Gen Y in Uncertain Times of Remote Working: From the Employees' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this article is to identify the experiences of Generation Y employees of remote work and to identify the key factors that, in their opinion, develop or limit its effectiveness and efficiency.

Research Design & Methods: The authors carried out a questionnaire (CAWI) which was filled in by 304 respondents from Generation Y who worked remotely during COVID-19. Descriptive statistics measurements were used in the analysis. The original questionnaire was based on two measurement scales: ordinal on the Likert scale and nominal (binary and categorical). Then, the two-way data analysis method was used. Due to the nominal nature of the variables, frequency and percentage statistics were used in the statistical evaluation. For variables on the Likert scale, measures of descriptive statistics were used. In addition, hierarchical clustering analysis was

used as part of the conducted research. Quantitative research was supplemented by unstructured interviews, conducted with eight HR Business Partners.

Findings: The obtained results made it possible to conclude that workers from Gen Y have adapted quite well to remote work and were very involved in the workplace when working remotely. Unfortunately, they were also overworked and tired. Gen Y strive to effectively perform their duties, regardless of whether they work on location or from home.

Implications/Recommendations: The experience of remote work gained by organisations and employees during the pandemic was an opportunity to implement innovative solutions, suitable for pandemic and post-pandemic conditions of the functioning of enterprises in the remote work era.

Contribution: The article recognises and analyses the experiences of employees from the Y Generation who are professionally active, working remotely during COVID-19. The value of the study is the presentation of two perspectives on the experience of switching to a different mode of work organisation – remote mode. Conclusions drawn from the empirical research have an application value primarily for leaders, managers, and supporting departments, such as HRM.

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JEL Classification: J11, J81, M12, M14.

1. Introduction

The generational structure of the job market is currently highly diverse. It includes representatives from the Baby Boomer, X, Y, and Z Generations. Generational differences are visible in, among others, attitudes towards work, employers, the dynamics and means of fulfilling an employee's role, professional development and career, work ethic, work styles, value systems, and diverse views on the work-life balance (Lubrańska, 2018).

In response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many employers were forced to introduce remote work. For most of them, and the people they employed, it was a completely new challenge, which they dealt with in different ways and with varying degrees of success. Identifying, analysing, and evaluating these experiences seem highly desirable in the face of the emerging post-pandemic "new normal", in which various forms of remote work will be increasingly popular among employers and employees (Antal, 2020; Eurofound, 2022). Remote work gives rise to widely varying experiences. To comprehend its impact on a personal level, one must consider the interplay of an individual's home environment, work-related duties, and personal circumstances, as these factors collectively influence their experiences and shape employees' perceptions and behaviours (Gálvez, Tirado & Martínez, 2020).

The authors of this paper believe that it is cognitively very interesting to look at experiences with remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of representatives of different generations. Finding answers to questions about how employees adapted to remote work, whether generational affiliation was important in this adaptation process, and whether there are differences between generations can all be valuable for managers of age-diverse human resources.

A review of the latest literature about remote work shows that the influence of socio-demographic characteristics of workers on their attitudes toward telework continues to raise questions (Ivasciuc *et al*., 2022). Further research is needed in this area. This article fits into this research gap. Its aim is to present the experiences of employees who are representatives of Generation Y in remote work during the pandemic. Millennials are the largest generation in the workforce (Smith & Garriety, 2020). Together with Generation Z, it supplies the human capital of the new economy (Kawka, 2021). They are the most educated, knowledgeable, and engaged generational cohort. For these reasons, employers are interested in attracting them to their organisation and retaining them for longer. Consequently, employers must determine the working environment, incentives, and policies that will meet the needs of Millennials, including in the area of remote work (Bannon, Ford & Meltzer, 2011).

2. General Characteristics of Generation Y

Despite some theoretical and conceptual confusion (especially at the intersection of Generations Y and Z), we can safely assume that Generation Y (The Millennials) includes individuals born between 1980 and 1995 (Kwiatkowski, 2019). This generation was born and raised in entirely different circumstances than previous generations. Their childhood was spent in peace and relative prosperity. They grew up in the era of globalisation, Poland's membership in the EU, freedom of speech, challenges, and easy access to modern communication and information processing technologies (Patterson, 2007; Baran & Kłos, 2014; Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2017).

Compared to their predecessors, the Millennials were undoubtedly the most educated and technologically proficient workers when entering the job market. The extended time devoted to education means that the moment of starting a job, becoming independent, or starting a family was significantly delayed for them. Aware of their value in the market, they were upfront about their professional demands, even if they were somewhat exaggerated, and the job market valued them less. They can negotiate their employment conditions robustly (Reisenwit & Iyer, 2009; Wiktorowicz & Warwas, 2016).

Work is essential for people from the Y Generation, but it is only one aspect of their lives (Dziadkiewicz & Kłos, 2013). People from this generation do not want

to sacrifice their personal lives for work. They follow the life maxim: "I work to live" (Czernecka & Woszczyk, 2012). They prefer work that gives them a salary and, above all, a sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfilment. It should also correspond to their passions and interests and allow personal development. They believe that work should be tailored to the multiple needs they want to meet at work. It is about achieving task outcomes and receiving financial rewards, but it is also about fun, social connection, training, personal development, greater fulfilment and even environmental sustainability (Woszczyk, 2013). They want to experience new things, explore interesting ideas and solutions. That need for constant learning should be met in their working premises. They are always on the move, but that may result in work overload. They like eating out, playing sports and meeting their friends after work, and all that requires appropriate infrastructure. They value the balance between work and private life, flexibility, home office and an informal atmosphere at work. They crave interaction with their co-workers and for the office to support their work in diverse ways (Buckley *et al*., 2001; Deloitte, 2020).

