

The Experiences of New-Starters: Remote Working in The Post-COVID-19 Era

Meri TAKSİ-DEVECİYAN (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9206-0315>), *İstanbul Kültür University, Türkiye;*
m.taksideveciyan@iku.edu.tr

Hazal Koray ALAY (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6638-3089>), *Batman University, Türkiye;*
hazalkoray.alay@batman.edu.tr

Yeni Başlayanların Deneyimleri: COVID-19 Sonrası Dönemde Uzaktan Çalışma

Abstract

This study aimed to understand the experiences of information technology sector employees who started their first job using remote working. A semi-structured interview, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. Twenty-four interviews were conducted to understand the effects of the advantages and disadvantages perceived by the employees regarding the remote working method on their life and career aspects. Two prominent and five sub-themes emerged in this research. The main themes regarding the perceptions of those who start their business life within the scope of remote work and the advantages/disadvantages of working remotely are the sub-themes: perceptions of their managers, career life, corporate culture, work-life balance, and learning processes.

Keywords : Remote Work, New Starters, Learning, Organizational Culture, Work-Life Balance, Job Autonomy, Self-Discipline.

JEL Classification Codes : M5, M12, M21, M54.

Öz

Bu çalışma, uzaktan çalışma yöntemiyle ilk işine başlayan bilgi teknolojileri sektörü çalışanlarının deneyimlerini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma desenlerinden yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme kullanılmıştır. Görüşmeler, çalışanların uzaktan çalışma yöntemine ilişkin algıladıkları avantaj ve dezavantajların yaşam ve kariyer yönlerine etkilerini anlamak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, içerik ve betimsel analiz kullanılarak analiz edilmiş, temalar, alt temalar ve kodlar oluşturulmuştur. Bu araştırmada iki ana ve beş alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Uzaktan çalışma kapsamında iş hayatına başlayanların algılarına ilişkin ana temalar; uzaktan çalışmanın avantajları/dezavantajlardır, alt temalar ise; yöneticilerine yönelik algılar, kariyer yaşamı, kurum kültürü, iş-yaşam dengesi ve öğrenme süreçleridir.

Anahtar Sözcükler : Uzaktan Çalışma, Yeni Başlayanlar, Öğrenme, Örgüt Kültürü, İş-Yaşam Dengesi, İş Özerkliği.

1. Introduction

One of the sharp changes experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic was seen in working methods. Many companies chose to work from home, albeit temporarily, to protect the health of their employees. One of the first measures taken during the pandemic was the general spread of the work-from-home system. The business world has managed its processes with its employees at home, except for specific sectors, so as not to disrupt its services while protecting employee health. Even before the pandemic, some companies allowed their employees to work from home on certain days of the week, and productivity studies were conducted on this. In other words, working from home was an issue that the business world included in their plans long before the pandemic. Moreover, there are many critical studies on the increase in productivity (Allen et al., 2015: 40-68; Bailey & Kurland, 2002: 385; Bentley et al., 2016: 210). The practicality of online meeting platforms, the ability of workgroups to do almost any work in the computer environment, the ease of sharing files and data in parallel with the increase in access speed, the ability to work on the same documents, the infrastructures that allow devices to be managed remotely, and many other technological opportunities enable us to perform our duties without actually getting up in the morning and going to work. Humanity is reconstructing its lifestyle through digitalisation, with which people integrate quickly. Many changes thought to occur shortly are happening even more recently, i.e., at present.

Research on remote work methods before the pandemic was conducted within the context of "work design and outcomes" and was associated with responsibility, relations, and organisational structure (Cooper & Kurland, 2002: 520; Di Martino & Wirth, 1990: 532; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007: 1530). After the pandemic, the remote work method has been examined by associating it with many individual and organisational variables such as "better performance, job satisfaction, well-being, psychological state, motivation, communication, socialisation, and learning" (Wang et al., 2021; Charalampous et al., 2021: 16-59). However, how the remote work method, which has become so widely adopted and is the subject of academic studies, is perceived by new starters has not yet been adequately examined. In this context, this study sought answers to the following research questions: *Can new starters develop a sense of belonging to the corporate culture without ever seeing the office environment and meeting their colleagues and managers face-to-face? How do new starters perceive the effect of remote work on their life and career aspects? What benefits and challenges do new starters think the remote work model has?* These questions constitute the starting point and primary purpose of this research. Through this research, the researchers hope to observe the role of the characteristics of the remote work method in shaping the experiences of new starters. In the following sections, the researchers will try to present a theoretical framework on the subject by first summarising the remote work literature's past, present, and future information. In the next section, several variables inherent in the remote work method will be synthesised with the findings of previous studies, and some inferences for new starters will be made. Then, the results of semi-structured interviews will be presented to explore the experiences of new employees who have started their business lives through the remote work model during the pandemic. Finally, the results of the findings

obtained as a result of the research will be discussed, and some recommendations will be provided for managers and employees.

