

# Digitalization in Organizations



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Edited by

Mehmed Zahid Çögenli

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To my beautiful wife Elif



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# INTRODUCTION

## DIGITALIZATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

MEHMED ZAHID ÇÖGENLİ (PHD), EDITOR

Technology; is an indispensable part of our lives. This concept is actually the lead actor in the world order that has changed and evolved quite rapidly over the last 30 years. Countries, nations, borders, economies, social structures, businesses and organizations. All systems are now almost divided into those who have and develop technology, or those who do not have and cannot develop it. The balance of power is on the side of those who invest and produce technology in every sense. The world is now shaped in the shadow of technology, led by international companies and organizations, not certain nation states. The new name for this transformation is the Digital Age. Digitization; that is, harmonization of each case with technology, is now a must. Imagine turning off your lights that you left on at home with a mobile phone app or turn on your combi half an hour before you get home and make it warm. What about showing your parents, who live 12,000 km away from you, the first steps of their grandchildren live? These are just a few simple examples of the social effects of digital transformation. In fact, if you were to say or write them 30 years ago, you would have been named a fictitious crazy or sci-fi writer by people. These examples are now the normals of us and the world we live in. So, can you imagine what would be normal in 30 years? Let me ask you a simpler question: What did you imagine about your new year in January 2020? More money, more power, more travel, more peace and happiness, or a virus? It's quite difficult to predict how technology will evolve and what will normalize after 30 years, but today we are going through a process called "The New Normal" in our social life, and causing this new normal is a Virus (Covid-19: "SARS-CoV-2"). An infectious disease resulting in the death of more than 1 million people as a result of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) as of the end of 2020. As a result of the effects and rapid spread of the virus, which appeared in Wuhan, the capital of the Hubei

region of China on December 1, 2019, a global outbreak was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 (Pandemic).

In light of all these, we basically need to talk about this. Digital transformation, which surrounds the earth and progresses quite rapidly under the influence of technology, has become a necessity with the Covid-19 Pandemic. With this process, which directly affects billions of people, it will not be quite difficult to observe that we need digitalization more and we are even being forced to digitise. Ten thousands of scientific publications have been published that deal with the process in medical terms. It would not be wrong to mention that the economic impact is hundreds of billions of dollars and that even estimating the damage it causes to the world economy will take years. It should also be noted that it collapsed our social life and created a new concept called “Social Distance” by eliminating the physical proximity of people with each other. However, it is not possible to ignore the contribution of digital transformation and, naturally, the effort of all humanity to adapt to this negative and frightening process while addressing the negative aspects of this process. This effort should be evaluated individually in each discipline.

With this study, we will attempt to carry out an evaluation of the digital transformation process, which has accelerated further with the influence of Covid-19, for organizations. We aim to provide an up-to-date perspective by addressing organizational aspects and activities of different social science disciplines. First of all, it is necessary to reveal that organizational studies were also carried out on the effects of digitalization before the pandemic process, but differences emerged with this process. Therefore, it is likely to say that the softer and slower developing digital transformation of organizations has become harder and faster in the name of sustainability.

With the contribution of 27 scientists, our book which has 19 chapters discusses the digital transformation of social and organizational studies related to disciplines such as Public Practices, Human Resource Management, Finance, Education, Occupational Health and Safety, Organizational Behavior, Health Management, Management Strategies, Entrepreneurship and Marketing. In this way, it will be possible to see and evaluate digitalization in many aspects in terms of organizations.



## CHAPTER ONE

# HOME BASED REMOTE WORK: FREEDOM OR SLAVERY THROUGH DIGITALIZATION?

MÜGE KLEIN AND SEVGİN BATUK

### **Introduction**

Winning over highly qualified employees and retaining them on a permanent basis are crucial for the success of companies. Flexible working environments make a major contribution to increasing companies' attractiveness, because employees see greater flexibility in more easily combining work and private life (Hofmann and Nostdal, 2014; Kraus et al., 2020). Flexible work environments are diverse; flexibility can be seen in working times, in location, or even in the spread of risk (Hofmann and Nostdal, 2014; Kraus et al., 2020). Until recently, location-independent flexible working has been the ultimate dream of every white-collar employee. Also, companies that have realized the costs of keeping the workforce on-site, have changed their approach towards the importance of physical occurrence and have rather emphasized efficiency and productivity. This alternative view has opened up a new work arrangement, remote working, which has allowed employees to do their jobs outside traditional offices (Hardill and Green 2003).

