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Article

Home-Office Managers Should Get Ready for the “New Normal”

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Abstract: This research article aims to explore how employees are coping with working from home and provides practical suggestions for employers and managers adapting to the “new normal”. The main contribution of this research lies in the comprehensive integration of various aspects of managing a home office into four strategies, surpassing the findings of prior studies that focused on specific areas. This was achieved through a qualitative descriptive approach. Through semi-structured interviews with employees in the Czech Republic during the COVID-19 pandemic, four distinct employee types (“Working from Home is Not for Me”, “Yin and Yang”, “Holiday with Emergency”, and “Chameleon”) were identified based on their adaptation strategies. These strategies encompass aspects like time management, self- and family management, setting boundaries, task management, stress reduction, and adherence to rules. The article concludes by offering suggestions for more effective collaboration and employee management, taking into consideration their approach to remote work.

Keywords: home office; HR management; typology of employees



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1. Introduction

Remote work emerged as a governmental response to the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, with approximately 45% of Czech employees transitioning from in-person work, compared to a pre-pandemic rate of around 10%, primarily in IT, communication, and knowledge-intensive sectors (Milasi et al. 2020; Dombrovský and Kankrlík 2021). Presently, according to Plesník (2023), 48% of white-collar workers in the Czech Republic seek a home office option, while 61% of employers offer hybrid work and 23% provide fully flexible arrangements. Globally, Buffer’s 2023 survey reveals that 98% of respondents express a desire for occasional remote work due to its time management flexibility. Overall, 71% of companies have embraced remote work, with only 8% opposing it (Buffer 2023). Irrespective of the future trajectory of the home office, it stands as a valid alternative to on-site work (Crawford 2022), necessitating employer readiness for the “new normal” (Joia and Leonardo 2023; Raghavan et al. 2021).

The widespread adoption of remote work has presented a range of challenges at both organizational and individual levels (Raišienė et al. 2023; Raghavan et al. 2021; Anuar et al. 2021). Delany (2022) highlights challenges in policy and practice, especially concerning individual development and career progression. Babapour Chafi et al. (2022) emphasize the social difficulties, such as the loss of camaraderie and isolation, while also recognizing the necessity for new skills and competencies in a hybrid work environment. Popovici and Popovici (2020) delve into the multifaceted motivations and drawbacks of remote work, including its psychological impact on employees. Panchuk (2023) further underscores the difficulties in communication, monitoring, and motivation when managing remote teams. Collectively, these studies underscore the imperative for organizations to address these challenges to successfully navigate the new normal of remote work.

While conducting an extensive literature review, a knowledge gap in research emerged regarding typologies of employees based on their adaptability to the home office form of work. Existing studies delve into factors such as gender, parenting situations (Song and Gao 2020), socio-cultural working conditions (Łukasik-Stachowiak 2022), occupation-specific approaches (Iwu et al. 2022; de Silva and Rosa 2022; Kupka Feliciano et al. 2021), and managerial perceptions (Kowalski and Ślebarska 2022). However, a distinct shortage exists when it comes to typologies that elucidate the individualized strategies chosen by workers.

The motivation for conducting this research was to understand how various factors that influence the home office, previously explored separately in existing studies, come together to shape specific employee strategies. Through this understanding, employee management can be significantly enhanced, adapting to individual approaches that align with the comprehensive needs and perceptions of the entire process, instead of solely concentrating on attitudes towards specific issues. This research article seeks to achieve two primary objectives:

- To understand and articulate the strategies employees employ to cope with various facets of remote work. This entails delving into the intricate details of how individuals navigate challenges related to time management, self- and family management, boundary establishment, task management, stress mitigation, and adherence to rules.
- To gather insights for more effective employee management in the context of remote work. This involves ensuring that management styles are responsive to the needs and preferences of workers in the “new normal” situation, where the dynamics of work have evolved.

By fulfilling these objectives, this research article aims to offer valuable guidance for organizations looking to enhance their approach to remote work, promoting both employee well-being and organizational productivity.

2. Recent Research and Publications on the Home Office Phenomenon

The term “home office” carries diverse meanings, reflecting varied perspectives influenced by technological advancements, cultural norms, and individual preferences (Kelly 2020; Homberg et al. 2023; Antczak and Horzela 2021; Grozdics et al. 2023). In essence, the term is dynamic, embracing a spectrum of meanings shaped by contemporary work trends and individual choices. Academic research approaches it from multiple disciplines, and the surge in flexible work arrangements broadens its scope to include remote work with digital tools. Cultural and regional disparities further shape interpretations, with some linking it to work–life balance and others viewing it as a solution for business continuity. For some individuals, a home office may signify a dedicated room equipped with professional-grade furnishings and technology, while for others, it might refer to a designated workspace within their living environment (Ciolfi et al. 2020; Tietze and Musson 2005; Islam 2021; Kelly 2020). Home office encompasses numerous definitions, with synonyms such as digital work, distributed work, e-working, flexible work, homeworking, hybrid work, mobile work, off-site work, remote work, telecommuting, telework, teleworking, virtual work, and work-from-home. Its roots trace back to the 1970s, primarily linked to office-based remote work involving telephone communication (Lamond et al. 1997; Homberg et al. 2023). Patton (2020) traces the historical roots of working at home and the emergence of the home office in the United States, particularly in the postwar period. Building on this historical context, Paris (2019) explores the application of efficiency and scientific management principles to the home environment. Magee (2000), Ahrentzen (1987), and Fitch (1980) each contribute to understanding the practical aspects of the home office, with Magee and Ahrentzen concentrating on the spatial and behavioral boundaries between home and work, while Fitch reviews the social values linked to household formation. Building on this narrative, Myerson and Ross (2003) provide a comprehensive exploration of the home office, portraying it not just as a physical workspace but as a holistic experience—a brand encounter, a hub for knowledge exchange, a social setting, and a distributed workspace. Kumar and Aithal (2016) and Gough (2012) write about the transformative shift from traditional office spaces

