BALANCING EFFICIENCY AND PERSONAL TIME REQUIREMENTS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS AFTER TELECOMMUTING

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ABSTRACT. The exploitation of work and household responsibilities among women and men remains a pressing issue with significant impacts on employee productivity and satisfaction. This study sheds light on the patterns of exploitation and their consequences, with a specific focus on the experiences of HR professionals. The research emphasizes the prevalence of the "flexibility stigma" in society, which views flexible work arrangements, including teleworking, as less committed, motivated, and productive compared to traditional 9-5 work hours. The study also highlights the tendency for workers to extend their work hours when boundaries between work and personal life become blurred. In particular, the study highlights the increased likelihood of working overtime as a result of teleworking, which can further contribute to the exploitation of work and household responsibilities. For HR professionals, it is essential to understand these challenges and develop strategies that support employees' work-life balance and well-being. The study concludes by calling for a comprehensive approach that considers the institutional and cultural contexts in which employees operate and that prioritizes their well-being and productivity.

Keywords: human resources, telecommuting, "flexibility stigma", work-life balance, productivity

Introduction

The global outbreak of the SARS-COV-2 virus transformed flexible work into a widespread and recurrent practice. The experience of preventing transmission with the mentioned virus, through the implementation of social

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distancing measures, has provided us with some evidence in this regard. This global phenomenon has accelerated the widespread introduction of work from home and produced paradigm shifts not only in perceptions and practices regarding the conceptualization of work, but also in the results of flexible work in relation to the employees' personal lives.

The concentration of new meanings and ideological values generally accepted around the terms of flexibilization, and digitalization of work is based on a vision that no longer fits into the classic framework of the workplace with strong, regulated temporal and spatial dimensions (Reuschke & Ekinsmyth, 2021). Instead, they favour continuous adaptation, in which the type of organizational control changes from direct to indirect (Watson, 2012).

A clear delimitation between the concept of flexible work and teleworking is essential given the work activity that employees have experienced during the telework obligation period. This work does not aim to present the organizational statuses during the COVID-19 pandemic, but these remain a main reference subject, being a trigger factor of the phenomenon. Therefore, clearly speaking, telework is just a form of flexible work and not a synonym for it.

In this context, the sociological lens of analysis on this phenomenon must consider the organizational, social, economic, and political characteristics in its context of implementation. As Chung (2022) also argues, telework cannot be analysed in a vacuum, it is reshaped according to already existing human and organizational practices. Amplification of the factors of change in established work organization practices have been destabilized within organizations in the context of a global health crisis; especially, the human component, on the one hand related to the physical condition, and on the other hand, to the connectivity and relationship of the employees.

As mediators between the organization and its workforce, Human Resources specialists experience a significant overhaul of their professional duties. They go from having daily, constant contact with employees, constantly contributing to the organizational development process, to a significant decrease in human contact facilitated through video conferencing platforms. The compensation for the lack of interaction in telecommuting. has become a responsibility for these specialists. The central point of the question is focused on identifying the ways, resources, and means by which this compensation takes place. The division of Human Resources practices is fully branching and can represent a predominantly administrative work, but at the same time, it can also be emotionally demanding work that highlights the need for good internal collaboration between processes and employees.

Given these elements, the question I aim to answer through this work is centred on the significance of flexibility in a profession built around constant

contact with employees and how the Human Resources professional is considered in terms of the type of industry in which they work after telecommuting is implemented as an alternative way to perform their work.

Literature review

In the section dedicated to presenting the theoretical perspectives that underpin this research, I position myself firstly to outline in a concise manner the major debates surrounding the legitimacy of the human resources specialist profession, followed by the presentation of the differences between flexible work and remote work.

The work presented positions the human resources specialist as a key player in the organizational building and development process of a company. To contextualize the entire ideological spectrum of providing or not providing professional legitimacy for this type of specialist, it is necessary to mention the most important debates in the field of organizational sociology and the sociology of professions that address this topic.

