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Implications of Remote Working for Employees in the IT Services Sector: Experience of Polish Employees and Managers

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Analysis of long-term implications of remote working for employees in the IT services sector from the perspective of Polish managers and employees. The aim of the research undertaken in this article is to identify various threats that result from the implementation of remote work in organisations.

Research Design & Methods: The theoretical part presents the issue of remote working, taking into account the challenges of its implementation, at different levels and in different dimensions (organisational, managerial, social). The empirical part presents the findings of the research carried out on a group of employees in the IT services sector and on a group of managers responsible for recruitment and management of work within IT project teams.

Findings: The findings show a number of negative consequences in terms of efficiency, effectiveness of task performance, trust building and, above all, exchange of knowledge and broadly understood learning among employees, which will lead to the worsening of problems with recruiting new IT staff in Poland in the long term.

Implications/Recommendations: Remote work will generate many new problems in the IT services sector.

Contribution: The article fills a gap in the literature regarding remote working in the IT services sector, which is the youngest, but at the same time the most rapidly developing sector in Poland, showing a tendency for further intensive growth.

Article type: original article.

Keywords: remote working, dispersed team, IT project management, job performance, home office, homeworking.

JEL Classification: M510, M540.

1. Introduction

Remote working in the IT services sector is nothing new, but the way it is implemented today and the reasons why it has become even more common among employees in this sector significantly affect organisational behaviour, motivation, commitment, building a culture of collaboration, knowledge exchange and, consequently, also loyalty, trust and relationships that the employee develops within the organisation (Taboroši & Strukan *et al.*, 2020, pp. 52–59). Ultimately, the way it is implemented often determines whether the business goals of an organisation will be achieved at all, at what cost, with what effort, how long it will take, and what shape the team working together in this model will take. As work environments, social and technological trends change, so does the way we work. Today, employees of various organisations enjoy more freedom and flexibility than ever before (Eriksson & Petrosian, 2020, p. 4).

Remote work in the literature is also referred to as home office or homeworking and, as Mitrus (2020, p. 4) points out, similarly to telework, it is work organised using modern technologies. In the author's opinion, home office is established practice but requires agreement between the employee and the employer. It also reflects the realities of a given organisation and is the result of the needs of both stakeholders – the employee and the employer. It may affect the attractiveness of the employer among employees looking for employment.

Analysis of the literature on the subject indicates that researchers are interested in the impact of remote work on the efficiency and quality of team work. Sobczak (2021, p. 149) emphasises that the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting increase in the number of employees who work in this model has enabled the implementation of in-depth research on the essence of remote work, including the identification of its positive and negative aspects for both employees and the organisations themselves. The, often forced, need to work remotely has exposed a number of problems that are associated with this work model and affect not only the way work is struc-

tured in organisations, but also have social and psychological consequences for the employees themselves. As Moczyłowska (2021, p. 22) points out on the basis of her research, remote work may generate many significant threats. In the perception of the surveyed managers, these included: loneliness of employees, a lack of connection to the company, poor team integration, difficulties in controlling employees, obstacles to communication, difficulties with employee motivation, barriers to assessing employee effectiveness, challenges for employee development, difficulty with access to data and knowledge, depression among employees, low quality of tasks performed, low employee independence, low employee creativity, delays in delivering work results, and others. The analysis of the current state of knowledge and research in the field of remote work in organisations allowed for the identification of a cognitive gap resulting from the deficit of studies that would indicate particularly significant threats resulting from the implementation of this model of work, especially in the perception of managers responsible for organising the effective work of teams in enterprises, taking into account the long-term perspective. In turn, the application gap refers to building awareness among management staff regarding the effects and possibilities of shaping remote work in a way that enables the achievement of established business goals. There is a noticeable shortage of studies that would provide recommendations for health care practice, indicating which threats should be of particular concern and what impact they may have on the condition of the entire team.

The aim of the research undertaken in this work is to identify various threats that arise from the implementation of remote work in organisations. Therefore, the following research questions were asked in the presented article:

1. How does remote working affect the efficiency of task performance, team collaboration and personal relationships within project teams among IT services sector employees?
2. What opportunities and constraints as regards knowledge exchange and trust building are generated by remote working?
3. What social, psychological, organisational and developmental consequences, if any, will remote working have among employees in the IT services sector in the long term, as assessed by managers?