to the home as a workplace, with Kumar emphasizing the advantageous flexibility it offers, and Gough delving into the challenges associated with maintaining a healthy work–life balance. Rafalski and Andrade (2015) contribute valuable insights by highlighting the flexibility of working hours as a major benefit of the home office while acknowledging the potential downside of diminished social interaction. Collectively, these studies illuminate the dynamic evolution of the home office, influencing not only work practices but also shaping psychosocial variables in the contemporary professional landscape.

A growing body of published research sheds light on the advantages and challenges associated with home office work, affecting both employees and employers across various dimensions (Krajčák et al. 2023; Raghavan et al. 2021; Song and Gao 2020; de Klerk et al. 2021). Benefits of home office work include heightened flexibility in embracing innovation, self-determined time management, an enhanced work–life equilibrium, reductions in commute times, and cost savings spanning travel expenses, clothing, and attire (Raghavan et al. 2021). Research on the negatives of home office work has highlighted several key issues—employees suffering from increased work-to-life and life-to-work conflicts, a potential risk of social isolation, poorer occupational health and safety outcomes for home-based workers, and the need for assistance and education to improve conditions and reduce complications (Palumbo 2020; Quinlan and Bohle 2008; Stürmer and Fincato 2021; Cruz-Ausejo and Rimache 2022). Furthermore, the absence of adequate legislation to regulate home office implementation poses another significant complication. Many countries are currently revising political directives and legal frameworks to facilitate home office utilization for both employers and employees. The necessity for legislative changes to address the challenges of remote work, including the regulation of remote work, the implementation of a working time recording system, and the protection of leisure time and health, is emphasized as well (Kashekhlebova 2021; Izbienova and Averyanova 2020; Hadi Khorsand et al. 2023). The absence of specific legislation has compounded issues such as employee expense reimbursement, compensation for equipment damage, health and safety ergonomics, working hours, on-call duty, accident insurance, and digital adaptation (Marica 2023). Another persistent challenge entails digital adoption, encompassing the provision of essential digital work equipment, software and hardware solutions, technical support systems, and enhancing digital skills among employees (Raghavan et al. 2021).

A critical issue that has arisen revolves around the imperative need for capable and supportive leaders and managers, necessitating their retraining to effectively guide their teams through the transition from on-site work to the home office setting. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the daily activities of managers, particularly in terms of time allocation and work structure (Teodorovic et al. 2021). Unprepared managers navigated diverse employee responses to remote work while meeting client demands, refining skills in communication, performance monitoring, and well-being support (Crawford 2022; Chirico et al. 2021). Recent research on managerial response to home office work has highlighted the importance of leadership behaviors, such as communication, feedback, trust, support and empathy, and encouragement (Lundqvist and Wallo 2023).

In the context of our research article, the term “home office” is used to describe employees who perform their work from their residences, including secondary homes or the apartments of close relatives or partners. These individuals use information and communication technology for tasks and communication related to their work, both internally and externally within the organization. It is worth noting that our focus on home office regulations does not extend to mobile work conducted in public spaces.

3. Research Methods and Design of Data Collection

This research utilized a qualitative descriptive approach, as outlined by Sandelowski (2000). The goal was to concisely summarize everyday events (Lambert and Lambert 2012) and capture perceptions and experiences related to a specific phenomenon (Doyle et al. 2020). This approach was chosen to directly portray the investigated phenomenon while ensuring both descriptive validity (accuracy in descriptions agreed upon by researchers

and participants) and interpretive validity (capturing participants' attributed meanings and agreeing on their precision). This approach proved most fitting for the study's objectives, which aimed to identify strategies for adapting to home office setups and subsequently develop management recommendations. By maintaining close alignment with the data in language and interpretations, this approach facilitated straightforward verification of results and recommendations with research participants, ensuring their applicability in people management practices. These principles also guided the sample selection and data collection process. Purposeful sampling was employed with a focus on variability, allowing for the exploration of common and unique manifestations of the target phenomenon across a diverse range of cases (Sandelowski 2000). Both individual and focus group techniques were recommended for data collection and were accordingly applied in this research.

The research diagram presented in Figure 1 depicts the different stages of the research process. After the initial data collection, the research categories underwent analysis and were interlinked to form an initial framework outlining identified strategies. These strategies underwent validation in the second round of data collection, during which the examined relationships between approaches to various aspects of the home office were thoroughly discussed. A conclusive typology was then established through the culmination of these two rounds of data collection and two rounds of validation.

