TRANSITION TO AN ONLINE MODE DURING COVID-19

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Abstract:
The Covid-19 pandemic, which is still an actual issue worldwide, has hit the Czech Republic on an unprecedented scale, changing the work habits of almost all citizens. The aim of our article is to explore and show how the pandemic has affected the ordinary lives of working people. What effects did this pandemic have on their mental and physical health and their social life, when almost the whole world had to switch to online mode. From the result of our contribution, the pandemic affected workers in a rather negative way in terms of performance and mental and physical health. However, we can point out that it also has some positive effects in terms of expanding the ability to work with technologies, and people have also started to exercise more and focus on their health.

Introduction

Our contribution focuses on a still current topic, that is, the transition to an online mode during Covid-19. It was unexpected and we all had to learn to live with it. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the whole world and our lives - personal, but mainly work. Due to the increase in the number of infected, new and new regulations have been introduced. There was no face-to-face learning in the schools, but all lessons took place online. Recommendations were also issued to companies for their employees to move to a home office. This whole situation significantly affected work, and many companies started using home office. The first confirmed cases in the Czech Republic occurred on 1 March 2020. In the following, you will learn about the changes that have affected working people in these difficult times. We collect these data based on primary data using a questionnaire.

The aim of our article is to investigate and show how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the daily lives of working people. What impact did this situation have on your mental and physical health? We also want to show how the conditions, the performance of the work, and the applications have been used the most during this period have changed. The work is divided into several sections. In each section, we present the results of our questionnaire. In the first part we analyse changes in the work sphere. What were the changes in working conditions and compliance with government regulations that have affected all people? Some stayed at home in the home office, some still had to go to work and follow regulations, such as testing, wearing masks, etc. These changes have affected the lives of all and especially the performance of workers. Therefore, we will analyse the performance in the next section. With the transition to work from home, applications have also developed that have been widely used at this time. We define the two most used applications, namely Microsoft Teams and Zoom. In the following parts, we will analyse the terms netiquette and digital citizenship. In the chapter on the concept of netiquette, we will provide the reader with advice on how to

behave on the Internet and what rules to follow during, for example, an online meeting. In the final part, we will mention what effects this time had on the mental and physical side.

We use primary and secondary data to fulfil the goal. On the primary and secondary data, we outline how the whole online going process took place and what impact it had on employees. We collect primary data using a questionnaire survey. We sent the generated questionnaire to several companies and labour institutes, we also used social networks and went out on the street, where we made a short question with random people on a specific topic. Secondary data represent a theoretical framework, as well as data from other research.

Changes in a Working Sphere

In this section, we will introduce you to the main changes that have been noted in the pandemic. The biggest change was the transition to a home office. In one publication we read that working from home has been a component of the workplace for years. At the same time, home office arrangements are becoming more popular among businesses and individuals due to the perceived benefits for both employers and employees. These advantages are categorized under the topics of flexibility and cost reduction. On the other hand, the home office poses a potential danger to employers and employees. These are potential negative impacts on productivity, problems with the long-term viability of the home office, and impacts on the physical and mental health of employees. In March 2020, due to the growing pandemic, certain measures had to be taken to prevent the spread of the virus. National governments in Europe and beyond have recommended a home office to companies, and many companies have taken advantage of this. Many office workers have started working at home offices. It was a great shock for everyone and very difficult to organize. Companies had to provide their employees with technological equipment so that they could work from home. Companies had to ensure the constant motivation and efficiency of their employees, because for some it was a novelty to work from home. At this time, it was difficult for everyone, because all restrictions were very strict, such as quarantine.

Performance

Employee productivity is considered one of the main priorities in most companies. The main tools for stimulating productivity are regular communication, motivation, increasing rewards, or training. In the final report of Asociace malých a středných podniků a živnostníků ČR, we found out that Covid-19 had a negative impact on employee productivity at about 38%.

APPS

Microsoft Teams

In a book by N llag (2018), Microsoft Teams defined as a collaboration solution that centralizes discussions, persistent chat, phone calls, meetings, file content, and applications. Users can collaborate with colleagues with confidence using any device with enterprise-grade security. Teams is a tool that allows users to form a team and interact using chat rather than e-mails and channels rather than just files and folders.