2. New Starters and Remote Work

The COVID-19 pandemic process has caused a radical change in individual and organisational life, especially in health. In the 21st century, which we call the digital age, the digitalisation process of world economies has accelerated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of the remote work model, which was implemented with the support of digital technologies, into business and working life and is a preferred method for many employees and workplaces worldwide, has become a norm even if it started due to the pandemic. Even though the pandemic is over, it has brought permanent habits to the business world. In addition, this situation requires companies to update their human resources practices and policies. The most important of these updates is the process of recruiting new staff. In this context, in the following sections, some factors affecting the remote work process of those who have just started working life are examined.

2.1. Learning Process of the New Starters and Organizational Culture

The global health crisis has had far-reaching effects on candidate selection, recruitment, and candidate orientation. During the pandemic, many employers, unlike usual, have had to start their newly hired personnel remotely, not in the office or the workplace. In addition, the importance of continuous mentoring, personal support, and guidance has increased to prevent employees from lacking social learning in the office environment. At this point, when the literature is examined, *social learning theory* (Bandura, 1977b: 200), which claims that individuals learn by imitating the behaviours of others, comes up. Social learning theory explains how individuals learn by observing and then imitating the behaviour of others in social situations. Social learning suggests that employees are influenced by the behaviour of their colleagues through modelling (Brown & Rector, 2008: 400). In this context, situations that can be learned faster in the office environment, such as the adaptation process, adoption of organisational culture and values, getting to know managers and colleagues, learning business processes, and crisis management for those who have just started working with the remote work method cannot be managed through the social learning process due to the nature of remote work. Studies emphasise that a tried and tested online learning and training program is an important variable that will accelerate the employee's job learning process. A comprehensive learning and development program has been proven to advance new employees much faster than when this program is not implemented, and a supportive environment will help new employees develop (Jabutay & Rungruang, 2020: 60-79; Putinas-Neugebauer & Roland-Lévy, 2021: 308-325).

To introduce a new employee to the company in a digital environment without human warmth, all department managers and the human resources department must be in solidarity and cooperation. But how exactly can this process happen remotely, and how do new starters learn about the job behind a screen? The question is important. According to the study of

Laker et al. (2021), the answers to this process design should include the following steps: documents such as company introduction, organisational structure, and employee handbook should be made suitable for online sharing, the company should be introduced carefully on the first day, questions should be answered, and computer, mobile phone or other tools should be available to the employee. A mentor responsible for newly recruited employees should be appointed, contact the new employee, and follow up on motivation and performance. Of course, the adaptation process of the new employee is not only under the responsibility of the human resources department and the company. The new employee is the most important stakeholder in this process and should cooperate with her/his company (Laker et al., 2021: 1-4). It is not easy to manage the situation correctly for new starters who experience their first work experience through the remote work method, have never worked in an office environment before, and communicate with their colleagues from behind a screen. When the literature is examined, there are studies on the difficulties experienced by new employees who have work experience and leave the workplace for different reasons and start working in a new institution or were transferred to another unit of the company or a branch in a different country (Gray, 1975: 33-37; Jahoda et al., 2009: 422; Bauman, 1995: 17-21; Kauppinen et al., 1998: 410; Morrison & Brantner, 1992: 926; Jerman et al., 2020: 388-402). Situations that can often disturb the new starters in these studies include management styles, administrative procedures, and all the organisational features that make up the distinctive "cultural characteristics" of the new institution. At this point, corporate culture is very important. Thanks to a corporate culture built on solid foundations, the stability of the social system can be maintained, the attitudes and behaviours of the employees are shaped, and it becomes easier to manage. In short, corporate culture can also be defined as an institution's rule of the game. However, the power of corporate culture changes the effect it creates. Consistency and continuity are the best part of having a strong corporate culture, which is always desired and targeted. The downside is that it has the potential to hinder what needs to be done to adapt to a changing world. The change, which has become mandatory with rapid digitalisation, especially for the remote work method, can create insurmountable obstacles for those with weak and strong corporate cultures. Strengthening the corporate culture or managing change may become more difficult in low-centralized working models such as remote work. The low frequency of face-to-face communication makes it difficult to maintain common cultural norms and create new ones. Newcomers to the institution are not accepted as full members until they learn the rules of the corporate culture game. For this reason, it is very important to determine new methods for those who start their experience in the institution as "remote employees" to adopt the corporate culture. At this point, the flexibility and adaptability of corporate culture play a key role (Westerman et al., 2019: 59-68; Howard-Grenville, 2020: 1-4; Herway & Hickman, 2020: 1).