2. Literature Review

To a large extent the methods of managing remote working determine not only the quality and efficiency of the work, but also whether a culture of collaboration will develop in the organisation, at what level knowledge can be exchanged and, consequently, what level of management will be reached, and to what extent business objectives will be met. There is another important aspect – in the era of the employee's market and a deep crisis in social relations, the question arises: Which

employees will base their professional lives only on remote working, abandoning other models of cooperation with organisations? How will this affect their needs, expectations, perception of collaboration and relationships with other people in the long term? What implications will this have for organisations themselves? Won't siloed working, characterised by mutual distance at various levels, be the beginning of the white bear¹ era?

Remote working is a way of carrying out work with great flexibility in terms of the place at which it is carried out and often the time within which tasks are actually performed (Jung, 2016, p. 84). Sokolic (2022, p. 202) points out that it is technological development that enables new ways of working to be introduced, but at the same time this makes it necessary to rethink the meaning of the size and composition of the organisation. In the author's opinion, the development of information and communication technologies and digitalisation have enabled the practice of working at a physical distance from the employer's premises which has resulted in a blurring of the physical dimension of an organisation. But since dimensions of an organisation are interrelated, changes in one dimension lead to changes in other dimensions of the organisation as well. Research analyses carried out by Ferrara *et al.* (2022, pp. 8–9) show that the amount of funds organisations will be willing to invest in the conditions and outcomes of remote working will largely depend on the culture of the organisation, which affects both strategic and human resources (work-life balance, flexibility, transparency, methods and criteria for assessing an employee's contribution). Remote working is likely to be successful when it matches the current value systems of an organisation, so in this respect, knowledge creation and sharing are crucial to promoting effective and successful remote working. The higher the consensus on the tools, dynamics and processes embedded in remote working, the more probable that employees will not experience a lack of support and role conflict when working outside the office.

In business practice, remote working, in order to remain efficient, most often requires development of new ways and methods of building and, above all, maintaining mutual relationships between the employee and the manager, the employee and other employees, the employee and the organisation, new channels and ways of exchanging knowledge, building commitment, assessment of efficiency and supervision of the work of its individual members. This form of working, apart from strictly tangible, financial and organisational costs, also entails major changes in the way an employee performs at various levels (Kardaszewicz, 2011, p. 58; McTaggart & McLaughlin, 2020, pp. 2–11; Al-Rfou, 2021, pp. 95–96; Kowalski & Ślebarska, 2022, pp. 7–9). This is also pointed out by Professor N. Bloom (Bloom *et al.*, 2015, pp. 165–218) from Stanford University, one of the leading researchers on remote

¹ For the author, white bears mean white-collar employees who carry out their work mainly alone, with minimal support from the manager and the team.

working – depression and boredom is a state that remote employees sink into very easily. An experiment conducted by the professor on a group of 16,000 employees of a Chinese company working remotely for nine months showed that, after this period, as many as half of them reported a desire to return to the office, despite the fact that the distance from home to the place of work was about 40 minutes each way. The desire to return to real-life interactions turned out to be stronger than the distance to be covered and the time invested in reaching the workplace.

The issue of social, mental and cultural consequences that will broadly affect people isolated from each other is also discussed by Professor N. Hertz (2022, pp. 196–219) of University College London. If we do not want the workplace to trigger loneliness, the challenge, among other things, is to appreciate kindness, collaboration and interaction. Although the prevalence of remote working has increased dramatically due to the pandemic, at the same time the focus on productivity is increasing, and employee supervision is also significantly intensified. Hertz (2022, pp. 198–208) also draws attention to the problem of loneliness that is inherent in remote working in its broad sense. In her opinion, loneliness at work results from loneliness felt outside of work. It concerns not only communication with the people among whom the work is carried out, but above all it is a feeling of being deprived of any agency and powerlessness.