This is the first generation of employees on the market who change employers so frequently and do not see any problem with it (Szymczyk, 2018). They are less loyal to their employer than previous generations and do not prefer long-term employment in one organisation. What matters to them is what they do, not who they work for (Brdulak, 2014). In situations where their job does not meet their expectations, they are willing to resign and believe that they will find a job that better suits their needs and ambitions (Andrałojć & Ławrynowicz, 2012; Stachowska, 2012; Woszczyk & Gawron, 2014). They do not accept the rat race or fierce competition. When choosing a future employer, they focus on enriching their CV, acquiring transferable skills, accumulating career capital, and increasing their value in the job market (Chester, 2006).

Employees from Generation Y are flexible and open to challenges, training, and mentoring (Brdulak, 2014; Mazur-Wierzbicka, 2019). They are unafraid of changes and quickly adapt to new situations (Gadomska-Lila, 2015). They prefer teamwork and are very effective in a multicultural work environment (Suwa, 2014). They value open, assertive communication and freedom of speech. They communicate primarily through social media and messaging apps. This stems from their great need to contact other people and constantly share information. They want to participate in creating the company's strategy and engage in organisational matters. They need to participate in ambitious projects, and they expect quick feedback on the effects of their actions (Dziadkiewicz & Kłos, 2013; Gadomska-Lila, 2015; Smolbik--Jęczmień & Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, 2017).

Generation Y was the first generation to grow up in the digital era. As a result, they possess a high level of proficiency in using modern technologies and use them daily. These people use social media, search for information on the Internet, and

work in environments where technology is critical. They cannot function without the Internet, e-mails, and mobile phones, and their presence in the virtual world is integral to their lives. Digital language and technology are almost their first language. They are technological "natives" compared to the Baby Boomer "digital immigrants" who migrate to the latest technology (Prensky, 2001; Suwa, 2014).

It is worth noting that in the literature on the subject, attention is drawn to the fact that Generation Y is internally diverse. Deloitte distinguishes six categories of individuals among its representatives who differ in their approaches to work and career. These are individuals who consider job and career as overriding values (work-oriented, demanding, seeking meaning) and those who assign them a low position in the value system, rating their worth in the job market poorly (avoidant, careless, and distant) (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2017).

3. Methodology

The main article's purpose is to identify the experiences of Generation Y employees of remote work under the conditions of COVID-19 and to identify the key factors that, in their opinion, favour or limit its effectiveness and efficiency. The authors formulated the following research questions:

RQ1. What activities in work management have employers undertaken in connection with the transition to home office?

RQ2. What factors influenced the actions taken by employees from Generation Y during remote work?

RQ3. Which factors were considered to facilitate remote work, and which hindered performance?

RQ4. In which of the analysed modes of work areas were their answers most consistent?

The research was carried out in the second quarter of 2022 and covered the entire territory of Poland[1]. The current research was preceded by a pilot study among representatives of the Z Generation in the first quarter of 2022 (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz *et al.*, 2022)[2]. It was a diagnostic survey using the survey technique and a tool, which was a survey questionnaire conducted using the CAWI method. The questionnaire contained closed questions about the nature of a disjunctive and conjunctive cafeteria. The range of respondents was selected within socio--demographic parameters reflecting the distribution of these features in the general

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[1] The results of empirical research presented in the article are part of the research conducted by the authors. The target sample was 690 respondents representing four generations (BB, X, Y, and Z).

[2] The research instrument used for this article is an extension of that used in the pilot study. It was adapted to the specificity of four generations and their experiences in remote work.

population. The selection of the sample was intentional, and the respondents were only professionally active people working remotely during the pandemic. Correctly completed questionnaires by 304 respondents qualified for the analysis. The questionnaire was based on two measurement scales: ordinal on the Likert scale and nominal (binary and categorical).

As part of the statistical analysis, frequency, and percentage statistics were used for nominal variables. For variables on the Likert scale, measures of descriptive statistics were used. Moreover, hierarchical clustering analysis was used as part of the conducted research. It allowed the grouping of the respondents' most frequently coherent answers regarding the analysed subject matter. In the hierarchical model, due to the nominal nature of the variables – there are responses to individual questions – a cosine similarity measure was applied to analyse the similarity between different response vectors. The studied issue consists of "n" questions, with responses on a scale of 0 and 1. The number of indicated questions, i.e., "n" forms a feature vector with binary values. Consequently, the similarity pertains to the most similar vectors, allowing the grouping of the space into subsets of statements where the value 1 is most likely. For their graphical presentation, dendrograms were used. The characteristics of the research sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Sample

