed for remote work as a new, atypical phenomenon (e-work), specified by the following terms in English and German: telework, telecommuting, distance working, remote working, Telearbeit, Bildschirmarbeit, Computerheimarbeit, elektronische Fernarbeit (Bankó–Ferencz 2015).

There are several conceptual approaches to remote work. Definitions refer to the place of work, the use of communication tools, and the method of control. Also, remote working is often associated with intellectual activity, independent problem solving by the employees, the existence of employment status, the importance of being available for the employer, and the condition of the job being fully manageable from a remote workplace (Jarjabka 2010). Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) say that remote work (telecommuting) means working from home in the whole or part of the working week. Ásványi et al. (2021), to the contrary, consider that the description used in the definition of remote work, i.e. that working takes place in a location other than the location or headquarters of the employer, does not necessarily mean working from home, but may as well be working in another location specified by the employer (as opposed to home office that means working from home).

Working at home (in home office) is a form of remote work, work far from the location of the employer, with work activities taking place at home with the use of info-communication devices (Hárs 2012); in this definition, home office is a sub-category of remote work.

As regards remote work and home office, it must be mentioned that this kind of working is not suitable for all life conditions and for all personalities (Devine et al. 1997).

Kowalski and Swanson (2005) examined the critical success factors of remote working and found that support, communication and trust are indispensable factors in creating the conditions for successful remote working, and at the same time, they remarked that the creation of a remote work programme is not only an opportunity but also a clever strategic business decision. Omondi and K'Obonyo (2018) defined the following factors as conditions for flexible work: quality communication, supportive organisational culture, favourable working conditions, supportive legal regulations, the commitment of the employees, and adequate demographic features of the staff (gender, age, educational attainment).

Beauregard et al. (2019) say that the success of remote work depends on the features and character of the work, on the respective employee, and on the characteristics of the employee's leader. They also stress that technology support is a key factor. In their opinion, the successful application of remote work requires special attention to two fields: selection of the staff and their preparation for remote work, and the management of remote work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a major shock to the global and EU economies and has very serious socio-economic consequences (EB 2020). Academics of different disciplines have conducted research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the short, medium and long run, also taking international and global effects into consideration.

The Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) collects and publishes recent research findings related to the coronavirus (KSH 2020). TÁRKI created an online platform named "Pandemic-related social science research in Hungary"[6], where COVID-19 research projects underway in Hungary are listed. An online survey reached 1,269 ethnic Hungarian respondents from Transylvania, Romania (Gergely et al. 2020). Another research examined Hungarian organisations and their reactions to the crisis in all three phases of the pandemic, exploring their experiences and expectations (Poór et al. 2021). A research launched by the University of Pécs surveyed the impact of coronavirus on organisational culture, organisational communication, digitalisation, organisational integration, and expectations for the future (Sipos et al. 2020; Jarjabka et al. 2020c).

As of 30 April 2020, Eurofound reached more than 85 thousand persons in the Member States of the EU with their "COVID-19 e-Survey", which asked about the impact of the pandemic on subjective quality of life, health perceptions, trust in institutions, and concerns about work and workplace (Eurofound 2020a). Based on the answers of more than 110 000 respondents, the "International Survey on Coronavirus"[7] examined the health impacts of the pandemic, fears and coping methods. The Global Research Data Alliance also dealt with the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic (RDA 2020). The International Association of Universities (IAU) published a report based on 576 replies (from 424 universities in 109 countries) to an online questionnaire that was accessible from 25 March to 17 April 2020 (IAU 2020).

The situation brought about by the coronavirus gave a considerable momentum to the penetration of remote work both at international level (Gibson 2020; Eurofound 2020b; Caligiuri et al. 2020; Kronblad 2020) and in Hungary. Before the pandemic, remote work had been a curiosity in Hungary; the proportion of those working from home had remained below 5 per cent. According to the GKI research, this proportion grew to 20 per cent by early June 2000, which concerned

[6] https://adatbank.tarki.hu/en/covid-19-research-in-hungary/

[7] https://covid19-survey.org

approximately 800 thousand people (GKI 2020). In July–September 2021, the proportion of those employed in remote work or home office was 6.3 per cent, 0.3 per cent more than in the previous year (KSH 2021).

