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PECULIARITIES OF REMOTE WORKING IN TERMS OF EMPLOYEE JOB POSITIONS

Eka Maghlaperidze

Kutaisi International University,

Kutaisi, Georgia

E-mail: emaghlaperidze@gmail.com

ORCID 0000-0002-2126-4369

Davit Dugladze

Georgian state teaching university of

physical education and sport,

Tbilisi, Georgia

E-mail: dugladzedavit@gmail.com

ORCID 0000-0001-6738-5409

ABSTRACT. The adoption of remote work, also known as telecommuting, has been growing at a really fast pace in the last few years. The revolution in communication technologies has affected all aspects of social life. Internet has become the basis of the new economy and a major contributor to globalization and information technology development. However, it became especially relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, when the vast majority of companies were forced to switch employees to remote work mode. Remote working is in the special spotlight now, since COVID-19 challenged many, if not all, companies by making the remote work an essential prerequisite for the continuation of corporate activities and existence in general. Under the influence of the modern digital world, Globalization and of course Covid-19 Pandemic, the classical meaning of the workplace has changed and today, as never before, remote work, also known as telecommuting, is one of the most relevant and popular forms of employment contract. The main factor of employee motivation is not only a salary any more, but emotional well-being, flexible work schedule and an autonomy are no less important to them today. In addition to competitive challenges, it is important to motivate employees, since without it, it is difficult to acquire and retain loyal employees who are not constantly looking for the new opportunities in the labor market. Therefore, we find it interesting to examine the consequences of remote working and employee attitudes towards it. In this research, we have identified the remote work peculiarities, determined the link between job positions (Top-level managers, middle-level managers and workers) and employee job satisfaction, self-rated productivity, career advancement opportunities and related tasks. Finding of the study can be very useful for many companies in order to successfully implement the remote working model and achieve their goals.

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Introduction

Remote work is becoming increasingly popular across the globe due to the increase of new information and communication technologies, and the number of companies, at the same time, being positive about this approach is growing every year. Investigations of the impact of the remote work as a flexible form of work performance, began as early as the 1970s. The term “telecommuting” was first coined by Jack Nilles [1] in the 1970s, when he was working remotely as an engineer on NASA's communications systems and referred to his work as telecommuting. He later defined telecommuting as the way of working outside of a standard workplace through telecommunications and computer-based technology [2]

Remote work presents many advantages and disadvantages for both the organizations and the employees [3],[4]The most important advantage of telecommuting is that it allows the employee to do

business and perform activities from the desired location. Besides this, remote worker enjoys the advantage of a flexible work schedule, autonomy and cost savings. The most important disadvantage of remote work is the lack of direct social contacts which leads to social isolation and the difficulty of separating working and non-working hours (work and home lives). It is noteworthy that the remote work mode allows the employer to use the available resources more efficiently, they can reduce organization's overhead/facility costs, also the investments and expenditures in office building. Offering telecommuting work arrangement reduces employee turnover, provides organizations with a larger talent pool and increases employee productivity, which in turn is in the best interest of the company [5]

The adoption of remote work is increasing significantly all over the world. According to the 2020 State of Remote Work survey, which was conducted worldwide and surveyed 3,500 remote workers, 57% of respondents were full-time remote workers and 45% of employees worked part-time, with 27% working more than half of their time, and 18% working less than half of their time remotely[6]. According to the Global Workplace Analytics 2020, 5 million employees (3.6% of the U.S. employee workforce) were working remotely half-time or more in 2018. Compared to 2005, this figure has increased by 173%, almost 47 times faster than the number of self-employed, which is characterized by a 4% growth[7]. Also, according to a large-scale survey conducted by PwC International in the United States in June 2020, 72% of remotely employed people said they would like to work away from the office for at least twice a week, while 32% of employees said they would prefer to work from home for all of their time, i.e. 5 days a week, even after Covid – 19 is no longer a threat[8] It is very interesting that, according to PwC recent research, employees want to return to the office more slowly than employers expect. By July 2021, 75% of executives expect that at least half of office employees will be working in the office. In comparison, 61% of employees expect to spend half their time in the office by July [9]. As we can see, job positions can have a great impact on expectations and preferences about future working conditions. In our study we examined how job positions are related to employee attitudes towards remote working and if there are any significant differences between top-level managers, middle-level managers and workers.