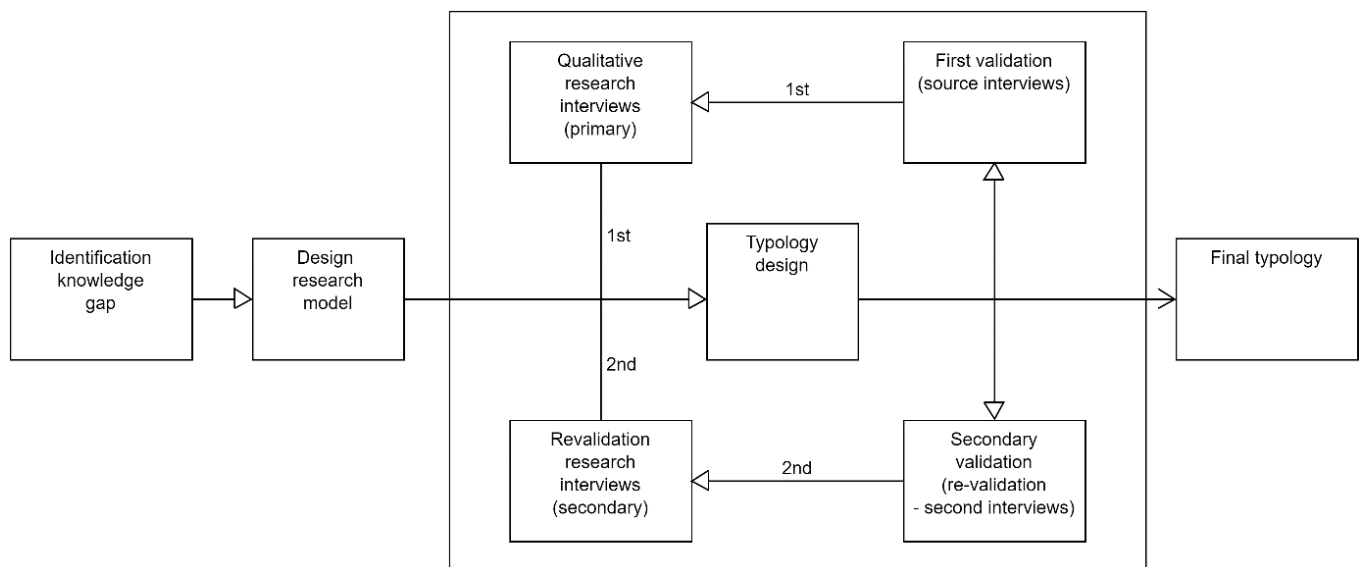


Figure 1. Research diagram.

We conducted comprehensive interviews with 18 communication partners chosen through purposive sampling, a widely used technique in qualitative research. The sole criterion for inclusion was their experience with a home office during the pandemic. Participants were carefully selected to ensure diversity in professions, positions, genders, and to cover a wide age and educational range. To safeguard their privacy, all communication partners were assigned fictitious names. Table 1 offers a concise overview of the individual communication partners with whom the researchers conducted face-to-face or online interviews lasting 30–90 min.

In the first round of data collection, we conducted in-depth interviews with communication partners who had provided informed consent, adhering to organizational ethics. The interviews were carried out in natural settings, recorded audibly, and the transcripts were anonymized. Two researchers independently analyzed the transcripts, comparing identified themes, findings, and interpretations through multiple rounds of cross-referencing and discussion. Seeking consensus among observers in providing a comprehensive description of the subject is a characteristic feature of the qualitative description approach (Seixas et al. 2018).

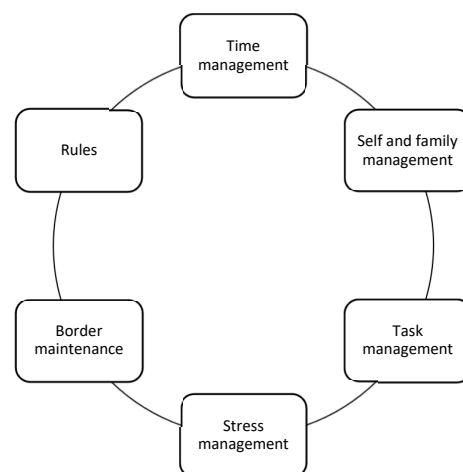
Table 1. List of participants.

Name	Age	Maritals	Children	Job	Experience
Ellen	57	married	2 (33; 35)	administrative	No
Martina	43	divorced	2 (7; 11)	top manager	No
Heda	40	married	4 (7, 8, 10, 14)	teacher	Yes
Nina	45	married	without children	academic	Yes
George	51	married	4 (grown-up ch.)	academic	No
Robert	42	married	2 (8, 11)	IT specialist	Yes
Adam	36	married	1 (6)	engineer	No
Petra	42	married	1 (6)	administrative	No
Libor	32	married	2 (2, 3)	manager	No
Denis	40	single	without children	engineer	No
Leo	42	married	2 (3, 7)	manager	Yes
Patricie	39	married	2 (2, 3)	academic	Yes
Hugo	35	married	without children	manager	Yes
Laura	36	married	without children	technical officer	No
Jane	40	not detected	1 (8)	social worker	Yes
Kathy	44	not detected	3 (4, 13, 18)	administrative	No
Zoe	49	not detected	(grown-up ch.)	administrative	Yes
Linda	52	married	without children	administrative	Yes

The primary aim of this initial data collection round was to gain insights into the home office experiences of practitioners heavily involved in communication. The focus was on contextualizing perceptions, covering topics such as pre-pandemic home office experiences, adjustments made due to the pandemic, the pros and cons of home office work, potential obstacles, and future attitudes toward working from home.

4. Key Categories Relevant to Home Office Experiences

The analysis unveiled recurrent themes in respondents' statements, concentrating on key categories pertinent to their home office experiences: time management, self- and family management, stress management, task management, boundary maintenance, and rules. Subsequently, this text outlines crucial statements delineating these areas. The core of the typology lies in how respondents assess themselves within these categories and attribute influence and importance to them. Interestingly, these categories closely align with the key elements of work–life balance as defined by Davidson (2013). Furthermore, our findings share similarities with those of Sturges (2012), whose research focuses on unofficial techniques and activities individuals employ to shape their work–life balance. Common focal points in both studies include time management, self- and family/relationship management, and boundary maintenance, all crucial aspects of the home office experience. The Figure 2 and following text offer an overview of these areas identified based on statements from communication partners, which are an integral part of the analysis.