Global narratives constructed around the legitimacy of the human resources management occupation are presented through two strongly polarized perspectives. While Losey (1999) credits institutional legitimacy to human resources specialists, Hammonds (2005) takes the opposing position and states that the human resources function is a low-prepared, reactive, low-autonomous, cost-reducing administrative function, designed as a tool for management control to encourage productivity and to minimize investments in employees. The normative discursive arguments revolve around a complex set of responsibilities aimed at increasing professional legitimacy and credibility. Ulrich & Brockbank (2005) counterbalance their perspectives on the need to create strategic value within the organization, emphasizing the role of the human resources specialist as a consultant, while authors such as Khochan (2004) or Legge (2005) highlight the role of this profession as a mediator in the internal social environment, balancing the pluralistic and sometimes competing interests of the parties involved in the employment relationship. This examines how human resources professionals (non-traditional occupations if they are incorporated into organizations) seek greater professional legitimacy and how the stakeholders approach these challenges.

Pursuing with this theme of adaptability concerning the constant changes in the job market, in the following paragraphs I will attempt to highlight the intersection and differentiation of the terminology of work flexibility. Kelly et al. (2011) argue that flexible work involves the control exercised by employees over the time or place of work. Building on this idea, according to Chung et al. (2020),

the flexible program allows control over work hours. The employee has the ability to change the timing of their work activities, including the alternating of break hours, start and end of the workday, as well as the number of hours performed in a week. If the employee exceeds the standard work hours allotted for a day, the additional hours can be converted into days off at the employee's request.

The largest difference between flexible work hours and autonomous ones is that in the former there are still some constraints regarding the adherence to basic hours (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM) and/or the number of hours that employees can work in a day or week (40 hours per week), as opposed to autonomous work hours, where such restrictions may not frequently exist.

In addition, flexible work can also imply that employees have control over the number of hours they work, referring to the reduction of work hours (temporarily) to meet family demands. In this idea, to identify the problematic aspect of this work structure, Chung et al. (2020) also argue that the "freedom" to control when and where to work leads workers to work increased time in the current culture of balancing professional and private life, where additional work beyond contracted hours embodies the "ideal productive worker".

On the other hand, the central element of this research is the diversity in conceptualizing flexible work, with telecommuting becoming a strongly used alternative to express flexibility. According to Eurofund (2020), telecommuting includes all activities carried out by workers who use information and communication technologies (ICT) outside of the employer's premises.

This practice may indeed be presented in a flexible work manner where the employee can arrange their schedule according to their own needs. However, in the opposing sphere, telecommuting does not automatically guarantee flexibility. In professions and roles where contact with people is constant, such as support and assistance roles (call center) or administrative roles (which also include HR specialists according to legislation), a fixed schedule is necessary for people to be able to reach specialists. As I presented in the introductory section, one of the main challenges related to the flexibilization of work and digitalization of the process is the way in which the workspace is conceptualized (Reuschke & Ekinsmyth, 2021). This allows us to deduce that one element may have a versatile characteristic like the location where work is performed and the stronger regulated element of time which remains unchanged for some roles. Alternating professional tasks with family responsibilities is a practice accepted by employers, but not encouraged by the flexibility of working hours or the adoption of professional-personal life balance policies. Companies accept tacitly an overcompensation from employees (often manifested through overtime) as a response to the possibility of fulfilling their household and/or parental responsibilities.

Methodology

In the presentation of the research methodology, I attempted to argue the relevance of studying this type of dual role employee in the company by seeking to expand the sociological lens into different work domains that are present in the city of Cluj-Napoca: technology industry and the service sector. The lines of analysis in this work were traced with the help of qualitative research. Regarding data gathering, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with HR specialists in Cluj-Napoca during February to March 17, 2022, through videoconference platforms that facilitated a deep dive into the details and events proposed for analysis.

The interview guide outlines a comprehensive manner the relevant perspective on the subject of interest and especially access to the opinion of a category of respondents who do not express their opinion publicly or officially. The research questions were structured based on the works of Olson (1983, 1989) and Chung et al. (2020); Chung (2022) in four diverse categories: attitudes towards work, performance, and job surveillance, and the role of information technology in the work process. The dimensions structured in the guide focus on: (1) surveying the impact of working from home on individual performance and organizational monitoring methods, with productivity levels generated by work throughout the day, being the determining factors, which require an amount of concentration, attention, and fluidity in the context of environmental distractions (children, domestic emergencies); (2) the elements that restructure the attitude towards the work process, the dimension drawing a point of analysis on the confirmation or denial of the causal effect of the change in attitude related to one's own profession in the context of a change in work mode (office - home); (3) organizational commitment as an indicator of involvement, dedication, and loyalty to the reference company analysed using absenteeism rates that can draw negative implications for the cohesiveness of a group in a long-term telework system; (4) the role conflict of the individual who duplicates in the teleworking context needs to manage both work processes and domestic ones.

