

# Remote Work and Telemigrants: The New Face of Offshoring and Its Effects on Industrial Relations

Serpil ÇİĞDEM YÜCEL<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>(Assoc. Prof. Dr.), Sakarya University of Applied Sciences, Sapanca Vocational School, Department of Marketing and Advertising, Sakarya, Türkiye

## ABSTRACT

The development of digital technologies is moving work beyond institutional and physical boundaries, leading to the replacement of traditional work models with new and flexible work models compatible with technological innovations. The term telemigrant, introduced by Richard Baldwin in his 2019 article "The Globotics Upheaval: Globalisation, Robotics and the Future of Work", together with the terms offshoring and remote work, forms a new typology that describes non-traditional forms of work. Telemigrants are individuals who work remotely for an employer in another country while physically residing in one country.

This study examines and discusses the concept of telemigrant in conjunction with remote work and offshore configurations, analysing the impact of these developments on industrial relations. A systematic literature review was conducted using sources on remote work and offshoring to understand the emergence of the telemigration trend and explore the underlying reasons behind this new work model. Based on the specified inclusion criteria, 15 articles were analysed. The findings from the systematic literature review show that digitalisation and globalisation are gradually transforming the traditional labour market. Remote work allows employees to perform their tasks through digital tools without physically attending a workplace, while offshoring enables employers to access labour in low-cost countries. As traditional business models give way to new forms of work such as telemigration, it has been found that this shift presents both significant challenges and opportunities for industrial relations. The protection of workers' rights and the development of new organisational models suited to digitalisation processes are becoming increasingly important topics in the industrial relation literature.

**Keywords:** Telemigrants, Remote Work, Offshoring, Industrial Relations

## Introduction

In 1980, futurist Alvin Toffler claimed that advances in telecommunications technologies would usher in the era of the "electronic cottage", where work would return home due to the costs of commuting (Toffler, 2008:446). The rise of remote work and the digital nomad lifestyle that we see becoming more common in modern society were expressed with this concept at the time. With the rise of telecommunications and information technologies, it was thought that individuals would be able to work from home or from remote locations, turning their homes into electronic huts. Although significant developments have occurred since then, it took the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions to reach the levels of remote work predicted by Toffler. Remote work arrangements, which had been technologically possible for years but were not widely used, were quickly adopted due to the lack of any alternatives (Berg, Humblet, and Soares, 2021:185). Although it is not known exactly whether the work-from-home experiment will be permanent in the post-COVID-19 world, we are witnessing many businesses making remote work permanent for at least part of their business.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, remote work has allowed companies to expand their talent pool beyond their immediate geographic areas, allowing them to tap into a global workforce. The infrastructure required for remote work has improved significantly, particularly with the advent of AI technologies, making it easier for companies to coordinate and manage overseas work teams, even if they are spread across different countries and time zones. This is evident in the popular press's attention to the potential for increased offshoring. For example, Will Daniel wrote in Fortune (Daniel, 2022):

*"Since the era of remote work began, business leaders and economists have suggested that companies would begin to consider moving jobs offshore to reduce costs, creating a more difficult environment for white-collar workers."*

**Corresponding author:** Serpil Çiğdem Yücel E-mail: serpilcigdem@subu.edu.tr

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Richard Baldwin, an economics professor at the Graduate Institute in Geneva who has studied the suitability of remote work for offshoring, warned in the Europe-based *Centre for Economic Policy Research* : “If you can do your job from home, be afraid.” Baldwin went even further, adding, “Be even more afraid that someone in India or elsewhere is willing to do it much cheaper”. Furthermore, It wasn’t just Baldwin who said this. Nicholas Bloom, an economist and expert on workplace issues at Stanford University, also told the Wall Street Journal: “Around 10% to 20% of U.S. service support jobs, such as software developers, human resource specialists, and payroll managers, could be moved overseas in the next decade.” (Kelly, 2023).

According to Andrew Van Dam (2022) of the Washington Post, while globalisation has exploited blue-collar workers, especially in the Rust Belt<sup>1</sup>, white-collar workers enjoyed the spoils of globalisation because they knew their jobs could not be easily outsourced, urban professionals are now facing a similar fate. The coronavirus pandemic has greatly accelerated the adoption of remote work, creating a new cycle that could be the most disruptive force to hit the job market since the blue-collar apocalypse of the 2000s, known among economists as the China Shock<sup>2</sup>. With the spread of remote work, one of the biggest obstacles to outsourcing for small businesses has now been removed. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has forced them to go digital and become adept at managing a distributed workforce, leading them to consider outsourcing as the next step (Van Dam, 2022).