Work that deprives people of their agency and entangles them in helplessness, powerlessness and deep loneliness may have many consequences that are difficult to remedy, especially in the long term. It should be expected that it will hinder or completely prevent self-reliance in action, decision-making, deprive employees of responsibility for the direction in which the work assigned to a particular person is heading, lower the quality of the intra-organisational relationships created. Thus, a human being becomes merely a cog in the machine, which is much easier to replace and which is much easier to dispose of if it stops working. While work performed in this way may be efficient in the short term, it can also affect the sense of purpose in doing it, the way employees see their role in the organisation and the relationships they create in their own professional space. They are often a source of inspiration, support, assistance and a very broadly understood interaction that ultimately determines what a human being creates in an organisation. This is also pointed out by Oliver (2021, p. 3) who claims that the impact of remote working on employees' mental health and productivity are key indicators of whether remote working is considered successful. These two indicators, however, are contradictory, which causes confusion as to how to strike a balance.

Nevertheless, remote working also has its positive side. The conclusions of the report prepared as a result of cooperation between Deloitte and Worldwide ERC (2021) show that one of the most important positive aspects of remote working is the ability to tap into a growing global talent pool, which allows businesses to remain

competitive. Employees located anywhere in the world provide an opportunity for the organisation to attract critical talent, a wide range of qualified individuals regardless of their location. Importantly, such expansion will require adapting organisational rules to local customs and cultures while on the other hand it must ensure consistency and fairness (Deloitte, Worldwide ERC, 2021). Similar conclusions are presented by Coffey and Wolf (2018, p. 4) who recognised the importance of accessibility to talent in the global labour market which is certainly one of the biggest benefits for organisations. Optimistic conclusions can also be drawn from *The Distributed Work Dilemma: When Innovation and Job Satisfaction Compete* research carried out by Vanson Bourne (2022) for VMware (global data were collected from 5,300 HR, IT, and business decision makers and employee-level respondents between July and August 2022). The research shows that 56% of EMEA respondents who work under a remote or hybrid model report increased morale, creativity (52%) and collaboration (53%) within their teams compared to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Importantly, the research also shows that the current economic climate means that it is employers who are gaining the upper hand over employees in the labour market (Vanson Bourne, 2022).

While it is widely acknowledged that remote working should be the employee's choice and not the employer's (Woźniak-Jęchorek, 2022, p. 43), some doubts have been raised, especially when it comes to the long-term consequences for the organisation of carrying out work in this way. It is difficult to accurately predict these consequences today, because the phenomenon of work carried out remotely on as large a scale as it is today has been present in the global professional environment for a relatively short period of time. Research conducted among 61,182 Microsoft employees in the United States in the first six months of 2020 shows that the current enthusiasm for remote working may not ultimately translate into a permanent shift to this form of working in most companies. The researchers point out that remote working has made the collaboration network of workers more static and siloed, with fewer bridges between disparate parts. Furthermore, there was a decrease in synchronous communication and an increase in asynchronous communication. This will make it harder for employees to acquire and share new information across the network (Yang *et al.*, 2022, pp. 43–54). Negative consequences especially in the area of remote team management by managers of such projects are also highlighted by Parker, Knight and Keller (2020) – the researchers indicate that the problems relate to areas such as employee productivity (38% of the surveyed managers agreed that remote employees perform worse than those who work in an office), motivation to work in the long term, distrust in the competence of their own employees (29% of managers reported not trusting their employees' competence), and 27% assessed that employees lack essential skills. These results indicate that excessive optimism about the benefits provided by remote working today often does not take into account

the scale of the costs and threats it may face in the future, when it will be much harder to control the changes that have already taken place and much harder to return to the old model of working, which, although it does not always provide so much flexibility, nevertheless allows for greater control, better insight into problems and a quicker response from the organisation.

Today's world is becoming less and less comprehensible to many people. The COVID-19 pandemic, as the most significant event of recent years is just one element among many challenges that have arisen in the global space, but it has strongly affected our attitude to our own lives, the world, work, and consequently, other people. In the opinion of Taleb (2014, p. 31) it is "extreme events that should be taken as the starting point (...) for consideration, rather than treated as exceptions and swept under the carpet". In this context, important questions are posed by Obłój (2022, p. 196) who states that remote work, although similar to the work we knew before the pandemic but carried out remotely, after two years of the pandemic is not what we would like to see it. It is difficult to put into clear terms how it should be understood (and assessed) today. What is particularly important – he points out that it has dimensions that we know exist, but we do not know what their real consequences are. These are new legal situations for employees and organisations, a new way of coordinating and controlling employees. How to assess and promote people whom the employer has not seen for two years otherwise than through a computer? How to motivate and verify whether motivation is at the expected level? Although these aspects do not exhaust the issue, nevertheless they show how many questions arise from carrying out work remotely and how unclear and difficult it is to make sense of it today for the sake of the future.

