International Conference at the Brno University of Technology,
Faculty of Business and Management, September 16-17, 2021 Brno, Czech Republic
Perspectives of Business and Entrepreneurship Development: Digital Transformation for Business Model Innovation

Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Working

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Abstract

Purpose of the article Before the COVID-19, approximately 95% of employed persons in Latvia never worked at home, however, in 2020, number of remote workers increased until 18% roughly. Even after a year from the beginning of the pandemic, working from home is still a challenge for many employees, and actions are required from both workers and management. This, in turn, points the necessity to research the actual problems of Latvian teleworkers and provide solutions for them.

Methodology/methods To develop the background of the study existing literature in the fields of remote working and staff adaptation is explored. For processing results of the survey, frequency analysis, independent variables analysis, factor analysis and graphic analysis of identified benefits and problems of remote working are used.

Scientific aim The aim of study is to identify advantages and disadvantages of distance working and to find out main factors influencing distance working in Latvia.

Findings Analysis showed that Latvian distance employees face with organizational, communicational and motivational problems during working remotely. Based on the results of statistical analyses made by the authors, the recommendation for remote workers in Latvia in general and for remote workers of different groups (gender, age, having children, position, having previous experience of working from home) separately are provided.

Conclusions Remote employees highly appreciate economy of travel time and expenses and opportunity to organize working process independently. Childless persons more that those whose children are at home or out of home during working time appreciate a chance to organize their work independently including choice of working time and limitation of distractions by other employees. Latvian remote employees evaluated the following problems as the most negative: lack of environment change, lack of balance between work and personal life, lack of face-to-face communication with other employees, lack of inspiring working atmosphere and difficulty to stop working in the evening. The survey results could be used for the organization of distance working at companies in effective way.

Keywords: remote work, telecommuting, distance working, COVID-19

JEL Classification: J81, M12, M54

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Introduction

Pandemic in 2020 changed the most fields of life including requirements and conditions of working. According to Eurostat (2020), approximately 95% of employed persons in Latvia never worked at home, 1,8% was working distantly usually, and only for 3% that was a usual practice. However, the last statistical data that was presented by The Central Statistical Bureau in Latvia in February 2021 showed that in the 2nd quarter of the previous year 18,3% of employees were working remotely, in the 3rd quarter – 8,9%, in the 4th quarter –18% (Official statistic portal of Latvia, 2021a). This data clearly demonstrates the sharp increase of number of telecommuters.

The topicality of the research lies in the understanding that working from home became a challenge for those employees and employers who had no such experience previously. Many familiar processes and habits had undergone changes among which are working schedule, organization, communication, control and task performance (Gomez et al., 2020). Companies' staff had to come to terms with new requirements. However, media monitoring of Latvian news showed that even after a year from the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic and with lockdown experience, there are still many problems of remote working exist be-cause of lack of knowledge and understanding by the side of both employees and their management of how to adapt to new working environment to work effectively and efficiently staying in distance from familiar offices.

The aim of study is to determine advantages and disadvantages of distance working and to find out main factors influencing distance working in Latvia. To achieve the stated aim, the authors conducted a survey and proceeded collected data using factor analysis in SPSS.

1 The Concept of Remote Working, Telecommuting and Distance Working

Distance working is not a new concept in the field of working conditions. In 1972, Jack Nilles in-vented a term "telecommuting" that meant working from home using a telephone (Antropov, 2008). Since that remote working is developing faster and faster every year. In the period 2005-2020, the growth of remote work reached 159% (World Economic Forum, 2020), and the number of remote jobs increased for 30% from 848 to 3144 in the period 2014-2019 (ILO, 2020).

Distance working has many synonyms among which are remote work, telecommuting, teleworking, mobile working, virtual working, working from home also known as WFH, etc. Nowadays, in the period of pandemic, researchers use teleworking (Fang Nc, 2020; Malik et al., 2016; Perez et al., 2004; Ruiller et al., 2019), remote working (Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi, 2020; White, 2018), telecommuting (Barron, 2007), distance working (Milenin, 2020; Strakšienė et al., 2021) in equal meaning to specify in general that a person is working from home or other place but not on-site. As the decision to work out of office in this case is usually done not independently, but under the terror of circumstances, boundaries between the meanings have almost disappeared.

For better understanding of the problem, the differences of main types of such working should be identified nonetheless. Three main types of so-called work-out-of-office are distinguished: distance working, remote working and working from home.

Before investigating the main features of previously mentioned three types of work, it is required to understand differences in another two terms – telecommuting and teleworking – that would be closely connected with main ones. The prefix "tele-" means distance (Reynolds, 2011). While they look almost similar, telework is much wider definition that telecommuting. As Jack Nilles, the creator of the idea of distance working and the author of both these tele-terms, said: "All telecommuters are teleworkers but not all teleworkers are telecommuters". (Rodgers, 2020). Teleworkers perform daily working routine out of office and they still have to move somewhere (meetings with the clients, working from another branch of the company, from a co-working space, hotel, airport etc.). Other words, they are not telecommuters as they have to commute to fulfill their tasks. In comparison, telecommuters may stay at home without need to visit main office or specific place to work. It may seem that telecommuting is the same as working from home but actually, this term is more similar to distance working, as teleworking requires employee-employee relations and working schedule as well.

Different definitions of the above terms exist, and they depend of place of work, usage of informational and communicational technologies usage, distribution of time between office and home/other locations (Messenger et. al., 2017, 13). For understanding of differences of distance working and remote working and taking into accordance their similarity, the comparison should be done according to researches of Akuma (2019), Marzullo (2019), Smalley (2018). Among main common features are the next ones:

1. Both workers may work from any place other than office: at home, in a café, a co-working space etc. However, distant worker may combine working in the office and out of it or even never come to the office. He also sometimes need to participate in team-building activities and personal meetings. While remote worker never visit it.
2. Both workers work for their employer and have a salary provided by that employer.
3. Both of workers may work full-time or part time.
4. Such types of work may be on temporary basis and on permanent one. As it was mentioned, distance worker may sometimes work in the office or never do that. Remote worked may work out of office just while travelling or being just unable to commute to the work or work in another place all the time.
5. Both workers usually rely on the Internet and gadgets to work and communicate to other employees. Employer may provide required equipment and software or reimburse in case of usage of personal ones.

