THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT ON WORKPLACE EFFICIENCY

GINA APOSTOL, assoc.prof. PhD ILEANA SIMONA DABU
West University of Timişoara, Romania

ABSTRACT: *The crisis generated by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has forced organizations around the world to rethink their strategies and, more importantly, to adapt their current activities from traditional work at the employer's premises to working from home. More than 30 years ago, academic research predicted that rapid advances in technology would facilitate the deployment of remote working, and recent technological progress has accelerated its adoption, particularly in the service sector. Work performed by employees outside the employer's premises is commonly referred to as telecommuting, but alternative terms such as remote work, home-based work, remote online work, or home office are also used. Telework, an integral part of human resource policies, is regulated by legislation in most countries, and in Romania, Law 81/2018 sets specific provisions for this activity.*

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, telework and its forms were considered more an option or an alternative for completing tasks than a necessity. Organizations in fields such as telecommunications, IT product development, and design had already offered employees the possibility to work from home, either partially or entirely. In many cases, employers allowed employees to decide how many days per month they wished to work from home or from a location other than the traditional office.

The reasons why employees or employers opted for remote work were linked to high office rental costs in urban centers, limited parking spaces, wasted commuting time, and overcrowding in public transport, especially during peak hours. These factors made remote work an increasingly attractive option. (Dabija, 2021, p. 403)

In this context, telework has experienced significant expansion in recent years, especially during the pandemic, when avoiding crowds and maintaining physical distancing became imperative. Telework, also known as teleworking, is defined as a form of work that is independent of location and relies on information technology and telecommunications. In this way, the employee regularly and voluntarily fulfills the specific duties of their role, occupation, or trade in a location different from that organized by the employer. Telework represents a broad concept, encompassing multiple ways of applying and organizing work within an organization (Man, C., p. 225).

Keywords: *efficiency; virtual environment; motivation; satisfaction; remote work.*

1. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

1.1. Virtual Environment

Media institutions operating in the online environment maintain the same fundamental management principles; however, their approaches to organizational culture adapt according to the specific context, internal needs, and market demands. Organizational and leadership strategies form a flexible system characterized by adaptable techniques and leaders capable of responding quickly to constant changes in a society where technology plays an increasingly significant role. (Mariana Tacu, 2020, p. 27)

Interaction in the digital environment has become an essential aspect of daily life, both personally and professionally. In the field of mass communication and the media, analyzing new forms of media from the perspective of management, organizational culture, and corporate communication represents both a necessity and a challenge. The new media industry inevitably intersects with various market segments that, either directly or indirectly, are involved in mass media activity, thus reaching a wide range of audiences.

According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the digitalization of economies has had a significant impact on labor markets and economic sectors within the European Union, changing not only the nature and

structure of work but also working conditions. Digital labor platforms are a major factor in this process, connecting the demand and supply of labor and facilitating interaction between workers and clients through online platforms (Eurofound, 2018; European Commission, 2020). Work on these platforms offers a high degree of flexibility and autonomy, allowing workers to choose the time, place, and volume of work, as well as the type of tasks they wish to accept. However, researchers and policymakers have expressed concerns regarding working conditions and health and safety regulations on these digital platforms. In this context, in December 2021, the European Commission proposed a directive aimed at improving working conditions on digital platforms, including essential measures for occupational safety and health (AESSM, 2023, p. 3).

1.2. Workplace Efficiency

The workplace is an essential aspect of every person's life, being the environment where each of us spends a significant part of our time. One of the most frequently mentioned words in the professional context is "stress." It is often associated with moments when employees feel they can no longer cope with the demands and pressures of their job tasks, feeling as though they have lost control of the situation. Stress often occurs when individuals face excessive workloads or unrealistic expectations from superiors, and the feeling of being unable to adapt to these challenges becomes increasingly intense.

However, it is important to emphasize that stress should not be avoided entirely but rather managed effectively. In fact, stress can be a controllable phenomenon, which means that there are solutions and options that can bring significant changes to the way it manifests. In any stressful situation, the most important thing is to understand that there is always the possibility to change the aspects that contribute to this discomfort; through this awareness, we can take important steps toward managing it.

Organizational stress is a form of stress that directly affects employees, often influenced by environmental factors and organizational culture. It manifests particularly in certain professional sectors and among certain socio-professional categories where pressures and expectations are higher. Organizational stress is usually generated by negative factors such as a tense work environment, poor communication between employees and superiors, very tight deadlines, or a lack of adequate support from the organization. These conditions often lead to discomfort and decreased motivation, which can ultimately affect both employee performance and satisfaction.