The research field was selected based on the rapidly increasing percentage of the relocation of knowledge-intensive services in the city of Cluj-Napoca, particularly in information technology and business model processing in Central and Eastern Europe (Hoyler & Harrison, 2017). This research assumes that Human Resources specialists serve as the bridge facilitating the previously mentioned service relocation process through their role in identifying and managing potential employees that can contribute to the desired actions of companies. Human

Resources specialists have experienced and continue to experience changes generated by the introduction of remote work through fluctuations in the required number of employees (a drastic decrease in the first stage of the pandemic period of March to May 2021 and a qualitative and quantitative acceleration of the need for personnel starting in June 2021).

The subject sampling was designed to cover a wide range of functions and activities incorporated in the Human Resources departments such as technical and non-technical recruitment specialists, organizational development program specialists and Human Resources department managers, with the addition of the type of industry these specialists are active in. The research incorporates specialists in the manufacturing and technological industries as well as in the service sector to thoroughly identify similarities and differences in the profession of a Human Resources specialist in reference to different organizational contexts and functions.

The target group's segmentation elements were focused on (a) position and (b) quantitative experience (seniority level) in the labour market of the interviewee. Thus, the interviews targeted Human Resources specialists with a professional classification regulated by the Romanian Occupation Code (COR) through COR codes (242314) - Human Resources Specialist and COR (121207) - Human Resources Manager, with a minimum university level of education, with a bachelor's degree, who hold a middle or higher decision-making position in the organization of human resources in a company that carries out an activity segment in Cluj-Napoca or its metropolitan area for at least 5 years. The temporal delimitation of specific work experience is justified by the need to provide a prior perspective on teleworking processes (2019) and subsequent ones (2022).

I. Defining the work expectations of specialists shaped by their field of activity

The diversity of specialists' fields of activity represents the element that offers the possibility of a multi-perspective analysis. Through an inductive approach, following the analysis carried out, unanimously, specialists appreciate the adaptation to telework, but support the hybrid work model as the option that most effectively potentiates their personal development needs and the qualitative aspect of the work performed. Otherwise, I will illustrate the firm positioning of the interviewees who work in the production field, on the work schedule, but at the same time I will also add the vision of employees who mainly serve externalized services functions:

"Somewhat, I saw that many people came in this period, in this market with HR, there is a lot of writing, and many are coming to me, and all put full remote in the ad, and then it's over. Somewhat... I couldn't do it, no, I wouldn't feel comfortable, I wouldn't feel good, and if it's full remote, no, I don't know, I wouldn't like it. I would like it, maybe, to be a hybrid where I go 3 days, 4, and one I stay at home. But not one to go and the rest to stay at home because I'm not that kind of person. That's what I would need first, to be active, to be able to go." (R.R., Recruitment Specialist)

"[...] if I wanted to work remotely, I could work, I had this option, we had this option since the pandemic, no. We are a production factory, in production factories it is quite complicated to work remotely, because production works and you can't solve an online problem that arises on the production line from home. And then, not even during the pandemic... there were those 3 or 4 months when we were in lockdown, we didn't close the factory, our factory was never completely closed for a second." (I.R., Human Resources Manager)

The nature and practices of the field in which professionals carry out their work shape their perspectives on working methods. The functions for which the Human Resources sector is responsible in the production field are primarily administrative in nature, with the greatest concentration of positions being found in the recruitment department and those related to salary administration. Specialists' preferences are unconsciously shaped by the needs of employees. The worker profile in the factory, as presented by Bratton et al. (2012), is that of a person who performs manual work using the skills learned in elementary education. The innovative factor in the concrete situation analysed is introduced by the technology and automation-based process that nuances the paradigm on manual, physical work, but cannot manage the unexpected demands or elements that arise within and outside of work processes.