Decision of usage of such workers often depends on cost saving strategy of a company to cut costs connected with rent, electricity, taxes, etc. Rees and Smith (2017) in their classification of flexible working hours do not separate distance and remote working and combine them into mobile working/teleworking, but they accentuate working from home practice as those one when employees spend working hours at home.

Working from home considerably differs from previously mentioned two working-out-of-office types because there is still no clear definition of what is this exactly. Opinions of researchers are divided in relation to what type of occupation home workers have. While main participants of distance and remote working are employees, in case of working from home people also may be independent contracts and business owners (Brown, 2017) that means completely different obligations and rights. However, working from home may be equated to distance working if the main actor is an employee just fulfilling tasks from his apartment or other residence place but not from the office (Rodgers, 2020).

On the one hand, the best synonym for working-from-home is freelance as their features are the most similar. While there is a fine line between remote working, distance working, teleworking and telecommuting, the difference between remote working in general sense and freelance is huge. However, even today many people confuse these concepts. The main distinction has been previously mentioned: remote workers are usually employees that means they work for one company on the basis on official employment or working contract, have schedule and obligations, regularly get salary and have social protection. At the same time, freelancer can co-operate with a few companies or clients at the same time, has no social guarantees and stability in getting income but free for choice of working tasks (Petuhova, 2017). However, provided description is actual only in case if the person performing work from home is not permanently employed but acts under agreement or temporary contract. On the other hand, International Labour Organization (2020) considers working from home as home-based telework. The only and main difference be-tween these concepts is that teleworking may include various location out of office while working from home is limited with employee's premises.

Previously provided descriptions of different types of distance working demonstrate that all of them have similarities and may be easily confused because of, firstly, common features and, secondly, different understanding of them. In the Table1, the short comparison of all mentioned types of working is provided in general.

Table 1 Comparison of different types of distance working

	Distance working	Remote working	Teleworking	Telecommuting	WFH as employee	WFH as freelancer
Employment						
Official/long-term contract	•	•	•	•	•	
Short-term contract/agreement						•
Income						
Regular salary	•	•	•	•	•	
Non-stabile						•
Schedule						

Strict	●		●	●	●	
Flexible		●				●
Choice of tasks						
Independent						●
Dependent	●	●	●	●	●	
Office visits						
Never		●			●	
Sometimes	●		●	●		●
Place of work						
Office	●					
Home	●	●	●	●	●	●
Other spaces	●	●	●	●		
Frequency of working out of office						
Always		●	●	●	●	●
Sometimes	●				●	
Need to move somewhere during working						
Never		●		●	●	●
Sometimes	●		●			

Source: created by authors

Table 1 provides main features of different types of distance working in general. However, development of remote working the same as global movement from offices to homes all around the world make these requirements and rules more flexible. Blurring the boundaries leads to the fact that the difference between these concepts is gradually erasing, and they become interchangeable. This is another reason that even HR professionals and researchers in the field confuse these concepts and use the generic term “re-mote working” or “teleworking” in the meaning of any of them.

2 Research Methodology

The aim of study is to determine advanages and disadvantages of distance working and to find out main factors influencing distance working in Latvia.

As a research tool the survey was developed by authors. The period of the survey conduction is from February, 11th till April, 6th, 2021. The survey consists of five sections: Personal information, Working changes, Positive Factors, Negative Factors, Extra difficulties during working remotely.

Section A “Personal information” consists of 8 mandatory questions

Section B “Working changes” is connected with evaluation modifications during distance working. In the questionnaire, the section exists in two variants: employers (managers who have subordinate workers and self-occupied persons who may have persons with whom they co-work) and employees (usual workers and freelancers that work under employment contract). For both groups the section consists of 12 similar statements. The only difference in the statements that employees among other personal working changes are provided to estimate changes in communication with management while employers have to value changes of their staff and own communication with their workers. Respondents have to evaluate each statement by 1-5 point scale, where 1 is “Significant negative changes”, 3 is “No changes” and 5 is “Significant positive changes”.

Section C “Positive factors” consists of distance working benefits. Respondents are offered to valuate for which extension proposed factors are actual for them during working remotely. 1-5 point Lykert-scale has been chosen for the section where 1 is “Absolutely no”, 3 is “Difficult to answer” and 5 is “Absolutely yes”. Section consists of 12 statements to be evaluated which can be divided into 4 general factors by their meaning: technical organization of work, travel economy, working process and private space. General positive factors were identified

and questions were formulated under literature review and media monitoring concerning working from home in the period of COVID-19.

Section D "Negative factors" consists of possible problems employee could face during remote working. As in the previous section C, respondents were asked to evaluate to which extension the proposed statements are actual for them personally while telecommuting. 1-5 point Lykert-scale has been chosen for the section where 1 is "Absolutely no", 3 is "Difficult to answer" and 5 is "Absolutely yes". All questions are formulated with usage of words with a negative pattern (e.g., "difficulty", "lack", and "overload"). The section consists of 20 questions, which can be divided into 4 general factors: technical organization of work, communication, self-organization and personal feelings. The questions were written after the results of media and literature research of international and Latvian sources.

In the section E "Extra difficulties during working remotely", respondents were asked to indicate what other problems not mentioned in the Section E they experienced. In contradistinction to previous sections in which answering each question was mandatory, in this section respondents could decide if they want to answer or not. The section consists of one question with opportunity to write an answer in the special window.

The following methods for the research conduction were chosen: frequency analysis, independent variables analysis and factor analysis. The survey was created for collecting opinions of employees and employers who had an experience of distance working in Latvia in the period of lockdowns in 2020-2021. The following two types of analysis – independent variables analysis and factor analysis – were done with usage of SPSS program. Independent variables analysis was used to compare opinions of different groups and to disclose most actual problems and benefits for representatives of those groups. In case of revealing a significant pattern ($p<0.05$), the hypothesis that the option has a significant difference for representatives of compared groups, and this difference should be analyzed. For the analysis five groups where chosen:

1. Gender – to collate answers of men and women;
2. Age – answers of different age groups as it can be expected that different age groups may have a different attitude to telecommuting and different problems;
3. Position – answers of employees and employers to identify gaps between their view of the same working situation;
4. Presence of children – as during media monitoring the big amount of problems highlighted were connected with families with children at home that may distract working parents;
5. Previous experience – as those who had already known before the lockdown how to work from home may have another problems as those who just faced with such type of work.