For nearly 30 years, advanced industrialised countries have resorted to outsourcing and offshoring strategies to reduce operational costs, gain tax advantages and access cheap raw materials (Leibl et al., 2009:130; Kahai, Sara and Kahai, 2011: 113). Western companies’ offshoring practices have worked well for many years. However, today, offshoring strategies, which mean moving critical operations abroad, especially to developing countries, are being discussed again. Many American companies think that they have gone too far in moving their operations abroad and that they should bring some of these operations back (Umruk, 2023).

These discussions have particularly escalated with President Trump imposing tariffs on trade with China and others, and have continued throughout the pandemic, keeping the public quite busy. In recent years, there have been developments that suggest a shift from offshoring to nearshoring (Taylor, 2021):

\* Nike and Adidas have shifted most production and shoe soles from China to Vietnam.

\*In 2019, Hasbro announced that it hoped to move 50% of its production from China alone by the end of 2020, moving to new factories in Vietnam and India.

\*Samsung ended mobile phone production in China and shifted production to India and Vietnam in 2019 due to rising labour costs and economic slowdowns.

In fact, one of the most important reasons for these developments is that the global source of cheap labour has begun to be run out. While salaries in India have increased by an average of 10-20% per year over the last 10 years, manufacturing wages in the US and Europe have risen only slightly. Although there are still large differences in wages between different parts of the world, other factors such as transportation costs are increasingly balancing the wage gaps (Umruk, 2023).

If the main purpose of offshoring is to reduce labour costs, since many jobs can now be done from home/anywhere with the development of digital technologies, there is no need for offshore strategies. On the other hand, it is thought that the return of operations to the West in blue-collar jobs, which have been shrinking for decades, may lead to a revival in other countries (Umruk, 2023). In fact, the prediction that robots will replace humans with the development of artificial intelligence technologies (Stahl, 2022:18) is also seen as a sign that less manpower will be needed for jobs that rely on physical strength in the manufacturing sector. Indeed, the digital age is completely changing the offshoring industry. The once traditional offshoring model is giving way to a dynamic ecosystem where innovation prevails. With the rise of advanced communication technologies such as video conferencing, instant messaging, and collaborative platforms, geographical barriers are disappearing. In particular, the combination of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and offshoring has sparked a revolution. The emergence of cloud computing plays an important role in reshaping offshoring strategies. Companies can now effortlessly access and share data, allowing an individual to work on the same page as the entire team, regardless of location (Djekic, 2023).

Richard Baldwin argues that "remote work", especially with the emergence of artificial intelligence, will bring a new wave of globalisation for the service sector. However, according to him, this time the white-collar labour market is globalising. Baldwin defines such workers with the term telemigrant. He uses the term "telemigrant" to refer to individuals who live in one country and work for a company located in another country (Pochet, 2021). The phenomenon of remote workers, who are part of the global workforce without physically moving, plays an important role in the modern economy and reshapes traditional offshore concepts. Telemigrants become part of a global workforce that contributes to offshore work without physically moving through

<sup>1</sup> The Rust Belt is a region of the United States located mostly in the Midwest and the Great Lakes. Rust refers to deindustrialisation or economic decline, population decline, and urban decay due to the shrinking of once-strong industrial sectors. The term gained popularity in the United States in the 1980s.

<sup>2</sup> The term “China shock” is used to describe the major economic and social impacts experienced by blue-collar jobs in the United States and other Western countries in the 2000s, particularly after China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001. During this period, China’s integration into the world economy led to job losses and factory closures in many Western countries, especially in the manufacturing sector (see Autor, Dorn, and Hanson, 2013).

remote work (Forte & Ribeiro, 2020). In addition; offshore configurations, outsourcing and remote work create a new typology that encompasses many non-traditional work arrangements (Erickson and Norlander, 2022:72).

Telemigration can be seen as an evolution of offshoring, where instead of moving the physical location of a job or department, the job itself is moved digitally to the employee, wherever that may be. Thus, while offshoring typically involves a physical change in the location of a job, telemigration allows cross-border work without the need for a physical relocation, keeping jobs in a digital space. We are witnessing how globalisation and technological advances have made it possible to separate the workplace from the employer's location, enabling a new form of migration that is virtual rather than physical.