Technological progress has always been important in terms of the design of the working environment. Digitalization, in the sense of Industry 4.0, can be seen as an essential driver for "Work 4.0", the conceptual framework of future work, which has been discussed over the last five years in Germany and the European Union (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Germany, 2017). The associated digital communication technologies open new possibilities for collaboration, which are independent of spatial and temporal constraints and lead to a tremendous ease of access to globally distributed knowledge, skills and resources. According to the possibility of

working ubiquitously at any time thanks to digital information and communication technologies, companies tend to implement more flexible and adaptive work styles to retain high productivity (Kotera and Correa Vione, 2020). Even though digital technologies are sufficiently capable of technically supporting like never before the long desired remote work, based on the report of Owl Labs' Global State of Remote Work, at the beginning of 2020, 44% of companies globally still didn't allow remote work (Owl Labs, 2020). The reason that this is not as high as the potential acceptance of remote working may be the lack of an appropriate company and work culture in addition to the right technology, or psychological inhibitions (Engels, 2020).

The major role that digitalization plays in facilitating remote work became quite clear during the pandemic. The pandemic spread of the Covid-19 virus has resulted in a deep rift in the economy, society and the lives of almost everyone. The effects of the lockdown, which took place in numerous countries and has not yet ended, are forcing companies to offer their employees the option of working from home. Especially since the first months of 2020, the spread of the Covid-19 virus worldwide has caused companies to switch to "home-based" remote work, and the number of home-based remote workers has increased significantly in order to reduce the negative effects of the global epidemic. According to HR Drive (2020), 88% of the organizations worldwide, made it mandatory or encouraged their employees to work from home during the pandemic situation. Currently, the debate is on as to whether there will be a return to offices in the future even if the epidemic is over.

A study of home-based remote working could not have been fully attempted before, because remote-working was not prevalent enough in companies and it was in general time-restricted. The remote working scenario during the pandemic has thus created a great and novel opportunity to try out remote work, and it can be used to learn lessons from a large-scale remote home-working experiment.

The declaration of Karl Marx, "the worker is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home" calls attention to the importance of separation between work and private life (Marx, 1968). Unfortunately, due to home-based remote work the boundaries between work and private time are becoming increasingly blurred, and the ability to self-exploit through working at night or being permanently available is growing fast (Wimmer, 2019). Based on the fact that working remotely will be a part of company and employee life in the post-pandemic future, with this study we aim to achieve a better work-life balance and increase the efficiency of remote working. In this study, it is aimed to shed light on the

employees' experiences of home-based remote working during the pandemic process, in order to support the future concepts of flexible working under the assumption that 80% of companies would like to continue offering home offices after the pandemic (HR Drive, 2020). In this respect, in-depth interviews will be conducted with white-collar employees working in multinational firms to understand how their well-being and work-life balance have been affected with remote working. The study will investigate if remote working has created advantages or disadvantages for employees and why their experiences are good or bad during this process. The objective is to find out if the employees are generally satisfied and happy with remote working and to evaluate the major reasons lying beneath their assessments.

### **Interrelationship between Remote Working, Digitalization, Work-Life Balance and Covid-19**

It is crucial to attract and retain highly qualified employees for company success. On the one hand, flexible work environments increase the attractiveness of companies by enabling employees to integrate private and work life in a flexible way and on the other hand, they support a better utilization of the potential productivity and creativity of employees. The flexibility of work can be of different types as shown in Figure 1.1 (Degenhardt et al., 2012; Hofmann et al., 2015; Kraus et al., 2020):

- *Time flexibility*: This form of flexibility is about adapting working time, where employees can individually set their daily, weekly or annual working hours within a certain framework. For employers, the added value lies in the flexible adaptation to the workload. Typical appearances are shift work, overtime work, part-time working models and job sharing by the flexible assignment of individual content-related tasks to employees.
- *Location flexibility*: The focus here is on increasing the flexibility of the location from which the employees can carry out their work. Typical appearances are mobile working and home-based remote working.
- *Risk flexibility*: This form of flexibility is about relocating the company's risk of the permanent commitment of employees. The flexible disposition of the employees enables payments according to performance and thus costs can be reduced. Typical appearances are forms of temporary employment, agency work and outsourcing, where operational functions not belonging to the core business are carried out from other companies.

