INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF COMFORT-ZONE QUALITY IN E-WORK SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes face-to-display workers' environments and investigates how their habits affect both brick-and-mortar and virtual workplaces. A qualitative study with 20 respondents using a photovoice strategy via snowball sampling was employed. The study aims to shed more light on some of the factors associated with the e-workplace environment. All respondents stated that work cannot be done efficiently and effectively without a comfortable workspace. Data demonstrate that the blurring of the distinction between home and office as a workspace has undeniably accelerated recently. Results show that work-anywhere technologies have empowered e-workers to be highly productive. For some, the balance between family and work has been a challenge. Males and females proceed completely differently when setting up home offices. Employees see ICT as an enabler and motivator for productivity; however, self-care is becoming a must when working remotely. For many, this is a new experience that they have to adjust to. The results obtained show similarities between brick-and-mortar and virtual workplaces and indicate that there is a process of "domestication," i.e., of moving selected features of the traditional workplace to the home office.

Keywords: e-working; e-office Environment; technology; boundary management; eating habits; photovoice; Slovakia and Austria

INTRODUCTION

According to Beno et al. (2023), the world is more connected now than ever before. The working environment consists of technical, human and organizational environments (Opperman, 2022). Bakhtiyari (2020) further divided it into physical and behavioral aspects. Kanter (1977) expressed the idea of the "myth of separate worlds" existing between the private and the professional life. Kreiner et al. (2009) highlighted that "the workplace is no longer necessarily a discrete physical location." According to Beno et al.

(2020), "the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the change of human relationships with modern technology and the dependence of humans on the face-to-display world as a return of human/technology interaction." Zhenjing et al. (2022) stated that workforce motivation, efficiency, and performance are interlinked with the qualitative workstation. Generally, workforce performance relies on enthusiasm and acceptance by the workforce itself of doing the job. Stup (2003) explained that "factors that are external to the worker, such as the environment, standard operating procedures, equipment, and management's own behaviors, can have a big influence on how well workers perform in a job." Hornby and Sidney (1998) stressed elements of workforce performance, namely regular work presence, working hard, flexibility and fulfilling the necessary tasks. As stated by Franco et al. (2000), "work performance refers to a measure of the quantity or quality of goods or services produced." further concluding that workforce motivation is a crucial element of workforce behavior and performance. COVID-19 had a profound global impact on employees, notably in social and physical distancing and health issues. According to Beno and Hvorecky (2021), e-working has allowed workers to work and maintain social distancing. However, "digital skills are essential when working remotely," as stated by Beno (2022). Nowadays, workers are more aware of their private and professional lives than in the past. Since 1975, the incidence of obesity has shown a threefold increase internationally (WHO, 2021). Overweight and obesity cases are increasing exponentially in most of the EU member states (Eurostat, 2023). The work site is naturally of primary importance in encouraging good dietary behavior (Quintiliani et al., 2010). Work commitment influences work-related well-being (Virtanen, 2022). Lake et al. (Lake et al., 2016) highlighted the availability and convenience of unhealthy options in the canteen or shop at work as a barrier.

Eurostat data show an increasing rate of people working from home in European countries, including Austria and Slovakia (Eurostat, 2023). E-work has become a necessity for almost all employees (Beno, 2023). Despite the ongoing acceptance of working remotely, there has been little research into e-workplace performance, comfort and health under the e-work scenario. In this study, face-to-display working (e-working) also refers to those workers who, due to the pandemic, moved from cubicles to their own homes to continue participating in the working process using modern information and communication technology. With a focus on being able to get some work duties done remotely, office space at home (e.g., the bedroom office, the corner office, the kitchen office, dedicated office room) is required. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, however. As a result of the increase in e-work, this paper investigates the face-to-display work environment. Remote and hybrid work is changing workforce efficiency, well-being, and eating habits, so the focus of the study is to investigate the face-to-face environment of workers and their eating habits. A qualitative research paradigm using photovoice methodology was chosen in order to explore how e-workers work within their home environments.

The following research questions were explored:

- How does working from home affect the design of the workplace and work?
- Do e-workers separate the home from the workplace?
- Is e-working ruining e-workers' eating habits?

