

Article

The Nature of Employee–Organization Relationships at Polish Universities under Pandemic Conditions

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Abstract: (1) Background: The aim of this study is to describe manager–employee and employee–employee relations during the COVID-19 pandemic and their impact on measures of the likely use of elements of remote teaching by university employees in the future. (2) Methods: The study used a descriptive-correlation research design with a survey as the primary instrument for data gathering. A total of 732 personnel took part in the survey, selected by a convenience sampling technique. The researchers used an adapted and modified instrument to gather data. The instrument underwent a reliability test. This study used structural equation modeling to confirm hypotheses. (3) Results: It was shown that manager–employee relations at Polish universities during the COVID-19 pandemic were of low quality. However, employee–employee relations were of above-average quality, and have a significant positive impact on intentions to use elements of remote working in the future. (4) Conclusions: Based on the results of the study, some general recommendations are presented for change management and relationship-building.

Keywords: remote working; manager–employee relations; employee–employee relations; process management



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1. Introduction

Nowadays it is considered that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an innovative way to build the competitive advantage of a company in the long term. When considering the activity of companies in implementing the concept of social responsibility, a proactive strategy is noticeable [1]. Thus, companies of their own accord seek to develop relationships with groups interested in the functioning of the enterprise, that is, they form relationships with employees [2]. Establishing and then developing a relationship between an organization and its employees is extremely important from a strategic point of view. Indeed, it is nowadays believed that a firm's relationship with its employees is an essential asset needed for both competitive and cooperative market activities [3].

When the unexpected circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic first arose, organizations found themselves in one of two situations. In the first case, the employer and employees had previous experience of remote working—the employer had knowledge of the tools used for that purpose, had oversight mechanisms in place, and was capable of managing work even without face-to-face contact with employees. Employees were already experienced: they knew how to plan the working day, were able to report on completed tasks and plan subsequent ones, and understood the point of view of the employer, who had been compelled to change the form of working and to restrict possibilities of contact.

In the second situation, employers and employees had not used remote working before March 2020. The employer had to place an unprecedented degree of trust in staff, and to understand that this was a change that had to be accepted and skillfully managed [4,5]. A significant role was played by both sides and by the attitudes they adopted. They had to adapt immediately to the new conditions, and clearly define the parameters of remote work and methods of reporting and monitoring it. Regardless of which situation applied, there came a point at which business meetings began to be held exclusively online, which

affected interpersonal relations [6,7]. Online meetings place limitations on relations on the emotional plane, and provide limited room for professional and business privacy. In an atmosphere of concern about the future, pressure for results, anxiety about the market position, and fear of unexpected economic change lead to stressful situations, increase the sense of threat, and have an impact on employee relations, above all those between managers and their subordinates.

Thus, building correct employee relations should play a key role at this time. The implementation of CSR in the area of relations with employees, may contribute to a more effective resolution of conflicts that arise in crisis situations in the enterprise [1]. On the other hand, the time of crisis can be a good moment to introduce changes in the company, which will result in a permanent integration of CSR into its activities and influence a more strategic approach to this issue. Internal relations within the company, especially concerning employees, are the sphere where CSR should be particularly important during the crisis. It would appear important to find answers to questions about the nature of employees' relations with their immediate superior, and with colleagues, during such a period of isolation. Do those relationships—an essential part of work—have an impact on employees' attitude to the prospect of remote working in the future?

Answering these questions will allow us to contribute to the literature on both relationships, or the broader social responsibility of organizations, and work done from home. First, by validating scales measuring perceptions of employee-organization and employee-employee relationships. In addition, we show how these relationships are shaped during the COVID-19 crisis. This information allows for the conscious and effective introduction of appropriate management actions in the organization. Additionally, it can inspire organizations to introduce additional best practices. Second, our results suggest that employee relationships significantly influence the use of remote work comps in the future. This finding suggests that it is important in terms of shaping digital competencies and CSR activities in an organization to have an environment that enables the sharing of knowledge and results of the implementation of individual activities; focusing on further training of employees may not be sufficient.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the literature review and states the research hypotheses. Section 3 describes the data and methodology. Section 4 presents the results on employee-organization and employee-to-employee relationships and their impact on the future of remote working. Section 5 examines the discussion of the results. Section 6 concluded with the research limitations present and directions for further research.