These groups were chosen as they regularly appear in literature (comparison of men and women working distantly, problems and preferences of different age groups, different recommendations for employees and employers, difficulties of working while children are at home, remote working practice before COVID-19).

For the group "Gender" Mann-Whitney U-test method was chosen as it is used for analyzing two independent variables. For the groups "Age", "Children" and "Previous experience of distance working", Kruskal-Wallis H-test was chosen as it is used for analyzing more than two independent variables. In case of a significant pattern appearance, to identify groups that are significantly different from each other, it is necessary to test all groups in pairs (as in the test according to the Mann-Whitney-U method).

For factor analysis of advantages and disadvantages of distance working (separately), Varimax method was selected. Variables that are highly correlated with each other are combined into one factor. Accordingly, the main goal of this analysis is to identify complex factors that should help to interpret connections between variables.

According to the Central Statistical Bureau (2021) in Latvia 139 thousand employees were working remotely in 2020. This data provided opportunity to calculate the sample size for the survey conducted. With the confidence level of 90%, the confidence interval of ±5% and size of remote workers of 139 thou-sand, the required sample size was 272 persons. In general, 264 remote workers took a part in the research. The sample included 20,1% men and 79,9% women. Thereby, one of the survey features is that mostly women's relation to distance working is represented.

Respondents age. In the survey respondents were divided into 6 age groups and their spread was the following: 18-25 years old – 4,2%, 26-35 years old – 41,7%, 36-45 years old – 32,2%, 46-55 years old – 17%, 56-65 years old – 4,2%, and more than 65 years old – 0,8%. Thus, the peculiarity of the sample is that respondents in the age groups of 26-35 and 36-45 years old significantly predominate, and the respondents in the age group over 65 are practically not represented.

Respondents education. 42% of total survey output have bachelor's degree, 34,5% – master's degree, 20,8% – secondary education, and only 2,7% have doctor's degree. According to the official statistical bureau of Latvia (Official statistic portal of Latvia, 2021b), in 2019 (when the last statistic of education among Latvian citizens was presented), 59,7% (646,511 persons) of population had secondary degree, 11,9% (128,858 persons) of population had bachelor degree, 27,7% (300,426 persons) successfully finished master program, and 0,7% (7,765 persons) obtained doctor's title. This lead to the result, that the ratio of the survey respondents by education level can be considered representative.

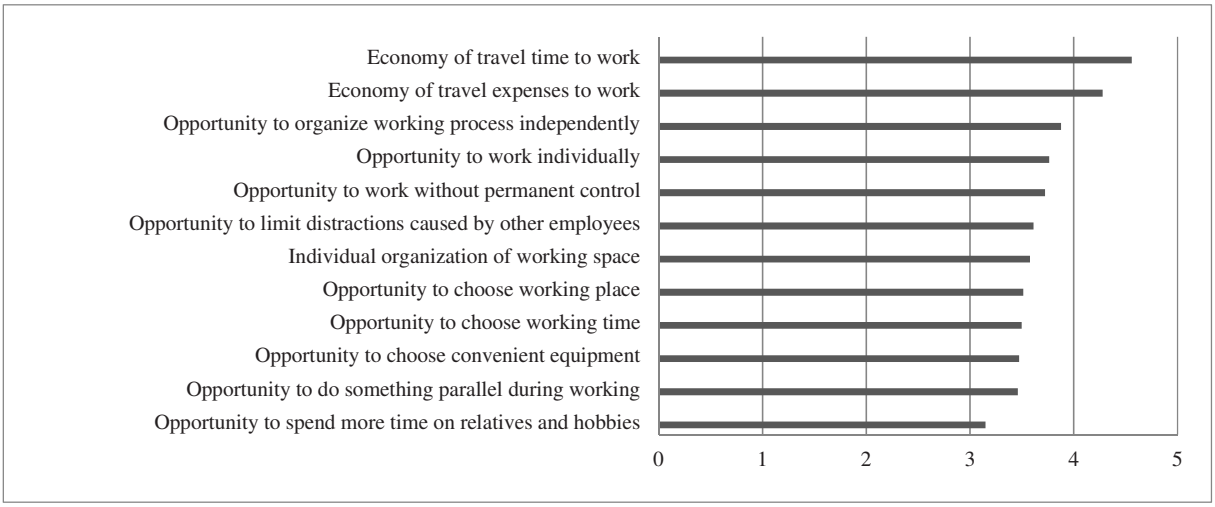
Respondents' family status. According to the survey results, 18,2% of total respondents amount are single, 67% are married, 12,9% are divorced, and 1,9% are widowed. This may lead to the assumption that the majority of respondents (married) may have a strong connection with questions related to spending free time from work with family and distractions while working remotely. Further, the survey participants were asked if they have children under 18 years old at home or out of home during working hours, or not at all. The answers were distributed as follows: 36,7% have children under 18 at home while parents are working, 13,6% have children under 18 out of home while telecommuting, and 49,6% do not have minors.

Previous experience of distance working of respondents. Another important question to those who are working from home during lockdown was if they have had previous experience of distance working, or other words, if they were prepared for such type of working. Among all respondents, 43,9% never worked remotely before COVID-19 pandemic, 53% worked both in an office and remotely, and 3% always worked only remotely. The question was formulated for understanding in the follow-up research if those who had and did not have such experience of telecommuting value the same benefits of remote working and which problems they face are different for them.

Job position of respondents. In the survey, 10,2% answered that they occupy a position of top-management, 29,9% chose the variant "middle management", 56,1% are ordinary employees or not big managers. 0,8% and 3% of respondents are freelancers and self-occupied persons respectively. As it had already been mentioned, for the further research these groups were combined between themselves into groups that are more general: top-management, middle management and self-occupied persons were combined into "Employers" group; ordinary employees and freelancers – into "Employees" group. Thus, number of employers after groups association is 43,2%, and number of employees is 56,8%. Such proportion allows counting that the results of the research would be representative.