We first discuss the current state of the e-office scenario, providing definitions and reviewing previous research. Next, a methodology is described. The fourth part presents the findings, followed by a section that presents the authors' discussions. The last section contains the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beno (2023) stated that working from home was rare in pre-pandemic times but became necessary as a result of the spread of COVID-19. Various forms of remote workplace arrangements can be determined: 1) full e-working: a) the asynchronous (independent of time constraints) model without any permanent location, and b) the synchronous model (specific time parameters) with in-person meetings, 2) the hybrid model (working partly in cubicles and partly at home or in other places), i.e. with partial e-working (remote-first or cubicle-first).

Generally, more business activity is done from home; however, there are still businesses that require a physical presence, such as retail (Zahari et al., 2024). Additionally, there is an issue of

logistical or technological impediments to working remotely (Gould et al., 2023). Employees' work-home environments have been adapted to the reality of working from home. This means having a home working environment that makes the e-employee feel comfortable, focused and productive (Spangler and Williams, 2022). The availability of modern technology and devices at home allows human beings to participate in business activities remotely (Matli and Wamba, 2023). "Digitalization has enhanced work flexibility and blurred the boundary between work and nonwork activities" (Farivar et al., 2023). Berger (2023), therefore, concluded that "workers should mindfully and intentionally manage the separation of work life and personal life while engaging in remote working."

Research has demonstrated that the workforce needs to focus on both physical and mental aspects, as is shown by Janneck et al. (2018), who highlighted ergonomic issues to increase productivity. A recent study demonstrated that e-workers encounter "emotional and temporal demand spillover from their work roles to nonwork roles" (Hilpi et al., 2023). A current study has shown that men find it easier to work remotely (Kadale et al., 2018). "Good lighting is essential," Gumpel (2020) wrote. Steelcase (2022) noted that "the number one complaint in the office is noise, but it can be even more of a problem at home." Winer (2020) found that movement has a powerful impact on the body and the mind. Davis et al. (2020) identified several concerns with workstations related to laptop usage, non-adjustable chairs without armrests, low monitor heights and hard desk surfaces. According to these authors, companies will need to provide proper accommodation with respect to ergonomics to increase workers' health. Other research data has highlighted the lack of ergonomic working conditions for home-based teleworkers, which points to increased health risks for home-based teleworkers (Wütschert et al., 2022). "The more ergonomic the work environment, the less absenteeism and the fewer compensation claims a company faces. Providing employees with a comfortable workspace reduces the risk of occupational illnesses while also making the employee feel valued by the company" (Bogossian, 2022). Working from home has been associated with an increased intake of vegetables, fruit, dairy products and snacks, but a decreased intake of seaweeds, meat and alcohol (Sato et al., 2021).

Another study showed that more than half of the remote-working respondents did not skip meals. Most of the respondents consumed vegetables, bread/rice/noodles and meat/chicken at least twice a day (Tan et al., 2022). A recent study "confirmed the change in dietary behavior and the occurrence of adverse health eating behaviors among remote and hybrid workers during the COVID-19 pandemic" (Białek-Dratwa et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

The following chart (Figure 1) illustrates the steps of the qualitative data analysis that were taken in this research. We chose a photovoice method for qualitative primary research. Face-to-display workers were selected to participate in the study. The research was carried out in January 2021. Interpretivist examination (experiences and opinions) was used.

Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris coined the term 'photovoice' in the 1990s to describe the methodological approach of blending narrative with photography in qualitative research (Wang and Burris, 1994; Wang and Burris, 1997). Photovoice is a participatory method that uses photography, critical dialogue and experiential knowledge to explore individuals' perceptions of participants' everyday realities (Sutton-Brown, 2014; Foster-Fishman, 2005; Close, 2007). In particular, it provides an opportunity to portray experiences visually and share personal knowledge about issues that may be difficult to express in words (Close, 2007). Participants are encouraged to reflect, comment on or tell stories about their photos, and this gives researchers a better understanding of a participant's point of view about the issue being studied (Foster-Fishman, 2005; Wang, 2006; Palibroda, 2009). The method has been successfully used in various fields of research, including education, disability studies, public health and refugee studies (Sutton-Brown, 2014; Liebenberg, 2018).

