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The impact of crisis management on teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak

Wpływ zarządzania kryzysowego w pracy zdalnej podczas wybuchu pandemii – COVID-19

Abstract. The pandemic outbreak began in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, in 2019 and then spread to most of the world. The spread of the virus very quickly encouraged social distancing, reflected by the closure of borders, the cancellation of flights, and the closure of financial markets, corporations, businesses, institutions, universities, and schools, as well as quarantining at home. COVID-19 influenced lifestyle and human health and, above all, had a considerable impact on the global economy. The crisis affected how and where we work, led to a sharp drop in employment and hours worked, and affected workers' incomes, job security, and job prospects for young people arriving on the labor market. The different trends in the effects of COVID-19 are partially explained by the ability of businesses to digitalize. This research is focused on the outbreak of the pandemic, its impact on the economy, industry, medicine, agriculture, tourism, etc., the challenges and opportunities of teleworking, and how to develop working online from home in the future. Understanding the value of working online can increase the development of businesses towards digitalization, more employment opportunities, increase income, and minimize the cost of living. However, there are several practical challenges and associated risks of valuing teleworking that affect its application in practice.

Keys words: Pandemic outbreak, Teleworking, Crisis management, COVID-19

Synopsis. Wybuch pandemii rozpoczął się w Wuhan w prowincji Hubei w Chinach w 2019 roku, a następnie rozprzestrzenił się na niemal resztę świata. Ekspansja wirusa bardzo szybko sprzyjała dystansowaniu społecznemu, co znalazło odzwierciedlenie w: zamknięciu granic, odwołaniu lotów, zamknięciu rynków finansowych, korporacji, przedsiębiorstw, instytucji, uczelni, szkół, a także kwarantannie domowej. COVID-19 wpłynął na styl życia, zdrowie ludzi, a przede wszystkim miał niebagatelny wpływ na światową gospodarkę. Kryzys wpływa na to, jak i gdzie pracujemy, doprowadził do gwałtownego spadku zatrudnienia i przepracowanych godzin, a także wpływa na dochody pracowników, bezpieczeństwo zatrudnienia i perspektywy zawodowe młodych ludzi wchodzących na rynek pracy. Różne trendy w skutkach COVID-19 można częściowo wytłumaczyć zdolnością przedsiębiorstw do cyfryzacji. Badania te skupiają się na wybuchu pandemii i jej wpły-

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wie na: gospodarkę, przemysł, medycynę, rolnictwo, turystykę itp., wyzwaniach i szansach, jakie niesie telepraca, jak w przyszłości rozwijać pracę online z domu. Zrozumienie wartości pracy zdalnej może przyczynić się do rozwoju przedsiębiorstw w kierunku cyfryzacji. Taka forma pracy wpłynie na zwiększenie możliwości zatrudnienia, zwiększenie przychodów i zmniejszenie kosztów działalności. Jednak w praktyce istnieją pewne problemy związane z pracą zdalną, zagrożenia, które utrudniają jej pełne wdrożenie.

Słowa kluczowe: wybuch pandemii, telepraca, zarządzanie kryzysowe, COVID-19

JEL codes: M12, J81, J24

Introduction

Due to lockdowns worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the economy and human health. The COVID-19 situation in December 2019, which continued until the beginning of 2022, somewhat destroyed daily routines [Okorley 2022]. Therefore, everything went online, and online work became a necessity. However, there are distinct differences between sectors. Sectors such as the cultural and creative industries were most affected by the crisis, while the pharmaceutical and digital sectors were least affected. The pandemic particularly affected digital transformation and its development. The study investigates the socio-economic situation, the strategies for overcoming the crisis, the limitations during the pandemic outbreak, and the expectations of working online in Albania – seen as an opportunity or even necessary. Promoting teleworking in the future will favor new businesses, thus stimulating young people and different age groups in the labor market, allowing them to carry out one or more jobs. In Europe, 40% of the employees started teleworking after the government issued a stay-home order [Predotova and Vargas Llave 2021]. Governments took fiscal measures and targeted discretionary or economic programs to help an economic upturn. These measures help 'flatten the economic curve', i.e., limit the economic loss [Bénassy-Quéré et al. 2020]. The crisis affected how and where we work and led to a sharp drop in employment and hours worked, affecting workers' incomes, job security, and job prospects for young people arriving on the labor market [Szpejna and Kennedy 2020]. Statistics show that in the global economy, the euro area experienced a larger hit in 2020, leading to a slower recovery in 2021. The EU (3.6 to 4.2% growth forecast for 2021) significantly lagged behind the recovery forecasts for China (7.9% growth for 2021) [De Vet et al. 2021]. However, international organizations, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the European Central Bank, have also contributed to alleviating the global economic crisis.