In this context, our goal is to identify ways to control and reduce organizational stress by using various methods and techniques that can be applied to improve working conditions. These approaches may include implementing psychological support programs for employees, improving communication processes within teams, or creating a more flexible and sustainable work environment.

1.3. The Impact of the Virtual Environment on Workplace Performance

The interest in understanding effort stems from the desire to identify ways in which it can be amplified in order to increase performance. Effort-often synonymous with diligence-represents a conscious engagement, an activation of physical and mental resources to achieve a result superior to the usual one or to overcome obstacles. Analyzing this concept is important because humans are perceived both as the source of effort and as the direct beneficiary of the resulting satisfaction, thus being considered the central element in achieving performance. For this reason, it is natural to want to evaluate effort and understand its impact (Radu et al., 2020, p. 738).

The literature supports the idea that systems and tools based on artificial intelligence (AI) have the capacity to significantly improve productivity and efficiency in various sectors. AI integration can support decision-making processes and transform the way professional activities are carried out. However, it is important to also consider the ethical challenges that arise from implementing such technologies (Fukumura et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2022). Furthermore, the integration of AI in the workplace can contribute to developing a better understanding of how employees may collaborate with AI in the future, with particular emphasis on their identity and the factors influencing AI adoption (Mirbabaie et al., 2021).

Thus, job satisfaction plays an essential role in employees' professional behavior and significantly influences their decision to remain in

or leave an organization. Directly or indirectly, overall job satisfaction affects individual performance and, by extension, organizational performance. Any of the factors identified in the research can lead to professional dissatisfaction, which in turn can reduce both employee and organizational performance. Therefore, both senior management and human resources specialists must carefully analyze any factor that may generate professional dissatisfaction and promptly identify its source within the organization. It is essential to intervene quickly to address these issues, thereby preventing long-term negative impacts on organizational performance and avoiding the emergence of other dissatisfaction factors. (Ticu C., 2009)

Human society has continually sought ways and solutions to adapt as effectively as possible to major technological changes. As new needs and problems have emerged, and technical solutions have evolved to meet these demands, institutions have been created to mitigate the impact of these new technologies and to prevent abuses that could lead to uncontrollable effects.

A relevant example in this context is automated teller machines (ATMs), a common application of computer technology. ATMs illustrate how the implementation of a new technology can generate negative effects. These devices allow banking transactions (including cash withdrawals) to be carried out at any time of the day or night and in convenient locations, such as near homes, offices, or transportation hubs.

Although the use of ATMs brings numerous benefits in terms of facilitating banking operations, there are also disadvantages associated with their use that deserve special attention. (tefan Iancu, 2001)

2. Methodology

To address the research objectives as faithfully as possible, I opted for a qualitative approach. This method enables the collection of detailed and relevant data, particularly for topics that involve interpreting personal experiences or subjective perceptions. I consider the use of interviews to be the most appropriate in the context of this research, as it facilitates a deep understanding of the perspectives expressed by participants.

The choice of the semi-structured interview as a data collection technique is based on the advantage of allowing flexibility in formulating questions while maintaining focus on the overall theme. This type of interview creates a dialogue framework that fosters spontaneity and authenticity in responses, while also providing the opportunity to capture essential nonverbal communication elements for a more comprehensive analysis.

The central aim of my scientific endeavor is to analyze the extent to which telework influences employees' levels of satisfaction and efficiency. In the context of significant changes to the work environment, it is important to understand how these changes affect both professional performance and employee well-being.

To achieve this goal, I have formulated the following specific objectives:
- Analyze the impact of the virtual environment on the structure and organization of work.
- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of working in virtual environments.
- Examine the influence of the virtual environment on interpersonal relationships and organizational culture.
- Evaluate the level of adaptation of employees and organizations to virtual work.

The choice of these lines of analysis is justified by the need to obtain a balanced perspective that includes both objective dimensions (efficiency, productivity) and subjective ones (emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships).

In this research, I opted for the semi-structured interview, given that this method allows for obtaining detailed and varied information about employees' perceptions and experiences in the context of telework. The flexibility of this approach makes it possible to explore complex topics in depth, such as the impact of the virtual environment on workplace satisfaction and efficiency.

