

mgr Alicja Sroka-Lacković

**“THE PLACE OF REMOTE WORK IN THE CURRENT LABOR MARKET MODEL
- THE EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES”**

Summary of a doctoral dissertation written under the academic supervision of prof. UE dr

hab. Maria Balcerowicz-Szcutnik (supervisor)

dr Martyna Wronka-Pośpiech (auxiliary supervisor)

Remote work, defined as work performed outside the office, using information technology, is, in a knowledge-based economy, the response of the labor market to the ongoing changes. Contemporary businesses are challenged by, amongst others, maintaining competitiveness and shortage of human capital. Therefore it is necessary to search for more and more innovative business solutions. Growing importance of information and the demand for specialised knowledge workers, as well as rising share of employment within services instead of industry sector result in increasing level of market elasticity. Another essential factor is modern technology, the development of which is influencing, among other things, the transformation of business models, the structure of employment, and providing almost unlimited communication opportunities. As a result, in certain sectors of the labor market, geographical boundaries are no longer a barrier to the provision of work. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the transformation of the boundaries of the work environment from place to value. Such a key change in the perception of work is one of the most interesting aspects of the revolution taking place in the labor market in recent years. The pandemic dramatically increased the scale of application of remote work and emphatically demonstrated that in many industries that conservatively use stationary work, remote work poses no problem in the delivery of work outcomes.

The events of recent years have influenced a spectacular increase in the dynamics of remote work's development, but the phenomenon of doing work in this form first appeared as early as in the 1970s. Its genesis was an attempt to solve the oil crisis in the United States. Year after year, the phenomenon of remote work became more and more popular, and recorded particularly rapid growth in the 1990s thanks to the spread of technology.

The identified shortage of knowledge in the context of the application of remote work in Poland allowed the formulation of the main objective of the thesis, concerning the recognition of remote work as a favorable alternative to the traditional employment model. The quantitative and qualitative research conducted for the purpose of this work included considerations on this topic. The empirical material collected by the author allowed an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of remote work in Poland. It allowed, among other things, to define the profile of a remote worker, to identify the motives for taking up such a form of employment, to present the benefits and negative features of remote work for both the employee and the employer, or a critical analysis of the factors limiting the development of remote work on the Polish labor market.

The scope of empirical research, as defined by the main purpose of the thesis, was carried out on the basis of the following research procedure: analysis of the literature on the subject, identification of the research gap and the research model, formulation of research objectives and hypotheses, data collection through the selection of the research sample and conducting the core research, analysis and processing of the results, interpretation and indication of the limitations of the conducted research and the rationale for further research. As a result, the outcomes of the research allowed a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of remote work from the perspective of both the employer and the employee.

In addition, the conducted research was oriented towards the following specific goals: defining the profile of a remote worker in Poland, identifying the motives for undertaking remote work, as well as isolating the benefits and negative features of remote work, and critically analyzing the factors limiting the development of remote work in the Polish labor market. The problem addressed in the paper is important both from a theoretical and practical point of view. First of all, over the past few years, the possibilities and spectrum of application of remote work have fundamentally expanded. Given this, the main hypothesis of the work is the presumption that remote work is a solution addressing the needs of the labor market in the 21st century. In addition, specific hypotheses were formulated stating that: H1) the development of the information society is a factor enabling remote work, H2) modern technology is a prerequisite for the development of remote work, H3) remote work makes it possible to attract qualified professionals employed in the service sector, H4) remote work makes it possible to reduce costs.

The empirical studies were conducted between November 2020 and April 2021 (employee survey) and in July and the first half of August 2022 (employer survey). They thus coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, the consequence of which was a significant increase in the availability of remote work. In many cases, remote work was even forced by the prevailing epidemiological situation (including in the education, service or government sectors), which was reflected in the responses and sentiments of respondents. The primary tool for collecting primary data in the first part of the empirical research, was a questionnaire prepared separately for employees performing stationary work and for employees performing part or all of their duties remotely. The questionnaire was prepared based on an in-depth analysis of the subject and the formulated research gaps. In total, 86 stationary employees and 155 remote employees participated in the first stage of the empirical part. All questionnaires were completed electronically, due to epidemiological limitations.

The scope of the questions can be divided into three categories concerning:

- sociodemographic characteristics of employees-industry, company size, experience, position held;
- outlining the nature of remote work - including frequency of use, place and time of work, expectations of the employee and employer from remote work, reasons for choosing it, legal basis, the problem of efficiency or control;
- the benefits and drawbacks of such a work formula, the relationship with the employer, opportunities for development or conditions of employment.

