Facing organisational culture in the remote setup:
An investigation of job satisfaction in European countries

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Work-in-Progress Paper

1 Introduction: Remote work and job satisfaction in organisational contexts

The advancements in production and spread of digital information and communication technology (ICT) have shaped occupations and working arrangement fundamentally. Although increases in flexibilisation of occupations occurred in the second half of the last century (Gratton, 2021; Sennett, 1999), the pandemic enabled a new momentum of change through the need of containment strategies. Remote work[1] was applied in many workplaces - especially for information workers - to contain the risk of infections (Abendroth et al., 2022; Richter, 2020). At the current level of implementation of remote work, an academic examination is essential to critically reflect and evolve work cultures that support the technology-assisted collaboration on the long run. Although various studies examined relationships between remote work and job satisfaction (for an overview, see Allen et al., 2015), only little is known about the influence of organisational expectations, in particular by the increase of remote work in the pandemic. Hence, the main aim of this work-in-progress paper is to consider the implications of remote work on job satisfaction[2] in varying contexts of organisational culture and the increase due to the pandemic. To examine the research questions: (1) How does remote work affect job satisfaction in different organisational cultures of expectation? and (2) does the effect vary for workers who work more frequently from home due to the pandemic? an employee-centered perspective is applied through the focus on job satisfaction as the central research object.

2 Implications of remote work: Organisational culture of expectation

Considering the implications of remote work for employees, different organisational dynamics come into account. Even though remote work can facilitate reconciliation of occupational and private concerns (Allen et al., 2015), strengthen autonomy (Richter, 2020) and save commuting time (Gratton, 2021), downsides can arise as well. Opposing effects can

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[1] Following the definition of Allen et al. (2015), remote work (or: telecommuting, telework) describes a work practise in which a part of the typical work hours is substituted by work from a location-independent place, usually from home. It is supported by the possibility to use ICT to collaborate with others.

[2] For a further discussion of job satisfaction in dependence to remote work, see Allen et al. (2015).

be captured theoretically by the job demands and resources model (J-DR) with its dual perspective on working conditions as demands and resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2001). To understand the implications of remote work, it is necessary to consider tacit norms and practises in organisations (Polanyi & Sen, 1964), here referred to as organisational culture. In line with the approach of the ideal worker norms (Acker, 1990) which describe high expectations on work devotion in terms of presence and accessibility for work in organisations, contradictions come into account for employees working away from a central workplace. One problem that could come into account is the extension of overtime hours in the remote setup (Peters & van der Lippe, 2007). In particular, when the organisational culture promotes overtime hours through the *expectation of doing overtime*. With the gain in employees' flexibility and autonomy, the possible risk of continual connectivity and accessibility comes into account. An organisational culture that fosters or *expects the responsiveness of workers outside work hours* may contribute to more boundary blurring between private and professional life which could also affect the individual satisfaction with the main job. With the pandemic, problems like the perceived lack of visibility gain importance for many information workers. Razmerita et al. (2021) described the feeling by workers who perceived a "out of sight, out of mind" (p. 637) mentality. Many employees also felt like being an outsider and were missing social support while others formed groups to motivate and help each other in the pandemic (Razmerita et al., 2021). Thus, organisational expectations and support seem to be highly influential considering job satisfaction in the pandemic. It has to be investigated if job satisfaction has been affect differently for remote workers who increased the frequency due to the pandemic.

3 Data and Method

The data of the 10th round of the *European Social Survey* (European Social Survey, 2022) was collected in ten European countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia) from 2020–2022[3]. Ordinary least squares regression analysis (OLS) with interaction terms are applied to identify possible effects of perceived expectations and frequency of remote work on job satisfaction[4].

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[3] Information on the specific survey methods and sampling procedures can be found in the country-specific documentation. Respondents (N=1,587) were identified through random sampling and reduced to remote workers aged between 16 and 65 and residing in one of the survey countries.