In the opposing sphere, that of the service sector, especially the Technology and Communication infrastructure, specialists' needs are shaped according to the trend promoted inside the company and the generally accepted work practices within the sector. While there is a clear shift among specialists who work with blue-collar employees to return to the office almost entirely, recruiters in the technological sphere emphasize the effectiveness of teleworking. Furthermore, they position it as a decisive factor in choosing a company in professional reference systems.

"To be honest, I don't know if I could physically go back to the office. If I had the option to stay like this, I would stay like this forever. If I didn't have the option, to stay in this hybrid work mode, I would probably look for companies that offer that." (C. O., Senior IT Recruitment Partner)

"[...] I did not want to move to Bucharest. The agreement is that when we return to the office, I will go once every three months, a few days, maybe 2-3, maximum a week, which is quite little, I cannot call it hybrid. If I were employed in Cluj, at any other company, I think I would go for hybrid. But not necessarily 3 days at home, 2 days at the office... rather like before, because before in the work-from-home area, 5 days a month." (I.R., Recruitment Specialist)

II. The viability of telecommuting from the specialist's perspective over the long-term

At this stage of the restructuring of professional standards, a clear delimitation of transformed preferences in relation to work is seen, professionals are outlining an emerging path that positions itself between Hammonds (2005) theory of concretizing purely reactive functions. At the same time, they are starting to acknowledge and explicitly express their role as mediators and consultants that balance interpersonal relationships as presented by Legge (2005) in his work. Similarly, there is a consensus on the hybrid model and this identical positioning is seen when questioning the feasibility of adapting Human Resource processes entirely in the online environment.

"From my point of view, as long as you do what you do well, you can do it online. And you adapt very well, absolutely everything is: speech, including light and whatever else you need for video, you can maintain them online, but you need to compensate very much and then it takes more effort. I am aware of that in myself [...] I heard a very cool phrase last week that stayed in my mind... <<In online meetings, everything is heard louder, and gestures are heard louder and voice and tone, everything is on a larger scale>>. So, I think HR can remain online, but it requires much more effort. At the same time, HR must be such that it becomes a partner. HR is still seen as a support function that only needs to calculate some salaries and make some analyses, do some magic to give some budget to people, but HR is much more than that." (M.O., Employer Branding Specialist)

The action that disrupts the favourable perspective of telecommuting is social interaction. Presented as one of the most disadvantageous aspects of working from home, specialists comprehensively outline the deficiencies generated by the nature of the job. They accept the possibility of work practices in the online environment but question the fragility or even the inability to maintain a human connection within organizational structures.

> "I believe that everything can happen very well online, but at the same time I believe that physical interaction helps. Seeing a person face-to-face helps. [...] At the office you are somehow closer to the person, you see their emotions differently, the candidate is in front of you. There are emotions, you can be a bit more natural... you see from the chest up and that's it." (I.R., Recruitment Specialist)

> "Yes, it can, it can be 100% remote. It can, the pandemic has proven it. We had, for example, colleagues who were in the office, but there were only one or two of them and nothing happened because no one was there, that is, everything can be done online. [...] I think the ideal would be to still have a workplace, a physical entity and from our perception point of view. That's where I go if I want to complain, for example, if I think of HR, [...] of course you can do that in a form, but maybe you want to... I noticed this too when I went to the office, for example, sometimes with colleagues who wanted to talk to someone, to explain a little, to incorporate a story. Of course, you could also participate through a Zoom call... if you were to ask me, person C., I would say that it would be ideal to have a physical entity, at least an HR office. Recruitment, on the other hand, is 100% online and I don't think it will change much." (C. D., Human Resources Director; Head of Talent Acquisition)

III. Changes in organizational commitment structure in the context of telecommuting implementation experienced by specialists

The responsibilities of the Human Resources department also focus on measuring the performance level of employees, whether there is a clear delimitation of key performance indicators, or an evaluation based on quality and service delivery time. Professionals in this sector can accurately position themselves on this indicator, as they have access to data that records performance fluctuations. At the same time, they can observe the quality of work processes empirically. Another paradoxical element that emerges in this regard is the tendency for performance to increase in the face of a decrease in organizational commitment.