2. Literature Review

Nowadays, CSR is considered an innovative way to build the competitive advantage of an enterprise in the long term. When considering the activity of firms in implementing the concept of social responsibility, a proactive strategy is noticeable. Thus, companies on their own will strive to develop relations with groups interested in the functioning of the enterprise, i.e., create relations with employees [8]. Moreover, the process approach assumes that people are the motor of every business. It is they who are the most important. It is widely known that a satisfied employee is more productive, loyal and committed [5,7]. Process management indicates what a firm can do to ensure that its employees are satisfied and that their work is effective [9,10]. One of its elements is the monitoring of the process of relationship management, including both formal aspects, defined by policy and procedures on relations between employees and the organization, and informal aspects linked to everyday practice [11,12]. Building positive relationships with employees requires an efficient flow of information.

2.1. Manager–Employee Relations

A relationship is characterized by the way in which two people or groups of people perceive each other and behave toward each other. The organization–employee relationship,

therefore, means the way in which the employer (a person or unit) and employees perceive each other and treat each other in the workplace. Both individual and collective relations are important. A relationship is a process in which the manager (organization) is aware of employees' multifaceted needs, and is thus able to pay attention to their financial situation, their emotional state, the working atmosphere, and working culture in broad terms [10,13]. This process creates the best conditions for holistic, comprehensive development on the part of employees. From the moment the contract of employment is signed, a relationship begins to develop between employee and employer, the latter represented by the employee's immediate superior. The manager–employee relationship is grounded above all in a social and psychological contract [4,10,13,14]. This contract comprises beliefs concerning the reciprocal obligations of the two parties [14]. If employees perceive that their organization has not duly fulfilled the terms of the contract, this can lower their trust, job satisfaction, desire to remain with the organization, sense of duty, and productivity [4,15]. It is therefore important to identify the causes of psychological contract violation and the moment at which it occurs. According to a study by [13], there are two basic conditions giving rise to a perception of violation: renegeing, meaning that an obligation is acknowledged but not fulfilled; and incongruence, meaning that there are differing understandings of an obligation. The nature of the manager–employee relationship is determined by multiple factors and is dependent on the organization [16]. The management of these relationships is usually formalized in an employee relations policy or program.

The process of the shaping of relationships affects the culture of the organization, employees' satisfaction, and staff turnover rates [15]. According to Nesco Resource [17], "When employees have a strong, healthy relationship with their employers, the entire company benefits. Studies show that employees who have mutually respectful relationships with their employers are more likely to be happy, loyal, and productive in the long-run." The value added by manager–employee relations can enable the retention of loyal employees, reduce workplace conflicts, increase productivity, and support the mutual learning process [4,15]. Studies show that companies which have positive relations between employees and managers are generally more successful [18].

According to the literature [12,16] factors affecting the building of strong manager–employee relations include sincerity, trust, assurance of adequate preparation, setting of clear expectations, flexibility, work–life balance, productivity, and commitment. Another list of important issues in the building of manager–employee relations includes flexibility, adaptability, and the ability to work together to find how best to satisfy the needs of both parties [19]. One of the most appreciated values is equality and the expectation of equality in business relations. Thus, everyone in the organization should adhere to the same standards at every level, from interns up to the CEO. This consistency, by building trust and self-confidence, makes a key contribution to relations not only between employees and managers, but also between colleagues. Regular monitoring of employee satisfaction, understanding of the effectiveness of actions undertaken, and open and transparent communication help to build positive, high-quality relations.