In the third trimester of 2021, the pandemic was not over. The new academic year started with a high number of people infected with COVID-19 and its mutations. Europe and the world was in its grip, and it was too early to assess the full impact of this crisis, whether negative or positive. Certainly, to support new businesses and young people in the job market, one opportunity is to promote remote work. Teleworking, called remote work, work from home (WFH), and flexible workplace, is a work arrangement where employees have the option to work remotely and remain interactive. The different trends in the COVID-19 effects are partially explained by the ability of businesses to digitalize [De Vet et al. 2021].

The overall goal is to investigate online work during the pandemic in Albania, which is seen as a challenge and an opportunity for the future. The specific objectives will be:

- Framing the valuation problems in the context of crisis management at the government level, including administration and businesses.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of online work (the degree of accomplishment of employment functions, the degree and quality of the performance of tasks, the possibility and effectiveness of online communication), and limiting/promotional factors.
- An assessment of the development of sectors and the degree of continuity or staying in the online system as a framework of measures that must be implemented (who, what, when, how?), as well as to promote or keep employment online in the future.

Desk review

This section focuses on the theoretical and conceptual perspectives. Telework facilitates flexibility and a strong work–family balance while reducing the environmental impacts of mobility and increasing the economic well-being of consumers [Belzunegui-Eraso 2020].

As can be seen from world statistics and literature, online work has its advantages in promoting new policies and practices to promote it. The ability of many employees to telework has mitigated an economic crisis [Abulibdeh 2020]. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model will be used to develop a theoretical basis for this research [Zheng 2020]; (Fig. 1).

This theory will serve to identify the conceptual framework of the study. Teleworking will be monitored in banks, such as stock exchange monitoring, updates of e-banking applications, manufacturing industries, and the design of new and modern software. The implementation of teleworking in various businesses showed success during COVID-19. This new employment practice can be successful in the future, giving more employment opportunities and minimizing living costs.

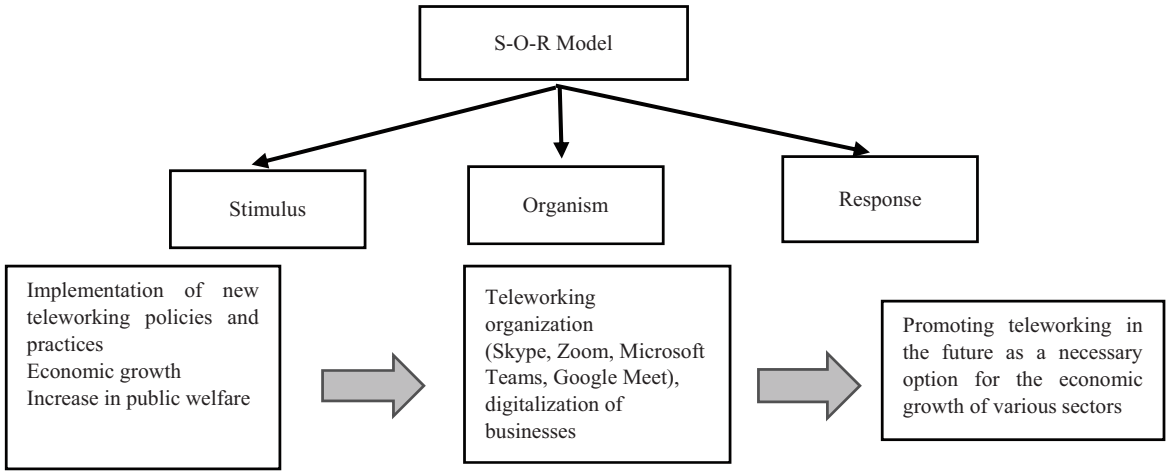

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Source: own elaboration based on [Zheng 2020].