Employee satisfaction

Thousands of studies have been published on the definition and measurement of satisfaction with work. Satisfaction cannot be treated objectively; what causes satisfaction or dissatisfaction for individuals may differ person by person (Sipos 2016).

The satisfaction of employees is an outstandingly important factor of organisational success and also an indicator of an organisation's efficiency. A satisfied labour force may even be a competitive advantage for the organisation (Ouedraogo–Leclerc 2013; Izvercian et al. 2016). Dhamija et al. (2019) emphasise that it is the responsibility of the employer, on the one hand, to make their employees "feel good" at the company and reach their goals (that made them join the organisation); on the other hand, it is also the economic interest of the employer to have committed employees because satisfaction, commitment and a good working environment impact the performance and competitiveness of the employees as well as the successful operation of the organisation. Employee dissatisfaction leads to low performance, increased labour turnover and the loss of talented staff.

In the opinion of Brunelle and Fortin (2021), the relation of employees to their employers will change in the future, especially due to the penetration of atypical employment forms. They predict a fundamental change in the motivation methods that boost employees' commitment, and these will be different for office staff and home-office workers.

Locke (1976) described satisfaction as a kind of sensation by which employees relate to their employers. Vroom (1964) also defines satisfaction as happiness deriving from work. Brief (1998) relates satisfaction to an inner state, sensation. Shaffer and Harrison (1998) involve needs and meeting (or failing to meet) these needs in the interpretation of satisfaction; in their opinion, satisfaction is related to whether the needs that can be satisfied by working are actually satisfied or not. Greenberg and Baron (2000) see satisfaction as a kind of intellectual, emotional and behavioural reaction triggered in the individuals about their work.

In the view of Noé (2004) and Becker–Kaerkes (2006), the combined effect of three groups of factors can be seen in the employee satisfaction model:

- *Conditions of satisfaction with work* (recognition of work by society, career opportunities, physical conditions of work, recognition of abilities, appreciation of work performance, safety of work)
- *Conditions of general satisfaction* (family life, entertainment and sports facilities, housing conditions, position and function in society)
- *Individual features* (age, personality type, health condition, desires, endeavours).

Ineson et al. (2013) say that trainings, skills development, working time, the diversity of work, and the safety of the workplace are factors contributing to satisfaction.

In Yang's (2010) view, satisfaction is impacted by role conflict, the misunderstandability of possible roles, overburden, work and family conflict, burnout, socialisation, independence and autonomy.

Van Saane et al. (2003) used a meta-analysis to define those work-related areas that have an effect on employees' satisfaction. These are the following:

- *Character of work* (work that requires diverse skills, complexity of work, challenges posed by work involving routine tasks),
- *Autonomy* (individual responsibility, control over work-related decisions),
- *Career/development* (personal growth and development, training or education),
- *Financial incentives* (wage, fringe benefits),
- *Promotion* (possibility of career building or getting promoted),
- *Supervision* (support from the superior, recognition and fair treatment),
- *Communication* (consulting possibilities, feedback),
- *Work relation with the colleagues*,
- *Sensibility of the job*,
- *Workload* (subjective feeling or lack of time, monotony, social problems, personal conflicts or stress),
- *Strain by work* (compulsory extra work, complexity of the job, uncertainty of the position, or emotional commitment).

Kozák and Sönperger (2019) emphasise the responsibility of employing organisations for creating a friendly workplace atmosphere, encouraging individual performance, and contributing to the preservation of their employees' mental health, which will entail an increase in their self-esteem and self-efficiency.

The efficiency of remote work and home office and their effects visible in the organisation – like retention, loyalty, fluctuation – are impacted by the following factors: whether work is organised around private or community interests, the scale of individual or collective responsibility, whether the employee feels s/he is a member of a cooperative community, whether work is done as an employee or an entrepreneur, whether the personality of the employee fits the requirements of the given position, individual features (time management competencies, independence, age, career plans), the attitude of the leader, and, what is most important on both sides: the role of trust. This kind of atypical working functions very well usually when the employees have greater professional skills and special knowledge. It must also be emphasised, however, that the employee can keep in touch with the employer in many different ways, and the efficiency of cooperation does not depend on the tools applied (Venczel-Szakó et al. 2021).