[4] Job satisfaction in the main job is evaluated on a scale from 0 "Extremely dissatisfied" to 10 "Extremely satisfied" and was already implemented in ESS 2010. The frequency of doing remote work is measured in the four categories 1

4 Results

Weekly remote work is significantly associated with less job satisfaction, compared to employees who work from home less often (β=-0.29*, β=-0.32*) (M1 & M2, Table 1).

Table 1. *Linear regression of job satisfaction*

	M1	M2	M3 Expectation of doing overtime	M4 Expectation of being responsive	M5 Expectation of doing overtime ×Increase	M6 Expectation of being responsive ×Increase
Remote Work (Ref. Less often)						
Monthly	-0.19	-0.23	0.18	0.45	0.54	0.58
	(0.1179)	(0.1187)	(0.2714)	(0.2689)	(0.3931)	(0.4018)
Weekly	-0.29*	-0.32*	0.20	0.30	0.29	0.65
	(0.1269)	(0.1279)	(0.2658)	(0.2694)	(0.4476)	(0.4641)
Every day	-0.14	-0.17	0.07	0.19	0.78	0.85*
	(0.1374)	(0.1385)	(0.2796)	(0.2854)	(0.4254)	(0.4306)
Perceived culture						
Expectation of doing overtime	-0.22***	–	-0.11	–	-0.09	–
	(0.0296)	–	(0.0669)	–	(0.0882)	–
Expectation of being responsive	–	-0.14***	–	0.01	–	-0.01
	–	(0.0271)	–	(0.0595)	–	(0.0808)
Increase of remote work due to pandemic	0.34***	0.35***	0.35***	0.35***	0.66	0.40
	(0.0954)	(0.0962)	(0.0954)	(0.0961)	(0.4001)	(0.4041)
Expectations and remote work						
Perceived culture× Monthly	–	–	-0.13	-0.22**	-0.25*	-0.25*
	–	–	(0.0869)	(0.0775)	(0.1233)	(0.1148)
Perceived culture× Weekly	–	–	-0.18*	-0.20*	-0.16	-0.27*
	–	–	(0.0861)	(0.0789)	(0.1405)	(0.1340)
Perceived culture× Every day	–	–	-0.08	-0.12	-0.22	-0.24*
	–	–	(0.0884)	(0.0818)	(0.1296)	(0.1223)
Expectations, remote work and increase with the pandemic						
Perceived culture×Monthly×Increase	–	–	–	–	0.22	0.04
	–	–	–	–	(0.1756)	(0.1568)
Perceived culture×Weekly×Increase	–	–	–	–	-0.01	0.06
	–	–	–	–	(0.1851)	(0.1709)
Perceived culture×Every day×Increase	–	–	–	–	0.23	0.18
	–	–	–	–	(0.1806)	(0.1662)
Constant	9.40***	9.23***	9.06***	8.70***	8.95***	8.82***
	(1.2492)	(1.2612)	(1.2584)	(1.2701)	(1.2759)	(1.2936)
N	1587	1587	1587	1587	1587	1587
Adj R^2	0.0745	0.0581	0.0756	0.0620	0.0769	0.0634

Note. Standard errors in parentheses, Further controls for gender, age, residential environment, highest level of education (ISCED), occupational status (ISEI), contracted weekly work hours, overtime hours, fixed-term contract, organisation size, trade union membership, net household income and partner in household were applied in all models.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Likewise, perceived expectation of working overtime and being responsive beyond work

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"Less often", 2 "Monthly", 3 "Weekly" and 4 "Everyday". Further, it was asked whether there has been an increase of the frequency of work from home due to the pandemic. The organisational culture is recorded through the self-perception of employees in selected items. The perceived expectation to work overtime and to be responsive outside working hours were investigated on scales ranging from 1 "Never", 2 "Less often", 3 "Once a month", 4 "Several times a month", 5 "Several times a week" to 6 "Everyday". Due to multicollinearity, both variables of perceived expectations are examined separately.