Literature review

Theories and the fundamental studies about the remote work developed by foreign scientists and scholars, as well as textbooks of Georgian scientists on human resource management represent the theoretical basis of this research. In order to study the topic in depth and enrich the theoretical knowledge, we have become familiar with the primary literature and studies related to the topic of investigation, such as: *“The Long-Distance Leader: Rules for Remarkable Remote Leadership”* by Kevin Eikenberry & Wayne Turmel 2021, *“Making the New Normal Work for You”* by Karen Mangia 2020, *„Telecommuting and Virtual Offices: Issues and Opportunities“* by Nancy J. Johnson 2020, *“The Ultimate Guide to Remote Work”* by Wade Foster and the Zapier Team 2015, *„Effective strategies to manage the teacher intellectual work productivity in distance learning”* by Kharadze, N., Giorgobiani, M., Melkoshvili, T., Dzebisauri, L., & Pirskhalaishvili, D (2021) and many more. All of these works aim to present the ways how remote workers can get the work done effectively, build relationships that are both productive and satisfying, and maintain a career path when they are not in constant close contact with their manager, leader, coworkers, or the organization in general.

Methodological approach

Based on a survey of 528 people working at different insurance companies in Georgia, we assessed the remote work peculiarities and in particular, how the remote worker job positions affect their perceptions and attitudes towards remote working style. The sample size of 528 people has ensured the representativeness of

the survey results. Research was conducted using a questionnaire survey method, it was carried out remotely via emails using Google Forms. First Section of the questionnaire survey contained the demographic items and the second section was developed to learn the respondents' attitudes towards remote working, with the sub-section of Likert Scale assessment tool. Various statistical procedures and methods (statistical software package) were used in the processing of the questionnaire and data analysis, including: descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation analysis, filtering, frequency distribution, Chi-square tests, etc...

Conducting research and results

The aim of the research is to study the peculiarities of remote work in terms of job positions in the insurance sector of Georgia and to find the ways of its improvement. Based on the aim of our research, the following objectives were formulated:

- Identify the link between job positions and the employee attitudes towards preferred remote working intensity;
- Identify the link between job positions and the employee views about advantages and disadvantages of remote work;
- Determine a link between job positions and employee job satisfaction;
- Determine a link between job positions and perceived self-rated productivity;
- Assess the impact of job positions on employee perceived career advancement opportunities;

The Survey Analysis Of Remote Work Peculiarities In Terms Of Job Positions

In order to understand the influence of employee job positions on their attitudes towards remote working, we formulated the below hypotheses:

H1: Employees' job positions have an important influence on preferred remote work intensity;

H2: Employees' job positions affect their opinions about the biggest advantages of working remotely

H3: Employees' job positions affect their opinions about the biggest disadvantages of working remotely;