2.2. Impact of the Job Autonomy and Self-discipline on The New Starter's Career

Remote workers can decide where to run their jobs, flexible working hours, and job-task priority. Although there are some limitations for new employees who step into business

with the remote working method, previous studies indicate that autonomy, one of the predecessors of the self-determination theory, is an important parameter of the remote work method. According to the self-determination theory, autonomy increases the internal motivation of employees and positively affects their personal and professional behaviours (Deci & Ryan, 1985: 111; Deci et al., 2017: 30). Autonomy and the opportunity to take responsibility, which will be given to remote workers, lead to an increase in the level of performance and productivity. In addition, in the research conducted by Charalampous, Grant and Tramontano (2021: 340), it is stated that the higher the position held within the organisation, the more comfortable the employees are in changing or stretching the timing of the work. On the other hand, Sardeshmukh et al. (2012: 200) emphasise that remote workers experience less emotional exhaustion as the autonomy granted to employees can reduce role conflict and work pressures. Those at the beginning of their careers need to apply a "job crafting" model, in which employees design their job descriptions and work to better reflect their strengths, interests and core values by reducing or reorganising roles and responsibilities that deplete and make employees feel inadequate.

Due to the job autonomy, monitoring, and workload features in the general structure of the teleworking model, negative situations such as work-home interference, ineffective communication, procrastination, and loneliness are more common in new beginners but cause difficulties in all employees (Wang et al., 2021). According to the study of O'Neill et al. (2014: 291-298), employee self-discipline is the individual difference factor that significantly impacts these challenges. The work autonomy offered to employees by the remote work method causes focusing problems and distractions very quickly in individuals with low self-discipline. Self-discipline is also effective in completing the work on time, knowing when to take a break, and establishing a work-life balance during the remote work process. Problems in work-life balance also affect the mental health of employees. At this point, it is stated that the social support to be provided by the organisation, as well as the self-discipline during remote work, is an important variable to reduce the loneliness of the employees; otherwise, it is inevitable for the employees who move away from the office environment to experience a lack of social-engagement due to the decrease in interaction (Khawand & Zargar, 2022: 42-46). It is also important to manage this process correctly for those who have just started to work without ever seeing the office environment.

2.3. Work-Life Balance of New Starters

Work-life balance is the individual's equal distribution of time, energy and responsibilities between life roles. The determining factors of work-life balance are divided into "individual" and "organisational" factors. Individual factors are listed as work orientation, personality, personal control, gender, age, life and career. Organisational factors are job demands, work culture, and non-work life demands. It is known that work-life balance is related to many variables. When the individual and organisational results of work-life balance are examined, it is seen that variables such as job and life satisfaction, physical and mental health, general well-being, stress, interaction with other people in the workplace

and interaction with other people in non-work life, emerge (Guest, 2002: 340; Vyas, 2022: 160).