These questions are particularly important in relation to the IT services sector, which is the youngest, but at the same time the most dynamically developing sector in Poland, in which remote working has become an established norm. The Polish IT market is one of the largest in Central and Eastern Europe, and its development is strongly affected by macro- and microeconomic factors (Wieszczycka, 2014, pp. 125–127). Both in Poland and in the European Union as a whole, there has been a serious problem for several years in recruiting IT professionals with the desired qualifications (Iskierka, Krzemiński & Weźgowiec, 2017, pp. 36–37) and an even greater one in retaining them on a long-term basis within a single organisation. Data prepared by the Polish Economic Institute for 2022 show that currently Poland falls short of 147,000 IT specialists to reach the same share of IT specialists in the total number of employees (in Poland) as that in the European Union. In Poland, IT specialists currently account for approx. 3.5% of all employees, one of the lowest figures in the EU. The data also show that Poland is short of 25,000 IT specialists – this is the difference between the actual number of specialists and that required by the economy. Poland currently employs approx. 586,000 IT specialists, with

an increase of approx. 192,000 over the last decade. The gap is significant, as it accounts for about 77% of the increase in the number of IT specialists over the last decade. The data from the report of the Polish Economic Institute leave no doubt – Polish companies have a problem in filling IT specialist positions. There is also a shortage of technical graduates to fill this gap. This deficit can only be filled to a certain extent by employees from Eastern Europe (Łukasik *et al.*, 2022, pp. 5–7). In this situation, does it really make sense to permanently organise work in a form that dramatically changes the employee-organisation relationship?

3. Research Methodology. Characteristics of the Surveyed Sample, Methods and Tools Used in the Research

The research sampling was purposive. The criteria for inclusion in the surveyed sample, in the case of employees, were: occupation – a job in the IT services sector (programmers, testers, analysts, administrators, project managers, graphic designers) and remote working, while in the case of managers: the role of manager, head, director, coordinator, owner, IT project leader, HR manager at a company from the IT services sector or at a company with a different business profile, where there is a separate IT unit. Quantitative research covered a total of 100 employees in the IT services sector and 56 managers from the IT services sector representing micro, small, medium and large enterprises in Poland (Polish or foreign capital).

In both cases, the group is not representative, but the data obtained are intended to show the trends and some tendencies in the area under research. The research was carried out between 1 December 2022 and 1 February 2023.

99% of respondents declared working remotely. The largest group of respondents were programmers (36%), testers (17%), project managers (15%) and IT architects (13%). In the group of employees, 70 men and 30 women were examined. The majority (61%) were employees with higher technical education, 30% of the respondents had higher education, but with a profile other than technical. Most of the respondents came from large organisations employing more than 500 employees (23%) and from medium-sized organisations (31–50 employees) – 18%. The third highest result covered employees from organisations employing 16–30 employees (15%). 43 employees declared that they work for foreign clients – mainly from Denmark (18.6%), the United States (14%), Norway (11.6%) as well as Sweden and the UK – in both cases 9.3% of respondents declared work for customers from these countries. Most of the respondents live and work in the Mazowieckie voivodeship (61%), Łódź (11%) and Wielkopolskie (8%). In the study group, the average values for individual variables were: “Age”, $M = 38.87$ ($SD = 5.523$), “Please specify the total work experience in years”, $M = 14.02$ ($SD = 4.992$), “Please specify the size of the team where you currently work number of employees”, $M = 14.71$ ($SD = 13,491$).

Almost all survey participants confirmed that they work remotely ($n = 99$; 99%). Only one respondent denied this ($n = 1$; 1%). In the study group, the average values for individual variables were as follows: “How long have you been working remotely? (years)”, $M = 3.40$ ($SD = 2,840$), “How many times a week do you work remotely?”, $M = 4.69$ ($SD = 0.862$).

