

PSYCHOSOCIAL ADAPTATION TO WORKING FROM HOME

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the psychosocial adjustment to working from home was surveyed on samples of 201 respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 201 from Montenegro, 221 from North Macedonia, and 408 from Serbia. The research was carried out using a questionnaire with 13 questions on the Psychosocial Adjustment Scale, specially created for this research. This research aims to describe the positive and negative aspects of the adjustment to working from home. Additionally, the research will examine the similarities and differences among respondents from four countries of the Western Balkans. The findings showed that the psychosocial adaptation of the respondents was positive, in general. However, respondents in all four countries highlighted the lack of time for socializing with close friends. They also underlined the feeling of social isolation due to working from home as the most difficult. The authors noticed that one of the reasons for the challenges of enduring social isolation and loneliness is the more emphasized collectivist patterns of sociability in the countries of the Western Balkans than in Western countries. Respondents from Montenegro show significantly weaker psychosocial adaptation in several aspects compared to respondents from the other three countries. In this regard, the respondents from North Macedonia are similar to a certain extent, however, the respondents from B & H and Serbia are the most similar to each other. The authors provided possible explanations for these similarities and differences.

Keywords: work from (at) home, psychosocial adaptation, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

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INTRODUCTION

The foremost noteworthy advantage of the novel model of work is that it increases worker independence [1] and fortifies inspiration [2]. Having control over the plan of work activities and impacting the arrangement of an adjustment between work and private life brings a sense of fulfillment, all resulting in great mental well-being [3]. On the other hand, negative aspects of working from home have their roots in a wide range of mental and psychosocial issues. It is fundamental to emphasize that the line between the positive and negative aspects of this model of work is sometimes tenuous.

Furthermore, remote workers often lose support from colleagues [4]. The independence of remote workers can be altogether decreased. It can happen due to an unreasonable desire for assistance that others can provide in accomplishing their objectives [5]. Poor mental health among remote workers is a serious problem in most countries [6]. Within the UK, 16 million working days were misplaced due to destitute mental well-being in 2016, costing Britain £65 billion or 3% of net national income. Dutch remote workers have the foremost battles with mental well-being in OECD nations, costing the Netherlands 3% of the national salary yearly (OECD, 2014). Within the European Union, due to the depression, the overall costs of misplaced efficiency, restorative costs, and incapacity installments sum are 620 billion euros [7].

The situation in Japan is more unfavorable; 66% of Japanese laborers detailed that their mental well-being has been impeded, and their claims for emolument due to these issues have expanded ninefold within the past two decades [8]. Having in mind this or perhaps a bleak epidemiological picture in Europe and Japan, the authors point out that for effective remote work and the conservation of mental well-being, the support and understanding of the work organization and the family are imperative [9]. Besides they propose various measures for the anticipation of mental issues, such as breaks for chatting, brief morning strolls, etc. In any case, they too point to a few key steps which were actualized in Japan. For instance, the four-day workweek, in Japan led to a 40% increase in efficiency [10].

Among the negative phenomena, social isolation holds a critical place. Also, back in 1983 in the United Kingdom, as numerous as 60% of remote workers distinguished separation as their greatest issue [11]. Remote workers concluded this by comparing themselves with others; others ended up as an indicator for themselves [12] [13]. According to another analyst, social isolation and forlornness are key to the development of other negative enthusiastic issues such as uneasiness, irritability, worry, etc. [14].

An issue that managers often neglect is presenteeism. Presenteeism not as it were cruel expanded working hours but moreover working while being sick. Presenteeism is shown by the appearance of diminished truancy and reduced sick leave. Rather than not doing work that day due to well-being issues, remote workers usually ask for the morning off and frequently work all day. This appears to be an issue for all workers, not only for remote workers. The requirement for such "behavior" is conditioned by the exertion to anticipate all conceivable repulsive occasions related to the emergency, which can be imposed through cutbacks or short-term work engagements, compensation decreases, etc.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the urge for technical support was the key figure to the success of working from home. Nevertheless, with the improvement of modern technology, this issue has generally been overcome nowadays. According to one study, common mental issues of individuals who work from home are depression, peevishness, stress, hatred, and blame [15]. Forlornness is one of the foremost serious sentiments of individuals who work remotely. It happens as a result of a need for the social bolster, which leads to the advancement of frailty and a need for certainty in one's capacities. Crabbiness happens due to the intrusion of social ties and the misfortune of control over the circumstance that happens due to the obstacle from others [16]. Among remote workers, peevishness increases since the individuals who obstruct are at a physical distance. Concerns emerge from the lack of support, particularly when it comes to troublesome assignments or errands with a brief due date. Worry can turn into panic.