Robert Skidelsky, in his opening speech at the "*Future of Work: Global Dialogue*" conference organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on April 6-7, 2017, stated that thinking about the future of work raises profound questions about the fate of humanity. Emphasising that work has become of great importance for human civilisation, Skidelsky stated that today's world is in a situation similar to a "new middle ages" in terms of work and employment. The medieval period was an important transition period from the ancient world to the modern age. Skidelsky used the metaphor of the "new middle ages" to explain that we are currently in a similar transition phase and to describe the modern era of work and employment as similar to the uncertainty, fragmentation and transition characteristic of the medieval period. Traditional stable employment structures are disrupted, leading to more decentralised and precarious forms of work (Eum and Terrasi, 2017: 8).

In this context, the industrial relations system also needs to adapt to the new realities of remote and flexible working. The traditional industrial relations system bases most aspects of working life on physical workplaces and related structures. This system requires employees to interact directly with their employers, has fixed working hours, and mostly works on-site. In the traditional model, relations between employees and employers are mostly shaped by labour laws, collective bargaining agreements, and workplace practices. This system also includes labour organizations such as unions and worker representatives, which defend the rights of employees and negotiate with employers. However, factors such as the advancement of technology and the recent pandemic have led to the emergence of new working models such as remote working, flexible working hours and the increase in digital interaction methods. The industrial relations system, which was shaped according to the Fordist mass production model, has faced a series of challenges with the spread of non-standard working styles. New developments are transforming the industrial relations system based on the Fordist production model and making the integration of new working models and economic structures necessary.

The industrial relations system, which was shaped according to the Fordist mass production model, has faced a series of difficulties with the spread of non-standard working styles. Since the Fordist model is based on large-scale mass production and standardised work processes, it has difficulty adapting to the flexible working styles that have emerged in the labour market. These changes transform the industrial relations system based on the Fordist production model and make the integration of new working models and economic structures necessary (Pedersini and Coletto, 2009; Buschoff and Protsch, 2008; O'Connor, 2013).

The ability of telemigrants to unionise depends largely on the local labour laws of the country where they work or are legally employed, as well as the policies of the country where they work remotely. The nature of remote migration also creates complexities in the application of labour rights across borders. The laws of the country where the telemigrant is legally employed or the laws of the country where they work remotely may affect unionisation rights. This can be complicated when these laws conflict or when the laws of one country do not recognise certain rights supported in the other. For example, the laws primarily apply to workers who are based in Turkey and work under Turkish contracts. The situation can be more complicated for remote migrants, especially if their employment contracts are under the jurisdiction of another country.

This study aims to understand the concept of the telemigrant by considering it together with remote working and offshoring configurations and to examine and discuss the effects of these developments on industrial relations. For this purpose, the existing literature was examined and analysed using the Systematic Literature Review (SLT) method. Articles written on telemigrant, remote working and offshoring were scanned using Google Scholar. In this study, a systematic literature review was conducted by utilising the remote working and offshoring literature to understand the emergence of the telemigrant trend and to discover the main reasons behind this new working model. Although the literature review was not limited to a specific date range due to the limited number of relevant concepts, it focused on studies conducted in recent years since the relevant concepts are related to dynamic areas such as rapidly changing technologies, digitalisation and labour markets. Key concepts such as "telemigrant", "remote work" and "offshoring" were used in the scanning process. Academic studies that used these concepts together or at least two of them together were meticulously examined, and 15 articles were analysed according to the specified inclusion criteria. The focus was particularly on studies on the labour market and industrial relations. The literature review was conducted using a systematic method, and the interactions of the relevant concepts and their effects on industrial relations were evaluated.

Telemigration refers to employees working remotely via digital tools while being located in a geographically different country. Telemigration emerged as a combination of remote work and offshoring. While remote work allows workers to perform their jobs without going to the physical workplace, offshoring allows employers to provide labour from low-cost countries. Telemigration is

at the intersection of these two trends. Workers can participate in the global labour market through digital tools even if they are physically in a different country.