The semi-structured interview offers me the possibility to adapt questions during the discussion, depending on participants' answers and the directions they take, thus allowing me to better understand the factors influencing performance and well-being in telework. This method enables an in-depth exploration of the subjective meanings of participants' experiences and how they adapt to the challenges and advantages of remote work.

Therefore, the semi-structured interview proves to be the most suitable method for this research, as it allows for a thorough exploration of

the topic and facilitates capturing the nuances related to the influence of telework on the employee experience.

The main participant selection method used in this study was the "snowball" technique. This involved contacting individuals from my circle of acquaintances who, in turn, recommended other people with telework experience.

In selecting respondents, I considered several demographic and professional characteristics, such as gender, age, field of activity, position within the organization, weekly working hours, years of professional experience, and the degree to which specific telework tasks are performed. Special attention was paid to the factor of "length of time in the labor market" in defining selection criteria. Most participants work in sectors such as IT and human resources, and their ages range from 21 to 27 years old.

The interviews were conducted both face-to-face and online. Direct interaction allows me to more easily observe nonverbal cues, such as gestures, posture, and facial expressions, which can provide additional insights into the interviewee's attitude and state of mind. Moreover, in a face-to-face interview, I have the opportunity to introduce more spontaneous or challenging questions, which can stimulate deeper and more detailed discussions, providing a clearer understanding of the respondent's experience.

3. The results of the research

3.1. Adaptation to Remote Work

Remote work has experienced significant growth in Romania, particularly in the context of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. This form of organising professional activity allows employees to perform their work from a distance-either from home or from locations other than the employer's premises. Among the main advantages of remote work are schedule flexibility and better alignment between professional and personal life.

3.1.1. How has the virtual environment influenced company hierarchy and organisational structure? During the interviews, respondents provided varied perspectives on how working in a virtual environment has affected companies' internal organisation, especially regarding hierarchy and organisational structure.

A significant number of participants emphasised that, with the shift to the online environment, communication with superiors has become easier and more direct. Many interviewees mentioned that it is no longer necessary to follow rigid hierarchical chains; instead, they can quickly interact with team leaders or project managers through digital platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or Slack. As a result, hierarchical boundaries have blurred, and access to information and decision-making has accelerated.

Moreover, most respondents believe that the organisational structure has become more flexible, with increased collaboration between departments and specialists from different areas. Frequently mentioned concepts included flat hierarchy, increased autonomy, and a more open and transparent organisational culture. As A.P. noted:"I believe that in terms of hierarchy there hasn't been much influence. However, if we think about organisational structure, there is more transparency now. Because, with the online environment as the main workspace, it's much easier to look up colleagues in the company, see what positions they hold, and know exactly whom to report to, ask questions, or reach out to."

While most participants noticed a positive shift in communication and flexibility, opinions differed regarding the extent to which the virtual environment has influenced formal hierarchy: some argued that the actual hierarchy remained largely unchanged, but access to key people and visibility within the company improved significantly thanks to the digital environment.

Others perceived the change as profound and transformative, suggesting that mid-level managers have lost part of their traditional role as information filters, and teams have become more autonomous-especially in IT companies.

A few mentioned that they never worked within a traditional, in-person organisational structure and consider the digital model more efficient, as it allows quick discussions and avoids unnecessary bureaucracy.

On the other hand, some expressed reservations, noting that while the virtual environment offers transparency and speed, it can also lead to confusion about responsibilities or a lack of team cohesion if not managed properly.

Thus, the online environment has imposed a greater degree of agility and adaptability, with an emphasis on individual responsibility and clear deliverables rather than formal authority.

3.1.2. What changes have occurred in the coordination and monitoring of employees' work?

Most interviewees agree that the transition to virtual work has brought significant changes in the way professional activities are coordinated and monitored. The most common points highlighted include:

- Use of KPIs as the primary tool for evaluating individual performance. Employees acknowledged that KPIs provide traceability, clarity of objectives, and measurable results, replacing traditional forms of direct supervision.
- Use of specialised digital platforms (e.g., Jira, Trello, Monday.com, ASNA) to track tasks, responsibilities, and team progress. These tools enable efficient and objective monitoring without resorting to micromanagement.

Greater autonomy and personal responsibility. Many observed that remote work has made self-discipline and effective time management essential. The focus has shifted from presence to results, with respondents appreciating that deliverables and quality matter more than physical presence or constant supervision.