Exploring the level of employees' satisfaction with their work is one of the most important aspects of workplace research (Pinsonneault–Boisvert 2001). The general belief, in the beginning, was that employees working remotely were more satisfied with their jobs, but this belief could not be solidly supported (Bailey–Kurland 2002; Morganson et al. 2010). Golden and Veiga (2005) examined the impact of remote work intensity on satisfaction with work in the circle of white-collar employees; their findings demonstrated a curve-shaped relationship between the intensity of remote work and work satisfaction, i.e. remote work has a positive impact on work satisfaction up to a certain point, while the impact is negative beyond that point (the authors set the threshold at 15.1 working hours per week). The authors supposed that, for high-intensity remote workers, the negative impact of increased isolation, the decline of interactions with leaders and fellow workers probably have a negative effect on satisfaction with work.

Gajendran and Harrison (2007) worked out the theoretical framework of the impact of remote work. They examined the relation between work done at home, looking at perceived autonomy, work-family conflict, the quality of the contact with the leader, the quality of the remote worker – fellow workers contact, satisfaction with the job, work performance, stress and perceived career chances. Their findings suggest that remote work has a positive effect on perceived autonomy and resulted in a decrease in the number of work-family conflicts.

The demographic variables further detail the picture of the relationship between jobs that can be done from home and employee satisfaction. On the basis of literature (Devine et al. 1997; Bailey–Kurland 2002; Golden 2006; Gajendran–Harrison 2007; Gajendran et al. 2014; Noé 2004; Becker–Kaerkes 2006), it can be presumed that women are more satisfied with home office than men are, as working from their home allows them to better schedule their days, they can balance better household chores and raising children with work, as they do not waste time travelling and thus have more time for other things as well. Men, on the other hand, are more reluctant to working from home; they are less tolerant to "melting" work and private life. As regards age, it is presumed that younger employees (below 35 years) are more satisfied with home office than their counterparts aged 35 or more, as the younger generation is keener on flexible working hours.

A further hypothesis of the authors is that those holding college/university degrees are more satisfied with home office than those without such qualification, as home office requires the employee to be good at time management, have self-control and flexibility, as well as several other skills, abilities and competencies that a person holding a college/university degree possesses.

A hypothesis concerning the place of residence is that employees living in the countryside are more satisfied with home office than those living in the capital city, as they may have access to extra opportunities in certain cases and they can take up work that otherwise they could not.

Another assumption is that those raising children under the age of 12 are more satisfied with home office than those who do not. Working from home allows parents to harmonise work with child-focused tasks, and they do not have to miss from work even if the child is ill.

After reviewing the employee satisfaction literature, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H1: Significant differences can be identified concerning satisfaction with working in home office based on the demographic background of employees.

Communication as a factor contributing to satisfaction

Internal communication is important in every organisation's life (Borgulya 2014), *"communication is the heart of the company's performance"* (Van Riel–Fombrun 2007. 2). Accordingly, its quality determines the successful operation

of the organisation, and with its channels and mechanisms, it also impacts the features of the management structure (Bakacsi 2002).

Several authors emphasise the importance of keeping in touch with the employees as part of corporate communication. Van Riel–Fombrun (2007) say that communication is one of the most important abilities of a manager, helping them to get the corporate goals accepted; also, this promotes the commitment of employees. The importance of communication to the employees (communication with the colleagues) is emphasised by Schmidt–Lyczek (2006) and Goodman–Hirsch (2010), while Piwinger–Zerfaß (2007) stresses the importance of communication between the staff and the management and the value-creating role of communication.