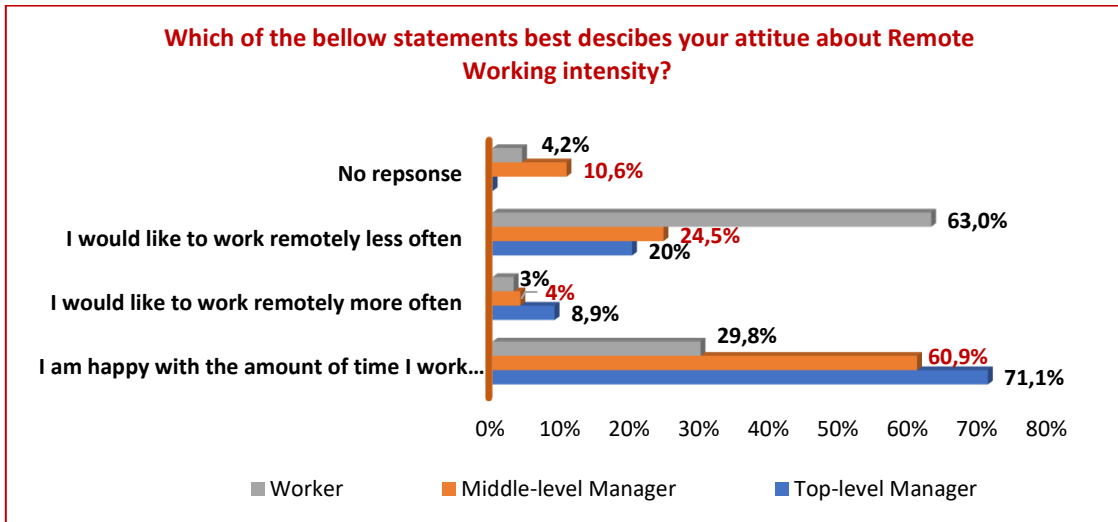
H4: The feeling of job satisfaction is different according to the respondent's job positions;

H5: Opinions about reducing the chances of career advancement opportunities differ among the groups of respondents according to their job positions.

By testing these hypotheses, we will be able to comprehensively assess the impact of job positions on remote working experience.

According to research results, via cross-tabulation analysis, it turned out that 71.1% of top managers are satisfied with the time they devote to remote work. 63% of workers would like to work more rarely remotely (Figure 1), which uniquely allows us to conclude that people who work fully remotely have a sense of dissatisfaction with this style of work. We will find out exactly what shortcomings they see from the following questions. According to Pearson Chi-Square Test (Table 1), there is a maximum statistical correlation between these two variables: job positions and the attitude towards remote work intensity, at the level of 0.001 (statistical significance level $P < 0.001$). Therefore, the first hypothesis was proved to be true, and it is revealed that employees' job positions have an important influence on preferred remote work intensity;

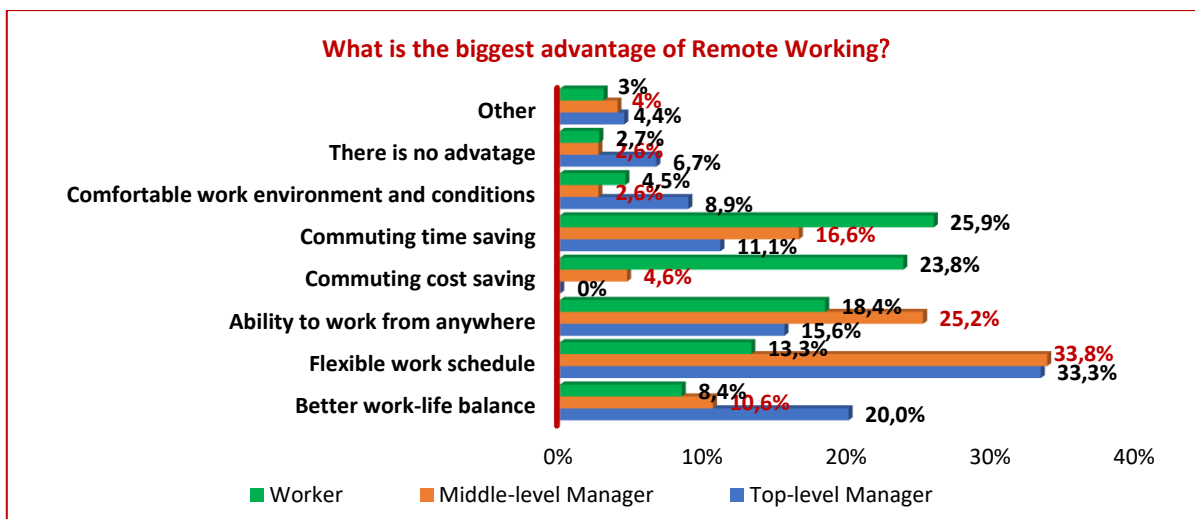
Figure 1. Desired intensity of remote work in terms of job positions



