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THE IMPACT OF REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK ON THE PERCEPTION OF BURNOUT SYNDROME: A CASE STUDY*

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Abstract. Remote work and working in a hybrid model have become terms that have been referred to quite often due to the coronavirus pandemic. This article aims to describe whether there is a direct link between the different work modes during the pandemic, the preference for the work mode in the post-pandemic period and the degree of perceiving burnout syndrome. The methods of an anonymous electronic questionnaire survey implemented by the CAWI method and statistical methods (calculation in IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 software – frequency, percentage, valid percentage, cumulative percentage) were used. A test of the independence of two variables was used using Pearson's goodness-of-fit test, where Pearson's chi-square test statistic was used as the test criterion. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to calculate and determine the reliability of the entire questionnaire. The primary outcome was that during the post-pandemic era, respondents would prefer the hybrid work model (60.3 %). The perceived burnout symptoms among respondents working in different work modes vary (8.1 % - 15.8 %) but are generally low. The result of this study is a recommendation for the public sector, in the event of the coronavirus pandemic or any similar situation – to use a hybrid model that does not lead to burnout syndrome.

Keywords: pandemic; remote work; hybrid model; burnout syndrome; public sector; Moravian-Silesian Region; Czech Republic

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JEL Classifications: M12, M54, I12

1. Introduction

The pandemic of the virus disease COVID-19 caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 became a global economic and social disturbance (ManpowerGroup, 2020). The adverse effects of this virus have been felt in both developed and developing economies (Siddiquei & Khan, 2020; Besenyő & Kármán, 2020), including, of course, the Czech Republic.

According to Article III of Government Resolution No. 1102 26th October 2020, concerning the implementation of a crisis measure, the Government, with effect from 00:00 28th October 2020, required employers to use a

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remote work module if employees could perform it at their place of residence concerning the nature of the work and operating conditions (Valíčková & Němeček, 2020). The coronavirus pandemic has affected all sectors of the economy to a various extent (Tittelbachova et al., 2022; Zimmermannova et al., 2022). Most public sector employees had to switch to a remote module overnight due to the nature of their work. Another section of public sector employees worked in a hybrid model, and a small proportion worked in office work only. Public sector employees work mainly in offices, some in the field. Their work is to provide essential services to the public (such as health care, education, social security programs, public safety, administrative services, etc.). They also deal with administrative and management tasks to ensure the smooth running of government organizations, collect and interpret data, and ensure compliance with laws and regulations. Their job description also includes inspections and audits. These activities can be implemented through remote work or a hybrid model (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2023).

Even the most conservative employers had to reevaluate their ways of functioning. Remote work and working within a hybrid model have become a pandemic phenomenon (HR News, 2021). However, the option to work remotely or in a hybrid model was distributed unequally across sectors, regions, and workers' education levels. Exploring remote work or work in a hybrid model is both relevant and necessary. Even in the future, in our conditions and other similar economies, people will work remotely or in a hybrid model because a similar or identical situation may arise. The outcome of this study, which focused on public sector employees in one region of the Czech Republic, can help select and adopt a work mode that will guarantee the needed productivity of employees and organizations and reduce any possible adverse effects.

This article aims to describe whether there is a direct link between the different work modes during the pandemic, the preference for the work mode in the post-pandemic period and the degree of perceiving the burnout syndrome; based on this study also recommends the public sector, which work mode to choose if the same or similar situation occurs in the future, as it did during the pandemic. The paper's aims will be achieved through an electronic survey using a questionnaire developed by the authors.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Remote work and hybrid model

The concept of remote work or working in a hybrid model has been the subject of discussion and global studies by researchers for the past ten years. Still, this global phenomenon began to progress with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and became an alternative strategy for many organizations worldwide (Mustajab et al., 2020; Turnea et al., 2022), including the Czech Republic. Workers were told to work remotely or in a hybrid model, depending on whether they liked it. The authors agreed that remote work or working in a hybrid model became common and now represents a crucial dimension of the future of work (Bai et al., 2020).