Resentment happens most regularly as a result of the failure to detach from work and the need for acknowledgment of any kind due to an excessive amount of work. Moreover, sentiments of disappointment can be seen when coming up short to oversee favorite family activities. Blame emerges from the inconceivability of building up an adjustment between work and family commitments, which leads to inner clashes among remote workers, and dissatisfaction due to a need for support.

Anxiety, social confinement, forlornness, and stress regularly lead to depression, which is shown by a set of indications:

- loss of interest in sex and hobbies;
- rest disarranges, including a sleeping disorder and oversleeping;
- tiredness and lack of vitality; even little assignments require additional exertion;
- the increased desire for food;
- uneasiness, eagerness, and anxiety;
- issues with thinking, concentration, decision-making, and memory;
- unexplained physical issues, such as back torment or cerebral pains." [17].

The foremost common and extreme result of struggle and imbalance between family life and work is burnout [18] [19][20]. At the same time, it clears out an arrangement of negative results on our psychosocial status [21] [22] [23]. Prior, it happened in a limited circle and was showed by angry outbursts, irritability, and frustration even over small little things [24] [25] and nowadays it regularly happens between distinctive and far-off professions. Burnout can be characterized as "a side effect of individual weariness, depersonalization, and decreased individual success".

Researchers of other studies reported physical health problems based on subjective assessments (pain, musculoskeletal problems, etc. [26] [27]. Noteworthy are several studies in which researchers observed mental health. The studies highlighted the following outcomes: well-being, stress, depression, fatigue, poor

quality of life, strain, and reduced happiness. Researchers who conducted these studies point out that working from home can have positive or negative effects on mental health depending on the behavior of family members, organizational factors in the company, social ties, especially outside working hours, etc. [28] [29] [30] [31][32].

Remote workers also complain about moderate career progression since their work is less obvious to managers, whereas all efforts and social promotions of office workers are assessed when managers make choices [33]. They can get the impression that they are bypassed in all critical activities and processes of the company [34].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Starting from these basic discoveries, our inquiry has an exploratory character, and the research objectives don't stem from a stronger theoretical-hypothetical premise.

The first objective is to depict distinctive positive and negative perspectives of psychosocial adjustment to working from home in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

The second objective is to look at the similarities and contrasts within the psychosocial adjustment of remote workers within the previously mentioned four countries of the Western Balkans.

SAMPLES

Four samples comprise of 1031 respondents from four countries of the Western Balkans: 201 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 201 from Montenegro, 221 from North Macedonia, and 408 from Serbia. The samples have a helpful character since they incorporate everybody who works from home and who agreed to fill out the survey in electronic form. Due to the need for representativeness, all generalizations that come about to the common populace of those who work from home are untrustworthy and can serve more as points of interest in future research.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The main research instrument is the 14-item Psychosocial Adjustment Scale (see Table 2). The answers were given in the form of a five-point Likert scale (Table 2). The introductory part of the questionnaire refers to socio-demographic data, the way of working, the type of activity, and the length of work that respondents perform at (from) home.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Activities of working from home by country