Information flow (as a feature of the corporate culture) is a characteristic factor of the organisational culture. Organisations where a free flow of information is provided usually stimulate innovation, they can be taken as workplaces with a more relaxed atmosphere, they plan for a longer time span, they have managers that are dominantly relationship-oriented and they practise emphatic leadership; employees see the social sensibility of their managers as a factor of utmost importance, consensus-seeking is considered as the tool for solving conflicts within the organisation, and they contribute to work satisfaction (Tsai 2011).

Infocommunication technology (ICT) is a precondition for remote work, so the provision of communication infrastructure is indispensable. The management of inner communication implemented with ICT tools contributes, even in the case of remote work/home office, to the strengthening of the relationship and to interactive information flow; in fact, it increases motivation and commitment. This supports and supplements the relevant literature findings of communication management (Argenti 2003; Bray–Williams 2017; Castro–Martins 2010; Grensing-Pophal 2000; Van Riel 1992).

Oral communication has significantly declined with home office arrangements; oral communication several times or at least once a day has been replaced by oral communication on a weekly basis or several times a week. The biggest problem is the lack of daily personal contact, and it is the efficiency of intra-organisational exchange of information that is most often criticised. Among the conditions and aspects of communication, the most crucial is to be informed about everything and to get all work-related information in time. This is followed by the number of tools necessary for home office and the efficiency of intra-

organisational information exchange (Jarjabka et al. 2020a; Jarjabka et al. 2020b; Jarjabka et al. 2020c; Sipos et al. 2020).

The findings of Meulen et al. (2019) show that spatial separation directly decreases the frequency of knowledge sharing among colleagues, while separation in time leads to lower quality of work and proactive performance.

Bauer et al. (2019) demonstrates that active and quality contact is the foundation of building trust, irrespective of whether it is realised in an online or offline form. The authors remark, however, that digital communication is more suitable for the implementation of targeted tasks, whereas offline communication is better for building personal relations. They also call attention, at the same time, to the difference between quality and frequent communication.

Akkirman and Harris (2005) showed that virtual office workers were more typically satisfied with organisational communication than conventional office workers were. Murphy and Sashi (2018) also examined the contribution of offline and digital communication to the increase of satisfaction. Personal communication has a more substantial impact on the maintenance of contacts, whereas digital communication is more effective. According to Verčič–Špoljarić (2020), organisations must quickly adapt to be able to reach their employees because the environment of internal communication is constantly changing (e.g. the effect of new technologies); the choice of the inner communication channel is especially important.

Digitalisation and the ongoing digital transformation have impacted almost each company and sector so far (Kronblad 2020; Makarius–Larson 2018), changing the interaction of employees at the workplaces, communication, expectations, as well as the place and time of working. Digitalisation also requires the adaptation and development of new skills and new working methods (Bondarouk–Ruël 2009). In addition, the literature emphasises the importance of investments in the development of new skills, especially if the change entails new technologies and new roles (Heracleous 2003). The basic mission of human resources (HR) managers is to support the employees and help them develop based on the overall organisational strategy (Watson 2009).

As remote work results in the decline of personal interaction and the weakening of social presence and interpersonal ties, the contact with fellow workers and superiors may also weaken (Golden 2006). The change of the

interpersonal sphere can be counterbalanced primarily with the use of ICT tools, although this makes it more formalised and asynchronous (Brunelle 2013). Text messages and e-mails do not provide interactions the same as personal ones because they limit the transfer and sensation of nonverbal signs (e.g. intonation, posture and facial expression) (Sharma et al. 1981). Some authors think that relationships may be affected, as this deficiency complicates effective talks among colleagues and the building of trust (Jawadi 2013; Wheatley 2012). Brunelle and Fortin (2021) believe that remote work may influence the quality and character of communication and the development of working relations, as opposed to those working in physical offices.

After the review of the communication satisfaction literature, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H2: Satisfaction with organisational communication significantly and positively impacts satisfaction with working in home office.