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie [Zheng 2020].

Methodology

This research consists of calculating and commenting on descriptive statistics for indicators related to the characteristics, dimensions, limitations, effects, and ways of coping with the effects of the pandemic, using gender and employment categories, etc. Tables and graphical representations are an important part of this method. Also, secondary data are collected from the literature (studies, analyses, publications) that is related to the characteristics, dimensions, limitations, effects, and ways of coping (by the population and government), the effectiveness of online work, and opportunities related to the effects/ /possibilities of future pandemics.

Two research hypotheses were formulated for the purposes of the research.

H_0: Teleworking/remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic is statistically but not significantly related to the age of workers and their working conditions.

H_1: Teleworking/remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic is statistically and significantly related to the age of workers and their working conditions.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data. It is a statistical method used to study observations that depend on one or more factors acting simultaneously. This method explains the probability with which isolated factors can cause differences between the observed group means.

Results of the study

This research includes data from 170 respondents in Albania, which was shared via e-mail using Google Forms. Quantitative and qualitative variables are explained and presented with tables and graphs below. In this study, a positive attitude of young people with the adaptation of online work from home is observed.

Table 1. The gender of the interviewees
Tabela 1. Płeć respondentów

Description		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	female	125	73.5	73.5	73.5
	male	45	26.5	26.5	100.0
	total	170	100.0	100.0	

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

The data in Table 1 shows the gender of the interviewees: 73.5% were female, and 26.5% were male.

The data in Figure 1 shows the age of the interviewees. From the 170 respondents interviewed regarding online employment during the pandemic, the majority were between 18–25 years old, giving an average age of 24.35 years old.

The data in Table 2 shows the education of the interviewees: 1.8% only completed elementary school, 11.2% only completed middle school, and 2.4% only completed high school. The majority of interviewees were students with university education.

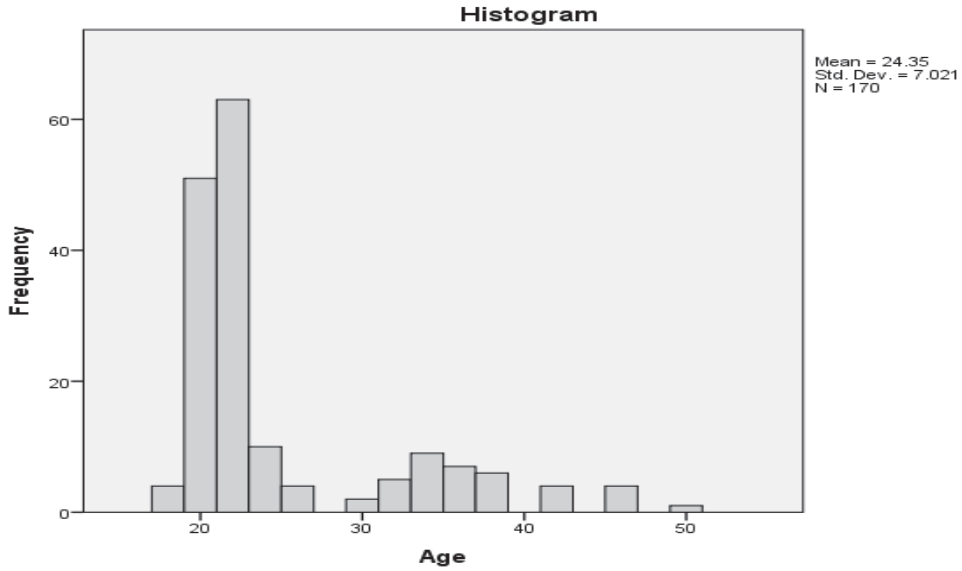

Figure 2 The age of the interviewees
Rysunek 2. Wiek respondentów

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

Table 2. The education of interviewees
Tabela 2. Wykształcenie respondentów

	Description	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	elementary school	3	1.8	1.8	1.8
	middle school	19	11.2	11.2	12.9
	high school	4	2.4	2.4	15.3
	university	144	84.7	84.7	100.0
	total	170	100.0	100.0	