Some people use the terms 'remote', 'virtual' and work from home interchangeably, while others have their definitions of each. The authors are going to use the term 'remote' and define it as a situation in which someone works fully remotely (independently and in an environment where there are no co-workers) - this most often includes working from home, from cafés or restaurants or while moving from place to place (Dyer & Shepherd, 2021; Felstead, 2022).

The hybrid work model involves a flexible way of organizing work and combines both work in an office and remote work. Organizations can choose which hybrid model arrangement works best for them because different hybrid models bring their positives and negatives. An organization may offer employees maximum autonomy to design their work week with zero restrictions or commands. Another option is that the organization, for example, sets a certain number of days that employees must spend at the workplace, as management sees this arrangement as a way to increase productivity and employee satisfaction (Kirkham, 2022).

During the days before the pandemic, remote work or working in a hybrid model was a popular and desired benefit. However, during the pandemic, it became an absolute necessity for many companies and state institutions to ensure their operation, and with the ongoing pandemic, it has become an everyday routine (Profi HR, 2020a; Kvapil, 2021). However, long-term remote work or working in a hybrid model only suits a third of

people, as shown by a survey conducted by Profesia in the spring of 2020 (Novinky.cz, 2021). If they work predominantly or entirely from home, they feel uncomfortable, less happy and satisfied, or even unhappy. Isolation is the biggest problem, with more than 70 % feeling less connected to their colleagues (Profesia, 2020).

Data from a global survey conducted by Wakefield Research showed that 77 % of companies have already chosen some form of hybrid functioning. More than half of these companies (56 %) allowed employees to determine when and how often they wanted to work from the office (Kirkham, 2022).

Across the Czech Republic, 60 % of employees in the business sector worked in a hybrid work model or fully remote work model at the time of the pandemic (Czech Statistical Office, 2022), 80 % or 60 % of employees in the public sector (depending on whether they were state organizational units or local authorities) and 60 % of employees in the voluntary sector. 50 % of public sector employees were satisfied with remote working or a hybrid model (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2021). We can expect that the number of e-workers who work remotely will increase every year, even after the pandemic (Novinky.cz, 2020).

2.2 Future of a hybrid model and remote work

Before the pandemic, about 20 % of Czech employees occasionally had the opportunity to work remotely or in a hybrid model – companies allowed this benefit only a few times a month, according to the research done by the company LMC (Černohlávková & Housková, 2021). The main reason was mistrust. However, the technical unreadiness of employers during the beginning of the pandemic played an important role, and the test of readiness was very tough during the pandemic. Nevertheless, thanks to this, the attitude of employers toward this issue has changed fundamentally, both for private and state institutions (Profi HR, 2020b). After the experience with the pandemic, half of the employers say that more frequent remote work or a hybrid model will become the new norm (Černohlávková & Housková, 2021). The authors would like to emphasize that in recent years, one-third of companies have implemented a hybrid model of work attendance, most often requiring their employees to attend the office at least three days a week. Another third offers a limited number of days to work from home per month. Some allow workers to choose their work schedule. The main reason is that employees have gotten used to more flexibility over the past few years, which has become their standard (HR News, 2022). Remote work and hybrid models place the highest demands on managers, who must learn how to assign tasks, manage employees, and check that work is performed correctly (Profi HR, 2020a; Androniceanu et al., 2023). While in the past it was enough to supervise the presence of subordinates in the office, with the absence of people in the workplace, it is essential to concentrate on outputs, not the activity itself, and to evaluate results regardless of the number of hours worked consciously. If managers do not want to lose track of their employees' work, the appropriately chosen project management technologies, advanced communication tools, or shared storage offer the latest information and enable insight into projects in progress. At the same time, the advantage of this approach is that employees are not so overwhelmed by communication and can focus on their work (Management News, 2023).