Activities	Bosnia and Herzegovina N %	Montenegro N %	North Macedonia N %	Serbia N %	In total: N %
Administration	1 0,5	1 0,5	0 0,0	0 0,0	2 0,2
Other	30 14,9	13 6,5	8 3,6	16 3,9	67 6,5
Economy, law, finance, research	8 4,0	5 2,5	3 1,4	21 5,1	37 3,6
Construction	5 2,5	13 6,5	12 5,4	23 5,6	53 5,1
Industrija	17 8,5	15 7,5	23 10,4	39 9,6	94 9,1
IT and programming	52 25,9	4 2,0	22 10,0	30 7,4	108 10,5
Cosmetic and hairdressing services	6 3,0	8 4,0	3 1,4	16 3,9	33 3,2
Marketing	9 4,5	2 1,0	5 2,3	14 3,4	30 2,9
Eduaction	22 10,9	39 19,4	51 23,1	65 15,9	177 17,2

Traffic	1 0,5	18 9,0	12 5,4	8 2,0	39 3,8
Trade	35 17,4	58 28,9	53 24,0	124 30,4	270 26,2
Tourism	11 5,5	23 11,4	23 10,4	39 9,6	96 9,3
Art (Web Design)	4 2,0	2 1,0	6 2,7	13 3,2	25 2,4
In total:	201 100,0	201 100,0	221 100,0	408 100,0	1031 100,0

Besides a few similarities within the activities that respondents from the four countries of the Western Balkans performed from home, a few noteworthy contrasts can moreover be observed (Table 1). The foremost critical is that in B &H more than a quarter work within the IT segment, which is a few times more than within the other three countries of the Western Balkans, particularly Montenegro. On the other hand, education through platforms is more present in Macedonia and Montenegro than within the other two nations, whereas the most prominent similarity is the expansive representation of trade (Table 1). In total, it can be concluded that the application of data and communication advances is generally constrained, which for the most part influences the lower effectiveness and efficiency of work from home within the four countries of the Western Balkans, in spite of the fact that certain contrasts can be observed in this regard.

Table 2. Distribution of items from the Psychosocial Adjustment Scale in four countries of the Western Balkans

	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	In total:
Claims ¹	No Indecisive Yes	No Indecisive Yes	No Indecisive Yes	No Indecisive Yes	No Indecisive Yes
1.	19,4 37,8 42,8	64,3 27,4 28,4	37,1 9,5 53,4	34,3 17,2 48,6	
2.	15,5 20,4 64,2	17,9 27,9 54,3	19,0 11,8 69,3	23,3 13,5 63,2	
3.	15,0 18,9 65,1	25,3 22,4 52,3	14,9 15,4 69,7	16,2 11,8 72,1	17,5 16,0 66,6
4.	9,5 15,9 74,7	24,9 23,4 51,6	20,4 11,8 67,9	16,9 17,2 65,4	17,8 17,0 65,3
5.	15,5 31,8 52,8	17,4 30,3 52,3	22,6 24,0 53,4	26,0 24,5 49,5	21,5 27,0 51,5
6.	7,5 17,9 74,6	3,5 29,4 67,2	20,8 13,1 66,1	9,0 18,4 72,5	10,2 19,3 70,5
7.	14,9 25,4 59,7	11,0 30,3 58,7	17,2 17,1 65,6	16,7 22,3 60,1	15,3 23,4 61,2
8.	10,0 28,4 61,7	9,5 24,9 65,7	22,2 19,0 58,9	16,4 26,5 57,2	15,0 24,9 60,1
9.	20,9 25,4 53,7	33,8 28,9 37,3	23,1 19,9 57,1	16,4 20,8 62,7	22,1 23,1 54,8
10.	38,3 27,4 34,3	54,7 18,4 26,8	40,8 27,1 32,2	33,8 28,4 37,8	40,2 26,0 33,8
11.	10,0 20,9 69,2	21,9 28,4 49,8	17,2 17,6 65,2	12,3 14,5 73,3	14,7 19,1 66,1
12.	3,5 14,4 82,1	4,0 21,9 74,1	17,6 13,6 68,8	5,9 11,8 82,4	7,15 14,6 77,8
13.	9,5 20,4 70,2	14,5 18,4 67,2	21,2 15,8 62,9	9,6 13,5 77,0	13,0 16,3 70,7

Since I began my own business, I have had much less time for myself and my leisure activities.