"You should know that the performance level hasn't decreased because we've seen it in results, on the contrary, it was very high last year, but everyone felt much more tired at the end of last year. So, performance increased at the beginning of the pandemic and stayed just as high, but you can really see... everyone knew about the fatigue. In December, at least, everyone was... that's why the company produced intense recommendations this year for people to take time off, to schedule their time off in such a way that in two or three months you have a 5-day break to recharge because... you don't realize when you're there, when you are the frog in the pot where the water is boiling and boiling you too. I interact with quite a few departments in the bank and yeah, that was generally it, the energy level dropped quite a bit, but people did their best to keep performance from declining." (M.O., Employer Branding Specialist)

The focus of employees to perform extra work builds its foundation around the instability generated by pre- and post-pandemic conditions, chronic fatigue becomes a symptom encountered within the general population, and specialists choose to position themselves based on the advantages and disadvantages of telecommuting.

"Undoubtedly, performance has increased, I can say that, because you no longer waste so much time doing other things, you are much more focused on doing what you have to do. There are not as many distractions. You no longer waste time coming and leaving work, going somewhere in the city during lunch breaks, going to coffee with different colleagues and then all that time materializes into working hours. Performance, in short, and for me personally, has been seen and felt, but also for our colleagues. We have had moments when, perhaps, we have had performance downtimes, but personally, when I feel that I need to go to the office for a few days to recharge with energy. And then things return to normal." (C.D., HR Director; Head of Talent Acquisition)

Structured as advantages: saving time spent in traffic, financial savings because lunch is served at home and formal attire is not necessary, it promotes focused work processes. The preceding question to this aspect materializes regarding the allocation of this savings in terms of temporal dimension.

"Honestly, I think that when I entered the online environment, I became more productive and I acknowledge that I often worked much more because, at least at home, I didn't realize how quickly time was passing and I often saw that it was getting dark outside or I would look at my

watch and see that it was 7:00 p.m., for example… and from the feedback I have received from my colleagues, everyone did that, so the myth that those who work from home, in fact, do not work does not exist, in my opinion, you are much, much more productive at home than on the days when you go to the office." (C.O., Senior IT Recruitment Partner)

The productivity increase is thus a result of an unobservable allocation of personal time to work activities. Actions that are initially presented as being beneficial, turn into a continuous culture of work (Williams et al. 2013) in which overtime and the performance generated by it become a stable predictor in contexts of instability for salary promotions (Pannenberg, 2005).

IV. Defining the boundary between "Office" and "Home" work

Based on the confirmed hypotheses by Olson (1989) and Chung et al. (2020) regarding women's explicit responsibility for household chores, the analysis further highlights the trend of increasing "workaholism" and the difficulties in clearly separating professional and personal activities in terms of both space and time.

"[…] you worked more, in the sense that, I would still wake up at 6:00, 6:30 and by 7:00 I was already with the laptop turned on now at least half an hour or an hour you lose on the way to say, you know, in the evening until my wife came home, I was still with the laptop turned on, so somehow I was working in one way or another more. That does not necessarily mean more efficient, but just that in terms of the time we spend at work or in front of the laptop, yes, it was indeed longer. Now, for example, I didn't arrive at 7:30, I closed my laptop at 16:30 and left. Before, I would say, I opened my laptop at 7:00, I was already with the coffee made, what to do, I sit and check emails and until my wife came home, I would leave the laptop open in case something urgent appeared or something to resolve not to leave for the next day." (C.H., Senior HR Consultant)

Given the qualitative presentation of the subjective perceptions of professionals in the Human Resources sector assumed at the beginning of the work, the materialization and concrete demonstration of the tendencies to remain over time is facilitated in this case by the illustrative examples in which organizational practices become timeless, with the result being the achievement of key performance indicators or deadline.

"Yes, at least declaratively, I work harder and as proof I received an email today at 6:30 in the morning. The hardest part is when I don't get up from my desk, it becomes 18:00, it becomes 19:00 and I still remain. At that point I admit that I don't like it and I realize... when I look at the clock even though the laptop is here and can stay until tomorrow morning, I shouldn't be in front of it anymore, there are also other people who need me [...]." (I.A., Human Resources Development Expert)

The "flexibility trap," as Olson (1989) calls it, structures an unconscious extension of the work schedule. The paradoxical element that changes the exploitation paradigm theorized by Marx and Engels (1967) is the desire of employees to work overtime. The organizational culture of companies does not explicitly encourage overtime work but positions it in a grey area through which the employee individually takes responsibility and consciously sacrifices their free time, a phenomenon accentuated by the permanent presence and connection in the online environment.