3 Advantages of Distance Working

Respondents were proposed to evaluate for which extension proposed advantages are actual for them during working remotely. For this, survey participants had to evaluate each statement by 1-5 point scale, where 1 is "Absolutely no", 3 is "Difficult to answer" and 5 is "Absolutely yes".



Source: authors' calculations

Figure 1 Means ranking of advantages of distance working

The leading positions of advantages that are important for remote employees in Latvia are occupied by two statements, directly connected to each other: "Economy of travel time to work" (M = 4,5606) and "Economy of travel expenses to work" (M = 4,2803). This lead to a conclusion that saving resources that can be wasted on travel is the most important advantage that remote workers value working from home.

For independent variables analysis, two non-parametric methods were chosen: Mann-Whitney U test in case there are only two independent variables and Kruskal-Wallis H Test in case there are more than two independent variables. Mann-Whitney-U test provided opportunity to identify different attitudes to the same remote working benefits for two groups: by gender and by position (between employers and employees) (Table 2).

Table 2 Mann-Whitney U test analysis of advantages for gender and position groups

	Gender				Position			
	Mean Rank - Male	Mean Rank - Female	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Rank - Employer	Mean Rank - Employee	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Individual organization of working space	120,04	135,63	4931,0	,170	126,00	137,44	7809,5	,213
Opportunity to choose convenient equipment	129,85	133,17	5451,0	,771	125,11	138,11	7708,0	,159
Opportunity to choose working place	121,49	135,27	5008,0	,226	127,32	136,44	7959,0	,322
Opportunity to choose working time	138,07	131,10	5296,5	,541	126,14	137,34	7824,5	,224
Economy of travel time to work	114,28	137,08	4626,0	,013	131,30	133,41	8413,5	,776
Economy of travel expenses to work	109,16	138,36	4354,5	,004	131,75	133,07	8464,0	,872
Opportunity to organize working process independently	128,41	133,53	5374,5	,648	138,08	128,26	7914,0	,279
Opportunity to work individually	128,54	133,50	5381,5	,659	135,46	130,25	8213,0	,567
Opportunity to work without permanent control	129,65	133,22	5440,5	,752	138,44	127,98	7872,5	,251
Opportunity to limit distractions caused by other	126,84	133,92	5291,5	,532	134,17	131,23	8360,0	,749

employees								
Opportunity to spend more time on relatives and hobbies	147,07	128,84	4819,5	,112	126,56	137,01	7873,0	,260
Opportunity to do something parallel during working	137,29	131,30	5337,5	,599	125,86	137,54	7793,5	,205

Source: authors' calculations

According to the results of Mann-Whitney U test by gender, significant difference (where $p \leq 0,05$) be-tween variables is observed in two cases: "Economy of travel time to work" ($U = 4626,0$; $p = 0,013$) and "Economy of travel expenses to work" ($U = 138,36$; $p = 0,04$). Mean indicators for both statements are higher for females that mean that women are much stronger appreciate the opportunity to save money and time spent or the trip to work than men.

No significant difference is identified for the group "Position" according to the Mann-Whitney U test. What is more, the high tendency for been important for both employers and employees in equal rate demonstrates the statement "Economy of travel expenses to work" ($U = 8464,0$; $p = 0,872$). This means that there is not only no difference between the independent variables' evaluation of the advantage but even the high likelihood that the value the advantage on the same level. With Kruskal-Wallis H test, those groups were analyzed which have more than two variables in them: Age, Having children under 18 years old and Having previous experience of teleworking (Table 3).

Table 3 Kruskal-Wallis H test analysis of benefits for age, having children and previous experience of teleworking groups

Asymp. Sig.	Age	Having children	Having previous experience of distance working
Individual organization of working space	,502	,250	,859
Opportunity to choose convenient equipment	,632	,336	,228
Opportunity to choose working place	,904	,381	,061*
Opportunity to choose working time	,453	,011	,014
Economy of travel time to work	,400	,925	,364
Economy of travel expenses to work	,522	,715	,329
Opportunity to organize working process independently	,572	,025	,191
Opportunity to work individually	,708	,072*	,448
Opportunity to work without permanent control	,819	,602	,269
Opportunity to limit distractions caused by other employees	,993	,065*	,335
Opportunity to spend more time on relatives and hobbies	,174	,550	,027
Opportunity to do something parallel during working	,006	,507	,171

** $p > 0,05$ insignificantly, and tendency for unequal distribution is saved*

Source: authors' calculations

For the group "Age", the high tendency for equal valuation (in case $p = 1$, the hypothesis that there is absolutely no difference between compared groups is accepted) of proposed benefits for all age groups is identified for the following statements: "Opportunity to limit distractions caused by other employees" ($p = 0,993$), "Opportunity to choose working place" ($p = 0,904$) and "Opportunity to work without permanent control" ($p = 0,819$). This means that representatives of all age groups equally or mostly equally appreciate opportunities to work without distractions from colleagues' side, personally define the place where to work and perform tasks without checking by management. Significant difference was detected only once: "Opportunity to do something parallel during working" ($p = 0,006$).

After the Kruskal-Wallis H test, the significant difference ($p \leq 0,05$) for the group "Having children" (see Table 3) was found in two cases: "Opportunity to choose working time" ($p = 0,011$) and "Opportunity to organize working process independently" ($p = 0,025$). For the second advantage "Opportunity to organize working process independently", the significant difference was identified only in comparison of answers of respondent without

children and with children out of home while teleworking (p = 0,009) with predominance of childless workers. Results of Mann-Whitney U test demonstrate that people without children higher appreciate their freedom of when and how to work than those with children.

The last group for comparison by Kruskal-Wallis method was "Having previous experience of tele-working" (see Table 3 of Annex 3), which respondents were divided also in three subgroups: "Never worked remotely", "Worked both in an office and remotely" and "Always worked only remotely". After these, in two benefits the significant difference was identified: "Opportunity to choose working time" (p = 0,014) and "Opportunity to spend more time on relatives and hobbies" (p = 0,027); moreover, for one benefit insignificant difference was also identified: "Opportunity to choose working place" (p = 0,061). After the Mann-Whitney U test, it can be seen that those who never worked remotely before COVID-19 now appreciate much higher the opportunity to choose working time (p = 0,011) than those who had such an experience before pandemic the same as office working experience. At the same time, respondents who al-ways worked remotely also value this opportunity more than those who worked both in an office and at home (p = 0,070), however, the difference between them is not significant. This brings to the result that people who always worked on-site before now highly evaluate their flexible schedule.