Considering the working conditions of individuals today, it isn't easy to achieve a work-life balance, but individuals, society and organisations need to provide a work-life balance. While it is stated that work-life balance is associated with an increase in job satisfaction, organisational commitment, productivity and life satisfaction, it is noted that work-life imbalance is related to the rise in stress level, decrease in life satisfaction, decrease in organisational commitment, productivity and performance, depression and burnout (Bell et al., 2012; Van Zonen et al., 2021). However, the fact that the working process takes place entirely at home, along with the pandemic, has made it even more difficult to balance work and personal life. At this point, the problems that those who do not have the practice of working remotely face and may encounter are also uncertain. When the work/life balance literature is examined, "boundary theory" emerges in this context. Boundary theory is a theory based on Nippert-Eng's (1996) classical sociology studies, which explains how people make sense of their personal lives (family life) and work environments and how they make connections, boundaries and transitions between these areas (Ashford et al., 2000: 480). Boundary theory argues that providing work and life balance, in general, can be explained by the integration and blurring of the boundaries between these areas and reveals that this situation affects the happiness level of the individual (Allen et al., 2014: 50). The individual's attitudes and behaviours play an active role in balancing work/life responsibilities. It is inevitable to experience conflicts where work/life balance is not provided, and the borders are blurred (Bentley et al., 2016: 210). Time, energy, and focus are among the resources that are limited for each individual. In studies dealing with the effects of work-life balance on individual and organisational outcomes during the pandemic process in the context of *compensation theory* and *conflict theory* (Galanti et al., 2021: 426; Tewel et al., 2021: 30), it is stated that incompatibility among work, family, and life affects job satisfaction and performance and causes waste of individual and organisational resources.

2.4. Virtual Management

Human management, which is one of the main activities of management, is generally a difficult and highly responsible process. Managers who want to be successful and effective must be able to manage others. In this case, issues such as the personal development of employees, adaptation to change processes, and employee motivation are vital for every manager to be successful. The monitoring and management of such a challenging process in virtual work environments requires managers to be open to the development and transformation of digitalised technologies to ensure sustainable business success (Sainger, 2018: 1). Petrucci and Rivera (2018: 55) state that effective and successful virtual or digital managers need to have sufficient technical knowledge and practical experience, as well as keep up with digital transformation. In addition, digital leaders must have expertise in digital technology, critical thinking, and people management skills (Euler, 2015: 1).

A study examining the employer-employee perspective on the digitalisation of human resources practices in Germany shows that the meetings titled "Stand Up and Touch Base", where employees share their experiences, thoughts, concerns and feelings, organised by managers to support the adaptation and motivation processes of those who start working during the remote work period reveals that it increases the loyalty and trust of the employees to the institution. The difficulties felt by the nature of the remote work method bring a sense of relief by speaking freely through meetings like this one organised by the managers, hearing that others have had very similar experiences, and finding answers to their questions (Putinas-Neugebauer & Roland-Lévy, 2021: 310).

Working in a company does not mean just working on projects or generating products/services/ideas. While employees create the dynamic and social environment of the company, they also adopt the company culture's basic values, beliefs and behavioural norms (Verbeke et al.,1998: 303-329). From this point of view, the managers' communication network is critical for the new starters to get to know and adapt to the institution. Rather than experienced employees who are new to the company, a properly established communication network is even more important for those who start their business life remotely at the beginning of their career. In addition to online training, workshops and activities, a mentoring system that will enable them to learn and network with experienced colleagues is an important strategy to be implemented at this stage (Jabutay & Rungruang, 2020: 60-79; Hope, 2020: 9; Janene-Nelson & Sutherland, 2020: 30-55; Heo, 2015: 21-34). While a good mentoring system accelerates the adaptation and learning process, this situation is perceived as a disadvantage in institutional structures where the employee is left alone. Another advantage of the remote work method for the beginning of their career is the opportunity to contact senior executives through online meetings and training and benefit from their experiences (Laker et al., 2021: 1-4). Studies have shown that the expectations of employees from managers during remote work are that the manager is accessible, friendly, clear, reassuring, empathetic, supportive and contributing to the development of team members (Pandey et al., 2022: 1-21).

3. Methodology

The qualitative research method was used as a research method to make sense of the experiences of those who have just started working life and the experience of working remotely. In the qualitative research method, the researcher's tendency to observe behaviour and collect data related to the problem, which is the subject of the research, in his natural environment is dominant (Cresswell, 2017: 72-98). The purpose of using phenomenology, the preferred research design in the study, is to be a powerful method based on individuals' perspectives, past experiences, and perceptions. Data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews with semi-structured questionnaires using the phenomenology design.