On the other hand, the employees should have sufficiently high self-motivation for work performance while working remotely or in a hybrid model (Frankovský et al., 2018). Only 16 % of Czech employees would like to work only remotely in the future, 72 % would like to switch between remote work and office according to their needs (hybrid model), 12 % of people would not want to work remotely at all (Hájková, 2021). Similar results were shown in research by the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, according to which over 22 % of workers wanted to continue to work remotely, over 35 % wanted to use this option more often than before Covid-19 (Novinky.cz, 2021).

A survey conducted by the company Profesia showed that the majority of employees in Czech companies and institutions (42 %) who worked thoroughly in remote work mode during the pandemic do not want to experience this situation in the future and prefer the hybrid model of work (Businessinfo, 2021). According to the study conducted by the company Ipsos, which surveyed more than 540,000 people from ninety-five countries, 68 % of respondents preferred hybrid work, and 24 % wanted to work outside the office. Less than a tenth wished to stay with the traditional model (Chlebek, 2023).

2.3 Burnout syndrome

Minimizing the harmful effects of remote working and working in a hybrid model and generating solutions to decrease adverse factors associated with the disadvantages of remote working and working in a hybrid model is critical for maintaining the productivity and well-being of individuals (Okuyan & Begen 2021). Burnout syndrome was one of the significant adverse effects of remote work and working in a hybrid model during the pandemic. For example, 67 % of US employees of various age groups and industries think burnout syndrome worsened during the pandemic (Threlkeld, 2021). Many employees in remote work felt overworked because it was difficult for them to break away entirely from their working duties at the end of classic working hours. Burnout syndrome is a set of symptoms that develop gradually over time and can resemble some of the symptoms of depression and anxiety disorders. Burnout syndrome manifests itself on both a physical and psychological level. Since it results from long-lasting stress, it can be experienced by anyone exposed to it. The common signs of burnout syndrome include general physical and mental exhaustion, negative thoughts about work and employer, feelings of inferiority, loss of interest and cynicism, unpleasant work and time pressure, etc. (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). All these manifestations lead to lower or very low productivity for an employee. Even the least severe symptoms of burnout must be recognized and addressed immediately to prevent further negative consequences on an individual's mental and physical state.

The most recent studies show that long-term remote work, to which many employers resorted during the pandemic, can lead to burnout syndrome (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Hayes et al., 2021; Parra et al., 2022; Zaharia et al., 2022; Yildirim & Ashraf, 2023; Moron et al., 2023; Costin, Roman & Balica, 2023). Regular work in the office or a hybrid model may appear less detrimental (Medical Facilities of the Ministry of the Interior, 2021; Stasila-Sieradzka, Sanecka & Turska, 2023). Suppose a hybrid model work system is set up appropriately, maximizing all the positives and eliminating the negatives. Managers make sure that people work only within their set of working hours. In that case, people can achieve a sustainable balance between productivity and healthy well-being and are less at risk of burnout syndrome than remote workers (Chafi, Hultberg & Yams, 2022). While 20 % of Czech citizens suffered from burnout syndrome before the pandemic (CT, 2018), this figure doubled to 40 % during the pandemic (Deník, 2021). According to a survey conducted by The Office Group, more than half of the respondents (52 %) saw the cause in trying to do too much whilst in a remote work mode. Approximately 58 % of respondents believed their typical remote working hours were too long, 39 % of respondents did not take enough time off, and just under half (47 %) felt they had to be available all the time. Two out of five workers thought they were under pressure to do some extra work more often in remote work mode. Less than half of the respondents struggling with burnout syndrome left their jobs due to exhaustion. Another third said they would consider taking unpaid leave next time in such a condition (IDnes.cz, 2020; Chafi, Hultberg & Yams, 2022).

Since none of the above-described studies concerning the Czech Republic have addressed the examination of the relationship between different work modes during the pandemic, as well as the preference for the work mode in the post-pandemic period and the degree of perceiving burnout syndrome specifically among public sector employees (but generally among all employees in the Czech Republic regardless of sectors), the authors decided to fill this research gap and carry out such research.