The SLT method offers the opportunity to evaluate scientific studies on a specific subject from a broad perspective. It is considered an effective research methodology for examining existing studies and synthesising the results and findings in a systematic, transparent and reproducible manner. When an objective and comprehensive evaluation of studies is required, a systematic literature review is an ideal method (Yavuz, 2022).

In today's world where telemigration and remote working trends are rapidly increasing, it is of great importance to examine and discuss these issues in depth. By examining the concepts of remote working and telemigration, the article can expand the conceptual framework in these areas. It can provide an innovative perspective to the literature by offering new terminology and theoretical approaches. By examining the role of remote working and telemigration in this process, unlike the traditional understanding of offshoring, it can provide a comprehensive analysis of how offshoring has evolved. This can fill the gaps in the existing literature. In addition, by investigating the effects of remote working and telemigration on industrial relations, this study discusses the effects of these new forms of work on unions, employer-employee relations and workers' rights. This can make significant contributions to the industrial relation literature. Unions should update their collective bargaining processes according to the new conditions brought about by remote and flexible working, adapt to the digitalisation process, create alternative organisation models through online platforms and increase their capacity to respond to the needs and demands of their members quickly and effectively.

## Conceptual Framework

### The Concept of Remote Work

Although remote work has gained popularity in recent years, especially with the pandemic, it is not a new phenomenon. In the 1970s, the term "remote work" emerged in response to the oil crisis and the need to reduce commuting time. Especially in the United States, oil shortages and limited fuel resources led to long lines at gas stations. Workers began working from home and communicating via the telephone to reduce their daily commute (Bailey, 2022; Ellison, 2004). Since then, remote work has continued to exist in various forms. As Messenger and Gschwind (2016) pointed out, these terms have evolved with technological developments. Recently, particularly with the facilitation of digital technologies, remote work has been implemented in almost all sectors, taking on various forms such as telework and platform work, affecting a number of professions, and its prevalence is increasing (Felstead and Henseke, 2017).

In the literature, remote working is defined in various ways, such as working from home, teleworking, and mobile working. From a traditional perspective, working from home is a form of work commonly seen in pre-industrial agricultural societies. After the industrial revolution, it refers to a working model based on the production of industrial products made at home, generally known as "piecework" production (Özer Turan, 2019:31). According to the ILO Home Work Convention No. 177 and Recommendation No. 184 of 1996, Home Work is defined as "*work performed by a person (i) in his/her own home or in another premises of the employer's choice, outside the workplace of the employer, (ii) in return for remuneration, (iii) in order to produce a product or service determined by the employer, regardless of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used*" (Convention No. 177, Article 1). This definition excludes "persons who have the degree of autonomy and economic independence necessary to be considered as independent workers under national laws, regulations or arrangements". In addition; those who work from home occasionally instead of their regular workplace are not considered home workers within the meaning of the Convention. Three different types of home work are mentioned in the report in question. The first of these is industrial home work, which refers to craft production. It can be carried out as part of factory production or by home workers who replace factory production (ILO, 2020). The other type of home work is telework. This type of work includes workers who use information and communication technologies to perform their work remotely. However, under Convention No. 177, it is limited to teleworkers who work regularly or permanently from home or another location of their choice. The third type of work from home is home-based digital platform work. This includes service sector tasks performed by "crowdworkers" according to the characteristics of the employer or intermediary. However, under Convention No. 177, workers are included in the scope when they do not have the autonomy and economic independence to be considered independent workers under national law (ILO, 2021:8).

Home workers are different from entrepreneurs, self-employed people or family businesses because they are hired by businesses or intermediaries for specific activities or services to be performed from their homes or another location of their choosing. Therefore, home workers do not own or operate the business for which they work. In this context, home workers refer to subcontractors/dependent home-based workers who typically perform paid work on a piece-rate basis for firms/businesses or their intermediaries (Dedeoğlu, 2020:8).

Teleworking is defined as work performed outside the workplace using information and communication technology (Eurofound and ILO, 2017: 1). It is a form of work carried out from remote locations—that is, away from the employer's premises—through the use of computer networks and telecommunications devices (Eurofound, 2010). The separation of "work" from the traditional

concept of the “workplace” has led to a revolutionary change. Teleworking is now widespread in human resources management, work organisation practices, and, of course, in the daily lives of millions of workers and businesses, establishing a more structural presence.