Characteristics Controlled in the Study		n	%
Gender	female	142	46.7
	male	162	53.3
Residence	country	51	16.78
	small town (population below 20k)	54	17.76
	mid-size town (population between 20k and 100k)	66	21.71
	big city (population over 100k)	133	43.75
Business sector	commerce	45	14.8
	production	64	21.1
	services	137	45.1
	public institution/office	35	11.5
	other	23	7.6
The size of the organisation	micro (less than 10 employees)	49	16.1
	small (from 10 to 49 employees)	85	28.0
	medium (50 to 249 employees)	82	27.0
	large (over 249 employees)	88	28.9

Table 1 cnt'd

Characteristics Controlled in the Study		*n*	*%*
Children	no children	41	13.5
	one child	101	33.2
	two children	119	39.1
	three children	36	11.8
	four or more children	7	2.3
Home conditions	apartment in a block of flats/house	201	66.12
	house	103	33.88
Separate room	yes	101	33.22
	no	117	38.49
	sometimes yes, sometimes not	86	28.29
Pets (dog, cat)	yes	179	58.9
	no	125	41.1

Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

In total, 304 people participated in the study, of which 53.3% were men. Respondents are residents of towns and cities of various sizes. The most significant percentage of them: work in the service sector (45.1%), are employed in a large (28.9%) or small company (28.0%), have two children (39.1%), live in an apartment in block of flats (66.12%), during a period of remote work did not have a separate room to work (38.49%), and they were pet owners (58.9%). Quantitative research was supplemented by qualitative research – unstructured interviews, conducted with HR Business Partners representing the surveyed companies to identify their perspective on the analysed problem. Eight interviews were conducted.

4. Results

The first question addressed to the respondents concerned recognising their opinions on the actions taken by the employer in connection with the pandemic – 13 statements were verified (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Actions Taken by Employers in Connection with the Pandemic Situation

Statement		*n*	*%*
1. Has the industry in which you work been directly affected by the COVID-19 restrictions?	yes	183	60.2
	no	100	32.9
	I do not know	21	6.9

Table 2 cnt'd

Statement		*n*	*%*
2. Was the company in which you are employed prepared for the transition to remote work?	yes	187	61.5
	no	100	32.9
	I do not know	17	5.6
3. Has the company in which you are employed quickly implemented solutions enabling remote work?	yes	234	77.0
	no	54	17.8
	I do not know	16	5.3
4. Has the employer provided an adequate material working environment for remote work (necessary equipment, Internet connection)?	yes	188	61.8
	no	101	33.2
	I do not know	15	4.9
5. Did the employer interfere with the way employees organise their work while working remotely?	yes	109	35.9
	no	176	57.9
	I do not know	19	6.3
6. Has the employer implemented additional forms of control related to remote work?	yes	93	30.6
	no	187	61.5
	I do not know	24	7.9
7. Did the employer inform you about the organisation's situation during the pandemic?	yes	210	69.1
	no	78	25.7
	I do not know	16	5.3
8. Has the employer adapted the incentive package to the pandemic situation?	yes	88	28.9
	no	173	56.9
	I do not know	43	14.1
9. Has the employer attempted to integrate people working remotely?	yes	107	35.2
	no	167	54.9
	I do not know	30	9.9
10. Did the employer encourage its employees to be physically active?	yes	86	28.3
	no	192	63.2
	I do not know	26	8.6
11. Did the employer provide psycho-social support to its employees during the lockdown?	yes	95	31.3
	no	183	60.2
	I do not know	26	8.6
12. Has the organisation you work for made cuts during the pandemic?	yes	84	27.6
	no	185	60.9
	I do not know	35	11.5
13. Have there been new jobs related to work during a pandemic created in the company you work for?	yes	62	20.4
	no	199	65.5
	I do not know	43	14.1

Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

Nearly 2/3 of the respondents admitted that the industry in which they work was directly affected by the restrictions related to COVID-19 (60.2%). Nevertheless, most respondents stated that the employer did not decide to reduce jobs (60.9%). A similar percentage of respondents declared that the company was prepared to transition to remote work mode (61.5%) and quickly implemented solutions enabling it to start (77.0%). Due to the change in the work mode, most of them admitted that the employer provided them with a suitable material working environment to enable remote work (61.8%). In the opinion of over 2/3 of the respondents, it also kept employees informed about the situation in the company (69.1%). According to most respondents, the employer did not directly interfere in the organisation of employees' working time during remote work (57.9%) and did not implement additional forms of control, for example, working time (61.5%).

Apart from the above-mentioned positive actions of the employer, the respondents also pointed out the negative aspects. Over half of them admitted that the employer did not provide employees with psychosocial support during the lockdown (60.2%) or did not encourage them to undertake physical activity (63.2%). Only one in three of them declared that the employer attempted to integrate people working remotely (35.2%). A similar, relatively low percentage of survey participants stated that the employer adapted the package of incentives to the pandemic situation (28.9%).

The above results were indirectly confirmed as part of the hierarchical cluster analysis methodology (Fig. 1). It was found that respondents' most consistent responses concerned situations where the employer did not provide employees with psychosocial support and did not encourage them to be physically active. Another consistency concerns the employer's lack of interference in the organisation of working time and the lack of additional forms of control. The last identified significant consistency concerns the situation where companies that quickly implemented remote work had already been prepared for it.

Another issue addressed in the conducted study was identifying factors that conditioned the actions taken by employees from Generation Y during remote work. Employees verified 17 statements regarding selected aspects related to their work during the pandemic, and 11 aspects assessed employees' physical and mental health (Tables 3 and 4).