It also appears to be very convenient for exploring the face-to-display work environment at home since it allows for visualizing different aspects of home-office arrangements. This is because, as Budig et al. (2018) highlighted, photovoice is a visual research methodology that is aimed at fostering social change.
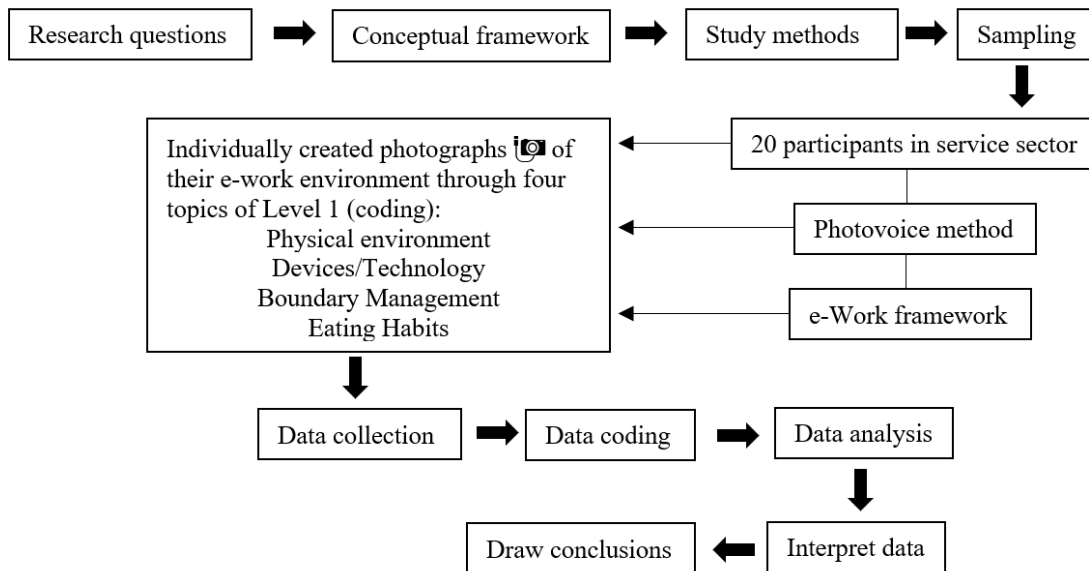
Figure 1: Flow chart of the research methodology.
Source: Author's work.

Based on a study of university custodians, this method can be an important tool, not just for identifying occupational hazards but also for empowering workers to be more active around health and safety issues, and it may facilitate important changes in the workplace (Flum et al., 2010). Another case with photovoice involving online faculty members working in their homes showed that understanding how virtual workers separate home from work provides employers with an opportunity to help new employees care better for themselves, resulting in potentially greater job satisfaction and higher productivity (Stadtlander et al., 2017).

It is important to determine that the participants remain under the sampling plan, as shown in Figure 1. This refers to "who, what, where, how and when" to choose sources for data collection (Tracy, 2020, p. 134). The non-probability sampling method of snowballing was implemented to identify a group of people from whom to gather information (Naderifar et al., 2017). The method involves finding one participant with whom to conduct the interview and then asking that participant to recommend the next participant, and so on (Quinlan et al., 2011). E-workers in the service sector were asked to participate in this investigation. Six of the participants were obtained by the authors through personal contact, and the remaining fourteen were obtained by snowball sampling.

Before COVID-19, e-workers were typically a minority in organizations, and it may have been challenging to recruit participants for research on e-working (Morganson et al., 2010). However, this situation has changed significantly. The sample was made up of 20 participants from the service sector who were selected equally from two countries. According to Hennink and Kaiser (2022), 9–17 participants can be sufficient to reach saturation. The authors further added that in view of multi-country research, a larger sample is needed. Therefore, in our cross-country research, the sample comprised 10 females and 10 males, with ages ranging from 22 to 57 (see Table 1), half of them parents. Once the participants were identified, an email invitation was sent to them.

Table 1: Breakdown of participants.