Working from (at) home does not prevent me from allocating sufficient time and inspiration to practice physical activities (exercise/sports)

Working from (at) home has contrarily influenced the sum and quality of rest.

Since I work from home, I pay less attention to my family or partner.

Since I work fr (at) home, I have more time to hang out with friends.

The work I am now doing fulfills me.

My current salary is adequate to cover all my essential needs.

I am beyond any doubt of the longer-term success of the business I am doing right now.

I have inconvenienced separating my work from my private life.

I would like to have more contact with other individuals at work.

Since I work from home, I feel tense and on edge.

¹ The numbers are given in percentages

My family and close friends generally support me in my current work.

Whereas working at (from) home, others (family, companions, neighbors) don't disturb me and I can completely devote myself to work.

It is very important to remember that the negative statements on this Scale are recoded.

Table 1 shows that the first statement "Since I started my own business, I have much less time for myself and my hobbies." there are significant differences between countries. We applied ANOVA ($F=9.881$; $p=0.000$). Respondents from Montenegro have much less time for their hobbies and activities than respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina ($IJ= -0.62189$; $p=0.000$), respondents from North Macedonia ($IJ= -0.61165$; $p=0.000$), and respondents from Serbia ($IJ= -0.58224$; $p=0.000$).

To the second statement "Working from home does not prevent me from designating the sufficient time and inspiration to lock in in physical exercises (exercise/sports)", respondents from Montenegro gave negative answers essentially more frequently than respondents from North Macedonia ($IJ= -0.3224$; $p=0.012$) and less from Serbia than from North Macedonia ($IJ= -0.2159$; $p=0.049$) in spite of the fact that this contrast is nearly at the constrain of factual centrality. No measurably critical contrasts were found between Serbia and Montenegro. It can be concluded that respondents from Montenegro had more issues and less inspiration to engage in physical activities than those from North Macedonia, whereas they don't vary essentially from those from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The question "Is your workspace separated from the space where you spend your free time or rest (a partitioned room, or else a room, living room, etc.)" (Yes/No) isn't included within the handling since it contains a double division. Table 1 appears that respondents from Montenegro were moderately more confronted with diminished and low-quality rest due to working from home; nearly a quarter (22.4%) detailed that they had issues resting. This was affirmed by the findings of ANOVA ($F=10.038$; $p=0.000$). Respondents from Montenegro had essentially more rest issues due to working from home than those in B&H ($IJ= -0.35821$; $p=0.004$) than those from North Macedonia ($IJ= -0.52509$; $p=0.000$) and those from Serbia ($IJ= -0.56940$; $p=0.000$, Table 1).

When inquired: "Since I work from home, I pay less attention to my family or my partner," respondents from Montenegro once more pointed out in a quarter of cases that they pay less attention to their family or partner since working from home (Table 1). These contrasts were affirmed utilizing ANOVA ($F=8.243$; $p=0.000$). Respondents from Montenegro, since they work from home, pay less attention to their family and partner than respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina ($IJ= -0.60697$; $p=0.000$), North Macedonia ($IJ= -0.35814$) and Serbia ($IJ= -0.43638$).

According to the fifth claim, "Since I work from home, I have more time to hang out with friends", no measurably noteworthy contrasts between countries were found ($F=1.182$; $p=0.316$). Table 1 appears that the need for time to hang out with companions due to working from home is communicated indeed in marginally more than half of the cases, and more than a quarter cannot precisely survey it. In any case, it is recognizable that the rate of those who don't think that since of work (from) home they have less time for friends is higher in North Macedonia, and particularly in Serbia, whereas this rate is the least in Bosnia and Herzegovina, taken after by Montenegro. However, these contrasts don't reach the level of factual centrality and we ought to consider them as gentle propensities.