When analysing the obtained results, it is worth emphasising that nearly 2/3 of the respondents had not yet had the opportunity to work remotely (62.5%) – it was their first experience. Working in this new mode did not cause significant concerns related to dismissal for most employees (66.4%).

Despite the changes in the operating mode, nearly 3/4 of representatives of Generation Y did not feel stressed (70.4%). The change also did not lead to a decrease in their commitment (61.1%) and work efficiency (60.3%). Although every second respondent's employer required work in strictly defined hours (49.0%),

A_1. Has the industry in which you work been directly affected by the COVID-19 restrictions?

A_2. Was the company in which you are employed prepared for the transition to remote work?

A_3. Has the company in which you are employed quickly implemented solutions enabling remote work?

A_4. Has the employer provided an adequate material working environment for remote work (necessary equipment, Internet connection)?

A_5. Did the employer interfere with the way employees organise their work while working remotely?

A_6. Has the employer implemented additional forms of control related to remote work?

A_7. Did the employer inform you about the organisation's situation during the pandemic?

A_8. Has the employer adapted the incentive package to the pandemic situation?

A_9. Has the employer attempted to integrate people working remotely?

A_10. Did the employer encourage its employees to be physically active?

A_11. Did the employer provide psychosocial support to its employees during the lockdown?

A_12. Has the organisation you work for made cuts during the pandemic?

A_13. Have there been new jobs related to work during a pandemic created in the company you work for?
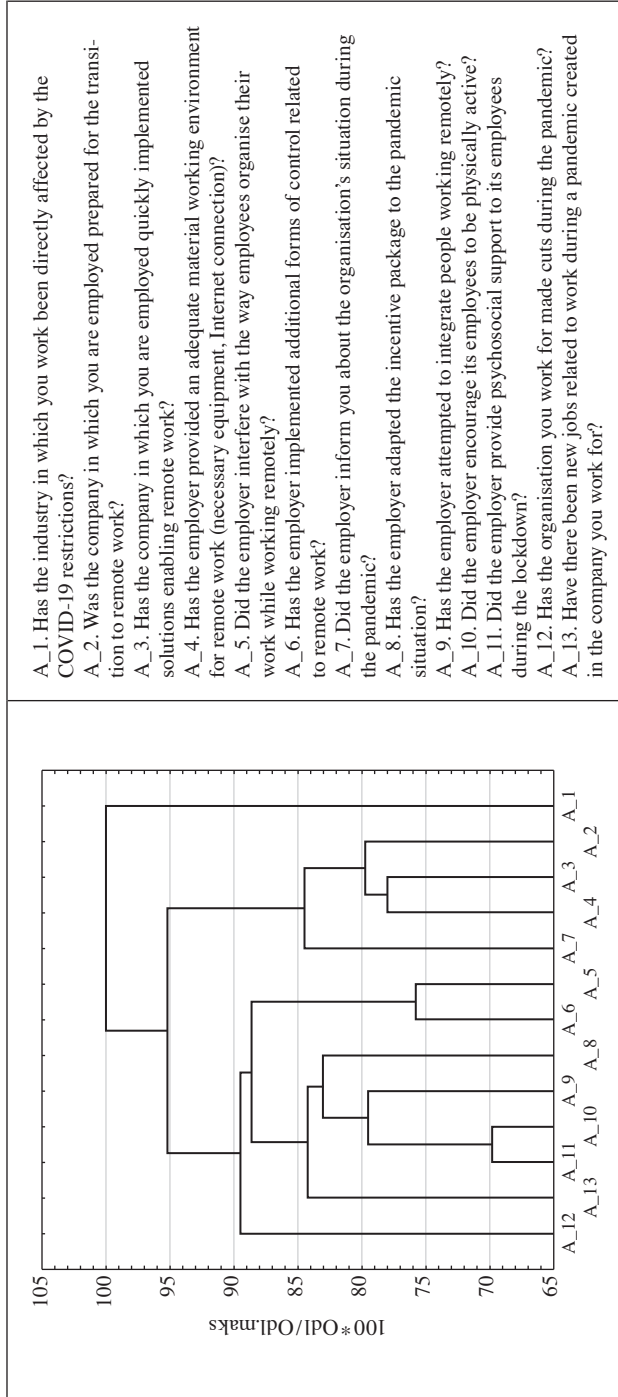
Fig. 1. Hierarchical Clustering Analysis for Questions Regarding Actions Taken by the Employer in Connection with Their Transition to the Remote Work Mode

Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

it was accompanied by freedom regarding its organisation (65.8%). Employees did not feel increased control (73.7%), but one in three of them admitted that they have had to look for ways to "bypass" it (34.4%).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on the Employee and Their Work in Connection with the Pandemic Situation