3. Methodology and methods

The starting focus point sector of the article was the public sector, which is the set of organizations and institutions that are directly or indirectly controlled by the state. The public sector was chosen because overall, the Czech public sector employs about 293,000 people, almost one-fifth of the workforce in the Czech Republic, according to a study of data from the Czech Statistical Office (E15, 2020).

3.1 Research questions and hypotheses formulation

For the area of the future of a hybrid model and remote work:

Research question Q1: Did the work mode during the pandemic influence the preference of the work mode of public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region in the post-pandemic period?

The first research question was answered by formulating and disproving/confirming hypothesis 1.

H1: Most public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region would prefer a hybrid model in the post-pandemic era.

For the area of burnout syndrome:

Research question Q2: Did public sector employees of the Moravian-Silesian Region working in different work modes during the pandemic experience various levels of burnout syndrome (where the level is understood as the frequency of burnout syndrome symptoms)?

Answering the second research question was done by formulating and disproving/confirming hypotheses 2 and 3.

H2: More public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region working remotely or in a hybrid model during the pandemic often or constantly experienced burnout symptoms than employees in the Czech Republic.

H3: The mode of work during the pandemic that least led to the experiencing symptoms of burnout syndrome for public sector employees in this region was the hybrid model.

3.2 Instrument development

In the part where the questionnaire refers to **H1**, the authors once again relied on theoretical assumptions and various studies, in particular, a study by Profesia regarding the preference of a specific work mode in the post-pandemic period based on the pandemic experience (Businessinfo, 2021), which is presented in chapter 2. This hypothesis was formed based on the quantitative content analysis of these studies. Confirming or disproving this hypothesis provided insight into how the experience of working during the pandemic affected the work mode preference of the Moravian-Silesian Region public sector employees in the future.

In the next part, where the questionnaire refers to **H2 and H3**, the authors once again relied on theoretical assumptions, mainly the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), and various studies, in particular the study that looked at the relationship between long-term remote work and hybrid model work and burnout syndrome (Medical Facilities of the Ministry of the Interior, 2021), presented in chapter 2. These hypotheses were formed based on the quantitative content analysis of these studies. The confirming or disproving of these hypotheses provided an insight into how remote work or work in a hybrid model affected the perceived level of burnout syndrome by public sector employees of the Moravian-Silesian Region and which mode of work during the pandemic was least conducive to experiencing symptoms of burnout syndrome.

Within the creation of the questionnaire, the authors, besides relying on the above-mentioned theoretical assumptions, also relied on the conclusions of a meeting with 42 HR specialists, managers, and employees of public sector organizations operating within the Moravian-Silesian Region of the Czech Republic. This meeting was organized to understand their experiences and views better and took place in May 2022.

The formulation of the individual questions was then validated by a focus group attended by 18 representatives of future respondents in May 2022. Approximately half of them had participated in the previous meeting; the other half were approached for a broader perspective and clarification of the issues. The authors of the article also attended this focus group. Focus groups were identified to capture participant's experiences, opinions, and perspectives (Kitzinger, 1995). How focus group participants responded to the questionnaire was determined, whether the questions were well formulated, whether they understood them, and whether the offered answering

options were appropriate. Based on the outputs of the focus group, one question was slightly reformulated, and one was deleted. The result of the focus group meeting was the final questionnaire, which experts within that field later validated — the experts also commented on the extent to which individual questions and proposed answers described individual areas. The authors also evaluated the content validity using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR). $CVR = [(E=(N/2))/(N/2)]$, where N is the total number of experts, and E is the number of those who rated the object as essential. CVR ranged between 0.85 to 1.00 for each topic and 0.75 to 1.00 for each item. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered valid from a quantitative point of view in terms of content.

The final questionnaire included six questions. In this article, the authors focus on the interpretation of only a selected part of the questionnaire due to its size.