Country	Participants	Gender	Age	Parenthood
Austria	A	M	57	No
	B		56	Yes
	C		52	Yes
	D		38	Yes
	E		31	No
	F	F	56	Yes
	G		51	Yes
	H		45	No
	I		38	Yes
	J		22	No
Slovakia	K	M	53	Yes
	L		51	Yes
	M		47	No
	N		38	No
	O		25	No
	P	F	41	Yes
	Q		39	No
	R		35	Yes
	S		33	No
	T		31	No

Source: author's work.

Selected individuals were asked to submit a digital photo of their face-to-display work environment at home. Then a pilot interview was conducted with one e-worker and the proposed questions were revised. Subsequently, each respondent was interviewed via WhatsApp for 20 minutes. Respondents were asked the following questions:

1. Can you tell me what your face-to-display working environment looks like? How does your face-to-display working environment differ from the office environment?

2. Are you able to separate work and home, and how do you do it?

3. What office devices help you work best remotely?

4. What are your favorite snacks to have on hand throughout the day?

The question on eating may look bizarre, but it helps to register the regularity of a person's habits. It is one of the few facts the person can observe objectively by him/herself. The community often observes others but are not noticed by the individual. Quality of life is determined by the quality of three daily habits (productivity and physical and mental activity). Productivity and physical activity – exercise and eating (nutrition) –

are both important and result from well planned and organized work. One has to differentiate between hunger and boredom, as poor nutrition has a strong influence on work. Thus, eating habits allow us to make certain extrapolations about the participants' unnoticed habits.

All the feedback data were plotted on a spreadsheet. Nevertheless, the analysis of the combination of visual data (photographs) and textual data (interview transcripts) involves a demanding conversion process and requires a systematic approach in data processing. Therefore, we developed a two-level coding scheme (see Table 2) by standardizing textual units to organize and make sense of qualitative data coming from interviews and photographs. The first level of units consisted of Physical environment, Devices/Technology, Boundary management and Eating habits. The second level further distinguished: (1) home-office space, basic equipment, and personalization; (2) hardware, software, connection and communication; (3) separation and integration; and (4) food, drinks, and habits. The data processing involved detailed analysis and comparison of examined home-office arrangements, identifying similar or contrasting approaches, perceptions, preferences, and particular features.

Table 2: Coding scheme.

Code level 1	Code level 2	Items
Physical environment	Home-office space	Separate room, separate fixed space (cubicle), integrated fixed space, flexible space, no special place ...
	Basic equipment	Desk, chair, lamp, elbow rests ...
	Personalization	Calming or inspiring elements: plants, art, pictures, souvenirs, mascots, talismans ...
Devices/ technology	Hardware	Computer (PC, laptop), keyboard, mouse, tablet, mobile, printer, scanner, camera, headset, headphones ...
	Software	Optional?
	Internet	Internet connection (landline, optical, wi-fi, mobile)
	Communication	Email, Intranet, Skype, Meet, Zoom, MS Team ...
Boundary management	Separation	Rules on time distribution, clearly separating work and private life, exceptions
	Integration	No specific rules on time distribution, boundaries between work and private life are fluid
Eating habits	Food	Sweet, salty, type
	Drinks	Coffee, tea, water, juice, soft drinks, wine, beer, spirits ...
	Habits	Only in breaks, during the work (behind the computer), both options, timing

Source: author's work.

Meta-coding was implemented to improve the quality of the findings and visualize key insights in the data. The last step of analyzing the report was to tell the story (communicate the narrative to the audience). Further, data analysis followed Beno's (2023, p. 126) approach: "started with no codes and developed the coding as the dataset was analyzed".

RESULTS

Physical environment

Finding an equilibrium between work and home is becoming difficult at the workplace. Due to the spread of COVID-19, the balance became even more mixed. For six employees (E, F, G, J, K and S), it was the first time they established a face-to-display office at home, unlike those who were used to working away from the office. Throughout the interviews, almost all the participants expressed the need to have their own space or hot-spot when working at home, e.g. "important is where you work, even without having a detached room, should feel like a separate location" (employee A). In addition, respondent B said, "If you have a separate room to work in and your family members are at home, set a rule of being at work. We made a green (open)/red (closed) sign hanging on the door to inform them when they are allowed to come in." Respondents F, G and K can choose freely where they work because of their occupation, which is not dependent on basic administrative equipment. As participant K outlines: "My home office setup needs to be as simple and compact as possible due to my lots of traveling... which means having a laptop, mouse and charger." "I keep things simple and purely practical," respondent F commented. Of course, that can be challenging for people who live in a small apartment or home and do not have space allocated for an office. But participant S stated the view that "even with more restricted physical parameters it really is possible to lay down fixed workspace boundaries". "In our mini condo, there is less possibility for a proper face-to-display office-at-home setup, but I improvised to have my own space," respondent J said.