For identifying most important factors which influence distance working positively factor analysis were conducted. According to the Table 4, three intrinsic factors have values greater than one. Therefore, only three factors were chosen for the further analysis. The first factors explains 37,472% of summary dispersion, the second – 16,901%, and the third – 8,584% (see Table 4).

Table 4 Total Variance Explained for advantages of distance working

Components	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4,497	37,472	37,472	3,238	26,983	26,983
2	2,028	16,901	54,374	2,582	21,516	48,499
3	1,030	8,584	62,958	1,735	14,459	62,958
4	,946	7,882	70,840			
5	,746	,6214	77,054			
6	,664	5,532	82,586			
7	,476	3,963	86,549			
8	,398	3,314	89,863			
9	,380	3,171	93,034			
10	,310	2,586	35,619			
11	,268	2,235	97,855			
12	,257	2,145	100,000			

Source: authors' calculations

Next step the rotated component matrix is provided (see Table 5).

Table 5 Rotated Component Matrix for factors which influence distance working positively

	Component		
	1	2	3
Individual organization of working space		,859	
Opportunity to choose convenient equipment		,851	
Opportunity to choose working place		,854	
Opportunity to choose working time		,509	
Economy of travel time to work			,857
Economy of travel expenses to work			,865
Opportunity to organize working process independently	,738		
Opportunity to work individually	,789		

Opportunity to work without permanent control	,796		
Opportunity to limit distractions caused by other employees	,702		
Opportunity to spend more time on relatives and hobbies	,582		
Opportunity to do something parallel during working	,569		

Source: authors' calculations

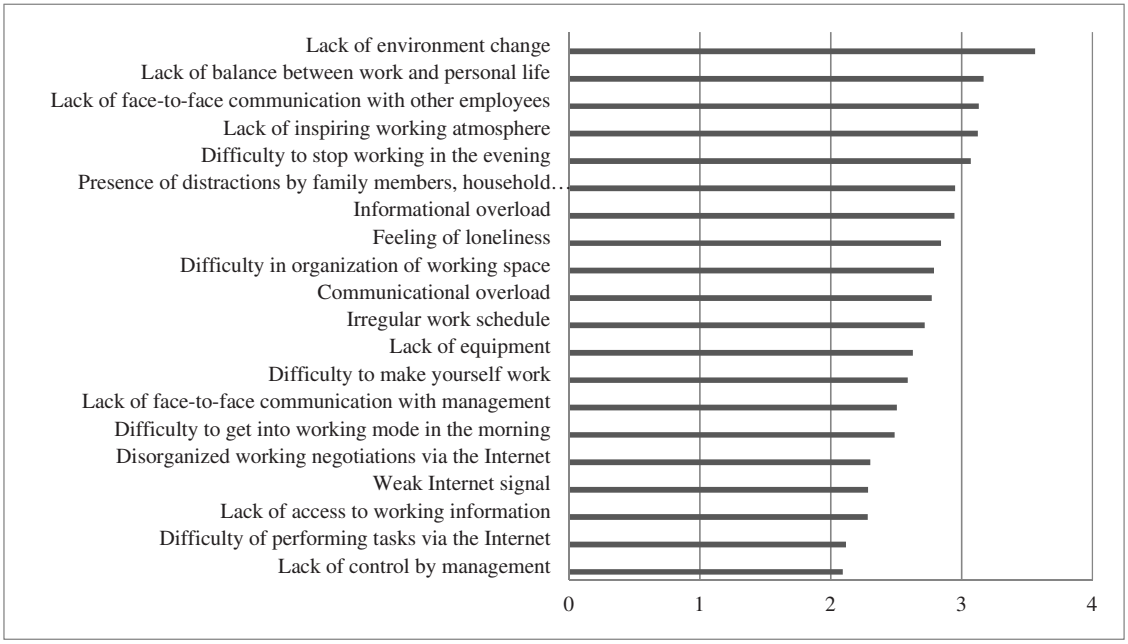
The three factors are identified: Organization of working process, Working conditions and Economy of time and money. The first factor collected all benefits that are connected with organization of working process. These items describe independent working, limitation of destructions by other employees and extra control, personal distribution of working hours. The second factor collected all benefits that are con-nected with physical organization of work, including choice of working space, place, equipment and schedule. The third factor collected only two benefits both connected with travel economy: saving money and time.

4 Disadvantages of Distance Working

In the section D "Negative factors", respondents were proposed to evaluate for which extension pro-posed factors are actual for them during working remotely. For this, survey participants had to value each statement by 1-5 point scale, where 1 is "Absolutely no", 3 is "Difficult to answer" and 5 is "Absolutely yes".

Frequencies analysis with calculation of means did not demonstrate any negative factor that was highly evaluated as absolutely actual for distance workers (see Figure 2).

The leading position among all proposed factors holds "Lack of environment change" (M = 3,5644) with tendency to the answer "Yes". This means that respondents feel themselves closed in their homes and wish to move somewhere else even if they highly appreciate travel economy benefits from the previous section. The second position is occupied by the lack of balance between work and personal life (M = 3,1705). Previously performed media monitoring showed that remote employees note blurring of boundaries between their working and free time the same as difficulty to concentrate at work while they have no opportunity to distract from household chores. The third position took lack of face-to-face communication with other employees (M = 3,1326), which means not only working negotiations yet also personal relations. It is closely connected with the following problem remote employees may face from the rating: "Lack of inspiring working atmosphere" (M = 3,1250) when people feel themselves a part of a team through spending time together.



Source: authors' calculations

Figure 2 Means ranking of disadvantages of distance working

As in the previous part, independent variables analysis is performed with usage of two methods: Mann-Whitney U for gender and positions groups (Table 6) and Kruskal-Wallis H for age, having children and having previous experience of distance working groups (Table 7).