For the top-level managers, a flexible work schedule proved to be the biggest advantage of remote working (33.3%), followed by a better work-life balance with 20% and the ability to work from anywhere with 15.6%. As for the specialists, the biggest advantage for them is the commuting time savings (25.9%), followed by a commuting cost saving by 23.8% and the ability of work from anywhere by 18.4%. In case of middle-level managers, for them, like for top-level managers, a flexible work schedule is preferable (33.8%), ability to work from anywhere takes the second place with 25.2% and commuting time savings with 16.6% (figure 2). The results prove that remote work has different positive outcomes according to the hierarchical ranks of employees, workers are unlikely to have high salaries, therefore it is important for them to reduce transportation costs, as well as reduce the time of commuting and spend it more with family or work again. The top three advantages for all three hierarchical levels include the ability to work from anywhere, which means that everyone enjoys flexibility at work.

According to Pearson Chi-Square Test (Table 1), there is a maximum statistical correlation between the two variables: job positions and the biggest advantages of remote working at the level of 0.001 (statistical significance level $P < 0.001$). Therefore, the second hypothesis was proved to be true, and we conclude that employees' job positions affect their opinions about the biggest advantages of working remotely;

Figure 2. Advantages of remote working in terms of job positions

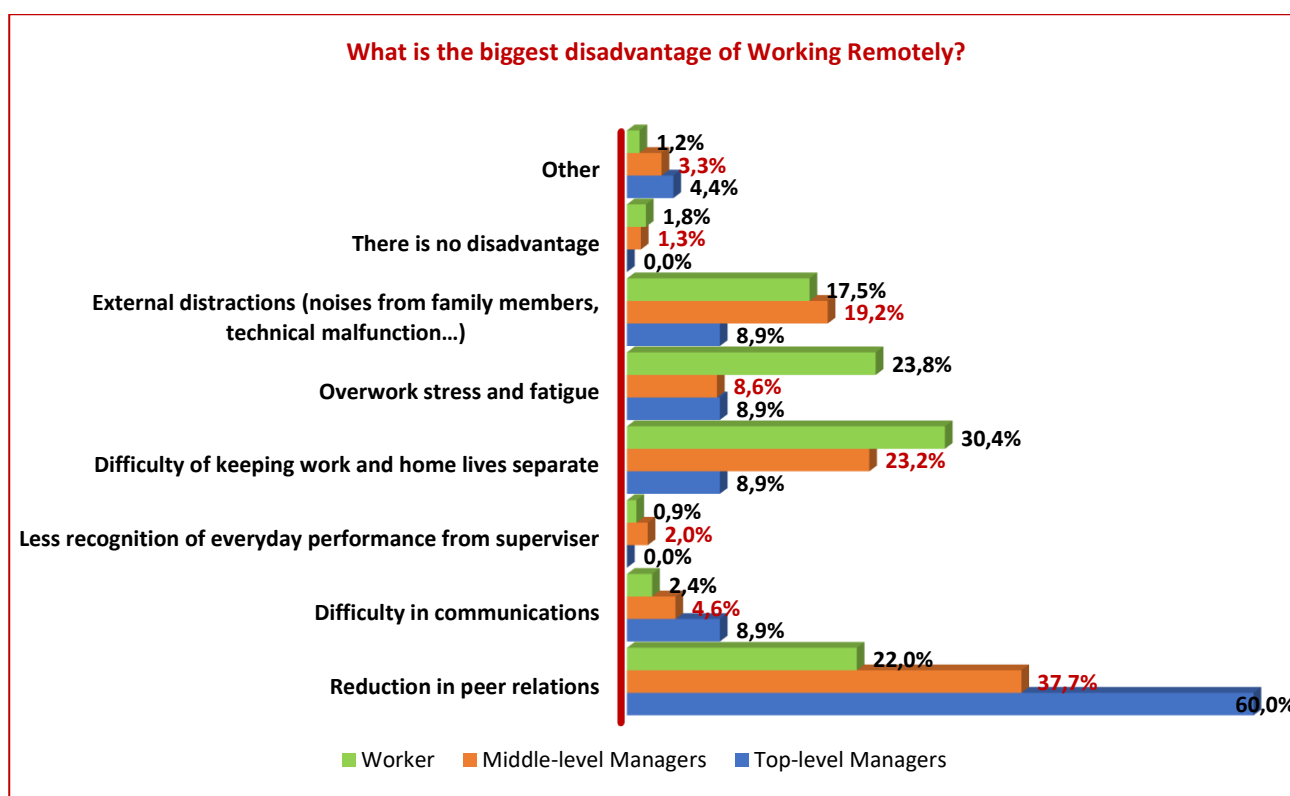