It is important to note that from the photos received and the interviews with e-workers, the individual home office setups vary between genders. Males and females proceed completely differently when setting up home offices. According to the data, men (A-E and K-O) see their home offices as their territory or a status symbol, as is shown by size and location of the room, equipment and furniture. Trophies, awards, and certificates are, therefore, often

found in men's workrooms. On the other hand, females (F-J and P-T) do not want to create an office atmosphere in their homes; rather, they want to make it more pleasant and casual. Their offices are designed as casual, social, physical, and virtual meeting places where you can work and chat. Accessories, personal belongings and knick-knacks, therefore, predominate in their home offices.

Basic equipment has been noted by all the interviewees, e.g., workstations (tables, adjustable desks, or standing desks), desk chairs, lamps, flowers, air conditioners, and paintings in the corners of the work area. Indeed, a desk seems to be the optimal place for working from home every day. Respondent, I pointed out that "I find a quiet place to be alone or with someone else who is also working. I recommend that this place should be outside the bedroom to avoid the urge to go to bed." Furthermore, participant Q commented as follows: "In the home office, you actually have the opportunity to design your workplace according to your own needs and wishes, and you should definitely use it." A similar situation was outlined by A, B, and T, who said the following: "Have you set up your office in the way that is ideal for you to be able to work well? Then the first step was taken, and nothing stood in the way of further daily planning and working from home."

Devices and technology

Face-to-display work at home is enhanced by modern ICT used by individuals and teams. All interviewees have the essential technology tools for their face-to-face work environment. Employees see ICT as an enabler and motivator to do their jobs from home.

One of the participants, D, said that "he found he could not – even going as far as using the expression "cannot" – perform his duties without his dual monitors". Similarly, employee L explained that an "additional monitor allows me to expand my desktop, getting more screen real estate for open programs." Respondent Q agreed that multiple screens "give you more screen real estate". In addition, participant C said that a "great benefit is the ability to add a second monitor to a laptop for my work… it allows me to have critical information displayed on one screen for reference purposes." All other employees, however, use only a laptop, tablet or one monitor. Respondent A explained that "he

couldn't do his work with dual screens because he could not maintain his focus when he switched his vision from one screen to the other". "For this reason," he said, "I use an ultra-wide screen with an installed tool to split my monitor's screen." It is clear that many of the participants do not need dual monitors because of different issues, e.g. participants F, J and K said, "a secondary monitor takes up more desk space." Employee O stressed that "adding a second monitor costs money." Respondent T added that "a second screen can be distracting." A total of seven employees (A, B, D, E, L, Q and T) of the 20 use headphones for listening to music, and eight of them use only a laptop for working (F, G, H, I, J, K, R and S). A mechanical keyboard and a mouse are utilized by nine of the 20 employees (A, B, D, E, L, N, O, Q and T), and five (D, I, L, M and R) make use of a printer. Three of the employees (F, K and S) have paperless offices.

The participants were unanimous in pointing out that without the use of certain reliable collaboration tools that help them with their particular jobs, they would not be able to work from home. Most of them referred to over-communication: As respondent H said, "You write and speak, write and speak much more than normal." Workers confirmed that they sent out more emails when working from home. According to the data, employees see a drawback in the absence of clearly outlined email etiquette. Three of the participants (A, B and C) observed that "it is not necessary to reply to every email and that you should "think twice" before simply sending a reply". Using professional salutations instead of slang is important for participants C, F, G and K. Respondents I, O, Q and J noted the presence of cultural differences. Employee E pointed out "It is better to leave jokes out of emails unless you know the receiver well enough."