First, the mentioned analysis has been done to compare attitude to the problems according to mean ranks of men and women and identify significant difference in special cases. Asymptotic significance ($p \leq 0,05$) was found only once: "Lack of environment change" ($U = 4502,5$; $p = 0,023$). Mean indicator is higher for females that mean that women tend to feel locked up more often and/or more intensively than males and require more freedom to move and work somewhere else for normal psychological state. The border of significance (where $p > 0,05$ but $p \leq 0,10$ which shows not significant difference but tendency to difference) was slightly crossed in three cases: "Lack of control by management" ($U = 4708,0$; $p = 0,060$), "Feeling of loneliness" ($U = 4680,0$; $p = 0,060$) and "Lack of balance between work and personal life" ($U = 4789,0$; $p = 0,098$). According to the mean results, men suffer more from the shortage of control. This observation is much more interesting because of the connected point from benefits section, where the "Opportunity to work without permanent control" got the sufficiently high level of equality in comparison of men and women answers ($U = 5440,5$; $p = 0,752$). This may be understood, as men prefer to work with-out permanent monitoring of their job performance but, at the same time, require someone to manage them for their personal reasons (for example, concentration, self-organization etc.). Loneliness and lack of work-life balance are observed in women mostly. Lack of communication was already reflected as one of the leading problems in the previous table. Taking into account that the research is empirical and some factors may be considered subjective, this significant difference can be seen as a results of the stereotype that women are more communicative than men and spend more time on personal conversations during working time, so the lockdown and requirement to work from home lead to a lack of communication. In the last case "Lack of balance between work and personal life", the difference is insignificant and almost reached the level from which there is no tendency to unequal attitude of men and women to the same issue.

The results of the analysis also showed the high tendency for equal valuation of proposed problems for both males and females in the following cases: "Irregular work schedule" ($U = 5474,5$; $p = 0,809$), "Lack of access to working information" ($U = 5512,5$; $p = 0,867$) and "Lack of inspiring working atmosphere" ($U = 5546,5$; $p = 0,926$). This means, that in the mentioned problems, the tensions remote workers feel is the same for men and women.

Table 6 Mann-Whitney U test analysis of disadvantages for gender and position groups

	Gender				Position			
	Mean Rank - Male	Mean Rank - Female	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Rank - Employer	Mean Rank - Employee	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Difficulty in organization of working space	127,50	133,76	5326,5	,585	144,25	123,57	7210,0	**,026**
Lack of equipment	124,01	134,63	5141,5	,352	135,21	130,44	8241,0	,605
Weak Internet signal	129,97	133,14	5457,5	,778	134,04	131,33	8374,5	,765
Irregular work schedule	134,71	131,95	5474,5	,809	140,54	126,39	7634,0	,126
Difficulty of performing tasks via the Internet	145,17	129,32	4920,0	,151	139,32	127,32	7772,5	,179
Disorganized working negotiations via the Internet	134,94	131,89	5462,0	,786	139,86	126,90	7710,5	,154
Lack of access to working information	133,99	132,13	5512,5	,867	136,89	129,17	8050,0	,392
Lack of face-to-face communication with management	135,20	131,82	5448,5	,767	139,47	127,20	7755,5	,182
Lack of face-to-face communication with other employees	136,26	134,07	5260,0	,494	139,56	127,14	7745,5	,180
Lack of control by management	149,17	128,31	4708,0	,060*	139,32	127,32	7773,0	,181
Difficulty to get into working	137,31	131,29	5336,5	,592	136,16	129,72	8133,0	,479

mode in the morning								
Difficulty to stop working in the evening	118,50	136,02	4849,5	,125	137,93	128,39	7931,5	,302
Lack of environment change	111,95	137,66	4502,5	,023	138,46	127,97	7871,0	,252
Feeling of loneliness	115,30	136,82	4680,0	,060*	141,26	125,84	7551,5	,096*
Presence of distractions by family members, household issues etc.	139,73	130,68	5208,5	,431	143,10	124,45	7342,0	**,044**
Difficulty to make yourself work	144,54	129,48	4953,5	,187	137,09	129,01	8027,0	,381
Lack of balance between work and personal life	117,39	136,30	4789,0	,098*	139,71	127,02	7727,5	,171
Lack of inspiring working atmosphere	131,65	132,71	5546,5	,926	143,95	123,80	7244,5	**,030**
Informational overload	119,23	135,83	4888,0	,148	141,41	125,73	7534,0	,091*
Communicational overload	122,50	135,01	5061,5	,272	143,39	124,22	7308,5	**,038**

** p > 0,05 insignificantly, and tendency for unequal distribution is saved*

Source: authors' calculations

According to the independent variables analysis of the group "Position" where opinions of employers and employees were compared, the significant difference was identifies in four cases. The first, "Difficulty in organization of working space" (U = 7210,0; p = 0,026), demonstrates that employers have more difficulties with making an office in conditions of their home area. As an assumption, the problem may be connected with complicity to find and establish special place that would be private and secure from any diversions during working hours. In case, the assumption is correct, it is closely related with another problems that employers face worse than employees and where the significant difference was detected: "Presence of distractions by family members, household issues etc." (U = 7342,0; p = 0,044). The reason for this difference is that employers may feel more responsibility for the work and require more concentration on the job they perform. On the other hand, especially for the top management, this may be due to the unaccustomedness to work among distractions, but in personal office, unlike regular employees, many of whom worked in shared offices or even in offices such as open spaces before the pandemic where the skill to ignore distractions is one of the most needed.

The third point where the significant difference was found is "Lack of inspiring working atmosphere" (U = 7244,5; p = 0,030). While it may seem that employees should feel this problem mote acutely, the results of the analysis demonstrates that mostly employers feel shortage of team spirit and inspiration. Finally, employers also higher evaluate actuality of "Communicational overload" (U = 7308,5; p = 0,038) than employees. This may happen because of increasing complexity in communication when the problem that could be solved in a few minutes during face-to-face interaction in an office requires more time and actions (like reading, writing e-mails or messages and waiting for an answer on the telephone or with special programs) while resolving it online. At the same time, the tendency for unequal distribution still exists even if the significance broader was crossed in case of "Feeling of loneliness" (U = 7551,5; p = 0,096). The difference is quite small, however, the mean results also demonstrate that employers feel more lonely that employees. Accordingly, employers feel communicational overload and loneliness at the same time that may be understood as they experience weariness because of working intercourse and have not enough personal contacts that allows to relax during working hours.