In the group of managers, 33 women (58.9%) and 23 men (41.1%) were surveyed. Managers came from the following organisations: employing more than 250 employees (large enterprise) ($n = 23$; 41.1%), 10–49 employees (small enterprise) ($n = 17$; 30.4%), 50–250 (medium enterprise) ($n = 15$; 26.8%), 1–9 employees (micro enterprise) ($n = 1$; 1.8%). Managers participating in the study work in the following provinces in Poland: Mazowieckie ($n = 23$; 41.1%), Małopolskie ($n = 8$; 14.3%), Dolnośląskie ($n = 7$; 12.5%), Lubuskie ($n = 3$; 5.4%), Kujawsko-pomorskie ($n = 2$; 3.6%), Lubelskie ($n = 2$; 3.6%), Łódzkie ($n = 2$; 3.6%), Pomorskie ($n = 2$; 3.6%), outside Poland ($n = 2$; 3.6%), Śląskie ($n = 2$; 3.6%), Podkarpackie ($n = 1$; 1.8%), Wielkopolskie ($n = 1$; 1.8%), Zachodniopomorskie ($n = 1$; 1.8%).

The research used proprietary surveys prepared for the purpose of research work, which were made available online for the respondents via the survio.com platform. The CAWI survey for a group of employees contained a total of 43 open and closed questions (single and multiple choice). The survey was delivered to the respondents via a direct link to the platform and was not time-limited in any way. Respondents were contacted by using the LinkedIn portal, which is, to some extent, a natural environment for the respondents, i.e., it is an online space used for strictly professional purposes and for direct searches in companies from the IT services sector. The survey was anonymous. The CAWI survey for a group of managers contained a total of 22 open and closed questions (single and multiple choice). The survey was not time-limited. The system accepted only complete surveys. Respondents were contacted by using the method of direct searches in companies from the IT services sector or in companies with a different business profile, where there is a separate IT unit.

4. Own Research Findings – the Group of Employees

The following statistical methods were used to carry out the analysis:

- a descriptive statistical analysis – basic measures of descriptive statistics to characterise the distribution of quantitative variables,
- a frequency analysis – percentage distributions of qualitative variables.

The analyses were carried out using Excel and Jamovi statistical packages.

In the opinion of employees, their task efficiency is high. Most of the survey participants strongly confirmed that they cared a lot about the quality and timeliness of tasks they performed remotely ($n = 65$; 65%). 27% of the respondents reported that they did everything that was assigned to them ($n = 27$). The remaining survey

participants selected the following answers: “definitely no, I often lack information, I have no one to exchange ideas and views with, I lack inspiration” ($n = 5$; 5%), “rather yes” ($n = 2$; 2%) and “rather no” ($n = 1$; 1%).

Also, when it comes to assessing their own self-reliance, proactivity and responsibility for the tasks performed (when working remotely), the respondents most often rated themselves very highly ($n = 71$; 71%). These features were rated as high by 28% of the survey participants, while only one person rated them as average ($n = 1$; 1%). The research shows that long-term (over 12 months) remote work by employees is not conducive to shaping pro-development attitudes, hinders the building of team collaboration, and negatively affects the quality of relationships and trust within the team. The research shows that employees have been working in this model for almost 5 days a week for the last 3 years on average ($M = 4.69$). In most cases, the respondents do not feel that they are gaining new knowledge and learning new things while working remotely ($n = 43$; 43%). The remaining survey participants selected the following answers: “definitely no” ($n = 22$; 22%), “rather yes” ($n = 20$; 20%) and “definitely yes” ($n = 15$; 15%).

The employees also tend to be negative when it comes to collaborating with a team with no day-to-day, face-to-face contact. The largest proportion of the respondents reported that they rather could count on the team with whom they had no direct contact ($n = 35$; 35%) but a total of 49% of the respondents estimated that they rather could not, completely could not, or stated that they could only rely on themselves.

The employees working remotely also assess the level of relationships as rather average, describing them as correct, but certainly not deep. Nearly half of the participants assessed it as such ($n = 48$; 48%). In contrast, the second highest rated answer was very good relations. Such a level was indicated by 23% of the respondents ($n = 23$). The third highest rated answer was: relationships have broken down, we talk less, we are not interested in each other ($n = 17$; 17%). Also, building trust within remote teams is one of the most frequently mentioned challenges within the group of employees.