As it turned out, the reduction of relations with colleagues is the biggest drawback for both top (60%) and middle-level managers (37.7%). As for the worker level, for them the difficulty of separating working and non-working hours, the stress and fatigue caused by excessive work, as well as the reduction of relations with colleagues are the 3 biggest shortcomings (figure 3), which can be explained by the fact that they mostly work 5 days a week, fully remotely, therefore they suffer from a lack of socialization and are addicted to technology, which usually leads to the above shortcomings.

According to Pearson Chi-Square Test (Table 1), there is a maximum statistical correlation between the two variables: job positions and the biggest disadvantages of remote working at the level of 0.001 (statistical significance level $P < 0.001$). Therefore, the third hypothesis was proved to be true: Employees' job positions affect their opinions about the biggest disadvantages of working remotely;

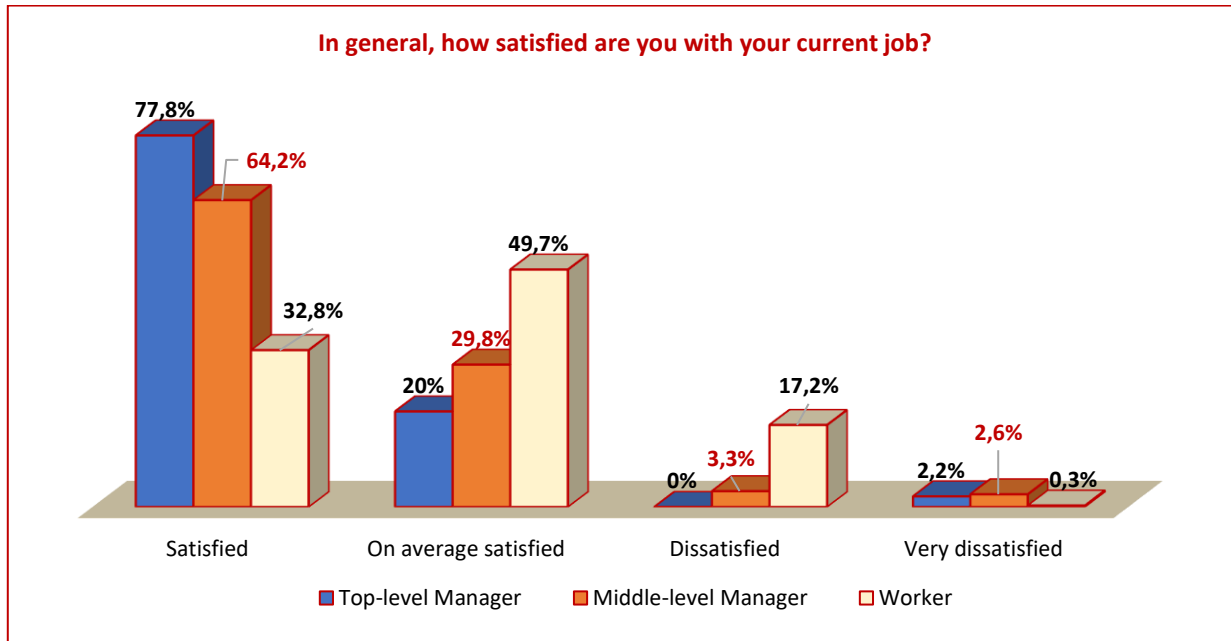
It was found that 77.8% of top managers and 64.2% of middle-level managers are satisfied with their job. As for workers, 32.8% are satisfied and 49.7% are satisfied on average (Figure 4). These results suggest that the general situation with remote work in insurance companies is such that it puts senior and middle managers in a more favorable position than the rest workers. This may be due to excessive control over workers, increased work-family conflict and social isolation, the difficulty of separating working and non-working hours, reduced chances of career advancement, and so on.