Methodology

Method of sampling

This research is focused on those who have experience with working in home office. When such a special target group must be reached, if either there is no official statistical information about its size or demographic features or representative research findings haven't been previously published, no criteria can be defined that can safeguard the representativeness of the whole sample during data recording. When the sources for the implementation of a representative large-sample survey are missing, the only solution is to specify different segments within the target group, in line with the research objectives and quotas, i.e. target numbers can be set for these "units" of analysis in order to have large enough samples for the reliable examination of the opinions of the respective target groups, segments (Sajtos–Mitev 2007).

We conducted an online questionnaire survey between 27 May and 25 June 2021, using random sampling, based on preliminarily defined quotas (Table 1).

Table 1: Quotas used in the research

	Before the COVID pandemic, s/he had worked in home office at least 1 day a week for at least half a year	Before the COVID pandemic, s/he had not worked in home office at least 1 day a week for at least half a year
Since the start of the COVID pandemic, s/he has worked in home office at least 1 day a week for at least 3 months	**QUOTA 1**	**QUOTA 2**
Since the start of the COVID pandemic, s/he has not worked in home office at least 1 day a week for at least 3 months	**QUOTA 3**	**QUOTA 4**

Source: Own research

Characteristics of the sample

Altogether, 600 Hungarian residents aged 18-64 who had worked from their home for at least 3 months were contacted for the survey, i.e. those who had no or little experience of home office were excluded from the group of respondents.

As regards the *gender* of respondents, the proportions of males and females are almost equal, respectively: the number of women filling out the questionnaire was 308 (50.41%), that of men 303 (49.59%), which is not significantly different from their proportions at a national scale (KSH 2021).[8]

Looking at the *age* of respondents, we can see that more than three-quarters of respondents (75.93%) are between 26 and 55 years of age, i.e. career starters and seniors just before retirement are less represented in the sample. The age cohort with the largest proportion (27.82%) was that of respondents aged 36-45, and 7.04% of all respondents were aged 18-25.

As for the respondents' *places of residence*, 42.06% are from Budapest or Pest County (257 persons)[9].

[8] National average in 2021: 9,730,772 persons (male: 4,663,794; female: 5,066,772, i.e. 47.9% male and 52.1% female). Source: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/hu/nep0001.html, accessed: 14.10.2021.

[9] Budapest and its agglomeration concentrate approximately 30% of the total population of Hungary (EURYDICE 2021).

Almost three-quarters of respondents (71.19%) are in a relationship (marriage or cohabitation), almost one-fifth (19.97%) of them are singles and 8.84% are divorced or widows/widowers.

As regards *educational attainment*, almost two-thirds of respondents (61.87%) have a higher education degree, the proportion of those who completed lower secondary education or less is 0.98% and 37.15% completed upper secondary education within the sample.

Of all respondents, 30.28% have a child/children younger than 12. Of those raising children, most were raising one child younger than 12 (59.46%), another 30.27% had 2 children, while 10.27% of respondents had 3 or more children under the age of 12.

The majority of respondents (55.80%) were working in the business sector, 31.40% of them in the public sector, while 12.80% of them were in the not-for-profit sector.

If we look at the company size, we can see that 39.30% of respondents were working for large companies (with 250 or more employees), 25.20% of them for small enterprises (employing 10-49 persons), and 16.69% of them in companies with less than 10 employees.

We built up our questionnaire using questions concerning work satisfaction and communication borrowed from previous research (see *Appendix*).

Description of the linear regression formula

When selecting the statistical methodology, we had in mind that both hypotheses are focused on work satisfaction, which is the dependent variable. Both the demographic and the communication factors appear as independent variables. The impact of the respective factors on work satisfaction is demonstrated by taking all other *ceteris paribus* variables into consideration.