There is a mutual reinforcement between the different forms of flexibility which accelerates and intensifies the overall trend towards greater flexibility. An example of this mutual reinforcement could be the combination of time and location flexibility, for instance flexible part-time solutions for women with children, where they go to the office on two out of three working days (“time flexibility”) and work from home on the third day (“location flexibility”).

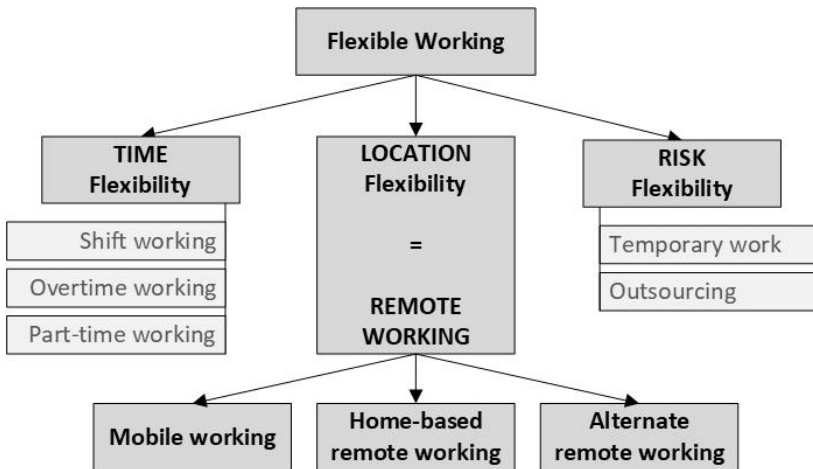


Figure 1.1: Flexible working types (Source: authors, based on Hoffmann et. al., 2015; Degenhardt et al., 2012)

The focus of this study is on location flexibility, where the employee can work remotely outside of the office. Depending on the place of work, a distinction is made between different forms of remote work (Degenhardt, et al., 2012): when remote work is performed from employees’ homes, it is called home-based remote work. With mobile working, the workplace is completely variable and work is rarely done at the company's location. Mobile work takes place when the work activity is carried out at different locations (Breisig et al., 2017). Alternate remote working is the variant of remote work where people work alternately at home, in the company or somewhere else.

The reason why remote working is also called teleworking is that by remote working the connection to the company is maintained through various information and communication technologies (Perez Perez et al., 2003). According to Di Martino and Wirth (1990), telework is the work



done away from head offices or production facilities, where the employee has no personal contact with employees in the head office or production facilities, but can communicate with them using new technologies.

By remote working the spatial distance to the company is balanced through a sort of information and communication technology. Feasibilities of information and communication technologies influence and define how remote work environments are structured and how working processes are run. Historical developments of digital technologies and digitalization of businesses, which can be summarized in four phases building on each other (Klein, 2019), influenced the development of remote work environments:

1. *Phase of the Personal Computer*: Digitalization began with the use of personal computers in the 1970s. At this time, electronic data processing in companies was possible and data banks were formed. Remote workers were able to connect to company mainframes and databases using personal computers and terminal emulation.
2. *Phase of the Internet*: The 1990s were the most important years of digitalization with the invention of the Internet, implicating the greatest changes on remote working. Remote working was then facilitated by so-called *groupware* tools, which aimed to enable information-system based communication, collaboration and cooperation between remote workers (Koch, 2008). The limited bandwidth of networks reduced the quality of the first videoconferencing attempts between remote workers and the company. As broadband Internet connections became more commonplace, remote workers had adequate bandwidth to link their homes to their corporate intranet and data sources.
3. *Phase of Mobile Technologies*: Since 2000 the hurdles of networking technologies have been overcome. Mobile phones and mobile network technologies such as 3G have made remote working more convenient.
4. *Phase of the Internet of Things*: Since 2010 the effects of the fourth industrial revolution, Industry 4.0 have been felt. Companies today are characterized by a high degree of digital communication and networking as well as large amounts of data that can be stored and accessed at any time (*cloud computing*). Work is becoming more and more mobile, decision-making is supported by IT-based mechanisms (e.g., *big data*), interactive forms of digital information exchange are practiced (e.g., *wikis, blogs, collaboration tools*) and other digital work practices are introduced (Thiemann and Kozica, 2019). Today, teleworkers carry smart devices enabling their steady and easy

access to company sources and communication among themselves using videoconferencing software (e.g., *Skype*, *Zoom*) that can be easily installed in seconds on every device.