The 6th explanation "The work I am right now doing fulfills me" shows that the respondents are by and large fulfilled with the work they do from home. The rate of disappointed individuals ranges inside exceptional contract limits from 3.5% (Montenegro) to 9% (Serbia, see table 1). The as-it-were exemption is for respondents from North Macedonia, where the rate of those disappointed with their occupations who work from home comes to as much as 20.8% (table 1). ANOVA too appeared that respondents from North Macedonia are altogether less fulfilled with their current work from home than all others ($F=4.542$; $p=0.004$). They are less fulfilled than respondents from B&H ($IJ= -0.2982$; $p=0.005$), Montenegro ($IJ= -0.2683$; $p=0.012$) and Serbia ($IJ= -0.3220$; $p=0.000$).

Three-fifths of respondents from all four nations are exceptionally fulfilled or fulfilled with their current salary, whereas the rate of those who are disappointed is as it were almost one-sixth (table 1). Compared to the work that the respondents do from home with which they are most fulfilled, the respondents are moreover fulfilled with their current salary, in spite of the fact that to a somewhat lesser degree (see table 1). Be that as it may, the contrasts between nations in terms of current salary don't reach factual centrality ($F=0.122$; $p=0.947$).

Respondents in all four countries are sure of the future success of their current work in approximately three-fifths of cases (Table 1). Applying ANOVA, no measurably critical contrasts were found between nations ($F=2.463$; $p=0.061$). In any case, it ought to be noted that respondents from North Macedonia are relatively foremost doubtful almost the long-term success of the work they are now working on, which can clarify why the esteem of the F test in this case test, approaches the significance limit of 0.05.

Respondents from Montenegro have more issues separating their work from home and their private life than all others; a third said they had issues, and much less within the other states (see Table 1). Those relative contrasts are the biggest in Serbia, where twice as numerous respondents had these issues (table 1). The contrasts are factually profoundly noteworthy ($F=14.023$; $p=0.000$). Compared to B &H, they are ($IJ= -0.48259$; $p=0.000$), North Macedonia ($IJ= -0.46386$; $p=0.000$) and Serbia ($IJ= -0.73101$; $p=0.000$).

Respondents from Montenegro less than all others need to have contact with other individuals while working from home; it ought to be noted that more than half did not express that need (Table 1). The contrasts are measurably critical compared to the other three nations; almost B&H ($IJ= -0.35821$; $p=0.000$), North Macedonia ($IJ= -0.32516$; $p=0.015$), and Serbia ($IJ= -0.50578$; $p=0.000$).

Because of working from home, respondents from Montenegro are the tensest and most anxious of all (Table 1). It is interesting to note that the highest percentage of respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina said that they do not feel tense and anxious while working from home (around 70%) and similarly those from North Macedonia, while respondents from Serbia in almost three-quarters of cases expressed confusion and ambivalence of feelings about working from home. The differences are statistically significant when it comes to Montenegro and others, as well as between Serbia and North Macedonia ($F=12.672$; $p=0.000$). Respondents from Montenegro are significantly more tense and anxious while working from home than those from B&H ($IJ= -0.50746$; $p=0.000$), North Macedonia ($IJ= -0.36402$; $p=0.000$) and Serbia ($IJ= -0.62533$; $p=0.000$). Respondents from Serbia are less tense and anxious than respondents from North Macedonia ($IJ=0.26131$; $p=0.9$).

Relatives and friends supported respondents in their work from home in very similar percentages, while relatives and friends supported them relatively least in North Macedonia, followed by Montenegro (see Table 1). Respondents from B&H were significantly more supported in working from home than respondents in North Macedonia and Montenegro, and also respondents from Serbia compared to Macedonia and Montenegro ($F=10.718$; $p=0.000$). Relatives and friends support significantly more in B&H than in North Macedonia ($IJ=0.4053$; $p=0.000$) and Montenegro ($IJ=0.2189$; $p=0.033$). They are also supported more in Serbia than in North Macedonia ($IJ=0.4495$; $p=0.000$) and Montenegro ($IJ=0.2631$; $p=0.003$). B&H and Serbia do not differ significantly from each other.