The final questionnaire can be used in the public sector when working in three possible work modes as a tool to detect problems that should be addressed to avoid reducing employee productivity. This evaluation should be an internal activity of the public sector organizations carried out by responsible persons, most often by HR managers (Up, 2021). In addition, corresponding numerical values can be assigned to all difficulties or feelings related to burnout syndrome, and their time monitoring can then reveal improvement areas.

The final questionnaire (the authors can send a full version after request) was then used to conduct a survey that fulfilled the purpose of this paper.

3.3 Sampling and data collection

The next step was to decide on the respondents. Respondents came from public sector organizations operating in the Moravian-Silesian Region of the Czech Republic. These employees are funded from public budgets (Vavrek & Bečica, 2020). According to data from the Czech Statistical Office, as of 31 December 2020, 293,000 employees worked in the public sector in the whole Czech Republic, and 1,654 employees were within the Moravian-Silesian Region. Before carrying out the survey, a pilot survey was conducted with a sample of 30 respondents from the target group. The pilot test took place the same way as the expected full test, i.e., sending emails with a link to an online questionnaire with the possibility of commenting on individual items. Only minor changes were made based on the comments on individual items that were sent to the testers, along with the answers by some respondents participating in the pilot test.

The primary quantitative research was conducted in May 2022. The questionnaire was anonymous and was implemented by the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing method, which was based on a questionnaire provided to the respondent via a link, panel or website (IdSurvey, 2023)). This ensured that there were no possible conflicts of interest or potential distortions of the data by the researchers; the results were not dependent on the persons who analyzed them, and this ensured objectivity.

The final result was, from the 1654 respondents, 492 fully and correctly completed questionnaires were received (29.8 % return rate).

The data was processed using statistical methods from May and June 2022. Based on the overall evaluation of the acquired data, the result of the survey was to answer the research questions, disprove/confirm formulated hypotheses, and develop more general conclusions in the research area as a basis for further directions of possible research on this issue.

3.4 Data analysis methods

The data was first examined for its completeness before analysing the data from the anonymous electronic questionnaire survey implemented by the CAWI method. Subsequently, all the questions and responses were decoded. Afterwards, descriptive statistics were calculated for each question, which helped better understand the respondents and the distribution of responses. Since the authors dealt only with nominal variables in the survey, a contingency was implemented to show the dependence between variables. This was followed by hypothesis testing conducted using Pearson's Chi-square test, where the p-value decided whether to confirm or reject the stated hypotheses. Finally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to determine the reliability of the research; in other words, the coefficient was used to assess the reliability and quality of the measurements

of the questionnaires and scales created. All calculations were done with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 software.

4. Research results

A total of 492 respondents were included in the results of the survey.

4.1 Sample characteristics

Of the 492 respondents, all respondents were employees of public sector organizations operating in the Moravian-Silesian Region of the Czech Republic. The research did not consider any other characteristics, such as the number of employees in the public sector organization, gender and age of respondents, etc. All respondents answered all questions.

4.2 Working mode preferences after the pandemic

The question "Did the working mode during the pandemic affect your preference for your working mode in the post-pandemic period?" was asked in the questionnaire to investigate how the working mode in which public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region worked during the pandemic influenced their view on the working mode they would like to work in after the pandemic. The responses to this question can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Working mode preferences after the pandemic

		Working mode preferences after the pandemic			
		Office work only	Hybrid model	Remote work	Total
Working mode during the pandemic frequency (%)	Office work only	70 (14.2)	14 (2.9)	4 (0.8)	88 (17.9)
	Hybrid model	64 (13)	262 (53.2)	28 (5.7)	354 (72)
	Remote work	6 (1.2)	20 (4.1)	24 (4.9)	50 (10.2)
Total		140 (28.4)	296 (60.2)	56 (11.4)	492 (100)