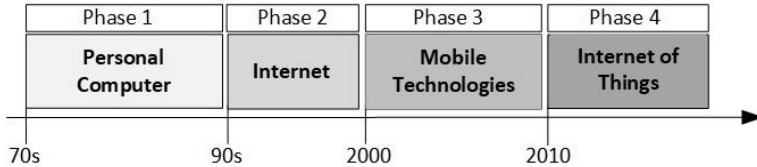


Figure 1.2: Digitalization Phases of Remote Working Environments (Source: Klein, 2019)

As already described in the above section, technological progress has always been important in terms of the design of the work environment and working life. Industry 4.0 influences the business models and business processes of companies, forces them towards digital transformation and also turns their organizational structures into a flexible and dispersed form (Klein, 2020). The Industry 4.0 derived concept, Work 4.0, is discussing the future scenarios of working environments as a response to developments in digital technologies (Vogler-Ludwig et al., 2016). Beneath globalization and demographic and cultural changes, digital transformation can also be seen as an essential driver for change processes around Work 4.0. The associated digital and mobile communication technologies offer new possibilities for collaboration, which are independent of spatial and temporal distribution, thus they lead to a tremendous ease of access to globally distributed knowledge, skills and resources: Work 4.0 is therefore more networked, more digital and more flexible (Rump and Eilers, 2017). Through Work 4.0, enabled modifications in companies' working environments can be mainly divided into three dimensions (see Figure 1.3): employment, skills and organizational structures (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Germany, 2017; von See and Kersten, 2017; Spath et al., 2012; Wimmer, 2019). The dimension of employment is about discussions of job losses and a definition of new jobs under the effects of digital transformation such as platform-oriented jobs. While some work will remain the same, complex and dynamic tasks can be added. The dimension skills deal with qualifications of leadership and employees in the new digital work life. The organizational structure dimension comprises flexible working arrangements including remote working supported by digital technologies, in order to build a more flexible, networked, mobile and agile organization.

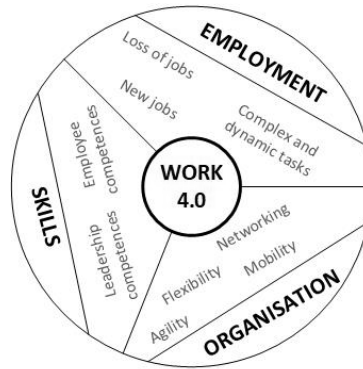


Figure 1.3: Dimensions of Work 4.0 (Source: authors)

Remote work is an elementary component of Work 4.0. Although remote work will be realized more efficiently than before thanks to digital technologies, the challenges may have remained the same, or be even greater. Lack of face-to-face social interaction can lead to loss of motivation, a decreased sense of belonging to the company and to troubles with the work-life balance of employees. The work-life balance is the state of equilibrium between the working life and personal life of an individual (Ratna & Kaur, 2016). The basic idea here is that work and life should be in such a relationship that one has the least negative impact on the other. The increasing flexibility of space and time due to digitalization may have a positive effect on work-life balance on the one hand, and negatively affect the private lives of employees on the other, with a compulsion for permanent availability and increased flexibility requirements (Rump and Eilers, 2017). Alongside the positive aspects, such as having more opportunities to spend time with family members and not to lose time on the way to work, it is also clear that working remotely from home implies the expectation that employees are reachable at all times and, as a result work longer, causing a blurring between people's work and personal lives (Cijan et al., 2019).

Owing to many possible reasons such as insufficient digital skills of employees, a perceived lack of value of the new technologies and insufficient development of an appropriate new company culture, remote-working scenarios have not been successfully integrated into existing work practices until today (Kaiser and Kozica, 2015). Furthermore, the corona crisis since the first months of 2020 has forced many changes in the economy and in the society. Since the global epidemic made staying at home mandatory, many companies around the world have had to migrate to

“home-based remote working”, which was not envisioned in any business plan. As shown in the next figure, Covid-19 has been beneath digitalization and a willingness to exploit the benefits of flexible working, a strong driver for home-based remote work and provides a very good and realistic opportunity to analyze the benefits and harms of remote working from home.