Respondent N said "The hardware is much better than in a cubicle." All stressed that without a strong Internet connection, an employee would not be able to access all the company's data and files and would not be able to do the work properly. Participant K explained further that "A home wi-fi network can be a major frustration point, causing a cut-out in your Internet connection at unsuitable moments. For this reason, I use wi-fi extenders to avoid it." All employees use a virtual private network and it seems to work without problems. All the

respondents noted daily online meetings. P explained as follows: "Once you get used to it, it is a really great tool." M adds "We talk to one other almost more now."

Boundary management

Participants in this study were asked to comment on how they manage the boundaries between work and family life when working remotely as the work environment has moved from the cubicle to their home.

All the interviewees indicated obstacles in managing boundaries and felt that the boundaries tend to become blurred. As a result, the majority of them mentioned longer working hours. On the other hand, almost all the employees mentioned that working at home had positive influences on their work-life balance. Respondent A reported an improvement in his work-life balance ever since he made the change to working from home. In a similar manner, every employee who is a parent described the benefits of working remotely as positive. Participant C emphasized that "It is not all about money and work, and most of my friends are starting to realize the benefits of working from home related to work-life balance."

Generally, working from home can blur the line between an employee's private and professional life. Participant A pointed out the importance of maintaining this boundary, however it was up to the individual to decide how to do so. It can be observed that for the young generation the boundaries are more blurred. "I can be having dinner while my laptop is open and I am responding to emails," participant O said. Additionally, modern technology may be the source of boundaries. As stated by J and T: "I have my Outlook account on my smartphone, so I do not think I separate my private and professional life." One of the biggest drawbacks of working from home, especially for six inexperienced e-workers (E, F, G, J, K and S), is knowing when to be off duty.

Experienced e-workers (A-D, H-I, L-R and T) stressed the situation of "being scheduled". Respondent B explained that it was necessary to follow rules, such as: "1) Dress like you would in a cubicle; 2) Take work breaks; 3) In the morning, act like you are going to the office; 4) Move; 5) Recover; and 6) Reduce disruptions and interruptions as a learning process for your private sphere." Some of the respondents talked

about daily routines: "Get dressed every day, do your routine... it is not a PJ party," participant T said. E-employee H explained this as follows: "I used to bring my plate where I put my bottle of water, coffee or tea, like in a cafeteria. It is a nice ritual." Similarly, participant L stated, "Keep yourself to a schedule (begin and end of the working day), the same process as in the cubicle." Employees H and I stressed the importance of "keeping your smartphone in another room while having lunch or dinner. Otherwise, you are always on." Interestingly, employee E, one who is not experienced in remote work, said, "Have a daily home meeting with your roommates every morning to discuss the priorities of the day, both at home and for work." J added, "Indicate you are at work and set working hours.". Most of the respondents use different signs or signals, such as "at work" or "do not disturb".

In times of an emergency, when many families are at home all day, parenthood e-employees (B-D, F-G, I, K-L, P and R) stated there are some challenges. Participant D said, "For us it feels like normality, but better." "Here is always something going on. Spontaneously, without a plan but all together," respondent I said. On the other hand, parents I, F, G and R said, "For us as parents, this situation, when kids are always at home, is very stressful." Participant P stresses its synergy "Our house is school, kindergarten and workplace at the same time and place." Respondent K added, "We juggle our way through the day."

Eating habits

All the respondents found it necessary to emphasize the importance of taking regular breaks from staring at the computer monitor, just as in cubicles. It has been argued that cubicle workers have bad eating habits., so we were interested in finding out whether e-workers have better control of their eating habits. Inexperienced e-workers (E, F, G, J, K and S) pointed out the issue of eating while working - so-called mindless eating - which means eating more without thinking about it. In contrast, experienced e-workers tried to avoid this habit because "eating at your desk is unhealthy, e.g., poor digestion, poor food quality and not having mental breaks." The older generation of respondents (A-C, H, L-M and P) emphasized that "it is important to get away from the desk." Furthermore, participants A and B stated, "I try to

eat when my family is eating." All the participants increase their hydration by making water easily accessible. Participant E summed up the overall view and confirmed that he always had a glass of water at hand on his desk. Respondent Q explained, "The glass sitting there is a reminder, and it helps me avoid unnecessary snacking." It can be observed that females with children are more likely to have healthy snacks available. Respondents F and G said they thought, "Smoothies are good to have… they are hydrating and you are getting a boost of energy and a good mood." E-employees I and R said, "I have a lot of apples, pears, carrots and bananas around, which is easy with small children." Some males (A, B and K) prefer buying extra healthy snacks during meals whenever they become hungry.