Statement		*n*	*%*
1. Did you have the opportunity to work remotely before the COVID-19 pandemic?	yes	104	34.2
	no	190	62.5
	I do not know	10	3.3
2. Was remote work your first job (no comparison to stationary work)?	yes	94	47.0
	no	90	45.0
	I do not know	16	8.0
3. Did you feel more stress when working remotely than when working at the organisation's premises?	yes	72	23.7
	no	214	70.4
	I do not know	18	5.9
4. Were you afraid of being fired while working remotely?	yes	81	26.6
	no	202	66.4
	I do not know	21	6.9
5. Did your immediate supervisor ask about your well-being during the lockdown?	yes	109	35.9
	no	174	57.2
	I do not know	21	6.9
6. Did your employer require you to work specific hours?	yes	149	49.0
	no	141	46.4
	I do not know	14	4.6
7. Have you ever dealt with private matters during the declared working time?	yes	164	53.9
	no	126	41.4
	I do not know	14	4.6
8. Did your employer give you the freedom to organise your work?	yes	200	65.8
	no	80	26.3
	I do not know	24	7.9
9. Did you sense more supervision from your employer when you switched to remote work?	yes	64	21.1
	no	224	73.7
	I do not know	16	5.3
10. Have you looked for ways to "bypass" this control?	yes	22	34.4
	no	36	56.3
	I do not know	6	9.4

Table 3 cnt'd

Statement		n	%
11. Has your commitment/motivation to work remotely increased?	yes	119	39.1
	no	149	49.0
	I do not know	36	11.8
12. Has your commitment/motivation to work remotely decreased?	yes	45	24.3
	no	113	61.1
	I do not know	27	14.6
13. Has the efficiency of your remote work increased?	yes	130	42.8
	no	129	42.4
	I do not know	45	14.8
14. Has the efficiency of your remote work decreased?	yes	42	24.1
	no	105	60.3
	I do not know	27	15.5
15. Has your family situation (e.g. children, animals at home) reduced the effectiveness of your work?	yes	114	37.5
	no	174	57.2
	I do not know	16	5.3
16. Has the number of household responsibilities made it difficult for you to fulfil your professional duties?	yes	99	32.6
	no	195	64.1
	I do not know	10	3.3
17. Have the operating costs of your household related to your remote work increased?	yes	124	40.8
	no	145	47.7
	I do not know	35	11.5

Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics on Employee Health in Connection with Remote Work during the Pandemic

Statement		n	%
1. Have you noticed a general deterioration of your physical health while working remotely (e.g. weaker physical condition, feeling tired / weight gain)?	yes	130	42.8
	no	150	49.3
	I do not know	24	7.9
2. Have you noticed a deterioration in your mental health while working remotely (e.g. mood swings, depression, loss of meaning in life)?	yes	123	40.5
	no	159	52.3
	I do not know	22	7.2
3. Have you started to experience existential dread while working remotely (e.g. "what will happen to us in a month, a year")?	yes	98	32.2
	no	173	56.9
	I do not know	33	10.9

Table 4 cnt'd

Statement		*n*	%
4. Have you noticed problems with concentration and attention span while working remotely?	yes	107	35.2
	no	175	57.6
	I do not know	22	7.2
5. Did you pay attention to your clothes while working remotely?	yes	68	22.4
	no	216	71.1
	I do not know	20	6.6
6. Have you experienced intense conflicts with people from your intimate environment while working remotely?	yes	82	27.0
	no	197	64.8
	I do not know	25	8.2
7. Have you used stimulants more often while working remotely (alcohol, cigarettes, etc.)?	yes	54	17.8
	no	226	74.3
	I do not know	24	7.9
8. Have you tried to introduce a well-balanced diet while working remotely?	yes	119	39.1
	no	157	51.6
	I do not know	28	9.2
9. Have you tried to introduce physical activity while working remotely?	yes	148	48.7
	no	133	43.8
	I do not know	23	7.6
10. Have you worked remotely despite illness?	yes	163	53.6
	no	117	38.5
	I do not know	24	7.9
11. Did you take on work despite illness more often than during stationary work?	yes	90	55.2
	no	59	36.2
	I do not know	14	8.6

Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

Attitudes of employers meant that only half of the surveyed employees could combine professional work with private matters (53.9%). For the majority of respondents, there are objective impediments to their home office. As many as 37.5% of them stated that their work efficiency was reduced by home-schooled children and additional household duties (32.6%). Analysing the costs of operating a household during remote work, it is found that, in the opinion of 40% of representatives of Generation Y (40.8%), these costs have increased.

Examining the results obtained using hierarchical cluster analysis, it can be seen that two questions produced the most consistent responses (Fig. 2). The first was when the employer required the respondents to work strictly defined hours, which