**Figure 2.** Key categories for employee typology.

4.1. Time Management

As seen in the Table 2, successful time management depends on setting clear boundaries between work and family, accurately understanding work requirements, having the freedom to plan independently, and feeling personally responsible for the quality of work. Moreover, different levels of time management skills are evident from the statements.

Table 2. Time management—summary of findings—key quotes.

Summary of Findings—Key Quotes
Working from home is great for me because I can choose when to work. However, it requires discipline since time can pass quickly, and I might forget about the work I enjoy. It's not always a problem, but if I do it for a long time, it could happen. (Libor)
Normally, you start work in the morning and stop in the afternoon when there are signals. However, about a year ago in March, I worked for 12 h instead of 8. So, I had to figure out when to stop. This went on for about a month until I set a routine, and that made things better. (Denis)
Going back and forth between home and work is stressing me out a lot. It's inconvenient, and I spend a ton of extra time commuting. The main problem for me is managing time between home and work (. . .). It makes me feel scattered, distracted, and anxious. I have to admit, if this keeps going, I might need to get help from a professional. I might consider getting coaching for time management or even therapy to avoid losing my sanity completely. (Petra)

4.2. Self- and Family Management

This category stands out as the intersection of self-management and family management (Table 3). While some statements focused on pure self-management, especially when communication partners did not have a family, in most cases, self-management was intertwined with family management and functioning. The statements reveal that different strategies, practices, and situations directly affect work performance.

Table 3. Self- and family management—summary of findings—key quotes.

Summary of Findings—Key Quotes
It's about freedom. I work because I want to. It's my choice. Why do we talk about motivation? I have a job, so I just do it. (Nina)
I have to adapt to the situation; the situation won't adapt to me. Honestly, on the days I work from home with the kids, I can get only about half as much work done as usual, at most. Luckily, I didn't have too much pressure with work. When I did, I either finished it later or asked the kids to give me some space. (Robert)
However, it surprised me how positive I felt about it. I have young kids, and being at home allowed me to see them grow, to be there with them while doing my work at my own pace. It doesn't matter whether I'm sitting there at 6 in the morning or 6 in the evening. It puts my family first, and at the same time, it doesn't mean I'm slacking off at work. (Libor)

4.3. Task Management

In this area, the emphasis is on scheduling tasks and managing them more effectively. The statements presented in Table 4 highlight the impact of personal responsibility for work, closely connected to the level of work autonomy. Having high autonomy in planning tasks became a crucial factor in adapting to the home office, especially in roles where tasks were externally managed. This raised concerns about the quality and suitability of work conducted from home.

Table 4. Task management—summary of findings—key quotes.

Summary of Findings—Key Quotes
The job doesn’t need me to work 8 h every day for 5 days a week. Some tasks can be mentally tiring, but then there’s administrative work that isn’t as exhausting. Honestly, working from home sometimes means just being at home, not very active, but available online. I like working at night, so I do my tasks in short bursts without distractions. This way, I’ve had busy days, but I’ve managed to make up for that time. (Patricie)
I don’t really have a boss, you know. You don’t have to stress about having an ideal boss; you just share what you’ve achieved when they ask. The boss is happy as long as they don’t have to keep an eye on you, and the job is done. (Adam)
Since you’re not restricted to set hours but instead concentrate on the current task, you can become more efficient. However, it’s essential to consider the other side too: if you move on to the next task as soon as you finish one, you might take a bit longer on the first one, possibly because you’re not in a rush. (Libor)

4.4. Stress Management

As presented in Table 5, this category clarifies the stressors that significantly affect communication partners’ experiences in a home office. Stressors encompass inaccurate estimation of task time, challenges in balancing roles (especially between being an employee and a parent/partner), and the unpredictability of tasks along with burdens imposed by supervisors.

Table 5. Stress management—summary of findings—key quotes.

Summary of Findings—Key Quotes
At my workplace, I know exactly what I’m supposed to do, but at home, I’m always anxious. Even when I go to the bathroom, I worry about missing something. I don’t feel comfortable with that. I feel more relaxed when I’m at work because I have all the tools I need to handle things. (. . .) I get stressed about balancing household chores and work tasks. I find a sense of calm at my workplace. (Ellen)
Time can have both positive and negative aspects. For example, I was discussing kids, and my colleague enjoys going for a bike ride in the morning when the weather is good. Having flexibility with time is a significant advantage, but it can also become a challenge. The discipline tends to loosen up after a while. However, if you have responsibility for a task (. . .), what often occurs is that you might feel relaxed on Monday and Tuesday, but then the rest of the week becomes hectic as you try to catch up and manage stress. (Libor)
When I’m in the home office, I feel very stressed because it’s challenging to focus on work. My daughter is at home, and I want to spend time with her rather than have her idle. Balancing both is not easy, and that makes me feel guilty too. So, working from home causes me a lot of stress. It’s a departure from my usual routine and the familiar path, and it just doesn’t suit me. I guess I’m someone who does well with order and clear boundaries, not necessarily guidance, but those well-defined limits! (Petra)

4.5. Border Maintenance

The concept of boundary maintenance (Table 6), connected to the earlier categories, involves communication partners discussing the negative impacts of boundaryless intermingling. It exposes a continual process of establishing, negotiating, and preserving boundaries, which requires continuous adjustments in response to changing circumstances.