More flexible and accessible communication. Interviews showed that online communication platforms make it easier to resolve problems quickly and facilitate collaboration regardless of location. As A.A. remarked: "*Time zone differences or working styles can affect coordination. But with the right tools, we've managed to maintain a stable workflow. Moreover, the focus has shifted from supervision to trust and personal responsibility*."

However, views varied depending on the type of company and field of activity: in industries such as automotive, some participants perceived an increase in monitoring, noting that constant KPI tracking and frequent reporting could create a feeling of excessive oversight and pressure.

Others described monitoring as more discreet, goal-oriented, and without frequent demands from superiors-especially in IT companies or Agile teams, where trust and autonomy are more prominent.

For some, there was no noticeable change in monitoring, as their work had already been carried out digitally before the pandemic, making the transition a natural continuation.

Additionally, some employees observed that coordination methods have become more efficient, with short virtual meetings (daily stand-ups) providing clarity and synchronisation, especially for geographically distributed projects.

3.1.3. To what extent has technology facilitated or complicated decision-making in a virtual setting?

Most respondents believe that technology has had a significant positive impact on decision-making within virtual organisations. A key aspect highlighted was rapid access to information and the ability to collaborate in real time through platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Drive, which allow easy synchronisation between team members in different locations:"It's very easy for us to synchronise in larger groups of people, even from different parts of the world" (A.I.).

Another benefit mentioned was digital signatures and process automation, which streamline workflows and reduce the time needed to make decisions:"Now we also have the possibility to sign documents digitally, which greatly simplifies many of the processes that happen in a company" (L.B.).

The integration of artificial intelligence into operational processes was also seen as an advantage for improving organisational performance:"Within HELA, AI plays a major role in optimising day-to-day processes" (A.P.). However, some challenges were also noted: technical difficulties such as internet outages or power failures (A.I.). Lack of spontaneous and nonverbal interactions, which traditionally supported decision-making: "I think an added value comes from the spontaneous discussions that happen when colleagues meet face to face."

Risks such as information overload and decision paralysis due to the multitude of technological options:"Because we have so many channels and options, decisions can be delayed or fragmented" (K.S.).

In conclusion, technology is perceived as a valuable tool for facilitating decisions, but its effectiveness largely depends on the quality of collaboration, clarity of internal processes, and organisational culture:"Technology helps, but the success of decisions depends more on organisational culture and the quality of virtual collaboration" (A.A.C.).

3.2. The Impact of the Shift to Remote Work on Employee Satisfaction and Experience

The shift to remote work has significantly influenced employee satisfaction, bringing clear

advantages such as schedule flexibility, which allows for a better work-life balance:

"*Flexibility, which allows me to create a balance between my personal and professional life, as I have direct control over my work schedule.*"

Employees also value the reduction in commuting time and costs:

"Nobody likes to waste at least an hour, an hour and a half in traffic, round trip" (A.P.) Increased productivity is another positive effect, as shown at HELA, where "the targets set at the beginning of the year were achieved within 7–8 months of working entirely from home." *Remote work offers comfort and autonomy: "I can work from an environment where I feel comfortable and have more control over my pace*" (R.S.)

However, there are also disadvantages, such as the difficulty of separating personal and professional life, and the feeling of losing organizational culture: "*It's no longer possible to make a clear distinction between home and work, and the organizational culture is being lost.*" (G.S.) Social isolation and the lack of spontaneous interactions affect team cohesion and mental health.

In addition, virtual collaboration can lead to misunderstandings and delays in decision-making: "*Virtual collaboration can lead to misunderstandings or delays in decision-making.*"

Satisfaction largely depends on organizational support: "Satisfaction depends heavily on the organizational culture and the support the employer provides for adapting to this work style." (A.A.C.) Remite work has brought major benefits in terms of flexibility and productivity, but its success requires the continuous adaptation of organizational policies to support individual needs and minimize the negative effects on collaboration and employee well-being.

3.2.1. What Challenges Do Employees and Employers Face in Managing Remote Work?.

Remote work has brought numerous challenges for both employees and employers. The main issues include social isolation, poor communication, and technical difficulties. Employees face the absence of direct interaction and non-verbal cues, which can cause misunderstandings and a sense of isolation: "*The main problem, I think, is communication. We no longer have non-verbal language... messages can be completely misinterpreted.*" (A.I.) or "*Social isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness and a*

decrease in morale."

There are also difficulties related to the lack of a proper home workspace and technica problems such as unstable connections: "*Remote work can come with a series of challenges... lack of a suitable workspace*" and "*technical problems... unstable internet connections.*" (G.G.)