2.2. Employee–Employee Relations

Employee relations can make or destroy the atmosphere at the workplace. They are a key factor behind an organization's performance, development and learning [15]. Because employees are every organization's driving force, it is important to be confident that both manager–employee relations and relations between colleagues are well maintained [12]. Employee–employee relations refer to how a person perceives his or her relationship with coworkers as a whole [20]. The degree to which members of working groups or units are satisfied with their activities while cooperating on tasks determines the quality of their relations within the team. Seers [20] proposed a ten-item scale for measuring the quality of cooperation in a team, while Raziq and Maulabakhsh [21] proposed their own nine-item scale. Appropriate relations between coworkers bring competitive advantage to the organization [22]. The quality of these relations is also very important, since according to

research by EY and the Employer Branding Institute [23] in Poland, only 37% of employees are happy, and a happy employee means greater profits for the firm. Moreover, a satisfied employee is 43% more productive and 86% more creative, takes less sick leave (by 36%), and generates lower staff turnover (by as much as 61%).

2.3. Remote Working

In the literature [24,25], three main components of remote working are identified: the use of information technology, a link with the organization, and delocalization of work. Remote working is defined as work done at home for the employer on a full-time or part-time basis, and communication with the organization and interested parties using telecommunications and other information technologies. Both employers and employees believe that remote working will gain importance in the near future [24]. However, this will require changes to be made to the organization of processes within the enterprise [5]. There are some employers who believe that remote working will not be possible for their employees in the longer term, due to, for example, specific features of their line of business. Some employers would like to retain remote working at least partially, as they acknowledge that staff do not need to be in the company office to perform their duties reliably [26]. It should be noted that almost 30% of employers believe that their employees' productivity is unchanged or higher when they work remotely, while 14% report that employees feel better when they have the possibility of remote working [27,28]. Other significant factors for the use of remote working in the future include the satisfaction of employees working in that way and their attitude to the practice [29].

Harmonious interpersonal relations are the basis of well-being in both private and professional life. Therefore, it is always worth investing in their improvement. For employers, such an investment can be particularly profitable. Thanks to trust, openness and acceptance in relations, they will gain committed employees willing to cooperate in the conditions of a crisis or incident. Unexpected situations strengthen and enhance employees' skills and find a place for them in their future.

Hypotheses

Manager–employee and employee–employee relations that have been shaped in normal conditions may undergo changes when remote working is introduced [24,30]. In both cases, the amount of time spent on such relationships is probably reduced, as face-to-face contact is replaced by electronic or virtual communication. Moreover, behavioral factors such as increased anxiety and reduced trust may lead to a lowering of the quality of relations [25].

Sias [31] shows that the quality of relations with colleagues and with one's immediate superior is positively correlated with job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Later studies [11,15,32] confirm that manager–employee and employee–employee relations have an impact on both job satisfaction and business growth. This research supports the statement that good relations between an organization and its employees, and between employees, are a predictor for business growth, success and job satisfaction. According to statistics [15], the satisfaction of employees grows by almost 50% when they develop a close relationship at work. It has also been proved that having friends at work brings benefits not only to employees themselves, but also to the organization. Relations with managers and colleagues are of fundamental importance for the quality of work as perceived by the employee [33]. From the aforementioned research results, it may be concluded that the desire to use remote working in the future is partly determined by the work environment, which is shaped by—among other things—manager–employee and employee–employee relations.