The majority of the Czech population has used Microsoft Teams since the beginning of the pandemic. According to an article on lidovky.cz by Jančarová (2021), more than 32% of the population uses the Microsoft Teams application. An interesting fact is that the application

also grew significantly worldwide. Kent (2020) published an overview of the development of Microsoft Teams users on one website. Due to the pandemic, we can see a rapid increase in users during the pandemic, with more than 145 million users in 2021.

Figure 1: *Development of the use of Microsoft Office*

Zoom

In a book by Crawford (2020), Zoom is another application that is widely used for communication from home or work. Like Teams, the application offers webinars, meetings, or video conferencing. However, Zoom recorded ZoomBombing several times. This is cyberharassment, where an individual or group tries to disrupt an ongoing online meeting (Bernstein, 2020).

Netiquette

There is also some behaviour associated with online communication. Although we are in online form, we need to follow the rules. We asked respondents if they knew the term netiquette. It is clear from the results that this term is not so well known, because 66% have never heard this term. This part is devoted to netiquette and its rules. The aim of this section is to introduce this term to the readers and everything related with it.

With the invention of the Internet in 1983 people embraced a new opportunity of social interaction. Since this moment each person can send and receive messages immediately, share information with people across the planet, can access to their own bank account to make transactions or send money, and nowadays also work from home. Therefore, the new society emerged and it requires rules of personal polite behaviour.

Naturally, cyberspace has its own culture. Tylor (1884) defined culture as *'a complex that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits'*. Consequently, when a person enters cyberspace, he should adapt to a new culture. The rules of online society can help to embrace the culture of the Internet.

According to 'Netiquette' by Virginia Shea (1994), network etiquette is the set of rules that requires proper behaviour in the online space. This part of the seminar thesis deals with basic principles to use in solving Netiquette dilemmas.

When we communicate electronically, we cannot use body language, gestures, tone of voice to express our own feelings or 'decode' the meaning of receiving the message using verbal signs. From time to time, we forget that there is a human being behind a computer screen and that you can allow yourself to behave inappropriately. Therefore, the first rule of netiquette is the following: remember the human. When you communicate through cyberspace, we should ask ourselves: "Would I say this to the person's face?"

The second rule is to respect the time of other people. *'Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend.'* (Theophrastus, from Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers). When we send information or data, we take people's time; therefore, we should ensure that reading our message is not a waste of time. It is vital in work sphere. Try to be concise and share relevant information.

Cyberspace provides us with an opportunity to preserve anonymity, and many users take advantage of the Internet or even misuse it. However, if we talk about home office, for example, we should remember that our colleagues or customers will judge us by the quality of our writing. Consequently, we should pay attention to grammar mistakes, watch our tone (control exclamation marks, use inflammatory words, etc.), and use formal language. The third rule: make yourself look good online.

These three rules are foundational, and there are plenty of further ones in cyberspace. For instance, respect other people's privacy, respond to emails promptly, do not email large files, etc. All of them are logical and clear, but often people forget about these rules or assume that it is not important. However, netiquette helps us to be more efficient in the online space, achieve personal or work goals, and more easily deal with emerging situations during online sessions.

Digital Citizenship

Currently, it is almost impossible to deny the fact that our lives are related to digital technologies. For instance, virtual reality, driverless cars, blockchain and cryptocurrencies, 5G, delivery drones, etc. Possibly now we can say that we live our digital lives. Moreover, the Internet pushes the limits of our possibilities and expands the world. However, all these technologies and possibilities demand human beings' ability to learn effectively, adapt to new inventions, follow trends and keep up to develop.

Therefore, the concept of cyberspace is related to digital citizenship and digital citizens. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a digital citizen is *"someone who is skilled in using the Internet to communicate with others, buy and sell things, and take part in politics, and who understands how to do this in a safe and responsible way"*.