DISCUSSION

There is some research from before the pandemic on the benefits and pitfalls of e-working. Pre-pandemic e-workers started their remote work voluntarily. But what happened in the minds of those who never worked remotely and were suddenly obliged to do so? As demonstrated in this study, the change for them was as fast as it was recent.

In the past, most traditional workplaces depended on physical contact (Matli and Wamba, 2023). A recent study highlighted that some employees feel that "the workspace hinders their productivity and ability to perform at their best (Pascal, 2023, p. 79)." But, as stated by Nelson (2014), sometimes people erect actual boundaries to stake a claim to their space. The same phenomenon is shown in our study, where almost all the participants expressed a need to have their own space or hot spot when working at home. Personalization evolves when an environment changes because of the needs of human beings or groups (Sundstrom, 1986). This is similar to the view of employee A, who stated that "important is where you work, even without having a detached room, should feel like a separate location." Personalization of employees' workspaces was seen as disorder or visual chaos (Becker, 1990; Donald, 1994), but as shown in this study, men (A-E and K-O) see their home offices as a territory or status symbol because of the size and location of the room, the equipment and the furniture. Accordingly, trophies, awards,

and certificates are often found in men's workrooms.

On the other hand, females (F-J and P-T) do not want to make the impression of an office in their home but rather make it more pleasant and comfortable. Their offices are designed to be casual and social, physical and virtual meeting places where one can work and chat, an all-in-one space. Recent data has indicated a positive significant relationship between physical environment factors and work engagement (Duque, 2020).

Urbaniec et al. (2022) stated that "the support of remote working by a company and the implementation of new IT tools to enable remote working to reduce the barriers." This is just like the data obtained in this study, where all interviewees have the essential technology tools for their face-to-display work environment. Baker et al. (2006) emphasized that technology has a crucial role, and it could, therefore, be a major factor in home-based telecommuting's slow growth. But we also agree with Gould et al. (2023) that the main barrier to some workforce working remotely was organizational, not logistical or technological, because respondents see ICT as an enabler and motivator for doing their jobs from home. The features of the working environment need to be appropriate so that the workforce is not stressed while performing their duties (McCoy and Evans, 2005), as is demonstrated in this study. Additionally, as stated by Zhenjing et al. (2022), "a positive work environment provides a nurturing and pleasant work environment which promotes employee commitment." And as all the respondents stressed, without a reliable Internet connection, an employee would not be able to access all the company's data and files and do the work properly.

All the interviewees indicated obstacles in managing boundaries and felt that the boundaries tend to become blurred. A possible explanation may be their lack of control over situations that arise (Cho, 2020; Schieman, 2021). The majority of respondents mentioned longer working hours resulting from this, which was dealt with in Bloom et al. (2015). Therefore, "effective work-life balance strategies such as setting clear work hours and establishing a dedicated workspace are helpful" (Prasad and Satyaprasad, 2023), as demonstrated in this study. Managing boundaries is done on an

individual's own initiative (Shirmohammadi et al., 2023). As presented in this study, boundaries are blurred for the young generation. "I can be having dinner while my laptop is open and I am responding to emails," Participant O said. Almost every employee mentioned the positive effect of working at home on their work-life balance. It may be considered that supervisor support is crucial in this matter (Nabawanuka and Ekmekçioğlu, 2022). One of the biggest drawbacks of working from home, especially for six inexperienced e-workers (E, F, G, J, K and S), is knowing when to be off duty. Generally, "those who were able to access work emails or phone calls outside of work had difficulty switching off" (The Myers-Briggs Company, 2019). It seems that "establishing and maintaining a structured work routine was sometimes hard" (Hilpi et al., 2023). Experienced e-workers (A-D, H-I, L-R and T) stressed the situation of "being scheduled". The data obtained show small habits and daily rituals make e-work successful; e.g., inexperienced remote employee E said, "Have a daily home meeting with your roommates every morning to discuss the priorities of the day both at home and for work." In Beno (2021), respondents said, "At the beginning of the lockdown drawing a clear boundary between home-office-school environments caused some difficulties." Identical data were obtained in this study.