Remote working limits opportunities for self-development, team learning, and knowledge exchange among employees. This is the highest rated challenge of all those indicated by the respondents. No possibility of learning directly from the team and/or the manager was indicated by almost half of the respondents ($n = 48$; 48%). When asked whether they exchange knowledge with the team on which they work remotely, respondents also overwhelmingly declared that there is no knowledge exchange between team members. In most cases, the respondents are unlikely to share experiences and knowledge with the team they work with remotely ($n = 45$; 55.6%). 29.6% of the respondents strive to do so ($n = 24$). The other respondents

strongly denied this (everyone focuses on themselves and looks for information and inspiration on their own) ($n = 12$; 14.8%).

The employees are negative about managers' activities when it comes to promoting the mutual exchange of knowledge, ideas, and information among employees, and encouraging them to undertake activities that will foster development. The largest group of the survey participants stated that in their work no one cared about the exchange of information, knowledge, and ideas ($n = 35$; 35%). The answer "rather no" was given by 31% of the respondents ($n = 31$). A significant number of the survey participants also chose the answer "rather yes" ($n = 22$; 22%). The other respondents ticked the answers: "definitely yes" ($n = 8$; 8%) and "everyone focuses on themselves" ($n = 7$; 7%).

Despite the many negative aspects perceived by the surveyed employees, they declare that they are positive about the possibility of working remotely and expect to be able to continue working in this particular model (100% remote working). 82% of the respondents from the IT services sector declare that they want to work 100% remotely. Only 17% state that they prefer hybrid working.

Research shows that the predominant reasons for wanting to work remotely include: possibility of flexible working with a strong focus on personal preferences (75%), possibility of combining home and professional duties (64%), and the third highest rated answer was the possibility of attending private matters and obligations during the day (62%).

5. Own Research Findings – the Group of Managers

The following statistical methods were used to carry out the analysis:

- a descriptive statistical analysis – basic measures of descriptive statistics to characterise the distribution of quantitative variables,
- a frequency analysis – percentage distributions of qualitative variables,
- Fisher's exact test – to assess the relationship between two variables of a nominal nature for small size groups.

The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$ (if $p < 0.05$, the results are considered statistically significant). The analyses were carried out using Excel and Jamovi statistical packages.

The managers, unlike the employees, are negative about the level of task efficiency among their own employees working remotely. The survey findings show that employers are not so enthusiastic about the efficiency and quality of tasks that are performed by remote employees. The respondents most often indicated that the efficiency of tasks performed by employees working remotely was average ($n = 24$; 42.9%). The remaining survey participants selected the following answers: "there are many errors, shortcomings, corrections, efficiency is low" ($n = 14$; 25%),

“tasks are performed carefully and on time, efficiency is high” ($n = 13$; 23.2%), and “tasks are not performed, often ignored, forgotten, efficiency is very low” ($n = 5$; 8.9%). A total of 76.8% of the respondents state that the level of work efficiency is, on average, low or very low, which indicates a completely different perception of this area by the employees when compared to the managers.

In the context of the formulated research problems, it also seems reasonable to analyse what kinds of problem may result in low task efficiency, if any, are noticed by managers among employees working remotely. This was examined from the managers’ point of view, with a gender split (female managers, male managers). The frequency analysis results show that the female managers are most likely to notice problems among employees such as looking for excuses not to attend online meetings or to be invisible, difficulty in controlling the task performance, difficulty in building team unity, while the male managers notice problems related primarily to building unity, finding excuses not to attend online meetings or to be invisible and difficulties in controlling the task performance. In the managers’ opinion, work carried out by employees remotely requires a lot of self-reliance, responsibility and discipline. However, the managers are negative about the impact of long-term remote working on employees. The analyses on the group of managers show that over 98% of their employees have been working remotely for over 12 months, which may be considered a long period.