Isin and Ruppert (2020) in the book 'Being Digital Citizens" state that *the Internet includes governments, corporations, and organizations that own and operate terrestrial and extra-terrestrial infrastructures that transmit digital objects. It also includes Internet service providers (ISPs) who own and operate additional infrastructure that connects users to the Internet. 'Cyberspace* is a whole system with structure, social norms, laws, architecture, and this architecture is code.

The authors of 'Being Digital Citizens' defined online space as a space of digital acts. Blogs, comments, messages, and tweets are new forms of speech that have become more numerous

and, also, they expand vocabulary. For example, the Internet 'engendered' a whole new word such as trolling or taking selfies. Posting and liking became a way to perform ourselves or could be an impetus to action. Negative examples of digital acts are cyberwar and cybercrime. For instance, in 2020, the most common type of cybercrime reported to the US Internet Crime Complaint Center was phishing.

According to Ribble (2016), the author of the book 'Digital Citizenship in Schools", there are three essential elements of digital citizenship. The first is respect. Respect other digital users and build prosocial relationships with other citizens. Netiquette and laws are used to achieve this goal. Educate is the second element. Keeping up to date with the concepts and changes is vital. The last one is to protect. Remain safe in the digital and nondigital world, protect yourself and others.

**Figure 2:** *Most commonly reported types of cyber crime 2020*
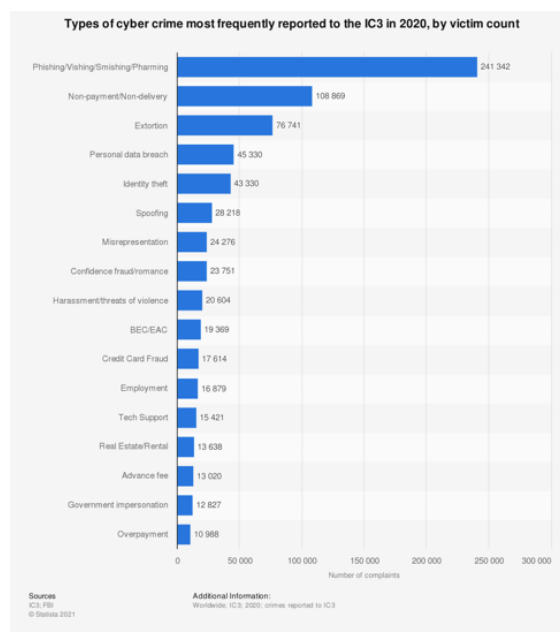
Source: Statista, 2021

Our data

We collect primary data using a questionnaire. This questionnaire was sent to selected companies and shared on social media. We also used interviews with people on the street to find the necessary data. In total, we collected 100 responses. The respondents were asked basic questions, such as age, specialization of work, and employment status. The largest representation was people aged 18-25 (41.9%), the second largest group was people aged 46 and over (26.7%) and then the groups 26-30 years (12.8%) and 31-45 years (18.6%). As for the specialisation of employment, we had a choice of a few basic specialisations: education, wholesale and retail, finance and insurance, administrative work, transport and storage, and other activities. Each focus had its representation. You can see this in Chart 1. As the third basic question was the employment status. We divided the answers into employees, employers, and the worker of the employer. The largest representation was of employees.
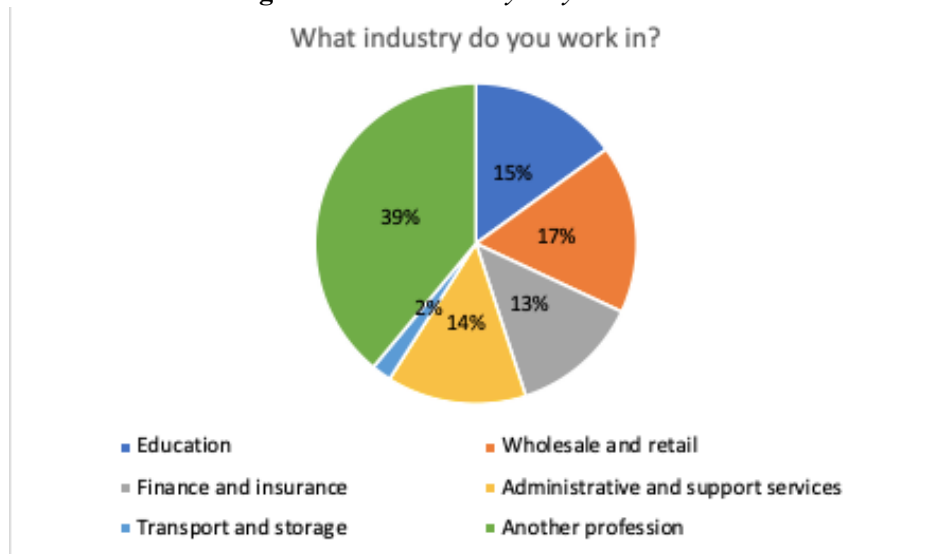
Changes in a Working Sphere