3.1. Study Group

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 interviewees working in the IT sector. The main reason why the interviewees were chosen from the IT sector is that the IT sector is the sector that has transitioned and implemented the remote working method the fastest after the pandemic. Another reason is that researchers have easier access to employees in this sector. In the study, the interviewees focus on the perspectives of 24 people who have just entered the IT sector in Turkey (without region-city restrictions) and started their professional careers by working remotely. Information about the interviewees is detailed in Table 2. In analysing the data obtained after the interviews, the MAXQDA 2022 program was used using content and descriptive analysis, and the results were interpreted with a phenomenological approach. The descriptive study aimed to present the data formed as a result of the interview and observation to the reader in an organised and interpreted way, and the data were classified, summarised and interpreted according to the previously prepared themes. Content analysis aims to reach the concepts and relationships that will facilitate the explanation of the data obtained. The sample size is expressed as the number of items emphasising the details in the universe of the sample. The mistake often made by researchers who use qualitative methods in the literature is that more information can be shown with an example, and the universe will be better reflected. What is essential in qualitative research is the quality of the sample rather than its quantity (Mertens, 2014: 3-5). Data size is unimportant for qualitative research (Neuman & Robson, 2014). In qualitative studies, instead of large groups, it is necessary to determine samples that meet the research aims and can present detailed data (Coyne, 1997: 623-630).

3.2. Data Collection

The research data were collected through one-on-one interviews lasting approximately 35-40 minutes, using the "Zoom" online platform, and through an interview form consisting of the research questions. In addition, the research was conducted in approximately 13 months between February 2022 and March 2023.

3.3. Validity-Reliability

A pilot study was conducted with one participant beforehand to ensure the study's validity. When this pilot participant completed the research questions, minor adjustments were made to the interview questions. On the other hand, since interviewing volunteer participants is an important factor in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data collection tool (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008: 102-136), volunteer participants were included in the study. In addition, direct quotations from the interviewees' answers were included to ensure the qualitative data's reliability and validity. In this way, the credibility of the research was tried to be increased. The compatibility with the conceptual framework used in creating the interview forms was constantly checked to increase the credibility of the data obtained. Since the study was carried out by two researchers, during the interviews, while one of the researchers continued the interview, the other asked additional questions and probed when

necessary, ensuring that the relevant questions were fully understood, thus providing adequate answers and avoiding data loss. In addition, in the data analysis part of the research, data triangulation was made using both content analysis and descriptive analysis, and the study's validity was again increased.

3.4. Research Questions

- How does the belonging to the corporate culture (adaptation and learning processes) of those who have their first work experience with remote work develop/take place?
- What are the perceived advantages (benefits) and disadvantages (ease/difficulties) perceived by those who have their first work experience with remote work?
- How do those with their first work experience perceive the impact of remote work on various life and career aspects?

With the answers to their questions, it will be tried to make sense of the remote work experiences of those who have had their first work experience with remote work, and the effect of this process on individual and organisational outputs will be explained and discussed. The researchers created the research questions using the studies of Baert et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2021).

Table: 1
Socio-demographic Characteristics of Interviewers

Interviewers Code	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Education	Position/title	Work experience
P1	26	Male	Married	Master Degree	Cloud Services Developer	6 months
P2	25	Male	Married	Master Degree	Automotive-System developer	2 year
P3	24	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Computer Technician	1 year
P4	21	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Computer Technician	6 months
P5	21	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Computer Technician	14 months
P6	20	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Junior software engineer	3 months
P7	22	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Junior software engineer	7 months
P8	23	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Bank Operation Specialist	5 months
P9	20	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Help Desk Specialist	3 months
P10	22	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Help Desk Specialist	1 months
P11	20	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Junior software engineer	5 months
P12	23	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Data Center Support Specialist	2 years
P13	24	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Customer Support Specialist	3 years
P14	22	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Game Developer	8 months
P15	24	Female	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Information security	10 months
P16	22	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Junior software engineer	2 years
P17	20	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Software engineer	5 months
P18	24	Female	Single	Master Degree	Java Developer	2 years
P19	23	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Telecommunication engineer	1 years
P20	26	Female	Single	Master Degree	Network Specialist	5 years
P21	21	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Content Developer	8 months
P22	21	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Computer Programmer	4 months
P23	26	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Network Specialist	2 years
P24	21	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Programmer Analyst	1 years