Additionally, tendency for the difference between these groups was also identifies in "Informational overload" (U = 7534,0; p = 0,091). As in the case of loneliness, the significance boundary was crossed, however the tendency for unequal attitude is saved. In this case, mean rank of employers is higher again than mean rank of employees, that means that employers also have more problems with this statement than their staff.

In the table below (see Table 7), the results of Kruskal-Wallis analysis for the groups "Age", "Having children under 18" and "Having previous experience of teleworking" is provided.

Table 7 Kruskal-Wallis H test analysis of disadvantages for age, having children and previous experience of distance working groups

Asymp. Sig.	Age	Having children	Previous experience of distance working
Difficulty in organization of working space	,065*	,399	,503
Lack of equipment	**,012**	,614	,204
Weak Internet signal	,632	,322	**,008**
Irregular work schedule	,089*	,129	,110
Difficulty of performing tasks via the Internet	**,002**	,165	,056
Disorganized working negotiations via the Internet	,158	**,024**	**,049**
Lack of access to working information	,222	,772	,095*
Lack of face-to-face communication with management	,193	,153	,333
Lack of face-to-face communication with other employees	,207	,163	,109
Lack of control by management	,483	**,004**	,426
Difficulty to get into working mode in the morning	,965	,373	,577
Difficulty to stop working in the evening	,300	,637	,375
Lack of environment change	,557	,898	,667
Feeling of loneliness	,800	,159	,271
Presence of distractions by family members, household issues etc.	**,010**	**,000**	,142
Difficulty to make yourself work	,682	,945	,663
Lack of balance between work and personal life	**,032**	**,010**	,198
Lack of inspiring working atmosphere	,779	,018	,799
Informational overload	,349	,240	,078*
Communicational overload	,333	,505	,299

** p > 0,05 insignificantly, and tendency for unequal distribution is saved*

Source: authors' calculations

For the group "Age", the high tendency of equal impact on all age groups was identified in two cases: "Difficulty to get into working mode in the morning" (p = 0,965) and "Feeling of loneliness" (p = 0,800). This seems logical, as remote workers may wake up later and have less time to get into working mode, and the lockdown reduced number of daily communications from usual level to minimum required level.

Significant difference was found in relation to the following problems: "Lack of equipment" (p = 0,012), "Difficulty of performing tasks via the Internet" (extremely low p-value = 0,002), "Presence of distractions by family members, household issues etc." (p = 0,010) and "Lack of balance between work and personal life" (p = 0,032). Additional attention was paid to "Difficulty in organization of working space" (p = 0,065) and "Irregular work schedule" (p = 0,089), where the significance border was slightly crossed, but the tendency for unequal distribution is saved. For this reason, the analysis under the method of Mann-Whitney was performed for these problems also, as the significant difference may appear be-tween special groups.

According to the results of the analysis remote workers in the age group 46-55 have significantly more problems with organization of their working space at home than telecommuters in the age group 26-35 (U = 1989,5; p = 0,050). Moreover, the group 36-45 also demonstrates tendency to having the same difficulties in comparison with the age group 26-35 (U = 4010,0; p = 0,081), yet this difference is not considerable. It may take to the result that for distance workers elder than 36 organization of working space is more challenging than for younger employees.

Remote workers in the age of 46-55 suffer significantly more from the irregular work schedule than representatives of the age groups 18-25 (U = 137,0; p = 0,019) and 26-35 (U = 1899,0; p = 0,020). The slight tendency can also be seen between age groups 18-25 and 36-45 (U = 319,0; p = 0,079), where re-mote workers in the age of 36-45 feel more tension of their irregular working hours. This leads to the conclusion that younger remote employees are more flexible working from home, and elder workers prefer stable and clear start and end of the working day.

Remote workers in the age of 46-55 experience difficulties while performing tasks via the Internet, that is demonstrated by the significant differences with the following age groups: 18-25 (U = 109,5; p= 0,003) that means that hypothesis of equal perception of the process of working in the Internet may be almost fully rejected; 26-35 (U = 1608,0; p = 0,000) that means that there is absolutely no equality between these groups; 36-45 (U = 1472,0, p = 0,025) and 56-65 (U = 124,5; p = 0,009). This means, that the employees aged 46-55 require more attention and even special study by the management side to help them facilitate to new distance working conditions. The slight tendency was also found in case of age groups 18-25 and 36-45 (U = 318,0; p = 0,066) where elder remote workers also have more difficulties than younger ones.

Presence of distractions by family members and household issues is the substantial problem for many age groups. Distance workers aged 26-35 feel more tension of this problem than workers aged 18-25 (U = 353,0; p = 0,020). However, the most difficult to work at home because of kindred and home tasks is for telecommuters in the age group of 36-45. They have a significant difference indicated with a few age groups with their leading position according to the mean results: with 18-25 age group (U = 197,5; p = 0,001), with 26-35 age group (U = 2757,0; p = 0,016), with 46-55 age group (U = 1513,5; p = 0,046) and a slight tendency with 56-65 age group (U = 321,5; p = 0,085). The reason for such distribution is that the large majority (68,2%) of remote workers aged 36-45 are married and 56,5% of them have children under 18 at home while working. For comparison, in the age group 18-25 only 27,3% are married and no one of respondents has a child; in the age group 26-35 years old, 72,7% are married but only 26,4% have children at home during working day; in the age group 46-55, 62,2% of distance workers are married and 37,8% have children at home during working day (and it is quite possibly that their children are elder than those from the group 36-45 and it is easier for them not to distract parents); in the age group 56-65, 54,5% are married and 27,3% take care of minor children at home during working hours; among the respondents el-der than 65 years, 67% are married and no one has children. This means that employees aged 36-45 may need more flexible schedule to have opportunity to work when the number of distractions is on the mini-mum level.

Finally, the last problem for which the significant difference between age groups was identified for the “Lack of balance between work and personal life”. Here, the age group of 18-25 has less problems in balancing than telecommuters aged 26-35 (U = 353,0; p = 0,020), 36-45 (U = 230,0; p = 0,007) and partially 46-55 (U = 164,0; p = 0,078). Previously it was found that these groups have more problems with the introduction of family members and household affairs into their work than young people in the age 18-25, such a misbalance may also be connected with distractions. On the other hand, employees aged 36-45 and 46-55 feel more tension because of irregular work schedule than those ones aged 18-25 and 26-35 who are more flexible.