hours are related to lower satisfaction (β=-0.22***, β=-0.14***). Contrary, employees who have increased the frequency of remote work report higher job satisfaction (β=0.34***, β=0.35***). The subsequent analyses (M3-M6, Figure 1) show interaction terms, that describe the relationship between a specific frequency of remote work and job satisfaction under the varying perceived expectations and whether or not there has been an increase of remote work caused by the containment strategies of the pandemic. The results show lower job satisfaction for employees working monthly or weekly under the high expectation of being responsive (M4 β=-0.22**, β=-0.20*) compared to employees who work less often from home. An effect in the similar direction can be reported for respondents who work remotely on a weekly basis and are expected to work overtime (M3 β=-0.18*). Nevertheless, there are no significant effects for employees who work remotely every day. Although, tests of significance reveal higher job satisfaction on average for respondents who increased remote work and perceive high expectations, three-way interactions (M5 & M6) do not support any significant differences.

Figure 1. *Conditional effects plot of interaction terms*
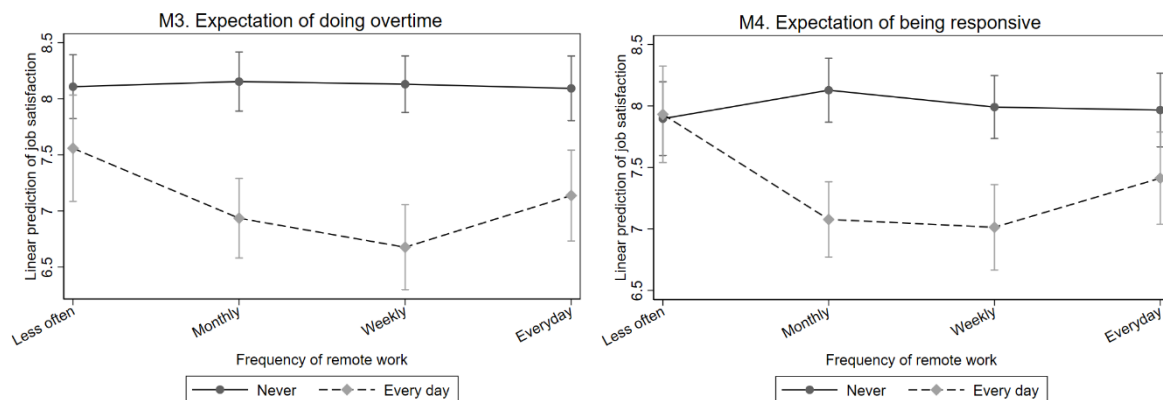
5 Discussion

Following the theory of ideal worker norms (Acker, 1990), the findings indicate an association between high perceived expectations and less satisfaction with the main job. Furthermore, the expectation of working overtime and being responsive beyond regular work hours moderate the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction. While this applies to monthly and weekly remote work, everyday remote workers who are confronted with expectations show higher job satisfaction in the conditional effects. This relates to the perception of everyday remote work as a specific working arrangement as executed by digital nomads. With strong expectations, monthly and weekly remote work seems more like a

demand than a resource. Possible behaviour as doing overtime, being responsive constantly and working additional shifts after a regular working day could result from perceived expectations and affect lower job satisfaction. Remarkably, the analysis shows higher satisfaction for employees who increased the frequency of remote work due to the pandemic. This rather supports the perspective of remote work as a resource in the crisis and a means of coping with the exceptional situation. Anyway, there are no significant differences between increased and unchanged remote work for varying expectations. Nevertheless, management of expectations should be considered in leadership, in particular for regular remote workers, to secure job satisfaction on the long run. However, the analyses are limited by the cross-sectional investigation. Yet, the focus on European countries without subsamples is very broad and allows further steps towards a cross-country comparison. Furthermore, different stages in the examination of the containment strategies should be taken into account to clarify the relationships from a broader perspective than the mere increase of remote work. However, the analyses present first hints towards an influence of the organisational culture of expectations that should be examined in-depth in future steps to understand the implications of remote work in the pandemic and beyond.

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