Source: Own research

Table 1 shows that 60.2 % (296) of the respondents working in all three modes of work during the pandemic would prefer a hybrid model after the pandemic. This group is most represented by those already working this way during the pandemic (262; 53.2 %). This group was then increased by 14 (2.9 %) of those working only full-time in the office at the time of the pandemic and 20 (4.1 %) working entirely remotely at the time of the pandemic. From those working in a hybrid model at the time of the pandemic, 64 (13 %) would prefer to return to only full-time office work; conversely, 28 (5.7 %) would like to work remotely after the pandemic. Furthermore, we can also see from the table that although respondents prefer the mode of work they worked in during the pandemic, the hybrid model is the most preferred mode in the post-pandemic period, thus confirming hypothesis **H1**: Most public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region would like a hybrid model in the post-pandemic era. According to a survey of HR professionals in Czech companies and institutions, in the future, more than two-fifths of employees expect a hybrid model of work in the post-pandemic era (Novinky.cz, 2021). It also corresponds with Hájková's claim that 72 % of employees would like to switch between remote and office work in the future according to their needs (hybrid model) (Hájková, 2021) – see subchapter 2.2.

The independence test for the two variables was performed via Pearson's goodness-of-fit test, where Pearson's chi-square test statistic was used as a test criterion for disproving/confirming hypothesis H1. The Pearson Chi-Square test value is 93.106 with 6 degrees of freedom (df). The P-value is .000, which indicates that there is a statistically significant association between the variables examined. Thus, we confirm that most public sector employees would prefer a hybrid model in the post-pandemic period. Moreover, this test found that no cells (0 %) have an expected value of less than 5, while the minimum expected value is 0.53. This aspect is essential for the validity of the test because the Chi-Square test is sensitive to low expected values in cells.

4.3 Burnout syndrome perception rate

The question "Did public sector employees working in different work modes during the pandemic experience different rates of burnout syndrome?" (where the rate is understood as the frequency of burnout syndrome symptoms) investigated whether the work mode affected experiencing burnout syndrome symptoms. First, it was necessary to determine the frequency of burnout syndrome symptoms from public sector employees working in all three work modes during the pandemic. The responses to this question can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of experiencing burnout syndrome symptoms

	Symptoms							
	I felt exhausted physically or emotionally	I had negative thoughts about my job	I got easily upset by minor problems or my co-workers	I felt under immense pressure to succeed	I felt like I was in the wrong organization or profession	I felt like organization policy or bureaucracy was hindering my ability to do a good job	I felt like I did not have time to do many of the things that are important for doing a good job	I found that I did not have time to plan as much as I wanted to
	Frequency (%)							
Never	74 (15)	171 (34.8)	144 (29.3)	160 (32.5)	246 (50)	171 (34.8)	156 (31.7)	140 (28.5)
Almost never	124 (25.2)	168 (34.1)	196 (39.8)	190 (38.7)	120 (24.4)	106 (21.5)	170 (34.6)	176 (35.8)
Sometimes	216 (43.9)	108 (22)	134 (27.2)	102 (20.7)	86 (17.5)	143 (29.1)	116 (23.6)	132 (26.8)
Total	414 (84.2)	447 (90.9)	474 (96.3)	452 (91.9)	452 (91.9)	420 (85.4)	442 (89.9)	448 (91.1)
Frequently	68 (13.8)	37 (7.5)	15 (3.1)	37 (7.5)	32 (6.5)	60 (12.2)	42 (8.5)	41 (8.3)
Constantly	10 (2)	8 (1.6)	3 (0.6)	3 (0.6)	8 (1.6)	12 (2.4)	8 (1.6)	3 (0.6)
Total	78 (15.8)	45 (9.1)	18 (3.7)	40 (8.1)	40 (8.1)	72 (14.6)	50 (10.1)	44 (8.9)

Source: Own research

Table 2 shows that the majority of public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region working in all three work modes during the pandemic never or almost never, or only sometimes experienced symptoms of burnout syndrome; only a smaller number of respondents experienced symptoms of burnout syndrome frequently or constantly, thus not supporting hypothesis H2: More public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region working remotely or in a hybrid model during the pandemic often or constantly experienced burnout symptoms than employees in the Czech Republic as a whole. According to the findings of the company Profesia, 40 % of Czech employees experienced the symptoms of burnout syndrome during the pandemic – see subchapter 2.3. This is a very positive outcome of the survey.