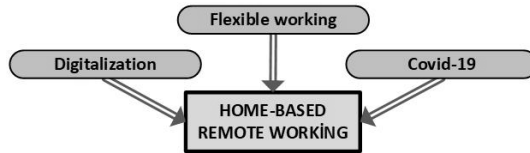


Figure 1.4: Drivers of Home-based Remote Working (Source: authors)

## Previous Research

With the effect of Covid-19, research on remote work has grasped much more of the attention of scholars. Until today, research in this field has been limited. Papers have generally focused on the outcomes of remote work. In the conceptualization of these papers, remote working is seen as a flexible working opportunity offered by the company and it has mostly been considered as a positive concept. Today, with being obliged to work remotely at home, the employees' perceptions and evaluations may have differed. Therefore, understanding previously drawn conclusions can assist with making comparisons.

According to the literature, one of the major advantages of remote working from the employee side is considered to be the lower costs of transportation and clothing (Özkalp et al., 2013). The time lost in traffic jams is reduced (Toduk, 2014; Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Karaca and Esen, 2019) and employees are able to spend more time at home and with family members (Özkalp et al., 2013). It is seen that remote work especially contributes positively to the work-life balance of working mothers (Karaca and Esen, 2019). It is also associated with higher autonomy and efficiency (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Johnson, 1997). Remote working is expected to lead to higher levels of autonomy; if the job role is appropriate, the workload is manageable and the supervisor trusts the employee (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). Notably remote workers who have greater autonomy are stated to require less supervision (Dimitrova, 2003). Especially home-based remote working is considered to contribute positively to self-management, work-life balance and job satisfaction (Wheatley, 2012;

Kurland and Bailey, 1999). It is also shown that for a positive work-life balance, the most important factor is managing the workload when it comes to remote working (Maruyama et al., 2009).

Remote working is also stated to offer advantages for organizations. Costs like real estate or electricity expenses can be reduced through the adoption of remote working arrangements (Toduk, 2014). Increased efficiency, increased life quality, decreasing costs and absenteeism are considered as major benefits of remote working (Alkan Meşhur, 2007; Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Tozlu, 2011).

The other side of the coin focuses on the negative effects of remote working. One of the most debated outcomes of remote work is over the social isolation it may lead to (Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Harpaz, 2002). Remote workers are stated to experience higher levels of worry due to the isolation they face and the lack of communication with colleagues (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003). It has also been found that remote workers cannot separate their work and private lives, leading to diminished restorative effects of home (Hartig et al., 2007).

## **Study**

### **Aim**

The aim of this work is to investigate the extent to which the increase in digitalization in remote working changes the perceived work-life balance of the individual under the pandemic conditions.

### **Sampling and method of data collection**

The sample of the study included employees working in one of the world's leading companies in the household appliance industry in Turkey. 19 semi-structured online interviews were conducted in 3 weeks, between 2 November 2020 and 21 November 2020. The interviews lasted 15 to 30 minutes and were recorded with the consent of the interviewees. The answers were transcribed verbatim and were content analyzed after decoding.

The questions included in the interview form aim to find out if remote working has created advantages or disadvantages for employees and to understand their experiences during this process in order to evaluate its effect on the work-life balance. The interview form basically consists of two types of questions. The first part includes items related to demographics such as age, tenure in work-life and in the company, marital status, etc. The second part is based on the perceptions, experiences and evaluations of

participants regarding home-based remote working. In this respect, previous works on remote work, work-life balance and well-being were examined. Especially the tools and scales used for assessment were analyzed and common themes/patterns were determined.

Previous research shows that, in order to majorly assess the work-life balance, the effect of work on private life and the effect of private life on work were investigated (e.g., Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian, 1996). In this respect, questions to evaluate the positive and negative effects of remote working on work life and private life were formulized and the participants were asked if they thought they were able to keep the balance between their work lives and private lives.

In order to assess the well-being level of employees, they were asked to define their experiences with adjectives as done in most of the well-being studies. Semantic scales that visualized two opposite sides via adjectives or items related to the emotions during work are majorly preferred to assess the well-being levels of participants (e.g., Warr, 1990; Van Katwyk et al., 2000). In this respect, respondents were asked to define the feelings and emotions they experienced during the remote-working process and to rate their overall happiness with home-based remote working.