An analysis by the World Economic Forum (2020) shows that 84% of employers plan to rapidly digitise work processes, potentially moving 44% of their workforce to remote work (World Economic Forum, 2020: 20). Data published by ETUI in the 2023 edition of the European Workers’ Comparison show that on average, 24% of workers in the EU worked from home at least sometimes in 2021, compared to 12% in 2012. With significant national differences: for example, 54% of Dutch workers worked remotely at least partly in 2021, compared to only 12% in 2012 (Countouris et al., 2023). Yet before the pandemic, only a fraction of the workforce worked from home occasionally. It was 10% in the Czech Republic and smaller proportions in Greece, Italy and Poland. According to studies, up to 20% of the United States workforce worked regularly or occasionally from home or some other alternative location, compared to 16% in Japan and only 1.6% in Argentina (Eurofound and ILO, 2017). Nearly three years after the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted U.S. workplaces, nearly one-third (35%) of employees whose jobs can be done remotely are working from home all the time, according to a new Pew Research Centre survey. That’s down from 43% in January 2022 and 55% in October 2020, but still up from before the pandemic. The same survey found that 41% of those whose jobs can be done remotely are working a hybrid schedule, meaning they work from home on some days and from the office, workplace, or job site on other days (Parker, 2023).

### **The Concept of Offshoring**

Offshoring is defined as the sourcing of corporate products and services from firms in other countries, whether overseas or not. It is a cost-saving strategy that allows firms to outsource some activities they once performed in-house to foreign suppliers (Raman and Chadee, 2007:2). It focuses on the relocation of labour-intensive service industry functions to locations far from the business centre, such as India, Ireland or the Philippines. In other words, it means the transnational relocation or dispersal of a firm’s value chain activities. This can be accomplished in one of two ways (Kedia and Mukherjee, 2009; McKinsey, 2003:5). First, an organisation may outsource some of its activities to service providers in other countries. In this case, the service provider hires, trains, supervises and manages its staff. Typically, a contract specifies the services to be provided as well as the time and quality criteria (Rubin, 1997; Chang and King, 2005). Second, the organisation may establish service operations in other countries. The operations are then managed as a remote service unit. Workers are hired, trained, supervised and managed by the organisation rather than by an external contractor (Dibbern et al., 2004). The steady decline of cross-border trade barriers and the development of more cost-effective advanced information and communication technologies have made offshoring generally financially viable.

Offshoring practices, which emerged because of businesses’ search for lower operating costs (Bunyaratavej et al., 2011:75), have manifested in two distinct waves. The first wave occurred in the early 1990s under the guise of restructuring. The adoption of new information and communication technologies has led to a gradual “trade revolution” in which it has become increasingly possible to move service production to offshore destinations. The development of international telecommunications capacity and the resulting gradual reduction in global telecommunications costs have been fundamental to the offshoring economy. Equally important is the computerisation and digitalisation of most business services. Because of these two changes, information can now be transmitted over long distances at very low cost and with little loss of quality. These changes have made organisational and national boundaries much less important in decision making regarding the location of service functions. Later, in the early 2000s, a similar trend began to reshape business processes with the aim of reducing costs. The focus of the second wave of cost reduction clearly lies in services (McKinsey, 2003:5; Doh, 2005 :776; Dossani and Kenney, 2007 : 696). Organisations have tried to reduce costs by transferring white-collar jobs such as call centres and IT functions to countries with low-cost or low-wage employment, such as India. India has become the preferred offshore location for many Western organisations in the field of information technology (IT) (Ravishankar, Pan and Mayers, 2013:288).

However, it has been argued that automation, which has become much more widespread in developed economies in recent years, could increase competitiveness and bring back jobs that were previously outsourced to low-wage countries. The pandemic and subsequent geopolitical tensions have further fuelled calls for reshoring, as they appear to highlight supply chain risks and over-dependence on certain countries. The emergence of new technologies such as robotics, 3D printing, and advanced automation facilitate such moves (Del Pero et al., 2022:3). For example; the study by Bonfiglioli et al. (2022) showed that automation and offshoring affect some occupations. Accordingly, automation can replace offshoring, allowing companies to use robots in tasks previously performed abroad. The replacement of robots and offshoring will also have significant impacts on employment. Automation can create conditions suitable for some jobs performed overseas to be performed domestically. Rising wages overseas raise the possibility that the direction of automation could shift from domestically produced tasks to foreign-sourced tasks, as the cost of goods produced abroad increases, making it more economical to produce locally. At the same time, disruptions in the supply chain abroad make local production more attractive (Bonfiglioli et al.: 41-45).