The further research of problems that remote employees may have while working from home is connected with factor analysis that provides opportunity to combine statements proposed for evaluation ac-cording to their actuality into factors that affect remote workers.

Table 8 Total Variance Explained for disadvantages of distance working

Components	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7,522	37,609	37,609	3,931	19,656	19,656
2	1,933	9,664	47,272	2,705	13,526	33,128
3	1,313	6,565	53,837	2,382	11,910	45,092
4	1,264	6,321	60,158	2,227	11,133	56,225
5	1,001	5,003	65,161	1,787	8,936	65,161
6	,924	4,620	69,781			
7	,833	4,166	73,947			
8	,685	3,427	77,374			

9	,631	3,156	80,530			
10	,568	2,841	83,371			
11	,441	2,206	85,577			
12	,429	2,147	87,725			
13	,406	2,031	89,756			
14	,391	1,956	91,712			
15	,350	1,749	93,460			
16	,311	1,556	95,017			
17	,301	1,504	96,521			
18	,256	1,281	97,802			
19	,229	1,143	98,945			
20	,211	1,055	100,000			

Source: authors' calculations

According to the Table 8, five intrinsic factors have values greater than one. Thus, five factors were chosen for the further analysis. The first factors explains 37,609 % of summary dispersion, the second – 9,664%, the third – 6,565%., the fourth –6,321%, and the fifth - 5,003%. Further, the rotated component matrix is provided (see Table 9). Table 9 Rotated Component Matrix for factors which influence distance working negatively

Table 5 Rotated Component Matrix for factors which influence distance working positively

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulty in organization of working space				,798	
Lack of equipment				,685	
Weak Internet signal				,494	
Irregular work schedule		,466			
Difficulty of performing tasks via the Internet		,694			
Disorganized working negotiations via the Internet		,669			
Lack of access to working information		,795			
Lack of face-to-face communication with management			,721		
Lack of face-to-face communication with other employees			,762		
Lack of control by management			,633		
Difficulty to get into working mode in the morning					,852
Difficulty to stop working in the evening	,637				
Lack of environment change	,641				
Feeling of loneliness	,541				
Presence of distractions by family members, household issues etc.	,501				
Difficulty to make yourself work					,827
Lack of balance between work and personal life	,809				
Lack of inspiring working atmosphere	,582				
Informational overload	,769				
Communicational overload	,724				

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

[a] *Rotation converged in 9 iterations*

Source: authors' calculations

The five identified factors are the following: psychological problems, self-organization problems, communicational problems, lack of equipment and motivational problems. The first factor combined all psychological problems that remote employees may face during working from home: different types of overload, inability to distinguish between work and personal life, feeling locked. The second factor includes all disadvantages of distance working related to the working process itself: schedule, access to required resources, easiness to work and communicate virtually. The third factor is connected with communications and includes both communication with colleagues and bosses. The management control is also added to this factor as it reflects one of the aspects of cooperation in an office. The fourth factor gathered statements about technical organization of work including not only organization of working space but also required for task performance equipment and ability to be online. The fifth factor collected only two disadvantages, both related to laziness: getting into working mode in the morning and making yourself work.

5 Discussion

Previously done research allowed to identify distinctions in attitude to the working from home among different groups of remote employees. In general, main benefits of the distance working are economy of travel time and expenses and opportunity to organize working process independently. The last advantage is closely connected with the disadvantage "Lack of control by management" that was evaluated as the most irrelevant. This means, that remote workers appreciate new for many of them possibility to perform their tasks without permanent monitoring and have more freedom during their working process. Among other problems that are the least actual for remote employees are difficulty of performing tasks via the Internet and lack of access to working information.

The lowest places of the benefits actuality rating are occupied with statements related to telecommuters' free time and opportunity to spend their time on non-working issues. This means that even with moving from offices to homes, remote workers are mostly enough responsible and higher appreciate new conditions of independent working than chances to pay less attention to work.

This even resulted in the main disadvantages of distance working. Employees' highest rates are connected with lack of environment change and lack of balance between work and personal life. This may be understood that for some of them their work has infiltrated personal life and takes overmuch power. On the other hand, this mix can be interpreted as reversible as in many cases people are distracted by non-working issues during working hours and have no ability to ignore or hide from undesirable interferences.

Conclusion

The given study presents the results of the authors' conducted survey on investigation the advantages and disadvantages of distance working in Latvia. The survey results showed that different groups of employees had the same problems during their work in pandemic situation. At the same time employee highly appreciate benefits gained from distance working.

Remote employees highly appreciate economy of travel time and expenses and opportunity to organize working process independently. Moreover, it was found that time and money saving is mostly important for females than to males. Employees aged 18-35 years old cherish opportunity to do something parallel during working distantly more that remote workers of other age groups. Childless persons more that those whose children are at home or out of home during working time appreciate a chance to organize their work independently including choice of working time and limitation of distractions by other employees. Those who always worked remotely still more then others value opportunity to choose working time and place and spend more time on relatives and hobbies.

Latvian remote employees evaluated the following problems as the most negative: lack of environment change, lack of balance between work and personal life, lack of face-to-face communication with other employees, lack of inspiring working atmosphere and difficulty to stop working in the evening. Men feel lack of management control and laziness more intensively, while women sharper experience such psycho-logical problems as loneliness and blurring the boundaries between work and life. Difficulty in organizing work by them is actual for younger employees aged 18-25; whereas the main problems of remote employees aged 26-45 are communicational and psychological. Remote employees aged 46-55 have the most complexities with working from home: they suffer from irregular work schedule and online negotiations, have problems with organization of workplace and feel lack of equipment. Naturally, that people with children anguish of distractions and lack of work-life balance while telecommuting, feel lack of team spirit and require more control by management than childless ones. Lack of

inspiration, diversions and communicational overload affect employers more intensively than employees. And, certainly, the most problems have those employees who never worked distantly before the lockdown.

The further research may be done on the basis of the survey results for previously ignored groups of remote employees (according to level of education, residence region and family status), for more specific groups of employees (e.g., single women with children or men on a management position). Research results may be used for comparison of distance working specifics during COVID-19 in Latvia and other countries.

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