For employers, major challenges include maintaining organizational culture, coordinating dispersed teams, and monitoring performance: "*The loss of organizational culture, which is the heart of the company*" and *"monitoring performance, as it is more difficult to evaluate without physical presence.*" (M.A.)

Another difficult aspect is onboarding new employees, especially in complex fields like IT, where virtual collaboration and mentoring become essential: "Onboarding new employees is harder to manage online" and "*we need to create clear processes and virtual mentoring in IT companies.*" (G.S.)

In addition, many employees struggle to maintain a work-life balance, being tempted to work overtime or skip proper breaks: "*It was hard to find the balance between work and personal life... the temptation to work overtime is high.*" (A.P.)

To overcome these challenges, a clear strategy and an organizational culture adapted to remote work are essential.

3.2.2. Are There Significant Differences in Perceptions of Virtual Work Across Industries?

Perceptions of remote work vary greatly depending on the industry and the nature of the job. Some professions, such as IT, consider virtual work natural and efficient since activities are already digitized:"I *work in IT, where online work is natural... We have everything digitized using special tools for remote collaboration.*" (A.I.)

On the other hand, in fields such as healthcare or education, remote work is much more difficult, and perceptions are mostly negative due to the necessity of direct interaction:

"*In healthcare, it's out of the question"* and"*In education, many face difficulties in maintaining students' attention and engagement.*" (G.G.)

There are also prejudices or misunderstandings from those unfamiliar with virtual work, especially in traditional professions: *"There are these assumptions... you just sit in front of a laptop all day and do nothing."*

However, for those working from home and delivering results, the general perception tends to be positive:"*If things work, we don't ask too many questions.*" (L.B.)

Adaptation to remote work depends not only on the field but also on the company's level of digitalization and the support provided to employees:"*The level of digitalization of companies influences employees' perception. If an employee has access to modern equipment, training, and support, they will see remote work as an opportunity.*" (A.A.C.)

Virtual work is a reality more easily accepted and implemented in technological and creative fields, while professions requiring direct interaction face greater difficulties and resistance to change.

3.3. Effects of Virtual Communication on Colleague Relationships and Team Cohesion

Virtual communication has brought significant changes in the way colleagues interact, but the effects vary depending on the context, the team, and the types of individuals involved.

For some, the negative impact was minimal: *"I wouldn't necessarily say that virtual communication has affected colleague relationships in any way. (...) We constantly communicate via Microsoft Teams,"* and "*we have weekly meetings... and if something comes up... we don't hesitate to call or message each other.*" (A.I.) However, integration difficulties for new employees are acknowledged:"*It is harder for new employees, who somehow have to adapt to an already formed team and in a virtual setting... it can be a bit difficult for integration.*" A common point in several responses is the lack of spontaneous interactions, which used to contribute to team cohesion in the past: (L.B.) *"The lack of face-to-face control leads to the disappearance of spontaneous discussions, for example coffee breaks,"* and "*we no longer have those spontaneous interactions at the office.*"

Also highlighted is the difference between professional and personal relationships, especially in the IT environment: "*Relationships between colleagues exist, but they are different... we IT people can be categorized as different.*" (R.S.) Despite these limitations, there are examples of positive adaptation and initiative: *"Just three days ago I came back from a team building... planned and paid for by the team" (A.I.),* indicating a

desire to strengthen offline connections. Virtual communication requires intentionality: "*In the virtual environment, relationships must be cultivated intentionally... emotional distance is created,*" but also organization: "*A team can be built online if there is desire, good organization, and healthy principles.*" (G.S.)

Among the positive effects identified are increased structural collaboration: "*some teams have become more organized, more goal-oriented,*" and team diversity: "*virtual collaboration allowed the formation of geographically distributed teams*" (A.A.C.). Although colleague relationships are affected to some extent by the lack of physical presence and informal interactions, virtual communication can work efficiently if supported by conscious effort, appropriate digital tools, and planned informal activities: (K.S.) "Effective communication in the virtual environment must be consciously cultivated. It is no longer an automatic result of physical proximity."

3.3.1. To what extent has organizational culture changed with the shift to an online work model? The transition to online work has brought essential changes in organizational culture. The focus shifted from control and physical presence to results, autonomy, and individual responsibility: "*greater emphasis was placed on results rather than on how each employee works*" (A.P.). Leadership has adapted, relying on trust and flexibility, and communication has become more structured but less spontaneous: "*interactions have moved almost exclusively to the digital environment.*" (G.G.) A frequently mentioned negative effect is the decrease in the sense of belonging and personal relationships: "*the feeling of collectivity disappears,*" "*relationships have become more functional and less personal.*" (G.S.)