Finally, family and friends do not disturb our respondents to work from home and they can devote themselves to work in large percentages ranging from slightly more than two-fifths (North Macedonia) to over three-quarters (Serbia, see Table 1). In this regard, Serbia and B&H are the most similar. However, the differences are still statistically significant ($F=7.138$; $p=0.000$). Family, friends, and neighbors hinder respondents from Serbia from fully devoting themselves to work at home more than respondents from North Macedonia ($IJ=0.4342$; $p=0.000$) and from Montenegro ($IJ=0.3029$; $p=0.003$) Respondents from B&H are also less disturbed than those from Macedonia ($IJ=0.025$, $p=0.025$). No statistically significant differences were found between Serbia and B&H.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

According to the structure of activity in all four countries, trade dominates, followed by the education and tourism (Montenegro and North Macedonia) industry, while according to our non-representative samples, the IT sector is the most represented in B&H. As a whole, it can be concluded that the application of information and communication technologies is relatively limited, which generally affects the lower efficiency and productivity of working from home in the four countries of the Western Balkans, although the IT sector is significantly more represented in B &H than in the other three countries.

Taking into account that the negative claims have been recoded, we conclude that the psychosocial adjustment to working from home within the four countries of the Western Balkans is quite good. In any case, respondents in all four countries are more influenced by the need of socializing with other individuals (articulation 10) due to the need for time for socializing (explanation 5, see Table 2). Social confinement

and forlornness are the key psychological issues of those who work from home in all four countries of the Western Balkans, as within the already specified inquiry about [11] [12] [13] [14].

More visible shapes of social isolation, conditioned by collectivist-cultural designs in all four countries than in Western countries, likely contribute to the expanded social confinement of respondents in all four countries.

There are contrasts between countries regarding the psychosocial adjustment to working from home, and the foremost critical is between respondents from Montenegro and respondents from the other three countries. Respondents from Montenegro, compared to the other three (or two) countries appear more of the taking after issues in psychosocial adjustment:

- since they work from home, they have less time for physical activities and side interests;
- they have altogether poorer quality rest;
- since they work from home, they pay less attention to family and friends;
- they have more issues separating their work from their private life than respondents in all other three countries of the Western Balkans;
- respondents from Montenegro less than all others need to form social contact with near individuals;
- whereas working from home, they feel tenser and on edge than everybody else.

As conceivable variables for the poorer psychosocial adjustment to work at the home of respondents from Montenegro compared to respondents from the other three countries, one ought to take into consideration the need for advancement and jumble of financial exercises, a general level of consumerism, particularly amid the COVID-19 widespread. Almost a third trade online. Besides the exceptionally unfavorable financial circumstance, one ought not to disregard the turbulent political setting, which made something else confounding social circumstances indeed more complicated.

Although working from home is one of the best strategies of choice in such social constellations, there is a big issue of installing the necessary technological infrastructure in a short time, even though the personnel base was in all probability satisfactory.

Finally, due to an overemphasized ego, every failure is psychologically harder to experience and causes greater anxiety and tension, which is conditioned by culturally formed and inter-generationally inherited collective narcissistic patterns.

4. The respondents from North Macedonia are somewhat similar to the respondents from Montenegro, primarily in terms of reduced sociability and less connection with the family. Also, respondents from North Macedonia are relatively the least satisfied with working from home, which can perhaps be explained by lower-paid educational work through platforms, with simultaneous overload.

In terms of psychosocial adaptation to working from home, the respondents from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are the most similar.

5. The foremost imperative finding of this study isn't just a great psychosocial alteration in all four states. With minor deviations, respondents in all four countries appear not as it were great psychosocial alteration, but too unified fulfillment with working from home, earnings, belief that they will be effective in the future, and unified conviction that the current work and work-from-home would not be changed. How can these contrasts be explained when compared with earlier studies? It appears that the answer lies within the reality that working from home through data and communication innovations gives essentially better-earning openings, more prominent freedom, and way better control over proficient life. At the same time, there are more opportunities for entrepreneurial activities than when working with managers, where all these conceivable outcomes are altogether constrained or in numerous segments they are missing. Additionally, obtaining permanent employment in all the countries of the Western Balkans is hard to achieve, with the exception of the IT sector.

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