Negative alterations in eating behavior could be due to anxiety or boredom (Moynihan et al., 2015), or lack of motivation to maintain healthy habits (Gardner and Rebar, 2019). In a recent study (Deschasaux-Tanguy et al., 2020), different trends for unfavorable nutritional behavior (increased snacking, decreased consumption of fresh food, especially fruit and fish, increased consumption of sweets, biscuits and cakes) were observed. Yet, the opposite trends were also observed: increased home-made cooking and increased physical activity. These behavioral trends relate to socio-demographic and economic positions, professional situations during the lockdown (teleworking or not), initial weight status, and having children at home (Deschasaux-Tanguy et al., 2020). This is the same as the inputs received from our interviews. A recent study revealed no meal skipping and healthy nutrition, e.g. vegetables (Tan et al., 2022), which is in the vein of the respondents' data. Inexperienced e-workers (E, F, G, J, K and S) stressed the occurrence of eating while working, so-called mindless eating, which means eating more without thinking about it. In contrast, experienced e-workers tried to avoid this because "eating at your desk is unhealthy, e.g., poor digestion, poor food quality and not having mental breaks." Interestingly, another study revealed a higher consumption of unhealthy snacks when working remotely (Knightley et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

According to the data received from the interviews, employees value flexibility the most. However, this conflicts with the practice during COVID-19 of letting all employees work remotely, and in addition, personal and family issues are just as important. A significant result of this study is that employers will offer more flexible choices to their workforce.

The following research questions were explored in this study:

- How does working from home affect the design of the workplace and work?

  Home offices varied in this study, from the bedroom and corner offices to the kitchen and dedicated office rooms. Setting up an office means making the home office one's own favorite space. Throughout the interviews, almost all the participants expressed a need to have their own space or hot spot.

- Do e-workers separate the home from the workplace?

  "What counts is where you work, even without the possibility of having a separate room, should feel like a separate place" (employee A).

  In addition, respondent B said, "If you have a separate room to work in and your family members are at home, set a rule of being at work. We made a green (open)/red (closed) sign hanging on the door to inform them when they are allowed to come in." Simply stated, respondents are not struggling to separate their work and personal lives in the remote working world.

- Is e-working ruining e-workers' eating habits?

  In a working environment where remote and hybrid work has become the norm, maintaining healthy eating habits and a work-life balance is crucial. The workforce

is pivotal in nurturing healthy eating habits through their own experiences when working remotely. Healthy eating is not only a generational component but also a workplace component.

Working remotely does not mean it is necessary to neglect one's well-being by skimping on a healthy and ergonomically sound workspace. Data has demonstrated that the blurring of home/office as a workspace has undeniably accelerated recently. Results show that work-anywhere technologies have empowered e-workers to be highly productive. For others, the balance between family and work has been a challenge. Males and females proceed completely differently when setting up home offices. Employees see ICT as an enabler and motivator for being productive. Self-care is becoming a must when working remotely.

For many, this was a foreign experience to adjust to. A designated workspace that encourages one to be more productive is the key. We conclude that human beings are exceptionally resilient and adaptable, and the initial switch from a flexible workplace environment has already been managed.

The findings of this study show a few limitations which arise from the nature of the interviewee sample. First, there is the number of participants; second, the data for the study were collected during the pandemic, and third, the study focused exclusively on the service sector.

Future studies should investigate the relationships between different flexible workplace environments, such as space planning and sound acoustics, more closely. In particular, more robust ways of determining what constitutes a workplace need to be devised. Future studies may be able to establish better links between the effectiveness of individual initiatives and participating e-workers. The participants in this study were from two different countries of different genders and in different sectors. Further research in this area may be needed to ensure greater homogeneity of the research sample.

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