On the other hand, companies pay more attention to mental well-being and open communication between hierarchies: "*the virtual environment has improved relationships between management and employees.*" Organizational culture has digitalized and requires active support: "*organizational culture in the virtual environment needs intentionality; it does not create itself.*" (R.S.)

3.3.2. What strategies do companies use to maintain employee engagement and motivation in the virtual environment? In the context of the transition to remote work, organizations had to

adopt specific strategies to maintain employee engagement and motivation. Among the most effective are offering flexibility in work schedules, allowing employees "*to do their work anytime and anywhere, as long as they have their laptop handy, a quiet environment, and a good internet connection.*" (A.P.)

Another central measure is performance evaluation based on clear goals and indicators, accompanied by rewards: "*Each employee receives an annual performance bonus*," (A.I.) which stimulates constant effort to reach targets. Companies have also invested in benefits adapted to the remote context, such as partnerships in education and healthcare, access to psychological counseling, or home office equipment. Many employees perceived these benefits as introduced "*along with the introduction of the virtual work environment.*"

Another pillar of engagement is open communication and leader accessibility. One participant states: "We communicate as equals, regardless of position" (K.S.), which reduces hierarchical barriers and encourages collaboration. Also, companies have emphasized maintaining team cohesion by organizing *"games, challenges, quizzes, or virtual informational sessions"* (G.G.), as well as frequent and transparent communication during online meetings. Finally, the importance of recognizing merits, providing constant feedback, and involving employees in decisions is highlighted: "Employees feel more motivated when they are actively involved in decisions that concern them and when they feel their voice matters." (R.S.)

3.4. Employees' Technological Readiness for Efficient Work in Virtual Environments

The level of technological readiness among employees varies considerably, influenced by previous professional experience, field of activity, and age. One participant mentions that "*for those who already have a background in the workforce... working in a virtual environment should not be considered an impediment.*" (A.P.) For employees less familiar with technology, companies have provided introductory and advanced training tailored to individual needs: "*the company provides employees with both basic training and advanced training.*" (A.I.)

Digital skills have significantly increased among employees due to the use of platforms such as Teams, Zoom, or Google Drive. However, "*employees less familiar with technology or from older generations have had difficulties using digital platforms efficiently.*" (K.S.) In the IT field, the level of readiness is high, but gaps can still appear. One respondent notes that "*some colleagues, less technologically experienced, needed support to become efficient working remotely.*" (S.G.) Thus, continuous training remains essential even in digitalized companies.

There is also a noted mindset shift, not only technological: "*technological readiness itself does not only mean knowing the tools but the ability to integrate them effectively into the workflow.*" (A.A.C.)

In conclusion, adapting to virtual work requires constant support, personalized training, and building employee confidence in using technology.

3.4.1. What kind of training do companies offer employees to help them work efficiently from home? Companies have implemented various strategies to support employees adapting to remote work, offering both technical training and training for adapting to the virtual environment, such as time management and self-organization: "*The company provides employees with technical training, which can be requested at any time... but we also place great emphasis on training for adapting to the virtual environment, such as time management and self-organization.*" (A.P.)

Technological readiness is supported through complex programs that include initial instruction, technical support, e-learning platforms, and digital resources: "*Assistance and technical support, initial training on how to install, configure, and use remote work applications... learning platforms and virtual libraries with video tutorials.*" (M.A.)

Special attention is also given to soft skills to maintain motivation and mental well-being: *"On the soft skills side, we also have courses on how to manage digital burnout or how to stay motivated while working from home.*" (A.A.C.) Additionally, material and emotional support is provided through appropriate equipment and psychological counseling: "*We provided support for equipment such as laptops, monitors, headphones, but also psychological support for managing isolation.*" (L.P.)

Training is seen as an ongoing process, and companies that consistently invest in this area

have more efficient and loyal employees: "*Training for remote work is not a one-time event but a continuous process. Companies that treat it as an investment, not an expense, have more efficient and loyal employees.*" (L.B.)

Thus, it is highlighted that the success of the transition to virtual work depends not only on equipment and technical knowledge but also on support for the psychological and organizational adaptation of employees.