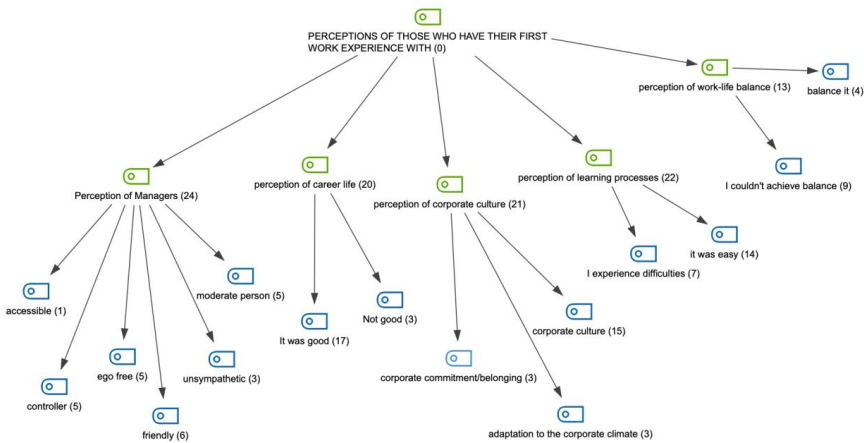
4. Findings

This part of the study compiled, analysed and interpreted by detecting repetitive expressions and collecting similar codes under themes. In this part of the research, the

findings related to the participants' demographic information and first work experiences will be included. Then, the results of the advantages and disadvantages perceived by those who have had their first work experience with remote work will be included. Table 1 gives information about sociodemographic characteristics of interviewees.

The sub-themes, which were created according to the answers given by the interviewees to our question about the perceptions of those who had their first work experience with remote work, are divided into five sub-themes as shown in Figure 1: Perceptions of their managers, career life, corporate culture, learning process and work-life balance. In addition, the codes of the sub-themes are also included in Figure 1.

Figure: 1
Model of Sub-Themes and Codes of Perceptions of Those Who Have Their First Work Experience with Remote Work



As a result of the analysis made using the MAXQDA 2022 qualitative data analysis program, the codes of the sub-themes are:

- Perception of Managers: friendly, controller, accessible, moderate person, unsympathetic, ego-free.

It was observed that those who had their first work experience with remote work perceived their managers primarily as friends ("he was very **friendly** and of course tried hard to convey his knowledge, P6"). It was determined by coding their answers with direct quotations (in vivo).

- Perceptions of career life: it was good.

It is also understood from Figure 1 that the perceptions of those who had their first work experience with remote work about their career life were mostly in the form of "*it was good*" (with the answers from 20 interviewees). Since all interviewees did not mention their perceptions about their career life, the code was created with the responses received from only 20 interviewees.

"My first experience was with remote work, and I still work remotely. I am very happy that it is like this" P13.

"I would say it was a good effect. I didn't have a hard time because it was remote" P12.

- Perception of corporate culture: corporate culture, corporate commitment/belonging, adapting to the corporate climate.

Considering the perceptions of those who started their first work experience with remote work, interviewed within the scope of the study, it was determined that they mostly gave answers towards the corporate culture.

"There is a horizontal hierarchy, there is respect. Everyone is understanding and helpful". P6

"There are rules and authority, of course". P10

- Perception of the learning process: It was easy, but I experienced difficulties.

The answers given by the perception they experienced during the learning process were to be examined, and it was determined that most of them perceived their first work experience with remote work as "easy".

"Because I was already educated, I didn't have much difficulty. You could say it was easy". P17

"There isn't much to learn anyway. Easy job... I wasn't forced, of course". P16

- Perception of work-life balance: I couldn't achieve balance, I balanced it.

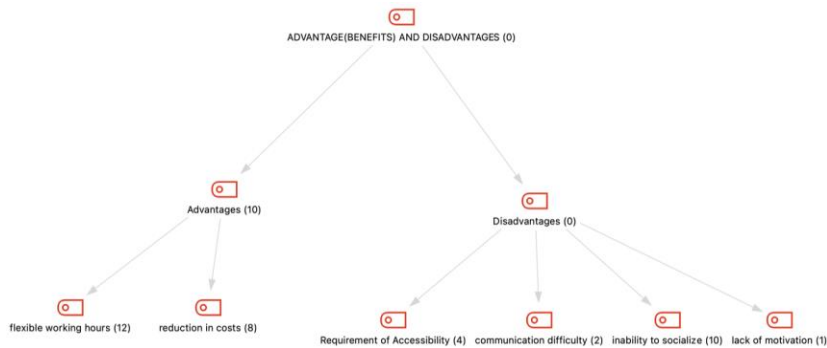
The answers received from the interviewees to our question about work-life balance were coded, and the answers as "I couldn't achieve balance" were determined in establishing a work-life balance.

"...because my father is constantly making noise at home, my brother is crying" P12.