Table 6. Border maintenance—summary of findings—key quotes.

Summary of Findings—Key Quotes
I had set specific working hours when my colleagues could reach me at home, but I didn’t have fixed hours for my personal life. At work, there’s a routine: I’m there for work, then it’s for the kids or to do the shopping, and finally, we return home. But it feels like I’m always in work mode this way. I don’t have clear boundaries, and I don’t want to keep going endlessly until I have to say, ‘That’s enough!’ (Martina)
The most challenging part was that our work and family time extended throughout the whole day, and I considered that a drawback. This full-time home office arrangement blurred the lines and disrupted the daily routine. While I see many advantages, the sense of order was disturbed, and the distinctions between work and free time faded away. (Patricie)
What I miss a lot is not having the excitement of coming back home. It’s always being at home. (Petra)

4.6. Rules

The last category is “rules”, a domain facing significant pressure for maintenance. Communication partners not only noticed a lack of rules in this context but also viewed the freedom from adhering to many previously established rules in a positive light. As presented in Table 7, this contrast between eroding boundaries and the negotiation of rules becomes apparent.

Table 7. Rules—summary of findings—key quotes.

Summary of Findings—Key Quotes
In the home office, we didn’t have a proper routine. At first, I enjoyed the freedom, having a relaxed hour-long breakfast in bed with my daughter and spending time reading stories for an hour and a half. Even though I did some work during that time, I found it enjoyable. But then, I started craving some structure. I needed to wake up in the morning, put on makeup, and brush my teeth. I established these rituals to maintain my sanity. Just changing the habit of washing my hair in the morning, instead of the evening like I did at work, made me feel off track for at least half a day. So, I missed having a routine a lot. That’s my biggest challenge with the home office—I struggle to establish it on my own. (Petra)
It’s a bit chaotic. We wear comfy clothes all day. We remember to brush our teeth, but we often forget to brush our hair. When I go to work, there’s a routine (wake up, freshen up, get dressed). It helps me stay productive and in a steady routine. (Ellen)

4.7. Validation

Utilizing the outlined categories, four worker types were distinguished based on their relationship with the home office. In the initial round, some participants from the initial in-depth interviews underwent a second round of interviews to discuss the characteristics of each type. This provided them with an opportunity to offer feedback on the final description of “their type”, enhancing the validity of the data presentation.

The second round of validation, initially planned as focus groups, was adjusted to individual interviews due to pandemic-related constraints. Ten individuals were invited to participate in this second round, with the aim of having at least two people align with each type. These interviews revealed that external influences played a pivotal role in aligning with a specific type. Each type represents a position along a spectrum ranging from enthusiastic embrace of remote work to complete rejection. The next section will present these types and their characteristics, developed from the three rounds of data collection mentioned above.

5. Typology of Workers

This section reveals the ultimate worker typology drawn from our data analysis. The types outlined here signify positions along a spectrum, ranging from enthusiastic support

for working from home to outright rejection. As with any typology, these descriptions generalize the most common characteristics within each category, acknowledging significant individual differences among those categorized. Nevertheless, the typology establishes a foundational classification of workers based on the sub-categories introduced earlier. It is essential to note that not every type may include all the categories; instead, they draw on selected categories to varying degrees.

5.1. “Working from Home Is Not for Me”

This initial type of worker unequivocally rejects the concept of working from home, considering it unsuitable. They strongly prefer maintaining a complete separation between work and home life. Even during the pandemic, they only turned to working from home when it was necessary. However, this group can be subdivided into two subcategories based on their reasons for resisting home office arrangements.

The first group perceives the home environment as so unsuitable for work that they believe productivity is impossible. This inadequacy arises from both space limitations and a lack of proper equipment:

I knew about the concept, but it doesn't quite fit my situation. You see, working from home typically involves having a desk, preferably in a private space, which I've never had and still don't have. So, I sort of thought it wasn't something for me, even though my employer provides things like a laptop and all that tech stuff. I've got the tech part covered, but I lack the private space. (George)

or due to the presence of other household members:

Working from home doesn't suit me; I don't like it, and it's not something I enjoy. Additionally, taking care of the kids, each with their own needs and online classes, becomes entirely my responsibility. At times, it can be very overwhelming, and even when the kids are occupied elsewhere, it doesn't bring much relief. I always feel stressed and exhausted. I'm really looking forward to this situation being over. (Heda)

The second group consists of individuals who express sentiments such as “I don't believe in working from home”. To provide a more detailed understanding of this group, additional data are necessary. In general, it can be inferred from their statements that they believe working from home can never be 100% effective, both for their own work and that of their subordinates or colleagues. Moreover, they hold the view that work should not encroach upon the home environment, preferring to maintain the traditional separation between their home and workspaces. This conventional division enables them to concentrate more effectively and maintain performance efficiency in all aspects of their lives—work, family, and home. When these spheres overlap, they find it challenging to sustain their level of performance.

From the company's point of view, we initially didn't like the idea of working from home. But because of lockdowns and illnesses, we had to try it out, and surprisingly, it worked well. I might be a bit old-fashioned, but I'm not entirely sold on it. I believe people should be in the workplace to build a sense of community, understanding the company's mission, and feeling a sense of belonging and shared purpose with the team. Over time, we noticed morale dropping—not because people wanted it to but because the situation was affecting them. So, our approach is to get people back to the office as soon as possible. I think having people work from home for a long time isn't the best way to go. (Martina)

5.2. Yin and Yang

The second type of worker occupies the opposite end of the spectrum. They consider working from home highly favorable, deeming it as suitable as working in a physical office. The term “yin and yang” highlights the harmony and balance often associated with this type. They strongly prefer remote work, find many tasks more manageable from home, and believe it significantly enhances their work performance. Proficient in time, task, and

stress management, they skillfully avoid crisis situations. They possess a high sense of autonomy and personal responsibility.