### **Sample characteristics**

The sample consists of 12 men and 7 women. The ages of the participants vary between 25 and 58. Most of the interviewees are between the ages of 31 and 50 (69%). Apart from one participant, all interviewees have more than 5 years of experience in work life (95%). 10 of the participants have subordinates under their span of control (53%). 18 of the respondents reside in Istanbul whereas 1 lives in İzmir. The demographics are indicated below in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Demographics**

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Men	12	63%
	Women	7	37%
Age	≤30	2	23%
	31-40	9	23%
	41-50	4	46%
	≥51	4	8%
Educational level	Bachelor	11	58%
	Masters	8	42%
Marital status	Single	2	11%
	Married	17	89%
Family	Have children	11	58%
	Do not have children	8	42%
Tenure in work life	≤5 years	1	5%
	6-10 years	6	32%
	11-15 years	3	16%
	≥15 years	9	47%
Tenure in current organization	≤5 years	10	53%
	6-10 years	3	16%
	11-15 years	2	11%
	≥15 years	4	21%
Managerial role	Have subordinates	10	53%
	Do not have subordinates	9	47%

## Findings

All the participants had the chance to work from home during the peak pandemic period between March 2020 and June 2020. In this respect, they were asked if they had the possibility to work remotely before the pandemic. All of the interviewees stated that they had this choice. The company allowed them to work remotely for a maximum of 4 days per month. Afterwards, the participants were asked if they had resorted to that option. 42% of them replied that they never or rarely used that option due to the requirements and structure of the work. 2 of the participants emphasized that they did not prefer to work remotely. The others mentioned that they usually used that option when it was offered.

Also, it was asked if they still continued to work remotely due to the pandemic or if they had returned to the usual practices. All of them

mentioned they still have the option to work remotely since the pandemic situation still persists and they plan their working location according to the task requirements and the flow of work.

Afterwards, questions regarding the work-life balance were directed at the participants. First of all, they were asked to describe their work environment and working hours during the home-office. The participants replied that they tried to create an artificial office at their home, if possible, in a separate room. Most of the respondents especially emphasized that there was no established “work time” concept anymore. There were expected to be available most of the time. One of the respondents stated that he felt “neither at home nor at the office”.

Two of the fundamental questions were based on the positive and negative effects of remote working on the respondents’ work and private life. The frequency of the results is summarized below in Tables 1.2 and 1.3, where the positive and negative experiences of the interviewees were categorized under some headings according to their content.

As seen from Table 1.2 the negative effects of home-based remote working on work life (58%) are higher than the mentioned positive effects (42%). The most frequently mentioned effect of remote work was extended working hours and extended workload due to limitless availability. The second most voiced effect was also an issue of complaint, namely the lack of communication and socialization. In the third position of the mentioned effects on work life is a positive effect, that is to say the advantage of time savings due to not being obliged to spend time during transportation between home and work. Increased concentration, trust and self-management, flexibility, work efficiency, agility, and trust in technology achieved the next ranks as the most frequently repeated themes among the positive answers. In terms of negative effects on work life, too long meetings were especially mentioned as a loss of time and energy. Feelings of inefficient working, ergonomic discomfort at home, a blurring between private and working life, no lunch break, a lack of corporate culture and increased individualism were repeated negative themes among the answers.



**Table 1.2: Effects of Remote Working on Work Life**

<b>Work-related effects</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Positive effects</i>	Time savings (no transportation)	8	8%
	Increased concentration	4	4%
	Increased perceived trust	4	4%
	Self-management/Time-management	4	4%
	Flexibility within comfort zone	3	3%
	Efficient work	3	3%
	Agility	3	3%
	Practicality/Innovativeness	3	3%
	Trust in technology	2	2%
	No distraction	2	2%
	Cost savings for company	2	2%
	Open data sharing	2	2%
	Time for self-development	2	2%
	<b><i>Sum of frequencies of positive effects</i></b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42%</b>
<i>Negative effects</i>	Increased availability/extended work hours/increased workload	14	14%
	Loss of social interaction/loss of emotions	9	9%
	Too many and too long meetings	7	7%
	Inefficient work	7	7%
	Ergonomic discomfort	6	6%
	Blurriness between work and private life	6	6%
	No lunch break	4	4%
	Lack of corporate culture and belonging	4	4%
	Increased individualism/no feedbacks	1	1%
<b><i>Sum of frequencies of negative effects</i></b>		<b>58</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b><i>Total sum</i></b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

The assessment of the effects on private life is exactly the opposite of those on work life: the ratio's positive feelings (63%) were higher than the negative ones (37%). The most mentioned effect of remote working on private life was a positive one: increased family time. The respondents were glad to spend more time with their families and they felt safe at home. Indeed, that feeling of safety was majorly associated with the pandemic rather than being a pure, direct effect of remote working. As the negative effects, the majorly mentioned factor was the loss of the "at home" feeling. This finding is, in a way, overlapping with the "blurriness between work and private life" factor given as a reply for the effects on work life. These two factors can be regarded as having a combined effect both on work life and private life.