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

Table 3. Living place of interviewees
Tabela 3. Miejsce zamieszkania respondentów

	Description	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	urban	138	81.2	81.2	81.2
	rural	32	18.8	18.8	100.0
	total	170	100.0	100.0	

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

Table 3 represents the living place: 81.2 % lived in urban areas, and 18.8% lived in rural areas. Most of the population in Albania lives in urban areas.

Table 4. Marital status of interviewees
Tabela 4. Stan cywilny respondentów

	Description	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	married	21	12.4	12.4	12.4
	not married	149	87.6	87.6	100.0
	total	170	100.0	100.0	

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

The question of marital status is also interesting since many young people today also live together and share the conditions at home to work online. Of 170 respondents, 12.4% were married, and 87.6% were not (Table 4).

Table 5. Monthly income of the interviewees
Tabela 5. Miesięczne dochody respondentów

	Description [EUR]	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	450–550	76	44.7	44.7	44.7
	550–650	4	2.4	2.4	47.1
	650–750	32	18.8	18.8	65.9
	750–850	13	7.6	7.6	73.5
	over 850	45	26.5	26.5	100.0
	total	170	100.0	100.0	

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

The data in Table 5 shows the monthly income of the interviewees: 44.7% earned EUR 450–550, 2.4% earned EUR 550–650, 18.8% earned EUR 650–750, 7.6 % earned EUR 750–850, and 26.5% earned over EUR 850.

Table 6. Teleworking (Have you worked online?)
Tabela 6. Praca zdalna (Czy pracowałeś/aś online?)

	Description	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	109	64.1	64.1	64.1
	no	61	35.9	35.9	100.0
	total	170	100.0	100.0	

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

The data in Table 6 shows if the interviewees worked online from home: 64.1% of interviewees worked online during the pandemic, and 35.9% did not.

Table 7. Online tools used during the pandemic of interviewees
Tabela 7. Narzędzia online wykorzystywane w trakcie pandemii przez respondentów

	Description	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	computer	80	47.1	48.2	48.2
	laptop	36	21.2	21.7	69.9
	tablet	29	17.1	17.5	87.3
	telephone	21	12.4	12.7	100.0
	total	166	97.6	100.0	
Missing	system	4	2.4		
Total		170	100.0		

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

Table 7 shows the online tools used to work online from home: 47.1% of interviewees used a computer, 21.2% used a laptop, 17.1 % used a tablet, 12.4% used a telephone, and 2.4% did not answer.

Table 8. ANOVA analysis
Tabela 8. Analiza ANOVA

Variation indicators	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Between Groups	9.789	20	.489	2.487	.001
Within Groups	29.323	149	.197		
Total	39.112	169			

Sign: ($p \leq 0.05$)

Source: own study.
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

Discussion and conclusions

1. The pandemic of 2019–2021 radically changed our lives. At this time, we were introduced to a new phenomenon – working from home. This distanced us from society and made us less social, but on the other hand, it allowed us to work more than one job.
2. As can be seen in the figures above, from the 170 respondents interviewed regarding online employment during the pandemic, the majority were between 18–25 years old, giving an average age of 24.35 years old.
3. 81.2 % lived in urban areas, and 18.8% lived in rural areas. Like all over the world, even in Albania, the majority of young people today live in urban areas, as it is easier to build a better life there.

4. From the statistics of recent years in Albania, another phenomenon is noticed – the average age of marriage has increased to 29 years for women and 30 for men [INSTAT 2023]. Of 170 respondents, 12.4% were married, and 87.6% were not.
5. 47.1% of interviewees used a computer to work online from home, 21.2% used a laptop, 17.1% used a tablet, 12.4% used a telephone, and 2.4% did not answer.

In this study, a positive relationship between teleworking and the age and willingness of young people to work online was observed. Thus, remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic is statistically and significantly related to the age of workers and working conditions.

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