Discipline? Well, that's not a problem for me. Work is always my top priority, you know. And this whole working from home thing is a real time-saver. When you go into the office, people want to talk to you, and there are so many distractions (I mean colleagues, by the way). For me, going to the office often results in unproductive days filled with meetings and conversations. Nobody does the work for me; I have to finish it in the evening. I've always been a strong supporter of working from home. However, there's still a need for contact with people, maybe just once a week to discuss things. (Nina)

These individuals excel in planning and seamlessly managing their work between home and the workplace. They efficiently schedule their tasks, prioritizing those that can be handled independently at home while saving tasks requiring collaboration with colleagues for their time at the office. It is crucial to note that none of the interviewees expressed a desire to work exclusively from home; they valued collaboration and contact with colleagues but to a limited extent.

How about team leadership? I've led high-performing teams before. These teams with a lot of expertise are always short on time and are spread out worldwide, dealing with busy schedules. We might only meet these folks once a year. Now, for the lower levels of the projects, where team members may not be as experienced and come from different regions, I used to rotate, and work from the home office at times. However, when the team's energy was dropping, you can't really replace that through a screen. Motivational activities need to be done in person. That's when you have to get those people fired up. (Nina)

This group comprises individuals with a robust social life outside of work, meeting their need for social interactions through friends and family. They excel in managing their personal lives, with no indication in their accounts of falling behind in their work, being distracted by other responsibilities, or experiencing a blending of personal and professional life. Instead, they emphasize that combining the two enhances their freedom and boosts job satisfaction. These workers now see this blending as a fundamental job requirement, even considering changing employers if this option is not available, especially if it was not before the pandemic. They do not discuss the home office as a means for personal matters but rather as a tool for optimizing their work schedules. Family and household responsibilities were not prominently discussed in their interviews, as they primarily focused on work-related topics. Their ability to maintain clear boundaries was evident throughout their accounts.

I think this is a big advantage nowadays, and I support it whenever it's possible. In fact, I believe that if someone asks for it and it's possible, it's the right thing to do, even before COVID. If a person is interested and gets their work done, there's no harm in it. (Denis)

5.3. Holiday with Emergency

The “Holiday with Emergency” type views the home office as a special working mode, akin to being on-call, similar to doctors or emergency services. In this mode, they can attend to their tasks but must remain “available” and prepared for urgent matters. What distinguishes this type is their perspective on working from home as a reward, in contrast to the previous group that sees it as a more efficient work method based on tasks and necessity. When perceived as a reward, it becomes a personal benefit. This category includes individuals who appreciate the home office for handling personal matters (such as caregiving or household tasks) and would welcome the opportunity to use it for 3–5 days per month.

But when it works, the job is not like a regular one; you mainly deal with important matters and make decisions. You don't have to sit at your desk for a full 8 h, walk around aimlessly, or do office stuff like coffee breaks. Working from home is great because the time you would've wasted can be used productively at home in just 2 h. You can attend

important meetings and have the rest of the day for yourself. What I like about working from home is that I can avoid getting involved in office politics. I don't have to spend almost half of my time in meetings where it's more about looking good than actual work. You move from one place to another, point at graphs—it's a game, not real work. (Leo)

This category encompasses communication partners who believe that their work and responsibilities offer some flexibility, allowing them to take occasional breaks for personal time without neglecting their work duties. They are diligent workers and compensate for these breaks by working efficiently during regular office hours, rather than resorting to traditional overtime. Their goal is to maximize their home office days without compromising work performance, highlighting their responsible work ethic.

That's interesting; we talked about this with colleagues today, and almost everyone agreed that working from home one day a week would be OK. It wouldn't necessarily involve handling the most critical tasks, but instead dealing with less demanding tasks, like sorting out emails. It's the kind of work that you can do at home without distractions and stress, in the comfort of your own space. (Petra)

If working from home were just a couple of days a month, I could focus on important tasks at the workplace, and only deal with urgent matters at home. (Elen)

In this category, communication partners often shared their experiences during the pandemic when the widespread adoption of remote work posed several challenges. They struggled to separate their personal and professional lives, faced difficulties in self-management, fell behind on work tasks, and felt regret over not meeting responsibilities both at home and work. While they recognized some benefits of working from home, they felt pressure from both sides due to the inability to work more diligently and the inconvenience of remote work. They could not effectively distinguish between work and personal spaces and responsibilities, leading to feelings of inadequacy in both areas.

However, unlike the “Working from Home is Not for Me” type, they desired to maintain the home office but with structured planning. They preferred either self-selection of home office days or advance designation by their supervisor to prepare adequately. This type exhibits challenges in managing their work and family life effectively. They find comfort in having their work supervised and controlled by a superior, which enhances their well-being and peace of mind. In return, they value the flexibility and reduced workload associated with home office arrangements, understanding that it does not fully replace their time in the physical workplace.