"What compels me to run my private life and business from home? I share the same house with my girlfriend, and she also needs attention; I have to cook, I mix two things simultaneously, and I can't achieve balance". P9

Among the answers given by those who had their first work experience with remote work and were interviewed within the scope of the research, two sub-themes (advantages and disadvantages) of the advantages/disadvantages that they perceive to have started their working life with remote work have been identified in Figure 2.

Figure: 2
The Model of Sub-Themes and Codes of the Theme of Advantages/Disadvantages Perceived



From the given answers, it was determined that those with their first work experience with remote work perceived “remote work” as the most advantage.

- Codes of the Advantages sub-theme: flexible working hours, autonomy, reduction in costs.

From the given answers, it is seen that the most repeated expressions of the sub-theme of the advantages they perceive when starting their business life with remote work are coded as flexible working hours.

“For me, it meant convenience, flexibility, and autonomy” P12

“The biggest advantage is my time management. I can complete my work whenever I want, provided I pay attention to deadlines, I am flexible and independent” P10.

- Codes of the disadvantages sub-theme: requirement of accessibility, communication difficulty, inability to socialise, lack of motivation.

It is seen in Figure 2 that the most repeated expressions of the sub-theme of perceived disadvantages at the point of starting their business life with remote work, among the answers given by those who had their first work experience with remote work, were coded as inability to socialise.

“There is no colleague, no office, no sociability” P24

“I have a hard time finding friends; sometimes I say I live like a couch potato” P23

Figure: 3
Theme-Sub Theme-Code Cloud



As shown from the theme-sub-theme-code cloud in Figure 3, the themes of managers, perception of corporate culture, and perception of learning processes, created using the MAXQDA 2022 program, stand out. Regarding these themes, it can be stated that it would not be wrong to interpret that these are the themes that those who have their first work experience with remote work often perceive in their working life (in the context of remote work).

Figure: 4
Code Cloud



In Figure 4, the theme, sub-theme, and code cloud in Figure 3 are presented in large fonts according to the frequency (repetition) created only in the code dimension. As can be seen from the code cloud, the prominent (most repeated) codes are "it was good", "corporate

culture", and "it was easy". The results are not surprising in that these prominent codes are also codes for the most emphasised themes in Figure 3.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study, in which in-depth interviews were conducted with new starters through semi-structured questionnaires, reveal the disadvantages and benefits of remote work, which is the new normal of our lives with the pandemic process. In the research, it has been determined that the perception of the managers of the employees who have their first work experience with the remote work method is in parallel with their perception of the corporate culture and learning processes. The manager's friendly approach facilitates the employees' learning process and increases their belonging to the corporate culture. Similarly, the employees' (new starters) ability to establish a work-life balance is shaped by the managers' attitudes and the employee's time management. While flexible working hours and autonomy are perceived as important sources of advantage, having constant access to work (requirement of accessibility) and lack of socialisation are perceived as difficulties of remote work. Although most of these results overlap with previous studies, there are also some differences. The fact that earlier studies on the remote work method did not focus on new starters makes the findings of this research distinctive and important.

Existing studies indicate that remote work can be a source of advantage in terms of establishing a work-life balance for employees (Allen et al., 2017; Shirmohammadi & Beigi, 2022; Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021; Rañeses et al., 2022; Vyas, 2022) However, the findings of this research reveal that for female new starters (P12, P9), remote work has turned into a work-home struggle. In addition, previous studies show that the work autonomy provided by remote work has positive outcomes in individual and organisational terms (Hedström & Gonzalez-Munoz, 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Galanti et al., 2021; van Zoonen et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). However, the findings reveal that new starters struggle to implement their job autonomy. Employees who perform the remote work process at home frequently state that they experience role transitions and have difficulty fulfilling their work and home-family responsibilities (P23, P24). This result, which aligns with the study's findings by Delanoetje et al. (2019), shows that the remote work process also causes role ambiguity and conflict. Being online is always perceived as the job characteristic the participants feel most uncomfortable with. At this point, it is recommended that:

Proposition 1: Although the work-life balance of new starters depends on self-discipline, it can be said that the general well-being and productivity of employees who manage time well will increase.