Although the majority of public sector employees working in all three modes of work during the pandemic never, or almost never, or only sometimes experienced symptoms of burnout syndrome, a smaller number of those experienced symptoms of burnout syndrome frequently or constantly. Consequently, the relationship between the frequent or constant experience of burnout syndrome symptoms and work mode during the pandemic was examined only for those employees who experienced these feelings. The responses to this question can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Relationship between work mode and experiencing the symptoms of burnout syndrome

		Office work only	Hybrid model	Remote work	Total
Symptoms					
I felt exhausted physically or emotionally	Frequently	10 (14.7)**	12 (17.7)	46 (67.6)*	68 (100)
	Constantly	3 (30)	2 (20)**	5 (50)*	10 (100)
I had negative thoughts about my job	Frequently	4 (10.8)**	7 (18.9)	26 (70.3)*	37 (100)
	Constantly	6 (75)*	2 (25)	0*	8 (100)
I got easily upset by minor problems or my co-workers	Frequently	2 (13.3)**	4 (26.7)	9 (60)*	15 (100)
	Constantly	3 (100)*	0**	0**	3 (100)
I felt under immense pressure to succeed	Frequently	6 (16.2)	4 (10.8)**	27 (73)*	37 (100)
	Constantly	0**	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)*	3 (100)
I felt like I was in the wrong organization or profession	Frequently	6 (18.8)**	6 (18.8)**	20 (62.4)*	32 (100)
	Constantly	2 (25)**	2 (25)**	4 (50)*	8 (100)
I felt like organizational policy or bureaucracy was hindering my ability to do a good job	Frequently	16 (26.7)	2 (3.3)**	42 (70)*	60 (100)
	Constantly	2 (16.7)**	2 (16.7)**	8 (66.6)*	12 (100)
I felt like I did not have time to do many of the things that are important for doing a good job	Frequently	8 (19.1)	4 (9.5)**	30 (71.4)*	42 (100)
	Constantly	2 (25)**	2 (25)**	4 (50)*	8 (100)
I found that I did not have time to plan as much as I wanted to	Frequently	6 (14.6)	2 (4.9)**	33 (80.5)*	41 (100)
	Constantly	3 (100)*	0**	0**	3 (100)

Note: The * symbol for each symptom always indicates the worst performing model(s) of the work mode for both intensities of its perception. Conversely, the ** symbol for each symptom always indicates the best-performing model(s) of the work mode for both intensities of its perception.

Source: Own research

Table 3 shows that those employees who worked entirely remotely at the time of the pandemic frequently (8 out of 8) or constantly (5 out of 8) experienced more symptoms of burnout syndrome than the employees who only worked in the office during the pandemic (frequently none of the respondents, 3 out of 8 constantly); respondents who worked in the hybrid model at the time of the pandemic experienced these symptoms the least (5 out of 8 frequently, 6 out of 8 constantly), thus confirming hypothesis **H3**: The work mode during the pandemic that lead least to experiencing symptoms of burnout syndrome was the hybrid model. The findings were consistent with the propositions that the work mode at the times of the pandemic that least led to experiencing symptoms of burnout syndrome was the hybrid model or that working partly from home had a preventive effect against burnout syndrome (Chafi, Hultberg & Yams, 2022).

The majority (404; 82.1 %) of public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region of the Czech Republic worked remotely or in a hybrid model during the pandemic. In the time after the pandemic, an absolute majority (296; 60.2 %) of respondents working in all three work modes during the pandemic would prefer the hybrid model. In terms of the effect of the pandemic work mode on experiencing symptoms of burnout syndrome, the majority of employees (414; 84.2 % to 474; 96.3 %) never or almost never experienced or only sometimes experienced these symptoms; only a low number of respondents (40; 8.1 % to 78; 15.8 %) experienced symptoms of burnout syndrome frequently or constantly.