Figure 3. Disadvantages of remote working in terms of job positions



According to Pearson Chi-Square Test (Table 1), there is a maximum statistical correlation between the two variables: job positions and the job satisfaction during the remote work at the level of 0.001 (statistical significance level $P < 0.001$). Therefore, the 4th hypothesis was proved to be true: the feeling of job satisfaction is different according to the respondent's job positions;

Figure 4. Job satisfaction in terms of job positions



We can make a very interesting conclusion by cross-tabulating the positions of remote employees and their career advancement chances. It is obvious that workers (65.4%) have negative expectations about career advancement opportunities (Figure 5), these are the employees who want to be promoted the most, therefore consider remote working as one of the important obstacles and disadvantages in this regard.

According to Pearson Chi-Square Test (Table 1), there is a maximum statistical correlation between the two variables: job positions and the career advancement opportunities during the remote work at the level of 0.001 (statistical significance level $P < 0.001$). Therefore, the 5th hypothesis was proved to be true: Opinions about reducing the chances of career advancement opportunities differ among the groups of respondents according to their job positions.

Figure 5. Career advancement opportunities in terms of job positions

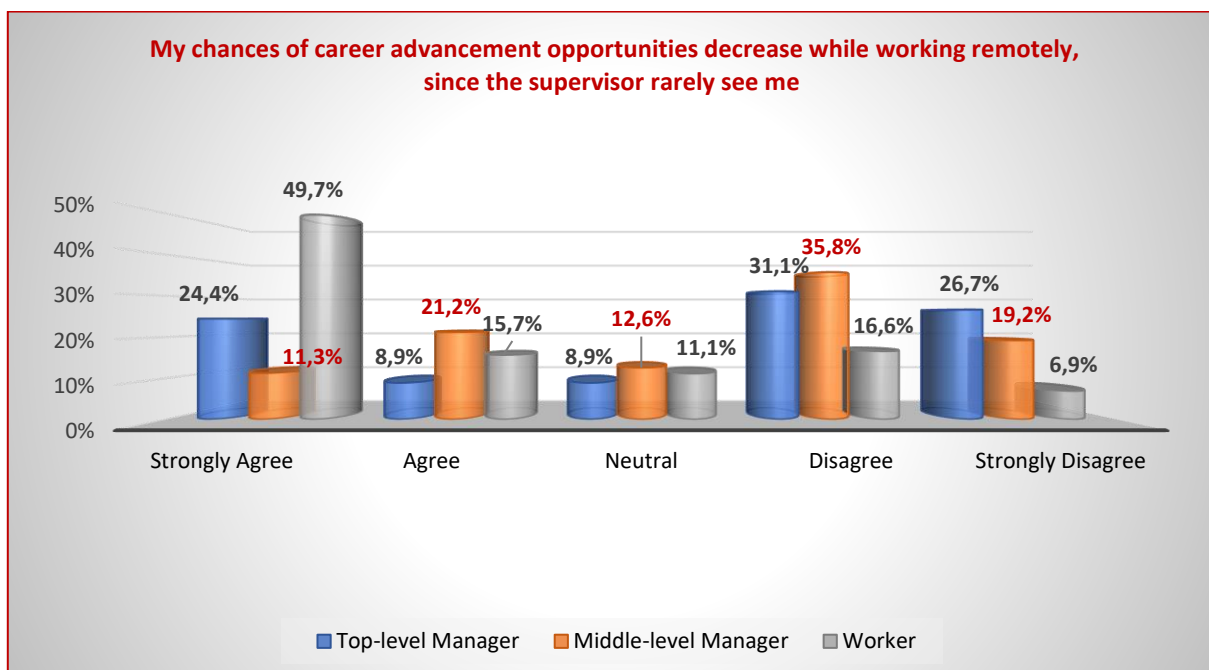


Table 1. Pearson Chi-Square Tests

		Q9. Job Position
Q16. Which of the below statements best describes your attitude towards remote working?	Chi-square	87.280
	df	6
	Sig.	.000
Q20. What is the biggest advantage of Remote Working?	Chi-square	76.813
	df	14
	Sig.	.000
Q21. What is the biggest disadvantage of Working Remotely?	Chi-square	60.630
	df	14
	Sig.	.000
Q28. In general, how satisfied are you with your current job?	Chi-square	77.232
	df	6
	Sig.	.000
Q40. My chances of career advancement opportunities decrease while working remotely, since the supervisor rarely see me.	Chi-square	87.276
	df	8
	Sig.	.000

Conclusion