Since flexible working is applied in situations where the control mechanism is softer, this can be challenging for employees who are new to working life without work experience. Previous research states that over-monitoring and control mechanisms during remote work may have negative consequences (e.g., slowing down work, inability to keep up with the deadline, and experiencing burnout with stress and pressure) (Delfino & Van der Kolk, 2021:

1376-1387; Prasad, 2021: 1-3). While this is true, the fact that new starters may need mentoring must be considered. Additionally, our research found that new starters lack socialisation and feel lonely during remote work. Previous studies reveal that supportive corporate culture and management style are effective in employees' management of this process (Andriyanty et al., 2021: 522-534; Sull & Sull, 2021: 1-7; Bhatia & Mote, 2021: 1905-1916). Based on this result, as stated by Khawand and Zargar (2022), it is very important for the organisation to provide social support for remote work and to feed its employees with events and meetings at regular intervals. In addition, the participants pointed out that they felt the existence of rules and authority but the existence of a helpful and understanding atmosphere (P6, P10). This situation reveals the importance of social learning theory, one of the theories on which remote work is based. Social learning theory is based on the basis that learning is a process that occurs in a social context through interaction, observation, and imitation (Bandura, 2001: 21-41). It can be stated that this is not possible for those who start working with remote work, and if they start with a good mentor or training program and work remotely, there will be no problems in the learning processes. At this point, it is recommended that:

Proposition 2: New starters who receive more support from their institutions will exhibit higher performance by providing faster adaptation.

New starters who started their careers with remote work evaluate this process positively. They can quickly contact their managers online and get together frequently (I guess I wouldn't be in the same meeting with the CEO if I didn't start with remote work, P20), which makes them feel better. In addition, those who began their careers with remote work state that they will choose this method or the hybrid model in their following business model preferences. Getting remote work experience for many reasons, such as the desire of the employees not to live their life between certain hours anymore, determining the will to exist according to their conditions and wishes, living by feeling their social presence even more, the belief that they come to life not only to work but to add value, to create additional income for their budget, those people do not want to lose the advantages of this situation. (Hope, 2020: 9; Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021: 69; Rañeses et al., 2022: 63-81; Vyas, 2022: 155-167; Sinitsyna et al., 2022: 153-164). The research findings also reveal that the participants are generally satisfied with working remotely.

Proposition 3: New starters who adapt to the remote work method may see this as an advantage and want to continue their careers this way.

As a result, when the answers given by those who started their business life with remote work are examined, it is seen that there are two themes, namely their *perceptions of working life* and their *perceptions of advantages/disadvantages*. Whereas the sub-themes of perceptions towards working life were *perceptions of managers*, *perceptions of career life*, *perception of corporate culture*, *perception of the learning process*, *perception of work-life balance*, and sub-themes of advantage/disadvantage were found as *advantages/disadvantages*. As a result of the study, it was determined that those who started

their business life with remote work perceived "*flexible working hours*" as the most advantage, and they mentioned "*inability to socialise*" as a disadvantage.

6. Practical Implication

In this study, which evaluates the remote work method, which is the new normal of our lives with the COVID-19 pandemic, from the perspective of new starters, some recommendations are offered to managers and employees. Our findings provide implications for the systems of organisations and the managers' attitudes. It is seen that many managers spend a lot of effort and effort to adapt their employees to changing conditions (Janadari, 2020: 53). While the business managers were trying to plan for the changing legal and economic conditions to realise the organisational goals, they were also interested in the new organisation brought by these changes and the processes of coordinating the employees and trying to control the outputs by the remote work conditions. On the other hand, during this remote work process, managers faced many problems, such as coordinating employees, communication difficulties and fear of 7/24 reporting, burnout, lack of human interaction, loneliness, and bad health habits (Prasad et al., 2020: 1-3). The research findings reveal that corporate culture and the supportive attitude of managers affect the productivity of remote workers and their perception of this business model.

There are many advantages to working remotely globally. The benefits of the digital age for individuals and organisations, such as saving time and money on the way to work, saving companies from buying office rentals, and providing access to a qualified workforce from abroad, are very attractive. However, as mentioned in this research findings, flexibility and autonomy, which are the characteristics of remote work, can disadvantage employees with low self-discipline. For this reason, companies should pay attention to person-job harmony when making flexible working arrangements (Perry et al., 2018: 577-593; Wang et al., 2021: 16-59).

7. Limitation and Future Research

This research is limited to the perceptions of 24 new IT sector starters who started working with the remote work method in Turkey. Interviews were conducted with semi-structured questionnaires through the "Zoom" platform. The scope of future studies can be expanded as the research questions narrow the size of the factors considered. Therefore, cross-country comparisons can be made in future research on new starters.

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