Based on the above considerations, the following hypotheses were proposed (see Figure 1):

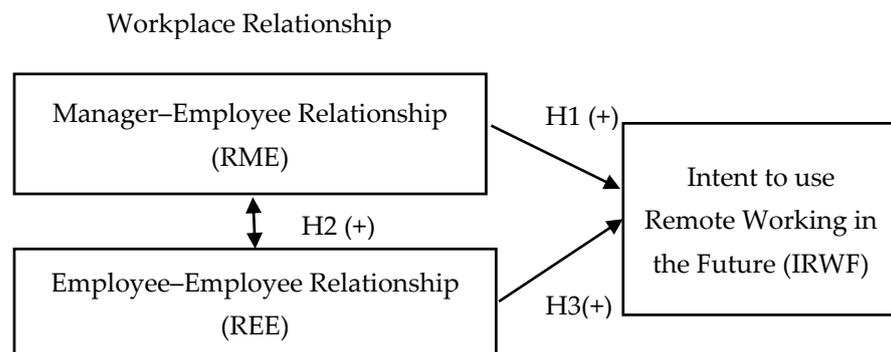


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *The quality of manager–employee relations (RME) has an influence on the intent to use remote working in the future (IRWF).*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *The quality of manager–employee relations (RME) is directly linked to the quality of employee–employee relations (REE).*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *The quality of employee–employee relations (REE) has an influence on the intent to use remote working in the future (IRWF).*

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Description of Sample

The studied population consisted of academic teachers employed at universities in Poland. It was sought to make participation in the survey available to all members of this population. Access to subjects was obtained in two stages. At the first stage, university e-mail addresses were obtained from a database, and e-mail messages were sent to them with a request to distribute a prepared questionnaire to employees. The e-mails were sent three times, as a reminder (one university requested that no more messages be sent, as all employees had already been notified). Unfortunately, there were some universities from which no responses were received, and attempts to make individual contact with employees of such an institution were also not successful. Therefore, the sample obtained is not representative. The survey was voluntary: participation was limited to persons who expressed consent and were willing to complete the questionnaire. According to figures from the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), on 31 December 2020, a total of 93,088 academic teachers were employed at universities in Poland. The number participating in the survey was 732, which represents a response rate of only 0.79%. It is difficult to understand why academics, who recognize the importance of every respondent to a survey, are unwilling to participate on the other side and support an initiative of this kind by providing their opinions. Survey responses were collected from 10 May to 30 June 2020.

3.2. Instrument of Data Collection

The survey was conducted using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) technique. A major advantage of CAWI is that the questionnaire can be completed in respondents' natural environment, at their desired time and speed. A person responding to an online questionnaire has control over the questionnaire tool, and has no contact with an interviewer; they thus feel unconstrained and more willing to admit to things that would be difficult to acknowledge in a face-to-face interview. The online questionnaire was presented using the publicly available Google Forms tool. The aim of the research was to learn about respondents' experiences with remote working under crisis conditions. Completion of the questionnaire took approximately 30 min. It consisted of 15 different parts. In the present study, only four of them were used, concerning relations with one's

immediate superior, relations with colleagues, and plans to use remote working tools in the future, and personal information (control variables).

The questionnaire was discussed among its creators, and was then reviewed by experts, who changed the wording of some of the questions and made numerous corrections to the form of the questionnaire. At the next stage, a pilot study was carried out among a group of 20 university employees, which enabled the identification and elimination of ambiguities and repetitions. After this validation process, the questionnaire was used in the full survey.

3.3. Measurement Scales

The scale used in the questionnaire to evaluate relations with managers was based on works on leadership theory [15,21,24,34]. The proposed scale measures the quality of the relations between a manager and subordinates which are essential for work. In its final form, following the pilot study, it consisted of seven items (Table 1). The scale used to evaluate employee–employee relations (three items; Table 1) was constructed based on the theory of teamworking [15,20,24], and was significantly reduced in size as a result of the expert evaluation and pilot study. It measures how a person perceives their relations with colleagues as a whole [20]. The scale for intent to use remote working in the future (five items; Table 1) was constructed based on existing publications [9,24,26,29], with details added as a result of the expert evaluation.

Table 1. Items used in the survey and their corresponding loading.