B_1. Did you have the opportunity to work remotely before the COVID-19 pandemic?
B_2. Was the remote work your first job (no comparison to stationary work)?
B_3. Did you feel more stress when working remotely than when working at the organisation's headquarters?
B_4. Were you afraid of being fired while working remotely?
B_5. Did your immediate supervisor ask about your well-being during the lockdown?
B_6. Did your employer require you to work specific hours?
B_7. Have you ever dealt with private matters during the declared working time?
B_8. Did your employer give you the freedom to organise your work?
B_9. Did you feel more control when you switched to remote work?
B_10. Have you looked for ways to bypass this control?
B_11. Has your commitment/motivation to work remotely increased?
B_12. Has your commitment/motivation to work remotely decreased?
B_13. Has the efficiency of your remote work increased?
B_14. Has the efficiency of your remote work decreased?
B_15. Has your family situation (e.g. children, animals at home) reduced the effectiveness of your work?
B_16. Has the number of household responsibilities made it difficult for you to fulfil your professional duties?
B_17. Have the operating costs of your household related to your remote work increased?
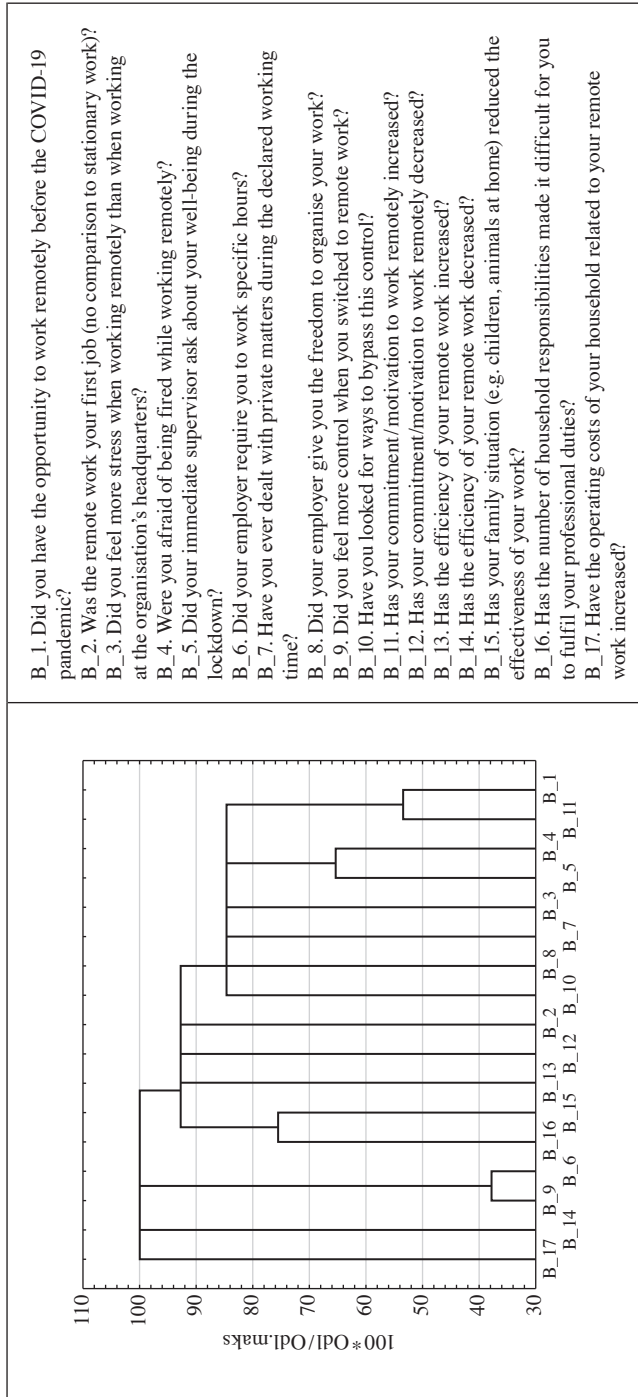
Fig. 2. Hierarchical Cluster Analysis for Questions about the Employee and Their Work in Connection with Their Transition to Remote Work

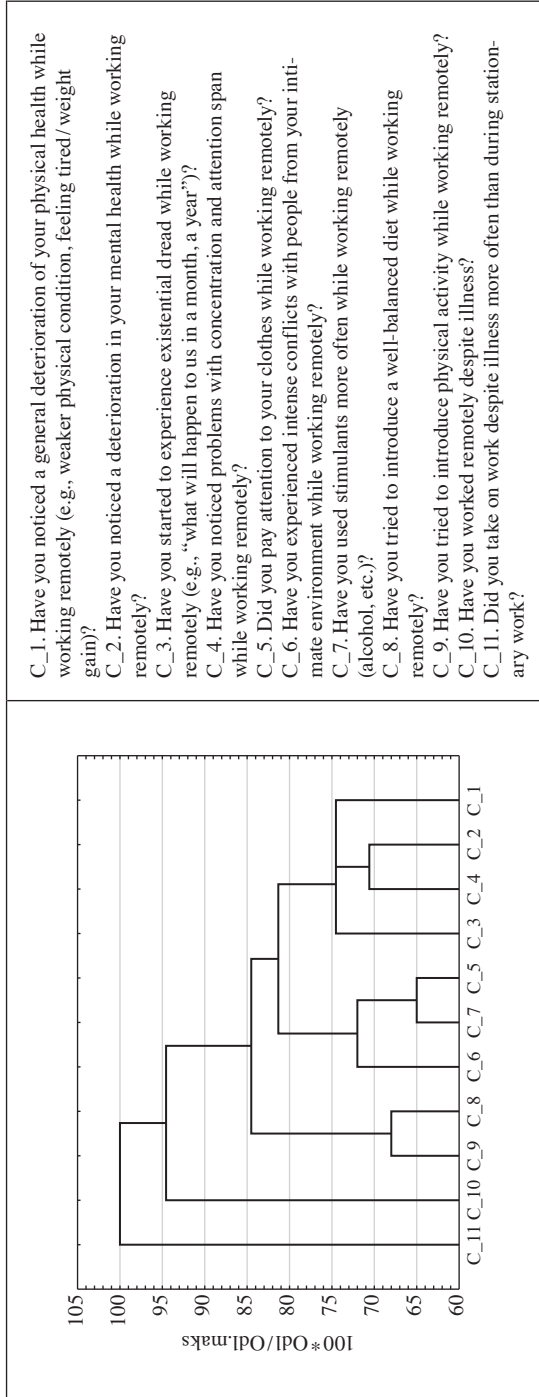Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

C_1. Have you noticed a general deterioration of your physical health while working remotely (e.g., weaker physical condition, feeling tired / weight gain)?