The second stage of the research was based on conducting in-depth individual interviews with representatives of employers in order to diagnose the situation of remote work in the Polish labor market. The generally accepted assumption was that the representatives of employers have the most up-to-date knowledge about the organization of remote work from the point of view of the company. In order to obtain comprehensive empirical material, representatives of diverse branches of the economy (including education, media, financial services, real estate) who are in contact with remote work and have a good knowledge of the organization of work in this form were invited to participate in the study. The research was conducted with representatives of employers in Katowice and Warsaw, mainly in large and medium-sized companies.

The subject scope of the qualitative research included:

- a general analysis of employers' experiences with remote work arrangements considering, among other things: benefits, problems, factors limiting the development of remote work, how work was organized before and during the pandemic, and plans for the future;
- assessing the impact of modern technology and the qualifications and characteristics of employees on the development of remote work;
- assessing the relationship between remote work and costs to the employer.

The collected empirical material shows that the average remote worker in Poland is a woman with a university degree who is in the 20-30 age range. Typically, remote workers are employed in large companies with more than 250 employees, in specialized positions and come from large and medium-sized cities. The main industries using remote work include journalism/publishing, services, education/academic work, as well as IT and administration. The decision to work remotely is often dictated by individual needs and character traits. The most common motives cited by employees are health reasons and the desire to save commuting time, as well as greater flexibility, while cost and family considerations appear not to be a key factor in determining the decision to work from home. On the other hand, companies are implementing remote work because of the reduction in office space, which is often associated with savings, and because of process optimization.

The structure of the work was devoted to the realization of the objectives of the work and the verification of the research hypotheses. It consists of six chapters - the first two forming the theoretical part and the next four forming the empirical and conclusion parts.

The first chapter of the work is an introductory chapter on theoretical issues related to the evolution of the labor market. It is based on a literature study of concepts in areas such as the development of the information society, the modern concept of work and the labor market model. The main part of the first chapter is a detailed presentation of the phenomenon of remote work.

The second chapter deals with the transformation of corporate organizational structures. Among other things, this part leans on issues related to globalization processes, the development of technology and selected concepts of changes in business management. The chapter culminates with a discussion of the practical application of the previously discussed management concepts in remote work.

The third chapter contains detailed research assumptions, objectives and hypotheses. It also presents the theoretical model with a detailed description of the various elements and relationships between the variables analyzed. It also focuses on the characteristics of the research sample, presents the methods, techniques and research tools, and describes the course of the research.

The fourth chapter presents the results of the first stage of the empirical research conducted, taking place between November 2020 and April 2021. The results presented provide a summary of remote work from the perspective of employees, both stationary and remote, as well as a comparative analysis of the use of this form of employment in the Polish and American markets.

The fifth chapter continues the empirical verification of the set research hypotheses. It presents the results of the second stage of research conducted from July to August 2022. It includes a perspective and interpretation of the phenomenon of remote work from the point of view of employers.

The final, sixth chapter presents a discussion of the research results obtained. The first section focuses on the results of the verification of the research hypotheses, and the following sections focus on theoretical and practical implications. Next, key conclusions about the future of remote work are presented, and finally, the limitations of the research conducted are summarized.

The paper concludes with conclusions on the formulated research objectives, and a proposal for further research directions is presented.

In conclusion, on the basis of the empirical research carried out, all the research hypotheses set in the study were positively verified. In addition, the completed research and literature studies allowed to achieve the set goals in the theoretical-cognitive and application layers. The final conclusion is that remote work does not aspire to supplant the traditional model of gainful employment. From the perspective of both employers and employees, a hybrid model is the most desirable solution. This approach is beneficial for the sake of cost reduction, work-life balance, employee well-being and the achievement of desired business results. There is also a noticeable shift in individual perceptions of remote work - many employers and employees initially distrustful of such a mode of work, during the pandemic and the top-down order to limit social contact, have become convinced of the benefits of remote work. The research took into account both the perspective of employers and employees. This allowed for a broader view of the issues at hand and the identification of future developments. It should be noted that the undoubted, although unforeseen at the time of planning the dissertation, added value of the work is the lockdown caused by the epidemiological and health crisis and its impact on the dynamic increase in the scale of application of remote work in Poland and around the world. However, further development of remote work requires, first of all, clarification of legislation on the rules and requirements for its use, as well as organizational transformation within companies. Given the ongoing work on amendments to the Labor Code, it can be expected that they will bring positive improvements and further development of remote work. Undoubtedly, certain issues require further analysis and research to fill theoretical gaps and develop practice. Especially in view of the current changes in the

labor market and the transformation of the form of work to a hybrid one, further enrichment of knowledge in the field of non-stationary form of employment is crucial.