According to research results, the positions held by the respondents in the insurance companies in Georgia, influence their remote work experiences and views. Most of the top-managers are satisfied with the time they devote to remote working unlike the rest of the workers. Majority of workers point out that they would like to work remotely less often, and name the disadvantages of remote work such as the difficulty of separating work and non-working hours, the stress/fatigue caused by overwork, and the reduction of relationships with colleagues. As for the advantages of remote work, the ability to work from any location for an employee of all three hierarchical levels is a significant advantage. Also, the feeling of job satisfaction is different according to the respondent's job positions while remote working and workers are less satisfied and have more negative expectations about career advancement opportunities compared to top-level managers.

Based on the research results, we have developed several recommendations regarding the remote work format:

- Managers and employees working remotely should be very careful about the issue of remote working, as it can have a negative impact on employees' job satisfaction and their expectations about career advancement opportunities[10];
- Top managers should take care not to over-control employees, since excessive control can lead to demotivation [11]
- Achieving job satisfaction in remote working conditions require maximum involvement of both the company and the employee: frequent online meetings with modern means of communication; creating appropriate conditions for remote working; proper recognition and evaluation of the employees' performance by the manager[12]; [13]
- It is important to monitor employees and evaluate their work performance regularly, when they are working remotely, so that they do not feel their daily workload is not recognized by the supervisors [14].

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ეკა მაღლაფერიძე

ქუთაისის საერთაშორისო

უნივერსიტეტი,

ქუთაისი, საქართველო

E-mail: emaghlaperidze@gmail.com

ORCID 0000-0002-2126-4369

დავით დუგლაძე

საქართველოს ფიზიკური

აღზრდისა და სპორტის

სახელმწიფო სასწავლო

უნივერსიტეტი,

თბილისი, საქართველო

E-mail: dugladzedavit@gmail.com

ORCID 0000-0001-6738-5409

მიღებულია: იანვარი, 2022

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**დისტანციური მუშაობის თავისებურებები
თანამშრომელთა სამუშაო პოზიციების ჭრილში**