5.4. Chameleon

The Chameleon type embodies a fusion of characteristics from both the “Holiday with Emergency” and “Yin and Yang” types. While individual attitudes and perspectives vary, this unique type emerged strongly in the analysis, justifying its distinct classification within HR management. Chameleons are employees who can efficiently work from home and manage their tasks effectively, akin to the “Yin and Yang” type. Nevertheless, they differ in that they adopt this approach only when necessary—during emergencies, often at the expense of family or non-work time. In the absence of pressing work duties, they tend to embrace a more relaxed, “vacationer” mindset. Compared to pure vacationers, Chameleons exhibit greater stress resilience and are unafraid of failing to complete their work or neglecting family responsibilities. While they appreciate the benefits of home office work and may prefer it for a portion of the week, they do not view it as a necessity and would not leave their jobs if it were unavailable. One challenge they face is accurately assessing their workload. If they misjudge it, they can become highly stressed, potentially neglecting their responsibilities or failing to perform them diligently. This may lead to work-related issues, such as task backlog, increased workload, and strained social relationships.

We almost hoped for this. We thought it could be possible because our connection to the workplace is minimal. (. . .) But even then, I had a feeling that I wouldn't want to be in a home office for five days a week because I truly appreciate my office, and I value the

ability to separate my work life. I ended up working from home more often due to illness at the time. However, it surprised me how positive I felt about it. I have young kids, and being at home allowed me to see them grow, to be there with them while doing my work at my own pace. It doesn't matter whether I'm sitting there at 6 in the morning or 6 in the evening. It puts my family first, and at the same time, it doesn't mean I'm slacking off at work. It's just more aligned with when I want it to be, not when it has to be. That's probably the most significant advantage of working from home for me. However, it requires a significant amount of discipline, as time can easily get away from you, and you might neglect the work you love. It's not necessary, but if you do it for an extended period, it can happen. (. . .) Since you're not restricted to set hours but instead concentrate on the current task, you can become more efficient. However, it's essential to consider the other side too: if you move on to the next task as soon as you finish one, you might take a bit longer on the first one, possibly because you're not in a rush. (Libor)

6. Limits of Research

Effective adaptation to home-office work is contingent on both individual and occupational characteristics. Some individuals may face challenges in adapting, even if their job and overall occupational traits appear suitable (Kramer and Kramer 2020). The concept of “individual characteristics” encompasses psychosocial disposition, living situations, partnership arrangements, and the presence of young children. However, our research encountered limitations due to the relatively small sample size. While we achieved theoretical saturation, further data collection would be necessary to refine the theoretical model, particularly concerning individual characteristics. For instance, the “Yin and Yang” traits were predominantly observed in childless individuals and a limited number of communication partners. It is plausible that some Chameleons might exhibit traits leaning toward the “Yin and Yang” type if they lack young children or have a partner with a lifestyle aligning with the “Yin and Yang” adaptation. Although individual characteristics might involve personality traits and situational factors, our numerically limited and static research sample prevents a definitive incorporation of this aspect into the presented theoretical model. Future research must grapple with addressing this challenge. It would be advantageous to enhance our findings by triangulating them with data that reflect employers’ perspectives on the performance of these employees in both office and home settings. While our research offers general insights into employees’ attitudes toward remote work, the specific findings may be influenced by the exclusive data collection within the context of the Czech Republic. Despite the Czech Republic sharing similarities with other European countries regarding attitudes toward work–life dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic, the cultural context and general attitudes toward work and working life may play a unique role. However, this potential impact likely manifested in the distribution of worker types within the population rather than fundamentally altering their typology.

7. Recommendations for Management

The earlier sections of this article have detailed the findings from qualitative research focused on identifying distinct worker profiles based on their approach and use of remote work arrangements. From the gathered data, four distinct worker types and their concise characteristics were outlined. In this concluding section (Table 8), our attention turns to linking this research with Human Resource Management practices. We aim to provide, albeit in a preliminary form, potential approaches and strategies that can enhance employee productivity by aligning with their attitudes towards remote work. The unique circumstances brought about by the pandemic provided an ideal backdrop for discerning a wide spectrum of worker types. Even those who were skeptical of remote work were compelled to adapt due to the constraints of the pandemic, offering insights into their attitudes that were previously untested or based solely on hypotheticals.

Table 8. Recommendations for management.

Type of Employee	Recommendations for Managers
<i>“Working from Home is Not for Me”</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home office is not seen as an advantage • Home office is not deemed an efficient work setup • Firm separation between home/family and work is preferred • Lack of suitable conditions for home office or lack of trust in it • Working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic was a highly negative experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow these employees to work in the office • Implement control mechanisms for managers overseeing subordinates who opt for remote work
<i>“Holiday with Emergency”</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to work responsibilities • Recognizes home office as a benefit • Avoids misuse of home office for reduced work hours • Challenges in managing time, tasks, stress, and boundaries • Struggles with the establishment of clear rules • Significant influence of family on the work environment at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited timeframe for home office availability • Home office considered as an incentive or bonus • Clearly defined tasks for employees working remotely
<i>“Chameleon”</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the home office as a valuable benefit • Tendency towards procrastination • Strong skills in managing stress • Challenges in task management • Difficulty in establishing rules and self-discipline • Capability for effective work in a home office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the frequency of an employee’s use of home office • Evaluate the nature of tasks completed during home office hours • Concerns about a potential decline in work quality that may be challenging to manage • Ongoing oversight of the process of fulfilling job responsibilities
<i>“Yin and Yang”</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home office is seen as an effective tool for enhancing work performance • Home office has evolved into an indispensable aspect of work • Exceptional proficiency in time, stress, task, and boundary management • Employee autonomy in choosing between working from home or at the office is crucial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A work environment focused on tasks • Establishing strict rules for transitioning to a home office mode is deemed unnecessary and counterproductive • Timely communication of information is vital for effective work arrangements • Employer promotes a culture of freedom and trust

As mentioned earlier, it is reasonable to assume that post-pandemic circumstances will lead to a more significant integration of remote work into our professional lives, with its usage becoming more widespread than ever before (Babapour Chafi et al. 2022; Iwu et al. 2022; Săvescu et al. 2022). Consequently, we deem it crucial to proactively engage with this work modality, not only in terms of shaping employment law parameters but also in our interactions with individual employees.