Manager–Employee Relations	RME	REE	IRWF	Mean	Std. Deviation
My immediate superior supported me in planning remote working	0.956			2.98	2.061
My immediate superior supported me in organizing remote working	0.955			2.92	2.037
My immediate superior oversees my remote working	0.635			3.45	2.091
My immediate superior collects information on my problems and needs in remote working	0.749			3.00	2.021
My immediate superior evaluates my remote work	0.659			3.38	1.947
My immediate superior informs me of the evaluation of my remote work	0.659			2.46	1.650
My immediate superior motivates me to work remotely	0.727			3.06	2.075
Employee–Employee Relations					
My colleagues support me in remote working		0.849		4.40	1.974
My colleagues are more flexible than in traditional conditions		0.712		4.04	1.792
My colleagues are willing to share knowledge		0.789		4.92	1.767
Intent to Use Remote Working in the Future					
I intend to use remote working in the future as an element complementing my traditional form of work			0.879	5.58	1.538

Table 1. Cont.

Manager–Employee Relations	RME	REE	IRWF	Mean	Std. Deviation
I expect the experience of remote working to be useful in my professional life			0.945	5.80	1.502
The use of remote working tools in the future will enable me to perform my work duties more quickly			0.925	4.96	1.695
The use of remote working tools in the future will increase my productivity			0.652	4.74	1.778
The use of remote working tools in the future will improve the quality of my work			0.666	4.88	1.705

In each case, respondents reported their opinions using the seven-point Likert scale, selecting answers from 1 (strongly disagree) up to 7 (strongly agree).

4. Results

In the period of the pandemic, the use of remote working at universities became a necessity. It had previously been used only for international communication under academic and teaching projects, and for e-learning courses. Now universities were forced to switch to remote forms of teaching overnight. From 10 March 2020, remote working was introduced for academics and teachers at Polish universities and for more than three-quarters of administrative employees. Before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, this fraction had been much lower; not all universities had suitable tools, and employees were not trained for such a process. The switch was a major challenge for management and for the employees themselves. It required a new approach to the implementation of particular processes, and above all a different approach to management, since—although academic teaching staff are accustomed to a high level of autonomy in their activities—only 52.5% of those responding to the survey had had even partial prior experience with remote working. Additionally, the process itself had never previously been implemented on such a scale at any Polish university.

4.1. Details of the Results

Of the respondents to the survey, 58.2% were women and 41.8% were men. In terms of age, 20% were under 40, 47.5% were aged 41–50, 22.1% were aged 51–60, and 11.4% were over 60. Full-time university employees accounted for 94.8% of the total, while 5.2% were subject to other forms of employment (self-employment, part-time working, freelance contract or contract for specified work). Of the respondents, 14.5% performed managerial functions (and thus had other members of the study population as subordinates). As regards the length of service, 21.4% had been teaching for less than 10 years, 34.2% for 11–20 years, 31.4% for 21–30 years, and 13% for more than 30 years.

First, the information collected from the selected parts of the questionnaire underwent factor analysis. For these items, the KMO index was 0.812 (>0.7), which meant that the analysis could be accepted. Bartlett's test, with Chi-Square = 8512.447 ($p = 0.000$), indicated that the factor model was suitable for the analyzed variables, as the variables were statistically significantly related. The explained variance was 69.81%. In the next step, Kaiser's criterion was used to identify three hidden variables, namely the number of factors suggested by eigenvalues greater than one for a given factor solution. Next, the Varimax rotation method was applied; the obtained factor loadings are given in Table 1. All of the loadings are greater than 0.63 (see Table 1). Based on theoretical determinants, three measurement scales were obtained, concerning manager–employee relations (RME), employee–employee relations (REE), and intent to continue remote working in the future (IRWF); measures of reliability are given in Table 2. These measures confirm the reliability

of the measurement scales used; in all cases, we have Cronbach's alpha > 0.7, AVE > 0.5 and CR > 0.7, and hence the values are greater than the accepted boundary values [35].

Table 2. Reliability indicators, descriptive statistics and correlations for the measurement scales.