აბსტრაქტი. თანამედროვე მსოფლიოში დისტანციური მუშაობა, რომელსაც ტელეკომუნიკაციები უწოდებენ, საკმაოდ გავრცელებული პრაქტიკაა, უკანასკნელი წლების განმავლობაში კი მუშაობის ადნიშნული ფორმის დანერგვის მაჩვენებელი ძალიან სწრაფი ტემპით იზრდება. კომუნიკაციისა და ტექნოლოგიების სფეროში რევოლუციამ საზოგადოებრივი ცხოვრების ყველა ასპექტზე იქონია გავლენა. ინტერნეტი ახალი ეკონომიკის საფუძველი გახდა, რომელიც გლობალიზაციისა და ინფორმაციული ტექნოლოგიების განვითარების ხელშემწყობი უმნიშვნელოვანესი ფაქტორი აღმოჩნდა. თუმცა, დისტანციური მუშაობა განსაკუთრებით აქტუალური კოვიდ-19-ის პანდემიის პერიოდში გახდა, როდესაც კომპანიების აბსოლუტური უმრავლესობა იძულებული გახდა თანამშრომლები დისტანციური მუშაობის რეჟიმზე გადაეყვანა.

დისტანციური მუშაობა განსაკუთრებული ყურადღების ცენტრშია, ვინაიდან გლობალურმა პანდემიამ კომპანიების აბსოლუტური უმრავლესობა მნიშვნელოვანი გამოწვევის წინაშე დააყენა: დისტანციური მუშაობა საქმიანობის გაგრძელების ერთადერთი და შეუცვლელი წინაპირობა გახდა. თანამედროვე ციფრული სამყაროს გავლენით სამუშაო ადგილის კლასიკური მნიშვნელობა შეიცვალა და დღეს, ისე როგორც არასდროს, დისტანციური მუშაობა წარმოადგენს დასაქმების ერთ-ერთ ყველაზე აქტუალურ და პოპულარულ შრომითი შეთანხმების ფორმას. დღეს ადამიანთა შრომითი მოტივაციის უმთავრეს ფაქტორს მხოლოდ ხელფასი აღარ წარმოადგენს, მათთვის არანაკლებ მნიშვნელოვანია ემოციური კეთილდღეობა, მოქნილი სამუშაო გრაფიკი და აღქმული ავტონომიის შეგრძნება. კონკურენტული გამოწვევების პარალელურად, ძალიან მნიშვნელოვანი ხდება თანამშრომლების მოტივაცია, რადგან მის გარეშე რთულია ისეთი ერთგული თანამშრომლების მოზიდვა და შენარჩუნება, რომლებიც მუდმივად ახალ შესაძლებლობებს არ ეძებენ შრომის ბაზარზე. აქედან გამომდინარე, საინტერესოდ მიგვაჩნია თანამშრომელთა დამოკიდებულებების შესწავლა დისტანციურ მუშაობასთან დაკავშირებით. მოცემული კვლევიტ ჩვენ გამოვავლინეთ დისტანციური მუშაობის თავისებურებები, დავადგინეთ კავშირი სამუშაო პოზიციებსა (უმალღესი დონის მენეჯერები, საშუალო დონის მენეჯერები და სპეციალისტები) და თანამშრომელთა სამსახურით კმაყოფილებას შორის. შევისწავლეთ ასევე თანამშრომელთა თვითშეფასებაზე დაფუძნებული პროდუქტიულობა, კარიერული წინსვლის შესაძლებლობები და

სხვა საინტერესო საკითხები დასაქმებულთა სამუშაო პოზიციების ჭრილობი. მოცემული კვლევის შედეგების გამოყენება მრავალ კომპანიას დაეხმარება დისტანციური მუშაობის ფორმატის წარმატებით დანერგვასა და დასახული მიზნების მიღწევაში.

JEL Classification: O15, J81

საკვანძო სიტყვები: დისტანციური მუშაობა, სამუშაო პოზიციები, სამუშაო კმაყოფილება, გლობალიზაცია, სამუშაო ადგილი, მოტივაცია, თანამშრომლები, კარიერის მენეჯმენტი

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