Accordingly, the appropriate methodology can be the OLS linear regression procedure. We examined the normality of the two indices on the basis of both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and the Saphiro-Wilkinson tests and we found that they significantly differ from normal (p-value is lower than the 5% significance level) (Babbie 2016). Therefore, a logarithmic transformation was made before the application of the OLS linear regression, as transformation keeps the positions of the respective values relative to each other, and it contributes to the normalisation of the values. Dummy variables were made from nominal variables, indicating the reference group in parentheses after the respective variable. The nominal variables

included were quota (Quota 1), company size (less than 10 employees), sector (business sector), gender (female), age (aged 36 or older), place of residence (not capital city), educational attainment (not higher than secondary), child younger than 12 (no). Based on these, equation 1 shows the formula applied during the running.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_{12} X_{12} + \beta_{13} Z_1 + \beta_{14} Z_2 + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

where:

Y = Logarithmic satisfaction concerning working in home office

$X_1 – X_{13}$ independent variables of linear regression: company size, sector, gender, age, place of residence, educational attainment, child(ren) younger than 12, logarithmic communication satisfaction

Z_{1-2} control variable of linear regression: quota

ε = residual

Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics (Table 2) show that respondents typically gave high values to work satisfaction factors (on a Likert scale from 1 to 10). Factor WS10 originally had to be interpreted on an inverse scale (from 10 to 1), but it was reversed for the analysis. With the exception of factors WS1, WS6 and WS11, the most typical value was 10 for each element, with a median of 6 or higher. The highest values were given to the application of skills and knowledge to home office work (average: 7.96).

As far as the elements of communication (C1, C2 and C3) are concerned, high averages can also be seen, the most typical value being 10 in all three cases.

Following this, we created two complex indices from the 11 work satisfaction factors and the 3 communication factors. A simple summation was used for the questions making one single logical unit, by which the theoretical range of work satisfaction index is 11-110, while communication index varies in the 3-30 range. Based on the descriptive statistics of the two indices, the descriptive statistics resulted in low heterogeneity (Table 3).

After the descriptive statistics, we moved on to *Equation 1.* Three runnings were applied for the sake of a gradual approach and for the separate analysis of the two hypotheses. First, we tested the impact of the independent variables without the control variable and logarithmic communication (LR1). Then we analysed the effect of the control variable and logarithmic communication

satisfaction (LR2) and we demonstrated the combined effect of all independent variables (LR3).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of factors related to work satisfaction and communication

Code	Work satisfaction	Average	Median	Mode	Std. deviation	Variation
WS1	When working in home office, I have interesting and challenging tasks.	6.48	7	5	2.54	39.16%
WS2	When working in home office, I am able to use my knowledge and skills.	7.96	8	10	2.18	27.40%
WS3	The amount of work I am given is acceptable on the whole when I work from home.	7.63	8	10	2.30	30.09%
WS4	Home office gives me more stress than working in my office.	7.10	8	10	2.87	40.41%
WS5	In home office, I can harmonise well work tasks with housework and/or looking after the children.	7.19	8	10	2.55	35.53%
WS6	It is hard to harmonise work and homework if I work outside my home.	5.39	5	5	2.92	54.16%
WS7	In home office, the balance of work and private life can be fully reached.	6.60	7	10	2.69	40.72%
WS8	In home office, the boundaries of work and leisure time are clear.	5.94	6	10	2.94	49.55%
WS9	Home office allows flexible scheduling of the working time.	7.85	9	10	2.46	31.29%
WS10	Home office alleviates the planning of work.	7.16	8	10	2.53	35.38%
WS11	In home office, the character of work is different than that of office work.	4.07	4	1	2.59	63.62%
C1	I am given all the information I need for the implementation of my daily routine tasks when I am in home office.	7.64	8	10	2.32	30.42%
C2	When working from home, I miss office gossip, informal communication.	6.23	6	10	3.10	49.78%
C3	In home office, well-established communication channels are used for working.	7.90	8	10	2.22	28.15%

Source: Own research

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the complex indices describing work satisfaction and communication

Complex indices	Average	Median	Mode	Std. deviation	Relative std. deviation
Work satisfaction	73.38	74	68	16.53	22.53%
Communication satisfaction	21.8	21	21	5.126	23.56%

Source: Own research

The results of the linear regression (Table 4) show that each model is significant; their existence can be taken as justified. In the case of LR1, the explanatory power is low, namely 1.7% based on the adjusted R^2. However, its examination is also important for us, as in the first approach, the effects of factors outside the logarithmic communication values can be identified.