3.4.2. What are the main obstacles companies face in effectively implementing remote work? Within companies, one of the main challenges for employees without prior digital experience is adapting to remote work, which can be "*a challenge at the beginning.*" (A.P.) (example: Hela). Additionally, the traditional organizational mindset, where managers associate performance with physical presence at the office, remains an obstacle: *"There are still managers who place great importance on office presence, associating employee performance with physical presence.*" (L.P.)

Communication difficulties in the online environment, such as misinterpreting written messages, affect collaboration and can lead to misunderstandings: "*Misunderstandings can occur when information is sent via email and is misinterpreted by the receiver.*" (A.A.C.)

Another important aspect is the loss of a sense of community and belonging, especially for new employees for whom integrating into an already formed team becomes difficult: *"The hardest thing is being integrated into an old team that already knows each other, while working only from home.*" (A.I.)

Also, the lack of clear boundaries between professional and personal life frequently leads to burnout: "*If you don't separate your personal life from your professional life... you lose sleep trying to find solutions to a professional problem.*" (G.S.)

Technical problems and insufficient infrastructure, such as unstable internet connections or lack of appropriate equipment, represent another significant obstacle:"*The main issues are technical problems and insufficient infrastructure... unstable internet connections, especially in rural areas.*" (L.B.)

Data security is also a major concern because working from home exposes companies to cyber risks: "*Working from home exposes the company to risks related to information leaks, cyberattacks,*

and data loss." (K.S.)

The lack of clear policies and an organizational culture adapted to remote work, as well as difficulties in performance evaluation, are major organizational problems: "*The lack of clear policies leads to confusion and frustration... remote management is a skillthat must be learned.*" (M.A.)

In conclusion, the transition to virtual work was an "accelerated adaptation" and requires a profound strategic change in how organizations communicate and lead teams, not just investments in infrastructure: "*Effective implementation of remote work requires more than infrastructure. It requires a strategic shift in how we organize and lead teams.*" (A.A.C.)

4. Conclusions

This study aimed to analyze how the virtual environment influences employee efficiency at the workplace, with a particular focus on teleworking. In the context of accelerating digitalization and the transformations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, telework has become not just an alternative but a current reality for many organizations. These changes have deeply impacted organizational structure, working styles, as well as the dynamics of interpersonal relationships within companies.

Throughout the research, it became evident that the virtual environment can significantly contribute to increased efficiency, provided it is supported by appropriate technological tools, an adapted organizational culture, and a high level of employee autonomy and responsibility. By analyzing interviews with employees from fields such as IT and human resources, it was found that flexible schedules, the absence of commuting, and the ability to work in a personalized environment add psychological comfort and help boost productivity.

At the same time, the research highlighted several challenges associated with the virtual environment: difficulty in clearly separating professional and personal life, lack of direct interaction and the risk of social isolation, technical problems, and the need for increased self-discipline. These factors can negatively affect job satisfaction and, consequently, both individual and collective efficiency.

Another important finding of the study is the identification of changes in hierarchical structure

and team coordination methods. Digital communication has reduced hierarchical distances and accelerated decision-making processes, but it has also imposed new demands regarding clarity of objectives and traceability of activities. Digital tools-such as project management platforms (Trello, Jira, etc.)-have become indispensable for monitoring performance and maintaining a steady work rhythm.

From the perspective of motivation and engagement, the results suggest that employees who perceive telework as an opportunity rather than a constraint are more likely to adopt proactive behaviors and actively participate in their professional tasks. Emotional intelligence, adaptability, and the support provided by employers during the transition to virtual work were key factors in maintaining high levels of efficiency and satisfaction.

It is important to note that efficiency in telework is not guaranteed by technology alone, but mainly by how organizations manage to create favorable conditions for autonomous, well-coordinated, and results-oriented work.

Thus, organizational culture, leadership style, human resource policies, and the ability to support a balance between professional and personal life become key elements in maximizing the benefits of remote work.

In conclusion, the virtual environment can have a positive impact on workplace efficiency, provided coherent strategies are implemented, a robust digital infrastructure is in place, and effective communication is maintained among team members. The research findings suggest the necessity for continuous organizational adaptation to new forms of work and a reevaluation of work policies to support both employee needs and organizational objectives.

This study offers a realistic and balanced perspective on telework, highlighting both the opportunities and limitations of this way of organizing professional activity. The conclusions can serve as a starting point for future applied research in human resources, especially regarding strategies for motivation, retention, and development of employees in an increasingly digitalized work environment.