C_2. Have you noticed a deterioration in your mental health while working remotely?

C_3. Have you started to experience existential dread while working remotely (e.g., "what will happen to us in a month, a year")?

C_4. Have you noticed problems with concentration and attention span while working remotely?

C_5. Did you pay attention to your clothes while working remotely?

C_6. Have you experienced intense conflicts with people from your intimate environment while working remotely?

C_7. Have you used stimulants more often while working remotely (alcohol, etc.)?

C_8. Have you tried to introduce a well-balanced diet while working remotely?

C_9. Have you tried to introduce physical activity while working remotely?

C_10. Have you worked remotely despite illness?

C_11. Did you take on work despite illness more often than during stationary work?

Fig. 3. Hierarchical Cluster Analysis for Questions about Employee Health Related to Their Transition to the Remote Work Mode

Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

made them feel more in control. The second situation was when employees who had the opportunity to work remotely before the pandemic experienced an increase in their level of commitment more often than other employees.

Analysis of respondents' replies to questions about their physical and mental health shows that, in their opinion, the pandemic has affected both their physical (42.8%) and mental (40.5%) health, with as many as one in three experiencing problems with concentration and attention span while working remotely (35.2%) and even existential dread while working remotely (32.3%). However, every second respondent denied such adverse effects of remote work on their health. Against the background of the above results, a few issues are worth highlighting. As many as 70% of the respondents did not pay attention to their clothes while working remotely (71.1%) – which might seem understandable. Almost every second surveyed person tried to introduce physical activity (48.7%), but nearly 2/5 tried to introduce a well-balanced diet (39.1%). It is also worth noting that remote work, despite the related distractions, in the opinion of as many as 2/3 of the respondents, did not significantly impact intense conflicts with people in their intimate environment (64.8%), nor did it encourage more frequent use of stimulants (74.3%). Because of the above, it is worth emphasising that as many as every second person worked despite illness (53.6%). More than half of the respondents admitted that such a situation occurred more often than when doing stationary work (55.2%).

Analysing the obtained results with the use of hierarchical cluster analysis, it is found that the strongest correlations between respondents' answers concerned:

– reaching for stimulants with paying attention to clothes while working remotely,

– introduction of a balanced diet with undertaking physical activity,

– deterioration in mental health with simultaneous lack of concentration (Fig. 3).

The following issues concerned the respondents' assessment of the advantages and limitations of remote work. Analysing the results, it is concluded that employees from Generation Y largely perceive such a mode of work as an overall positive (Table 5).

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics on the Potential Advantages of Remote Work

The Potential Advantages of Working Remotely	Mean (*M*)	Median	Standard Deviation
1. Development of IT competencies (use of applications for remote work, e.g. MS Teams, Zoom)	3.46	4.00	1.08
2. Saving time spent commuting	4.09	4.00	1.10
3. Ability to work from anywhere	3.89	4.00	1.10
4. More effective work due to the lack of distractions	3.27	3.00	1.16
5. Lack of direct contact with co-workers, superiors, and clients	3.19	3.00	1.13

Table 5 cnt'd

The Potential Advantages of Working Remotely	Mean (*M*)	Median	Standard Deviation
6. Greater freedom and independence at work	3.83	4.00	0.96
7. Ability to flexibly decide on working hours	3.65	4.00	1.12
8. Being able to spend more time at home	3.83	4.00	1.03
9. Ability to reconcile various activities – work, home, family, time for yourself, etc.	3.76	4.00	1.05

Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics on Potential Limitations of Remote Work

The Potential Limitations of Working Remotely	Mean (*M*)	Median	Standard Deviation
1. Lack of free space in the apartment/house allowing for unrestricted work	2.86	3.00	1.32
2. Internet connection instability	2.72	2.00	1.32
3. Lack of necessary tools for work (laptop, speaker, microphone, etc.)	2.53	2.00	1.30
4. Unexpected activation of the camera, microphone	2.33	2.00	1.19
5. Spending a lot of time in front of a computer	3.32	4.00	1.27
6. Less opportunity to receive support from colleagues in case of problems	3.13	3.00	1.20
7. Excessive contact from the employer regarding professional topics after working hours	2.48	2.00	1.22
8. Unscheduled assignment of additional work tasks after working hours	2.56	2.00	1.20
9. Difficulty managing your own time	2.89	3.00	1.22
10. Difficulties in reconciling professional work with home and family duties	2.79	3.00	1.20
11. Increase in costs incurred in connection with remote work	3.09	3.00	1.21
12. Unforeseen distractions (e.g. children, pets, renovations)	3.11	3.00	1.26

Source: the authors, based on conducted research.