Due to the character of some jobs, some people could not stay at home and therefore had to follow the regulations. Government regulations were issued to prevent the spread of Covid-19. For employees who could not use the home office, they had to follow these measures. These measures include mandatory workplace tests, wearing protective equipment, maintaining clearances, and maintaining hygiene. In some companies, workers were divided into groups that took turns after weeks. Due to lack of work, people were forced to take a vacation. Unfortunately, in some cases there was also dismissal.

Performance

Based on our primary data, we found that in more than 23% of the respondents, the performance decreased after the change in working conditions, the same part of the respondents is not aware of the decrease in their performance, and in the rest of the respondents, the performance did not change in any way.

Most Commonly Used Applications

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the lives of millions of people around the world, their work and private lives being severely affected, resulting in the transition to online. Following this transition, online communication has developed and so have various communication applications. These applications were widely used for online communication, meetings, or consultations that could not take place in person at work. Nowadays, it is almost normal to use these technologies and applications. Therefore, the transition to online communication was not difficult for many people. Only a minimum of respondents found it difficult. Based on the results of our questionnaire, we found that Microsoft Teams and Zoom are among the two most used applications. People shared with us other applications that they used, and these are: Skype for Business, Google Meet and Classroom, Microsoft Outlook, Wherby, Messenger and Webex. In this section, we present the two applications that have seen the greatest growth.

Impact on People

In this section, we will state what was the most difficult thing for our interviewees during the pandemic, what situations they had to face, and what problems they had to deal with. From our interview and questionnaire, people told us what changes the pandemic had left on them. The positive ones certainly include more time and more leisure activities. Many respondents said they started exercising, running and cycling more. Unfortunately, this had more negative effects. On the psychic side, people complained of fatigue, increased stress, and in some cases depression. People spend most of their time on computers, so a quarter about respondents complain of vision problems. For people who were in the home office, the most difficult thing was limiting social contacts. Because it took a long time, some did not see their colleagues at all. The answer also represented the home space. For some, being home was a constant distraction, such as children attending online school. For some, being home also meant that they did not have access to work needs such as swatches, manuals, etc. Some said it was the most difficult for them to get used to all measures such as quarantine and wearing protective masks. But, on the other hand, which was a huge surprise for us, is that more than 31% of respondents said that this time suited them.

Netiquette

Online communication is a vital skill that today all spheres of our lives require. 66% of our respondents have never heard of the term "netiquette". Although this set of rules helps users to be more efficient during online communication, reach personal or work goals, and more easily deal with emerging situations in online space.

Conclusions

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of society. Millions of people around the world have started working from home. This measure focuses on slowing the spread of the virus. Our research shows that the impact of remote work is significant. Employee performance decreased after the change in working conditions. Most of the respondents noticed fatigue, increased stress, and in some cases depression. Due to the time that employees spend at the computer, a quarter of respondents complain of blurred vision and headaches. In addition, limiting social contacts is another challenge for many people. Despite the difficulties that society faces, there are positive impacts of remote work. Thanks to the home office, many respondents said they started to exercise, run, and cycling more. On the other hand, employees who could not work remotely must follow some measures, for instance, mandatory testing at workplaces, wearing protective equipment, keeping clearances, and maintaining hygiene.

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