References

1. Andone, I., Mockler, R. J., Dologite, D. G., & Tugui, A., 2001. *Dezvoltarea sistemelor inteligente în economie. Metodologie şi studii de caz*. Bucureşti: Editura Economică.
2. Băbăgan, G. V. , 2013. *Aspecte teoretice introductive privind conflictul şi negocierea la locul de muncă*. Bucureşti: Sigma.
3. Băţăgan, L., 2005. *Virtual organizations*. Revista Informatică Economică.
4. Bogáthy, Z., Erdei, I., & Ilin, C., 2007. *Evaluarea performanţelor profesionale şi motivarea angajaţilor*. Timişoara: Fundaţia Diaspora, Coleburn Consulting.
5. Bonea, G.-V., 2013. *Aspecte teoretice introductive privind conflictul şi negocierea la locul de muncă*. Bucureşti: Sigma.
6. Bodea, C. N., Paparic, M., Mogoş, R. I., & Dascălu, M. I., 2024. *Artificial intelligence adoption in the workplace and its impact on the upskilling and reskilling strategies*. Amfiteatru Economic.
7. Cazacu, R., & Rusnac, S., 2015. *Tehnologii de adaptare eficientă la stresul organizaţional*. In The contemporary issues of the socio-humanistic sciences. Chişinău: Editura ULIM.
8. Dabija, D. C., 2021. *Teleworking: Socio-economic impact and perspectives*. Amfiteatru Economic.
9. Delia Vîrgă, Pascu, D. M., Mioc, M., Draguţ, I. E.,
10. Ţepeş-Onea, A., & Petrucă, E., 2012. *Psihologia resurselor umane*. Bucureşti: Editura Comunicare.ro.
11. Ghilic-Micu, B., 2000. *Revoluţia postindustrială şi munca la distanţă*. Revista Informatică Economică.
12. Goleman, D., 1998. *Working with emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
13. International Labour Organization., 2020. *Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: A practical guide*. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_751232.pdf
14. Lenaerts, K., Waeyaert, W., Gillis, D., Smits, I., & Hauben, H., 2023. *Munca pe platformele digitale şi securitatea şi sănătatea în muncă: Prezentare generală a reglementărilor, politicilor, practicilor şi cercetării*. Agenţia Europeană pentru Securitate şi Sănătate în Muncă.

15. Losîi, E., 2024. *Eficientizarea comunicării în cadrul echipelor de muncă*. In Science and education: new approaches and perspectives. Chişinău: CEP UPSC.

16. Man, C., 2007. Teleworking: *Telelucru, teleactivităţi sau munca la distanţă*. Oradea: Editura Grafnet.

17. Popovici, D. M., 2014. *Medii virtuale multimodale distribuite*. Craiova: Universitaria; Bucureşti: Pro Universitaria.

18. Radu, C., Deaconu, A., Mişu, S. I., & Triculescu, M., 2020. *The impact of work investment on performance*. Amfiteatru Economic.

19. Roche, E. M., 1991. *Telecommunications and business strategy*. Chicago: The Dryden Press.

20. Rusu, C., 1999. *Managementul resurselor umane*. Bucureşti: Poligraf.

21. Severin, A., 2017. *Motivarea şi satisfacerea la locul de muncă – premise pentru formarea continuă a funcţionarilor publici*. In Teoria şi practica administrării publice. Chişinău: S.C. Elan Poligraf S.R.L.

22. Tacu, M., & Purice, V., 2020. *Instituţiile media transpuse în spaţiul virtual: Principii de management şi forme ale culturii organizaţionale*. In Creativitatea în jurnalism, 12 februarie 2020, Chişinău. https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/27-38_1.pdf

23. Ţîmbaliuc, N., 2016. *Inteligenţa emoţională la locul de muncă*. In 25 de ani de reformă economică în Republica Moldova: Prin inovare şi competitivitate spre progres economic, 23–24 septembrie 2016, Chişinău.

24. Ticu, C. (Ed.)., 2009. *Determinanti ai motivaţiei în muncă – de la teorie la analiza realităţii organizaţionale*. Iaşi: Editura Universităţii „A.I. Cuza".

25. Ştefan, I., 2001. *Unele probleme sociale, economice, juridice şi etice ale utilizării tehnologiei informaţiei şi comunicaţiilor*. In F. G. Filip (Coord.), Societatea informaţională – societatea cunoaşterii: Concepte, soluţii şi strategii pentru România. Bucureşti: Editura Expert.