**Table 1.3: Effects of Remote Working on Private Life**

Private life-related effects		Frequency	Percentage
<i>Positive effects</i>	Increased family time	8	30%
	Safety	6	22%
	Time flexibility	2	7%
	Increased physical well-being	1	4%
<b><i>Sum of frequencies of positive effects</i></b>		<b>17</b>	<b>63%</b>
<i>Negative effects</i>	Loss of "at home" feeling	5	19%
	Loss of family time	3	11%
	Loss of order	2	7%
<b><i>Sum of frequencies of negative effects</i></b>		<b>10</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b><i>Total sum</i></b>		<b>27</b>	<b>100%</b>

After that, the participants were asked to describe the emotions and feelings they experienced during the remote-working process with a few adjectives in order to gain insight about their overall well-being. The results are given below in Table 1.4. As seen from the table, negative adjectives were plural (68%). Mostly, the uttered adjectives were lonely and bored in addition to anxious. To objectively interpret these findings, the undeniable effect of the pandemic on causing loneliness shall not be ignored here. But in addition to that, participants mentioned that they felt bored during work processes and work time, because work relations had become something rather "robotic and non-human" as two of the respondents named it. Participants also felt anxious due to technology-related uncertainties, possible malfunctions, and, also due to personal inabilities regarding technological issues. Calm, joyful, efficient, enthusiastic and vigorous

during home-based remote working were some of the positive emotions named by the participants.

**Table 1.4: Emotions during Remote Work**

<b>Experienced emotions during remote work</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Positive adjectives</i>	Calm	4	8%
	Joyful	3	6%
	Efficient	3	6%
	Enthusiastic	2	4%
	Vigorous	2	4%
	Valued	1	2%
	Free	1	2%
<b><i>Sum of frequencies of positive adjectives</i></b>		<b>16</b>	<b>32%</b>
<i>Negative adjectives</i>	Lonely	9	18%
	Bored	8	16%
	Anxious/Stressful	5	10%
	Tired	4	8%
	Busy	3	6%
	Insufficient	3	6%
	Restricted	2	4%
<b><i>Sum of frequencies of negative adjectives</i></b>		<b>34</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b><i>Total sum</i></b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

When the interviewees were asked if they believed they had achieved the establishment of a work-life balance during the remote-working process, they generally emphasized that work and private life had intertwined and therefore it had become hard to separate them. They generally thought they were not able to set the balance. At first, they felt overwhelmed but as time passed, they learned how to get along with the challenges better. It was mentioned that they always had work somewhere in their minds and therefore it was hard to rid themselves of that pressure to work further. Only 37% of the participants implied they were happy with the life they lived, whereas 63% of them asserted that they got used to it later but it was an exhausting process.

The participants were also asked if they evaluated remote work overall as positive or negative. 63% of the participants stated that they found remote work as a good opportunity, and therefore, their evaluations were on the positive side. As age increased, the participants' approach towards remote

work changed. Elderly participants were not so eager to conduct work remotely, and mentioned that they would rather be at the office than at home whilst working. The difference observed between the deficient satisfaction with the work-life balance and the approach towards remote work could mainly stem from the positively perceived idea of being able to work remotely. The interviewees all mentioned that having this possibility at hand was always beneficial but full-time remote work would not be preferred by them.

The final question that was directed to the participants was about the future of work. They were asked if the ideal work model would be office-based, home-based or a hybrid model which incorporates both work arrangements to some extent. With no exception, all of the employees asserted that the future of work should be a hybrid model rather than just an on-site or remote-working style. They all stated that they would prefer a mixed, integrated model in which they could decide their work schedule in agreement with their supervisors or in accordance with their job requirements.

## **Discussion**

The future is expected to be more digital day by day and new work arrangements will inevitably be based on technological advancements. Furthermore, the pandemic in 2020 has created an unexpected experimental environment in which the effects of remote working could be exercised and evaluated. From now on, it is impossible to think of work as the same old routine and expect classical ways of conducting tasks. Especially home-based remote work will be an inevitable part of work arrangements, therefore, understanding the dynamics of this process has become crucial. In this study, it is aimed to shed light on the employees' experiences of remote working during the pandemic process. In this respect, in-depth interviews were conducted with employees working in a multinational firm to understand how their well-being and work-life balance had been affected due to remote working. Since some of the participants had managerial roles within the company, their replies can also help to gain insights about the inclinations of the management perspective.