Based on the models LR2 and LR3, we can say that logarithmic communication contributes to the largest extent to the satisfaction concerning working in home office, as LR2 (where logarithmic communication appears) has an explanatory power of 26.7%, while this value is slightly higher (26.9%) for LR3.

During the running we also examined the existence of multicollinearity, and at none of the factors we found the VIF higher than the threshold value of 10 where the involvement of certain variables should have been reconsidered, according to Babbie (2016).

Quotas, taken as control variables, took significant values in each model. They had the greatest impact in model LR1 (satisfaction lower by 12.0% and 15.1%, respectively, compared to Quota1); at the same time, they are significant in each of the three models.

Socio-demographic and labour market factors have no significant influence on none of the factors related to work satisfaction. This means that satisfaction with working in home office depends primarily upon the experience with home office and not on other characteristics of the individual.

However, in the case of model LR3, where communication satisfaction plays a role, one factor proved to be significant: those employed in the public sector experienced a 7.6% higher satisfaction with home office than those working in the business sector. This is partly due to the greater security and predictability that characterise the public sector.

Table 4. Results of the OLS linear regressions

General features of the model	LR1		LR2		LR3	
n	586		586		586	
F	1.822		71.998		17.562	
p	0.042		0.000		0.000	
Adjusted R^2	0.017		0.267		0.269	
Constant	4.357		2.752		2.749	
Variables of the analysis	Stand. B	p	Stand. B	p	Stand. B	p
Quota2 (Quota1)	-0.120	0.006***	-0.089	0.017**	-0.083	0.029**
Quota4 (Quota1)	-0.151	0.001***	-0.063	0.093*	-0.066	0.080*
Size 10-49 employees (<10 employees)	-0.075	0.193			-0.066	0.188
Size 50-249 employees (<10 employees)	-0.075	0.175			-0.075	0.118
Size 250 employees or more (<10 employees)	-0.076	0.222			-0.080	0.137
Sector Public sector (Business sector)	0.031	0.484			0.076	0.047**
Sector Non-for-profit sector (Business sector)	-0.013	0.758			-0.041	0.281
Gender Male (Female)	-0.058	0.168			0.014	0.700
Age Aged 36 or older (Aged 35 or younger)	-0.021	0.613			-0.065	0.070*
Place of residence Capital city (Not capital city)	0.025	0.561			0.004	0.920
Educational attainment Higher education (Not more than secondary education)	-0.015	0.713			-0.020	0.578
Child(ren) younger than 12 Yes (No)	0.024	0.565			0.038	0.291
Logarithmic communication satisfaction			0.500	0.000***	0.516	0.000***

** Significant at 10%, ** significant at 5%, *** significant at 1%*

Source: Own research

Communication satisfaction appears as a factor with significant influence. Model LR2 clearly shows that higher communication satisfaction results in 50.0% higher satisfaction with the workplace. On this ground, we cannot say with certainty whether the communication is a cause or an effect, i.e. whether communication satisfaction contributes to satisfaction with working in home office or the other way around. It is evident, though, that communication and

work satisfaction are closely correlated to each other (Pearson correlation: 0.539, p=0.000).

The effect of communication satisfaction identified in LR2 on work satisfaction becomes even stronger for LR3 (51.6%). This strengthening appears parallel to the decrease of the difference identifiable for the quota factors, i.e. the differences in home office experience are increasingly less significant factors.

This supports the findings of Van Riel–Fombrun (2007), Schmidt–Lyczek (2006), Piwinger–Zerfaß (2007), Goodman–Hirsch (2010), and Tsai (2011) that communication, especially the free flow of information, is of utmost importance in the life of an organisation. This also means that it is definitely important for the employees working in home office to be informed about everything and get all work-related information in due time; also, the intra-organisational exchange of information must be effective.

Conclusions

This research focused on the factors influencing satisfaction with working in home office. After the categorisation of those with experiences before (Quota4), after (Quota2), and both before and after (Quota1) COVID-19, the following affirmations can be stated:

The difference identified in the experience with working in home office related to COVID-19 will significantly weaken with the inclusion of the communication satisfaction factor, both as regards its scale and its level of significance.