"I worked an entire ski vacation, almost continuously, but not because someone imposed it on me, but because I wanted it very much, for myself personally, to win this project and I did win it. Later, of course, I made up for some of the lost hours and I let it go a bit easier to recover and to regain my strength. But within the company, there was never an imposition to work more, to work overtime." (L.N., Head of Recruitment)

"But still, I am always logged in and I have my phones with me everywhere so that nobody calls me, and I am not there." (M.O., Employer Branding Specialist)

V. Overtime work practices

The "autonomy paradox" referred to by Putnam et al. (2014) and continued in Chung's (2020; 2021; 2022) research outlines the situation of employees who benefit from a higher degree of autonomy but structure their work schedule in a maladaptive and detrimental way for themselves overall. Tacitly accepted overtime contributes to the inability to distinguish personal from professional life. Overtime can be seen as a standalone, complex phenomenon, but the assumption from which the analysis starts confirms the presence of the phenomenon of working overtime, both in the pre-pandemic period and the aim of the objective is to research the new values generated by home working.

"The thing is, with telecommuting, it seems to me that in general, and in my case, people tend to be much more involved in work, and this guilt kind of arises... if I have a day and I feel like I didn't do enough, this guilt arises, at first, I felt like I had all the time in the world, being at home and it seems like it's not enough what I did in a day. Which is a disadvantage, for us, because everyone should be aware that if you did as much in one day, it's enough, I mean, as much as I could, tomorrow may be better and the day after tomorrow may be worse. I felt like I was quite involved and committed, sometimes I even stayed 1 hour, 1 and a half hours after work hours just to be at peace that I did everything that was mine to do." (I.R., Recruitment Specialist)

The general discourse aims of the interviewed persons centred around two terms: (1) the intensity and exponential growth of work and (2) the practice of overtime as a solution to the guilt and professional duty feeling. At an exploratory level, subjective perceptions are analysed. Definitive conclusions about a significant increase in the level of work cannot be drawn. However, the respondents' reports are supported by the first lack of fluidity and connections within a team. This can result in inadequate communication and an emphasis on individual responsibility. Otherwise, the perception acts directly on the activities that the professional must perform alone to complete an assignment, using formalized bureaucratic norms and techniques that require a waiting time and appropriate behaviour and not the informal ones with which was familiar, in which the time invested in completing the task is visibly diminished.

"From this perspective, the activity was more intense, as our company continued to function normally during the pandemic, and all the usual processes were maintained, while some additional processes related strictly to the pandemic situation and the imposed rigorous measures were added. And then yes, the activities were more intense at home because it was hard to manage, and we worked more from home than at the office, not as much in terms of time, because I can also stay at the office after hours to work, I usually do things that require concentration and I do them after hours or at the beginning of the day when my colleagues are not here. But in terms of the intensity of the volume of work, it was more intense at home. That's how I felt it or maybe I was stressing more because I was there and had to manage more things on my own, when here at the office I delegated more, I asked a colleague, or a colleague took care of it, and we worked as a team. So, at home you work as a team, of course, because all activities were still carried out as a team, but in a dispersed team and not as if you were next to each other, I have 3 tasks to do, but I can't go to take this document to be signed, you go." (I.R., Human Resources Manager)

In addition to the aspect of isolation in the online environment, the integration of extra hours becomes a practice that replaces the alternating work schedule with family obligations. A positive attribute stated in an early stage, but which, when engaged in routine systems, implies chronic deficiencies. The rapid and constant flow of actions does not favour an autonomous schedule, and paradoxically, the hypothesis of Kelliher & Anderson (2010) and Chung (2022) that flexible work is more intense is confirmed.