Finally, Cronbach Alpha calculated the internal consistency of the survey. The value of Cronbach's alpha 0.743 indicates the measurement's good reliability (internal consistency). This means that the items (questions) in the examined questionnaire had a solid level of correlation and were consistent in measuring the same construct.

Regression analysis was not used here because several assumptions were not met. For proper use and interpretation of the results of a regression model, the following assumptions should be satisfied: a linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, independence of observations in the sample, homoscedasticity, normality of errors, and absence of multicollinearity.

Conclusion and limitations

The article aimed to determine whether there was a direct link between the different work modes during the pandemic, the preference of the work mode after the pandemic and the level of perceived burnout syndrome.

Since there has been no research to date that has provided results examining the relationship between different work modes during the pandemic, as well as the preference for the work mode in the post-pandemic period, and the degree of perceiving burnout syndrome specifically among public sector employees, the authors conducted this research in one of the regions of the Czech Republic, which is where the novelty of this research lies.

The first step within the paper's methodology was to conduct a vast literature review. This resulted in meeting the aim of this article (based on the questionnaire survey done by the authors). In the next step, the stated aim resulted in formulating two research questions and corresponding hypotheses.

Subsequently, in May 2022, a survey was conducted in the form of an online questionnaire survey based on a structured questionnaire. The initial population for the sample selection included 1 654 public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region, where the return rate was 29.8 %. A total of 492 questionnaires were returned. The survey results were first compiled using Microsoft Excel, the data was collected, and faulty results were eliminated to ensure only relevant data was used for further analysis. Basic descriptive statistics (absolute and relative frequencies) were computed. Statistical analysis was computed and evaluated using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 software. Specifically, a goodness-of-fit test was used, with Pearson's chi-square test statistic as the test criterion.

The survey results were analyzed and commented on in detail compared with the results of various surveys dealing with the issue. The following conclusions were made in the research area, which became the starting point for formulating further directions for possible research on this issue.

The questionnaire survey results and hypotheses disproving/confirming answered the formulated research questions in the following way. **Q1** is: employees would prefer a hybrid model in the post-pandemic era. The answer to research question **Q2** is that the rate of experiencing symptoms of burnout syndrome among employees working in different modes varies but is generally low among these employees. Nevertheless, there is a lower number of those who experienced symptoms of burnout syndrome frequently or constantly. It is in the interest of employers and the affected employees to try to create such conditions and behave in a way that does not put them at risk of burnout syndrome. There is a fully extensive informational database on this topic that both employers and employees can now use.

The limiting conditions of the survey can be seen in the return rate of the questionnaires, which was only 29.8 %. Generalizing the findings of this study must be taken with care, as the findings are based on a sample in one region of the Czech Republic. Future research can build on the findings of this research, which can be considered pilot research.

A limitation of the survey can be that respondents' answers might have been influenced by the fact that public sector employees in the Moravian-Silesian Region needed to be sufficiently prepared for the instant transition to remote work or a hybrid model and had to implement new measures. The main challenge for public sector organizations was often how to technically provide employees with the possibility to work remotely or in a hybrid model. Suppose people could work on their computers if it were necessary to provide them with a company laptop or if they had the software required to do their work and to communicate with colleagues.

Another limitation of the survey may be the fact that the authors of the article did not have available pre-pandemic measures of the level of burnout syndrome not only for public sector employees in the Moravia-Silesian Region but also for public sector employees of the whole Czech Republic, no such study exists. Therefore, they based their hypothesis on the results of surveys on burnout syndrome throughout the Czech Republic across all sectors.

The authors see further direction in the research, focusing on the public sector throughout the Czech Republic. Another possible direction of the study could be to analyze the results based on gender, age, or job profession or position and to analyze in detail why the public administration employees of the Moravian-Silesian Region (or the whole Czech Republic) were identified as experiencing lower levels of burnout syndrome symptoms than other professions.

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