The managers are negative about the impact of remote working on the level of collaboration and understanding within teams. Most often, the participants rated the impact of remote working on the level of collaboration and understanding within the team among its members as average ($n = 22$; 39.3%). 33.9% of the survey participants indicated a low level of collaboration and understanding ($n = 19$). The other answers were selected less frequently: “level of collaboration and understanding is high” ($n = 11$; 19.6%), “level of collaboration and understanding is very low” ($n = 3$; 5.4%), and “level of collaboration and understanding is very high” ($n = 1$; 1.8%).

The managers also notice psychological, social and organisational problems. The most frequently noticed problem was the alienation of employees, e.g. missing meetings, not reporting absence from meetings ($n = 28$; 50%), while the second most visible problem were psychological problems (depression, low mood, $n = 25$; 44.6%). The managers also pointed out that employees were afraid to ask about various issues out of fear that it would harm their image within the team and the manager.

The survey participants (the group of managers), when working with remote employees, most often missed “responsibility for the assigned tasks” ($n = 43$; 78.2%). It was indicated slightly less often that, when working remotely, the following were lacking: “greater self-reliance of the employee in task performance” ($n = 32$; 58.2%), “trust in the employee” ($n = 32$; 58.2%) and “good communication and mutual

understanding” ($n = 27$; 49.1%). Other shortcomings were indicated by 3.6% of the respondents ($n = 2$).

Among the features and skills that an employee should have to effectively carry out remote work and ensure efficient performance of professional tasks, the survey participants most often included: “high self-reliance” ($n = 39$; 69.6%) and “a high level of responsibility for the tasks performed” ($n = 37$; 66.1%). The following features were mentioned less often: “very good communication skills” ($n = 21$; 37.5%), “very good organisation of own work” ($n = 15$; 26.8%), “strong commitment to tasks” ($n = 12$; 21.4%), “diligence” ($n = 8$; 14.3%), “proactivity” ($n = 8$; 14.3%) and “courage to express one’s own thoughts and opinions” ($n = 6$; 10.7%). The least often indicated were the following: “high focus on the quality of the tasks performed” ($n = 5$; 8.9%), “good knowledge of the objectives of the organisation” ($n = 4$; 7.1%), “team discussion skills” ($n = 3$; 5.4%), “active listening skills” ($n = 3$; 5.4%) and “ability to conform” ($n = 2$; 3.6%).

In the long term, the managers see more threats and difficulties when it comes to organising remote working. The largest proportion of the respondents, in the long term, “see more threats and difficulties related to organising remote working” ($n = 26$; 46.4%). “A lot of threats and problems related to organising remote working” are mentioned by 28.6% of the survey participants ($n = 16$). Other answers were indicated less often.

Most of the managers have limited trust in a team working remotely ($n = 35$; 62.5%). Distrust was indicated by 16.1% of the respondents ($n = 9$). Only 14.3% of the survey participants trust their team ($n = 8$), while in the remaining cases the trust is very strong ($n = 4$; 7.1%).

As regards the group of managers, we also examined whether there were differences between female and male managers in the assessment of the level of collaboration and understanding within the team and trust in employees working remotely, their effectiveness, efficiency, and focus on professional tasks during working hours. The analysis of the relationship between nominal variables was preceded by checking the assumption of the application of the χ^2 association test for a sufficiently large number of expected values (all expected values > 1 ; 80% of expected values > 5). This condition was not met by any of the pairs of variables, therefore Fisher’s exact test was used for the analysis. The results of Fisher’s exact test show that there is a significant relationship between the variable: “gender” and the variable: “To what extent do you trust your employees when it comes to working remotely? (work efficiency, organisation and effectiveness of own work, focus on professional tasks during working hours, etc.)”, $p = 0.028$; the strength of the observed effect was found to be moderate (Cramer’s $V = 0.39$, 95% CI [0; 0.61]). The results of Fisher’s exact test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Fisher's Exact Test Results – Relationship between the "Gender" Variable and Collaboration, Understanding, Trust, Efficiency and Effectiveness at Work

Specification	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>	Cramer's V	95% CI	
				lower	upper
How do you think remote working affects the level of collaboration and understanding within the team among its members?	56	0.327	0.30	0.00	0.49
To what extent do you trust your employees when it comes to working remotely? (work efficiency, organisation and effectiveness of own work, focus on professional tasks during working hours, etc.)	56	0.028*	0.39	0.00	0.61

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: the author.