The nine potential advantages of remote work were verified. As many as six received an average weight of at least *M* = 3.6. Respondents appreciated, above all: saving the time spent commuting (*M* = 4.09), the ability to work from anywhere (*M* = 3.89), spending more time at home (*M* = 3.83), reconciling various activities (work, home, family, time for yourself) (*M* = 3.76), greater freedom and independence (*M* = 3.83) and the possibility of flexible decision-making about working hours

($M = 3.65$). Only slightly lower indications concerned: development of IT competencies ($M = 3.46$), effective work related to the lack of distractions ($M = 3.27$), and lack of direct contact with colleagues ($M = 3.19$). When analysing the limitations of remote work indicated by the respondents, out of 12 potential disadvantages subjected to verification, they indicated only three – spending a lot of time in front of a computer ($M = 3.32$), limited support from colleagues ($M = 3.13$), and an increase in overall home office costs ($M = 3.09$) (Table 6). Other disadvantages are less important for employees ($M < 3$).

5. Conclusions

Remote work has been attracting interest from both employers and employees for several years. This work mode was met with caution and even fear by many, but the COVID-19 pandemic did two things: it fast-tracked the ongoing trend of remote work and its technologies becoming a lasting force for transformation of organisations (Hadidi & Power, 2020), and it compelled the labour market players to deal with the relevant challenges.

Since the pandemic work done in the office and work done at home has become unified. Remote work has become the norm, accepted as current and future practice, and used daily in communication with the outside world and relations within enterprises[3]. The period of experimentation is over. For many sectors, remote work is already the standard model due to the expectations of job applicants and employees, and business efficiency. A home office is another challenge for managers, but also a dilemma – can they manage themselves and their employees in this remote space? In a space that creates various threats, new habits, and procedures that may shortly become a management model. Radłowski (2022) accurately asks the question: Where am I now, at home or work?

The aim of the article was to present the experiences of Generation Y employees working remotely during the pandemic. Based on the conducted empirical research, it has been concluded that Generation Y has adapted quite well to remote work, moreover they assessed the actions of companies related to the transition to remote work positively. This may be because this generation has grown up in the age of the Internet and remote work and, therefore, is involved in their work irrespective of the physical location (Hampel & Hampel, 2023).

Even though Millennials emphasise many advantages of remote work, they also indicate the disadvantages of this form of work. As they are a generation that cares

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[3] The amendment to the Labour Code, which entered into force on April 7 2023, repeals the existing provisions on teleworking. The new regulations include introducing a definition of remote work, which may be performed entirely or partially outside the employer's premises (Act of 26 June 1974 – Labour Code; Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1465).

about work-life balance and good organisation of their work, they needed clear home office rules. They need a clear contract before starting remote work, including precise set working hours that will allow them to optimally plan other activities that are important to them. During the pandemic, these conditions were not fully defined, and therefore the Y's were sceptical about continuing to work from home. They were the ones who longed for more amenities in the workplace. Whenever possible, they tried to work at the company's headquarters. Then they could use the office space with the necessary work equipment, an essential element of building a personal brand for this generation. The above conclusions were also confirmed by interviews conducted with HR Business Partners (HR BPs). In their opinion, Gen Yers felt tired and overworked during the pandemic. This situation resulted directly from the many roles that required a lot of commitment from them during this difficult time. The pandemic situation affected both their physical and mental health. Other authors also support this, that younger generations experienced at that time more psychological distress than other generations (GfK, 2020; Vacchiano, 2023). As emphasised in the conducted interviews with HR BPs, the pandemic negatively impacted women from Generation Y. They pointed to significant difficulties in managing one's own time during the home office period. Combining professional duties with caring for children, their school – was sometimes beyond their capabilities[4]. In addition, women of the analysed generation feared dismissal after returning to stationary work. In order to minimise their sense of danger related to losing their job, they tried to be available 24/7 and to work despite illness. Therefore, they noticed a decline in their motivation and commitment to work. They also declared their willingness to return to relative "normality" more often than men, pointing to the importance of direct relationships with colleagues.

In summary, organisations today have significantly rationalised their online activities based on the experience gained. They have implemented security procedures, taken up challenges related to reducing the costs of their operations, and consciously resigned from significant investments. Plans for the future are rarely discussed, and managers remain humble in their ability to predict and shape the future of their companies. When asked about the future of remote work, the respondents most often point to the hybrid model. Such a model offers partial cost reductions and the increased flexibility so desired today, while maintaining the relational elements typical of stationary work (Obłój *et al*., 2020). What employers,

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[4] The answer to the changing trends in the labour market and the related needs of employees is the amendment of the Labour Code and some acts, namely the implementation of the provisions of two directives into the Polish legal code – the so-called parental directive and work-life balance, introducing solutions to help working parents reconcile work and family life – enabling the so-called "flexible work organisation" and the introduction of additional breaks as part of working time. The new regulations came into force on April 26, 2023.

leaders, and human resource teams should take care of is working on employee motivation, their commitment, strengthening broken ties with the company, and post-pandemic stress. They should be more thoughtful about the risks and challenges employees face, especially when working from home. They must ensure employees are adequately equipped with the relevant resources and support to perform their jobs more effectively.

The authors intend to continue their research on the indicated topic and the adaptability to remote work of employees from other generations present in the labour market. Due to the limitations of the research sample, it is essential to underline that generalising the research results must be done with caution.

Authors' Contribution

The authors' individual contribution is as follows: Each contributed a third.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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