Even from our gathered data, comments underscored that the availability of remote work options could act as a motivating factor for employees to either stay with or leave their current workplace. As a result, the concept of remote work presents a challenge that

necessitates a strategic response, and the typology presented here may assist in addressing this challenge more effectively at an individual level.

8. Discussion of Findings

As evident from the interview findings, engaging in remote work has sparked numerous inquiries concerning the interplay between professional and personal life. These inquiries go beyond the employees themselves and are particularly significant for HR managers from a management perspective. A crucial element in the successful implementation of a home office setup lies in establishing and maintaining boundaries that separate work from home life. This aspect is underscored by [Delanoeije et al. \(2019\)](#) in their research, where they specifically explore the conflicts that can arise between these two domains and emphasize the importance of employees' preferences for safeguarding their home environment. One distinctive contribution of our research lies in identifying additional factors that can either facilitate or impede the synergy between these spheres. Expanding upon the insights of [Babapour Chafi et al. \(2022\)](#), it is evident that transitioning to a hybrid work model presents numerous challenges that require careful consideration. Our findings have pinpointed critical elements within the decision-making process, namely comprehensibility, meaningfulness, and manageability. Comprehensibility involves the presence of clear, well-structured, and precise work guidelines, providing employees with a sense of clarity and direction in their roles. Meaningfulness, on the other hand, relates to the perception of the importance of one's work and a deep sense of commitment and engagement towards it. Lastly, manageability encompasses the feeling of control over one's work situation, coupled with the ability to communicate effectively to ensure that work tasks remain manageable. These identified factors offer valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges of transitioning to a hybrid work model, shedding light on key considerations that can impact the success of such arrangements.

Moreover, a separate study conducted by [Săvescu et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasizes crucial dimensions that hold paramount importance when contemplating alterations in work arrangements. These five dimensions encompass personal aspects, time (work schedule), spatial considerations (working environment), social interaction (socialization), and technical elements (use of technology). Importantly, the study emphasizes that these dimensions are subject to varying perceptions and experiences among employees, an insight that organizations should take into account when formulating their human resource strategies. When comparing these findings with the results of our research, it becomes apparent that these aspects are intricately woven into a typology that categorizes workers based on their attitudes and perceptions regarding these dimensions. This alignment stands out as a significant strength of our study, providing a structured framework for comprehending how individual employees engage with and interpret these crucial facets of changes in work arrangements. As highlighted by [Michinov et al. \(2022, p. 15\)](#), "organizations and managers could leverage the identified profiles to shape telework practices that ensure employees' performance, creativity, and well-being". Building on this insight, the authors propose that managers should offer employees flexibility in managing their telework arrangements based on their unique personality profiles, incorporating preferences for solitude and the 'big five' personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism). Additionally, managers should take into account employees' home working conditions, considering factors like the presence of family members, and actively seek feedback on their telework experiences. Aligned with these recommendations, our study puts forth a collective suggestion for managing the four identified worker types: providing them with the autonomy to choose the work system that aligns with their preferences. This recommendation echoes the approach advocated by [Neidlinger et al. \(2023\)](#), emphasizing flexibility in choosing the work location, and [Torres and Orhan \(2023\)](#), who stress human-centric approaches. It underscores the importance of recognizing individual differences and tailoring work arrangements to meet the unique needs and preferences of employees. [Prodanova and Kocarev \(2021\)](#) also emphasize the importance of this aspect

in their research findings. They highlight that it is crucial not to confine one's perspective solely to the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, as this is tied to a specific form of social isolation. Instead, it is essential to consider the inherent nature of the work tasks and the skills and capacities of employees, which remain constant and are not solely determined by the transition to remote work. A particularly noteworthy contribution to the understanding of remote work dynamics, especially for managing individuals in the "Working from Home is Not for Me" category, is the research conducted by Golden (2007). Golden's study delves into how the home office is perceived by co-workers who either do not use it or do not have the option to work from home. His findings shed light on the negative perceptions that can arise regarding this work arrangement among those who remain in the office. This underscores the importance of the considerate and thoughtful implementation and management of remote work arrangements to address these perceptions and promote a positive working environment for all employees.

9. Conclusions

In summary, the pandemic served as a stress test for the home office, providing both employees and employers an opportunity for reflective engagement with this remote work tool. The primary aim of this research was to stimulate reflection, particularly within the management sphere. As our research findings illustrate, the experience of working from home had diverse impacts on employees, leading to a heightened awareness of the home office. This increased awareness prompted employees to develop comprehensive strategies, as successfully identified and described in the four types mentioned earlier. Through interviews, we outlined potential managerial strategies aligned with individual attitudes toward remote work. Beyond presenting a typology of home office attitudes, our research has sparked inquiries for further exploration. Future transdisciplinary quantitative and qualitative studies could delve into the characteristics or traits influencing one's inclination toward a specific attitude type. This research avenue, coupled with an understanding of how each worker type is distributed across industries and job roles, holds the potential to provide valuable insights for more effective management and decision-making in the ever-evolving landscape of remote work.

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