6. Discussion of the Findings

The findings presented in this paper show selected issues that are a part of a larger field of research on employees and managers in the IT services sector. The findings obtained indicate some tendencies within the group in question. This is a contribution to further research and exploration, especially as remote working is a working model that is very strongly represented in the IT sector. The research also shows that employees expect this model to be maintained in the future. Despite the ongoing economic crisis in Poland, the IT sector is one of the most rapidly growing sectors in the country. Employment in this sector remains at a high level all the time, which only confirms that the demand for specialists does not fall – all the more so since, as the findings of this research also show, a large proportion of IT employees also work for foreign companies (Scandinavian countries, UK, USA are popular choices). However, the findings presented herein show the negative side of the working model so willingly chosen by employees. Particular attention should be paid to the issue of knowledge exchange. This is an area that requires special consideration when it comes to hiring specialists and planning project work. The research shows that exchange of knowledge among employees working remotely is at a low level. This problem is particularly acute when it comes to the formation of new teams in a market that is already experiencing a severe shortage of employment. With such work organisation, there may be a problem of knowledge exchange between senior and junior specialists. In other words, young employees may not have a source from which they can draw knowledge and thus supply the market with capital of new knowledge and skills. Senior specialists already generate very high costs in terms of remuneration levels in organisations,

and these expectations will grow if the labour market is not replenished with fresh groups of specialists, and seniors are given ample opportunities to choose a job, even outside Poland, which, according to the research, is currently the case. There is a gap between those who have knowledge, skills, and experience and those who are just starting their career in IT and do not have the opportunity to learn and benefit from the experience of seniors. The research shows that quite a large group of employees carry out projects remotely for foreign clients and, moreover, some employees carry out several projects simultaneously (e.g., for multiple employers at the same time). As remote working in IT is not a problem today, senior specialists may choose offers from outside Poland that are much more favourable in financial terms, which will further increase the outflow of human capital in the IT sector, which is already in deficit. In this case, similarly – young specialists will lose a source of learning. Intensification of these processes is certainly not conducive to ameliorating the problem of employment in IT in Poland, which prompts us to consider whether the remote model preferred by IT employees will not, in the long term, become a major threat to organisations in Poland which today decide to retain it for fear of an outflow of human capital. How far can organisations afford to make concessions today so as not to suffer the severe consequences of these decisions in the future? The high flexibility of organisations in this area combined with the lack of control and distrust in the employee raises serious concerns about the shape of cooperation between the employee and the organisation in the future, especially in such a difficult market.

Many alarming questions are also raised by the issue of why employees want to work remotely. One cannot expect high quality, timeliness and effectiveness (which, in the managers' opinion, are missing) if the main reason for wanting to work in this way is the possibility of attending to private matters and obligations during working hours. This leaves much room for abuse that will be difficult to control and eliminate. Large discrepancies between employees and managers in key areas such as trust, knowledge exchange and communication also give rise to concerns about the quality of mutual relationships in the future. Today, these two groups already perceive the same aspects of work in completely different ways. Remote working is likely to deepen the problems that plague organisations today, because it makes it impossible to notice problems more quickly and, consequently, respond to them. And finally, there are social, psychological and relational problems that have been plaguing employees in many regions of the world since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The question remains open as to whether the excessive enthusiasm over the present benefits of remote working will turn against organisations in the future, and how we, as employees, want to shape the work that is a significant part of our lives?

It is also worth paying attention to the limitations that emerged during the research and may be important when formulating conclusions. First of all, the surveyed group of employees is relatively small, which does not mean, of course, that research in this area should not be undertaken, but a larger sample could provide a broader picture of the examined issues. The surveyed group of managers was similarly small. It would also be worth conducting in-depth individual interviews with managers, which would give them the opportunity to learn about a wider range of concerns, problems, difficulties or, conversely the benefits they see from working in a remote model. Further research on this issue should focus on the relationship between employees' perception of remote work and variables such as age, gender, value system, or lifestyle. When thinking about further research on this issue, it is also worth paying attention to the cultural aspect, as well as the relationship between the perception of remote work and new trends in organisational behaviours.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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