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation Coefficients		
						RME	REE	IRWF
RME	0.902	0.875	0.546	3.035	1.579	0.739 ^a		
REE	0.823	0.828	0.617	4.453	1.587	0.368	0.785 ^a	
IRWF	0.917	0.911	0.618	5.193	1.426	0.205	0.383	0.786 ^a

Note: ^a denotes square root of AVE.

The descriptive statistics (Table 2) indicate that respondents' evaluations are lowest in the case of relations with managers, and here also the views expressed were subject to the greatest variation. The highest evaluations were those of the intent to use remote working in the future, and in this regard, respondents formed a relatively homogeneous group.

For verification of the conceptual model and the proposed hypotheses, structural equation modeling was used. Here it is important to verify whether each construct differs sufficiently from the other constructs. This may be done using discriminant validity analysis according to the criterion of Fornell and Larcker [35]; that is, checking whether the share of variance between each construct and its measures is greater than the share of variance between the given construct and other hidden variables. To do this, the square root of the AVE value for each construct (measurement scale) was compared with the correlations between constructs. As shown in Table 2, all square roots of AVE are greater than the correlations of the constructs, which confirms adequate discriminant validity.

The formulated conceptual model was verified empirically using AMOS 18. The following acceptable values of fit statistics were obtained: $\chi^2 = 409.77$, $df = 87$, $p = 0.000$, $\chi^2/df = 4.71$, CFI = 0.907, TLI = 0.906, RMSEA = 0.055. Results of estimation are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of estimation of the model.

Relations	B	S.E.	t	p	β	Sing	Result
IRWF ← REE	0.318	0.039	8.060	***	0.355	+	Supported
IRWF ← RME	0.057	0.030	1.870	0.062	0.074		Not supported
RME ↔ REE	1.214	0.146	8.322	***	0.368	+	Supported

Note: for the ↔ relation, coefficients of covariance and correlation are given; *** denotes $p < 0.0001$.

4.2. Summary of Hypothesis Tests

The following hypotheses were tested:

The path from RME to IRWF was not significant ($p = 0.062$). Therefore, the hypothesis that the quality of manager–employee relations has an influence on the intent to use remote working in the future was not supported by the data.

The correlation between RME and REE is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and positive (in the appropriate direction). Thus, the data strongly supported the hypothesis that the quality of manager–employee relations is directly linked to the quality of employee–employee relations.

The path from RME to IRWF was significant ($p < 0.0001$), in the hypothesized direction, and strong (0.355). The data strongly supported the hypothesis that the quality of employee–employee relations has an influence on the intent to use remote working in the future.

5. Discussion

Because of the lack of earlier research, the results of this study could not confirm findings that a switch to remote working can lead to a change in manager–employee and employee–employee relations [24,30]. In the present conditions, the manager–employee relationship and the employee–employee relationship are assessed differently. According to respondents' evaluations, manager–employee relations were poor, while relations between employees were better than average. The research confirmed that after the move to remote working there was a decrease in the amount of time devoted to manager–employee relations, and electronic-based communication is very poorly perceived by employees. Although they collected information, managers did not give feedback and did not evaluate the work of their employees [10,26]. In the opinion of employees, the worst feature related to remote working was the lack of support in planning, organization, and motivation [4,5]. Moreover, managers did not obtain information about employees' problems and needs in remote working [10]. The described situation in the first phase of the pandemic, when people experienced increased anxiety about their own health and that of their families, led to a lowering of the quality of relations between employees and their immediate superiors [25]. The same behavioral factor contributed to an improvement of relations between colleagues, who not only sought to cope with anxiety about their health, but also became more flexible, and supported each other by sharing knowledge about the new conditions in which they were required to work.