No significant difference could be identified between the work satisfaction of individuals with different demographic backgrounds, i.e. demographic factors don't influence satisfaction with work. Accordingly, *Hypothesis H1 (Significant differences can be identified concerning satisfaction with working in home office based on the demographic background of employees) is rejected*.

Communication satisfaction will have a significant effect on the level of satisfaction with working in home office. Based on this, *Hypothesis H2 (Satisfaction with organisational communication significantly and positively impacts satisfaction with working in home office) is accepted*.

Therefore, we can conclude that, in order to increase satisfaction with working in home office, employers must follow an open, transparent and efficient communication with their employees.

The main *limitation of the research* is that the respondents' opinions were presumably influenced by stress and fear during the epidemic. Another limitation

is that only the employees' side was analysed in the survey, and the employers' opinions, experiences and top-down employee judgment could not be identified.

Future research could include the implementation of an online national questionnaire survey with a sample of 1,000 respondents, representative by gender, age, educational attainment, place of residence, sector and company size. In the representative research, we intend to also ask those without any experience concerning home office; in their case, we will conduct an attitude test. We are planning to conduct the research on a regular (annual or biannual) basis in order to examine the change in employees' and employers' opinions and satisfaction concerning home office as an effect (or irrespective) of the pandemic.

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Appendix: Literature-based factors of satisfaction surveys concerning work satisfaction and communication satisfaction

Code	Factors of satisfaction	Literature background
WS1	When working in home office, I have interesting and challenging tasks.	Noé (2004), Becker–Kaerkes (2006), Saane, N.van et al. (2003), Gajendran–Harrison (2007)
WS2	When working in home office, I am able to use my knowledge and skills.	Noé (2004), Becker–Kaerkes (2006), Saane, N. van et al. (2003), Gajendran–Harrison (2007)
WS3	The amount of work I am given is acceptable on the whole when I work from home.	Noé (2004); Becker–Kaerkes (2006), Yang (2010), Gajendran–Harrison (2007)
WS4	Home office gives me more stress than working in my office.	Yang (2010), Gajendran–Harrison (2007)
WS5	In home office I can harmonise well work tasks with housework and/or looking after the children.	Yang (2010), Saane, N.van et al. (2003), Gajendran–Harrison (2007)
WS6	It is hard to harmonise work and homework if I work outside my home.	Yang (2010), Saane, N.van et al. (2003), Gajendran–Harrison (2007)
WS7	In home office, the balance of work and private life can be fully reached.	Yang (2010), Saane, N.van et al. (2003), Gajendran–Harrison (2007), Carlson et al. (2000), Netemeyer et al. (1996), Golden (2006), Makó et al. (2003)
WS8	In home office, the boundaries of work and leisure time are clear.	Yang (2010), Saane, N.van et al. (2003), Gajendran–Harrison (2007), Carlson et al. (2000), Netemeyer et al. (1996), Makó et al. (2003)
WS9	Home office allows flexible scheduling of the working time.	Ineson et al (2013), Gajendran–Harrison (2007), Makó et al. (2003)
WS10	Home office alleviates the planning of work.	Yang (2010)
WS11	In home office, the character of work is different than that of office work.	Saane, N.van et al. (2003), Hill et al. (1998), Johnson et al. (2008), Kraut (1989), Shamir–Salomon (1985), Gajendran–Harrison (2007), Makó et al. (2003)

Code	Factors of satisfaction	Literature background
C1	I am given all the information I need for the implementation of my daily routine tasks when I am in home office.	Saane, N.van et al. (2003), Meulen et al. (2019), Jawadi (2013), Wheatley (2012), Brunelle–Fortin (2021)
C2	When working from home, I miss office gossip, informal communication.	Saane, N.van et al. (2003), Meulen et al. (2019), Golden (2006), Brunelle–Fortin (2021)
C3	In home office, well-established communication channels are used for working.	Meulen et al. (2019), Brunelle (2013), Jawadi (2013), Wheatley (2012), Brunelle–Fortin (2021)

Source: Own research