> "Yes, yes, the overtime has increased, certainly the overtime has increased. Now we take C. and as a mother, to be honest and take my whole personal life into account. If you ask me, my availability for my daughters has increased. Because now I can take them to school, pick them up from school, take them to swim, pick them up from swim. That means in my personal life I am practically available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., which means online and, on the phone, often. Responding to emails or entering chats, but somehow, I am working more hours, but incorporating into my life... I'm not clear where is personal and where is work, that's what I feel has changed. Sometimes it is overwhelming and when it is overwhelming, I try to normalize, to say okay, as an HR person or any person you are, you can only do so much in a day. But as a volume of work, yes, yes. ...being at home and available, you feel like you want to work because the volume of work does not subside. So, this feeling is that you can always do one more report, read some HDR studies, I have a reading to-do list of 10 books. Somehow it is clear that I feel bad if I close at 6:00 p.m. How can you close at 6:00 p.m. when you know how much you can still do until 8:00 p.m.? Yes, yes. I have thought, I have thought, and I am thinking. Because I am aware that this work pace cannot be sustained indefinitely, I mean I now feel that I am in a sprint." (C.D., HR Director; Head of Talent Acquisition)

Discussion

This section of the work provides an overview of the significance of the social phenomena analysed in the interaction with the interviewed subjects. The highlighted trends regarding the nature and form of paid work are situated within the bounds of representativeness and generalization, as evidenced by the qualitative analysis of the phenomenon. The diversity of the domains of activity in which Human Resources professionals are active offers the possibility to present the telework phenomenon in a most comprehensive manner. The analysis notes and confirms significant differences between the service and industry sectors. At the same time, this analysis sets the expectations for actors

involved in the paid work phenomenon. These actors are individuals who have completed a university education cycle and engage in non-manual, strategically oriented work. The goal is to balance the interests of both management and employees.

This research approach highlights four major implications introduced by the adoption of telework in the specified organizational structures. In outlining the exemplification, I will present the results in relation to the objectives structured within this work. Thus, the first objective constructed around the identification of sustainability perspectives in the telework regime, precedes the paradigm shift to a new way of working adopting a hybrid work schedule. The second objective was structured to descriptively present certain attitudinal cutouts found in the new forms of interaction primarily mediated through technological systems. Its outcome highlights a latent encouragement of an individualistic culture in which collaborative processes face difficulties generated by the non-uniformity of actions performed during working hours. The third objective identifies the restructuring of professionals' expectations regarding the modes and working conditions promoted by the reference company, as well as the demands presented in the professional advancement process. The analysis shows an increase in the perceived level of personal productivity and efficiency in the context of flexible working hours, but besides this aspect, it also brings up the deficiencies built around the perspective on the term of flexibility. The last point of analysis intervenes in the context of relocating organizational space within personal space and identifies the ways in which professionals divide their resources between the two spheres. The results of the latest objective bring to the forefront the unpaid work of women displayed through the alternation of mother/wife/partner and employee roles. The interchangeability of the two duties takes place continuously throughout the day and erodes the 8-hour workday standard. By allowing for the management of household activities, women are extending their professional activity even during the designated rest hours.

Before outlining the study's conclusions regarding the medium and long-term adaptation of telecommuting in multinational companies, I acknowledge that a panoramic perspective of the feasibility of this work model requires an analysis of the organizational perspectives of the companies and the decision-makers who manage the high administrative structures. In addition, access to financial statistical data also aids in the process of making a comparative analysis of the financial profitability that telecommuting brings, such as: reducing maintenance costs for office spaces and their functioning elements. These aspects have not been structured in the research objectives, but the element of restructuring professional standards can also be highlighted from

the qualitative approach I have chosen to use. Thus, flexible work, especially the hybrid model in which employees can alternate between office work and home-based work, remains an alternative and encouraged practice for professionals in the Human Resources sector in Cluj-Napoca. The dynamic use of this mode of work can represent a new challenge for professionals or, as I have highlighted in the presentation of the results, even a criterion that cannot be negotiated during the hiring interview. This aspect is emphasized by the unanimously affirmative response given by the respondents regarding the feasibility and adaptability of supporting and managing human resources in the online environment. The year of 2020 (and 2021) represented an important vector in the focus of a complex restructuring of the paradigm of non-manual work, the home-based space, and especially the processes for which a digital or automated vision was not materialized in the pre-pandemic period. Hybrid work thus becomes a sustainable program to be implemented in the medium and long term in the work sector analysed in this research.