Our research shows that the quality of relations with colleagues is positively correlated with their intent to use remote working in the future and their commitment to the digital development of the organization. This is only partly in agreement with the findings reported by Sias [31], since our research did not indicate that the quality of relations with immediate superiors has an influence on the intent to use remote working in the future. In agreement with past studies [11,15,32] we were able to confirm that employee–employee relations have an impact on the further development of competencies and contribute to business growth, due to employees' satisfaction with working together. The results confirm that competencies that have been acquired in a friendly atmosphere—that is, where there exist close relations with coworkers—are desired to be used in the future [15]. Thus, relations with colleagues are of fundamental importance for the quality of work as perceived by the employee [33]. It should also be noted that having friends at work brings benefits not only to employees themselves, but also to the organization, since those employees intend to continue to use elements of remote working in the future, thus contributing to the digital development of the business [30].

The research has also confirmed that the working environment is shaped by the mutual influence of manager–employee and employee–employee relations [22,24]. Our study confirms that at the level of change management there was a lack of oversight and monitoring of employees' actions by the organization [4]; employees felt that they were left to deal with their own problems and concerns [11,12]. The lack of contact or support from immediate superiors led to the formation of strong bonds between employees. More detailed research in this area has shown that employees even created epicenters of knowledge, around which they gathered. Notably, these groups might even consist of employees of different organizations, facing similar problems [20,24]. Employees also underline how their acquired competencies can be beneficial for their future work, by increasing its quality and productivity [18,29].

This study established a causal relationship between coworker relationships and future use of learned remote work tools and skills. We show that the relationship between immediate supervisor and co-workers are correlated in the same direction, that is, they describe elements of the work environment. The study showed that the relationship with co-workers is an important factor to consider when developing competencies that we intend to use in the future, or that will shape the future of the organization, and indicated digitalization is a certain challenge that every organization faces. Through this research, we provide evidence on the direction of causality between the relationship at the level

of immediate supervisor and employees and its impact on the perception of work in the future. The paper presents a new opportunity to understand the predecessors' perceptions of the possibility of digitizing their activities in the future.

6. Conclusions

As society continues to grow and evolve, we are becoming more aware of the important impact that organizations and ourselves have on our interactions and their consequences. With the assumption that companies must continue to evolve and become more socially responsible, it is important to understand who and what mechanisms can accelerate this agenda. Our work shows that one such element is perceived relationships with co-workers. They determine what we can and how we can leverage in the future.

The foregoing analysis has confirmed that the competencies in remote working acquired by employees and organizations during the crisis will be put to use in the future. The situation has forced both parties—employer and employee—to come to terms quickly with the new reality. However, universities need to work on change management, as relations between employees and their immediate superiors were found to be poor. It is interesting that relations between coworkers in the crisis situation were assessed as above average, also being reinforced by grassroots initiatives.

6.1. Limitations

Every research study has limitations, and this present study is not an exception. The observed relationships could be driven by an unobservable firm or manager characteristics. This research is missing much unobservable info that could simultaneously affect the two relations are studying. In this analysis the working environment was considered in terms of manager–employee and employee–employee relations, but it is also affected by other factors, including remuneration and other benefits, but also work–life balance, productivity, and—in the case of remote working—the conditions of the home office. Thus, one of the principal limitations of this study is the incomplete representativeness of the considered elements of the working environment. Moreover, the research concerns different employers and very varied working conditions in the period studied.

6.2. Future Research

In future research, it is important to determine whether—following the difficult period of the first phase of the pandemic—attitudes to these relationships changed during subsequent periods. A frequently declared reason for the dissatisfaction of academic teachers with the switch to remote working was the excessive workload and resulting tiredness, which may have a large impact on the low quality of relations with the immediate superior, or the reduction of the high level of autonomy to which those teachers had been accustomed. Thus, in future studies, it will be valuable to determine how these relations are affected by the factors of independence, work–life balance, and tiredness. Thus, it would be interesting to explore the extended environment in future research. More importantly, future researchers should try to explore the aspects of social responsibility and refer to the studies depicting the different factors of social responsibility visibility in the organization [2].

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