From the angle of the employees including the supervisors, the most mentioned advantage of home-based remote working was stated as "time savings". Most of the participants regarded this as a highly important benefit of working from home. As the majority of participants live in Istanbul, this result is not surprising. Employees especially living in metropolises waste

so much time during travel to- and from work. Therefore, approximately 2 to 3 hours of the day have become utilizable for these employees.

The second most important contribution of remote work was considered to be “increased concentration”. Employees generally stated that they had no distraction during working at home, therefore, they could focus on the work more easily, and as a consequence, felt that their efficiency was increased. Also, they indicated that they felt trusted by their supervisors and the company. No external control mechanisms were used during remote work to check the availability of the employees, they were able to self-manage their tasks and given the initiative. Therefore, this factor contributed positively to their sense of being valuable and trusted. They also stated that they were more innovative in finding solutions and they could also find some spare time for job-related self-development. They had the time and the opportunity to join online certificate programs or workshops to gain deeper knowledge in areas useful for their jobs.

From the management perspective, the agility of the organization was questioned during this process. The answers showed that being able to conduct jobs via home settings has provided proof that the company was agile, adaptive and able to cope with sudden change that could have, otherwise, led to a trauma. The trust in technology was stimulated and open data sharing was encouraged. One of the most important benefits for the organization had been the cost-reduction opportunity. Especially the participants who had managerial tasks supported remote working due to the advantage in terms of costs, and, therefore, evaluated it as beneficial for the organization in terms of financial concerns.

In terms of negative aspects, the most mentioned effects were “increased work hours and availability”. These factors also led indirectly to blurriness between work and private life and the balance was lost. The frequent and unnecessarily long meetings were considered as having caused tiredness and inefficiency throughout the company. Another major complaint was “loss of social interaction”. This has been claimed to have caused three major outcomes: first, things that could have been done during small talk required much more time to be completed; second, people felt lonely and helpless during working; and lastly, it hurt the corporate culture. People started losing their sense of belonging. This can also be regarded as an outcome that affects the organization. Managers had also stated that corporate culture was hard to build and sustain when working remotely. People should come together, transfer feelings and knowledge and share thoughts and experiences for the survival of a solid organizational culture. In addition to this, remote work was not appropriate for newcomers at the beginning of their career in the organization because it is hard to transfer

the values and norms of the company to them. “Increased individualism” was also considered as a negative effect. It is a double-edged sword for both the employee and the company. Participants stated that they could not get proper feedback for their efforts, and due to being lonely, they were forced to continue alone and could not get proper help whenever needed. Besides providing advantages in terms of self-management and decision-making, this had also led to the loss of collective work and synergy. From the company perspective, teamwork was always encouraged and a shared culture was vital. Therefore, increased individualism posed a threat for both sides.

Most of the answers about remote-working experiences with regard to private life showed that the participants were happy to spend more time with the family. It was also a benefit derived from the time advantage brought about by staying at home. On the other hand, although time spent with the family increased, the quality of time did not. This means that most of the participants could not separate their private lives from work boundaries and therefore could not relax after work as they did before.

The participants were also asked to define their emotions during remote working with a few adjectives. The majority of the adjectives collected yielded negative emotions such as loneliness, boredom, anxiety and insufficiency. Keeping in mind that loneliness was doubled due to the pandemic and the lockdown situation, they majorly mentioned feeling alone in terms of doing the job. They were unable to find immediate support when needed, and due to the lack of communication, they also felt bored with no possibility for socialization. People generally consider work as a tool for socialization due to the fact that the majority of our daily time is spent with colleagues rather than with family. Therefore, colleagues are not solely professionals to work with, but they rather have a deeper meaning for most of us. Although the participants had prior remote-working experience, they doubted if this could be sufficient during this process. On the other hand, thanks to the isolation, the employees were able to set their own schedules most of the time and they felt calm and free. Also, this new experience facilitated a positive feeling of enthusiasm and joy towards this new way of doing things. Most importantly, they felt valuable to the organization in that the company let them stay at home and trusted them to do their job regardless of where they were.

The answers relating to achieving a work-life balance during the remote-working process showed that the participants generally thought they were not able to set the balance and they felt challenged by the expectations of both sides until they got used to it. This can be considered as an important explanation for the definition of the ideal work arrangement of the future