The second aspect relevant to this work is represented by the context of a significant increase in productivity level (analysed for non-manual work). In the presence of subjective reports, a behavioural structure adopted in different forms by professionals can be identified. The rising level of productivity directly implies a proportional increase in the number of extra hours worked. The substantial reduction or even elimination of human physical contact implements an organizational culture of individualism in which the employee does not seek help from other colleagues and tries to solve the obstacle independently. This aspect, in an applied manner, prolongs the time allocated to complete a task. Collaborative practices, by their nature, impose a continuous flow of calibration with other functions or people close to the employee, but this feature is not recorded in the personal space of the home, thus, a general trend of extending working hours beyond standard hours is established. Key performance indicators are completed by the statement made by respondents to the home environment that eliminates specific distractions of the corporate environment. The strong paradoxical element highlighted in the interaction with specialists was generated by the ambivalent character of autonomy and flexibility that, in a latent manner, favours exhausting work, and an increase in overtime, compared to the pre-pandemic period, and moreover a constant difficulty in drawing a delimitation between leisure practices and organizational practices. Nevertheless, at a superficial level, it all factors in an undeniable increase in productivity. The third element built around the level of productivity is characterized by the timelessness that employees experience in the context of working outside the organizational office. The temporal delimitation barriers of the work schedule are continuously fading away, where household activities interfere with

professional activities and the differentiation line between personal and professional time is eroded by the professional's permanent connectivity to the work environment through the phone or laptop. This element, which, in the first phase of adopting telework, represented a major advantage that facilitated the care of seniors or children, has now become a medium to long-term adapted practice that chronically exhausts the individual who agrees to branching out their responsibilities. The research has shown that the accommodation process, with the highest degree of difficulty, was in the case of women who managed their personal resources together with the professional ones.

Conclusion

The research confirms the upward trend of flexible work trends and highlights the change both in the legislative and organizational and societal aspects of how work is organized in Cluj-Napoca. Before the pre-pandemic period, the possibility to work from home was primarily concentrated in the IT sector, but after the experience of 2020, 2021, and 2022, this option or even work mode stipulated in the employment contract has been extended to all roles that can be performed through a digital device and do not necessarily require personal interaction. Based on this analysis, the research continued to question whether this possibility of working from home is feasible for all roles that meet the conditions or only for certain professional segments.

Human Resources specialists who have direct contact with blue-collar employees, by default, through the employment contract, may choose to work from home, but the organizational context favours the opposite. Blue-collar employees prefer to request a certain document or to clarify any questions in a face-to-face conversation, and in this way, given the mediator and consultant role of the Human Resources specialist, they are no longer able to personalize their work schedule and must adapt to the company's requirements. This phenomenon also occurs for specialists working with white-collar colleagues. As presented in the analysis, this type of employee prefers rapid communication mediated by technology, which the Human Resources specialist must integrate into their daily personal tasks along with their specific post-related duties and projects.

Another aspect in line with the research presented by Chung (2020, 2020a, 2021, 2022) is to discover the paradigm under which the flexibility trend is constructed. Is it shaped in a logic that favours the employee's orientation towards their personal life or in a logic that accentuates performance? Thus, companies integrate the concept of flexibility into their productivity growth schemes,

allowing employees to organize their time according to their personal schedule, but they also demand results and set more ambitious objectives based on the results recorded during the 2021 teleworking obligation period. The presence of a device facilitating communication with the company within the household (laptop and/or phone) indirectly contributes to extending the working hours. Performing routine tasks, checking email, or responding to certain topics considered as urgent, fall into a dimension of timelessness, with the employee in the role of a HR specialist resolving requests whether they are in or outside of work hours.

The professionally trained employee, as the subject of this research, is expected to efficiently manage the human work resource. They must integrate both theoretical perspectives and contribute to supporting and streamlining the administrative processes required by other company employees. Additionally, they should outline the department and company's vision for sustainable development of work processes and ensure ongoing professional training for employees through lifelong learning. All these tasks often framed within a single position and assigned to a single individual who must manage their time arbitrarily and at the same time contribute to household and/or parental activities form a context where overtime becomes a mandatory element.

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