### **The Concept of the Telemigrant**

With the spread of remote work, the inclusion of new players in the labour market has become inevitable. In the words of Richard Baldwin, one of these new players is called "tele-migrant". The concept of "tele-migrant", introduced by Richard Baldwin, who works as an economist in Geneva (Baldwin, 2019), represents a person who works in a company in a developed country while living in another developing country.

Telemigrants and digital nomads are often confused because they share some similarities. However, these two concepts differ in terms of their working styles and lifestyles. Although both concepts refer to doing business through digital technologies by taking advantage of the flexibility of working remotely, the main differences between them are related to work relationships and living arrangements.

Telemigrants usually work full-time or part-time for a specific employer. Telemigrants either use platforms to work remotely or work for an employer or institution, but they do this work from another country or city. Telemigrants usually prefer to live in fixed locations. They perform their work by working remotely from where they live (Baldwin, 2019; Baldwin and Dingel, 2023; Kahanec, 2021).

Digital nomads are usually freelancers or entrepreneurs. They are not permanently attached to an employer; they can do project-based work or run their own businesses. In addition to freelancing, some earn money through online platforms or their own initiatives. Digital nomads travel constantly and change locations frequently. They do not have a fixed settlement; they prefer to work from different parts of the world. Their lifestyle is based on travelling and discovering different cultures while working (Chevtava and Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2018).

It is seen as an inevitable trend that task that can be done remotely will be undertaken by telemigrants instead of home workers. This change is not a radical transformation but rather a further expansion of sectors where telemigrants are already widespread, such as web design and customised software development. If this situation becomes more widespread, the main reason for this will be the efforts of many companies to adapt their business processes to this new order by adopting digital technologies.

The pandemic has caused the rapid adoption of work models such as remote working and telemigration, which has led to the start of what Alan Blinder (2006) called the "Next Industrial Revolution" earlier than expected. Blinder predicted that the labour market was rapidly transforming with globalisation and digitalisation, and that many jobs would change radically as in the industrial revolution. In this context, with the impact of the pandemic, companies are restructuring their workforce strategies and turning to flexible work models such as telemigration. This situation has important consequences such as reducing labour costs, accessing a wider talent pool, and increasing competition in the global labour market (Baldwin and Dingel, 2023:176-177).

### **Method of the Research**

The aim of this study is to explain the concept of the telemigrant together with the configurations of teleworking and offshoring and to examine the effects of these developments on industrial relations. In line with the purpose of the study, a systematic literature review method was adopted to investigate the existing academic articles written on telemigrant, teleworking and offshoring. This systematic approach paved the way for understanding the telemigrant trend in a broader context, based on the literature on teleworking and offshoring, and for evaluating its effects on industrial relations.

The questions focused on in the study are as follows:

1. What are the main reasons for the emergence of the telemigrant trend?
2. What is the relationship between telemigrants, remote working, and offshoring?
3. What are the effects of the telemigration trend on industrial relations?

The method of the research consists of the following steps:

**Selection of Databases:** The Google Scholar database was used for the literature search.

**Determination of Keywords:** Keywords were carefully selected to identify the literature to be used within the scope of the research. The keywords used included terms such as "telemigration", "remote working", "offshoring".

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:** Due to the research topic being a new field and a limited number of sources, various sources were used and no specific date range was determined. However, priority was given to current studies covering the effects of the pandemic on remote working. Studies outside the field and those whose content was not directly related to the research questions or did not provide sufficient data were excluded. Due to the lack of publications in Turkish, English academic sources were included in the research.

**Literature Review Process:** The studies obtained because of searches conducted with the keywords used in the research process

were subjected to a systematic evaluation process based on the title, abstract and keywords. In addition, due to the limited literature, studies that included key concepts in the main text were also included in this review.

**Data Analysis:** The included studies were evaluated according to the qualitative content analysis in line with four main themes related to the research questions: (1) reasons for telemigration trend, (2) interaction of telemigration, remote working and offshoring, (3) telemigration and its effects on industrial relations.

**Limitations:** The limited data available in the literature on telemigration has limited the scope of this research to a certain extent. Therefore, sources from related fields that address new trends based on similar business models have also been sought.

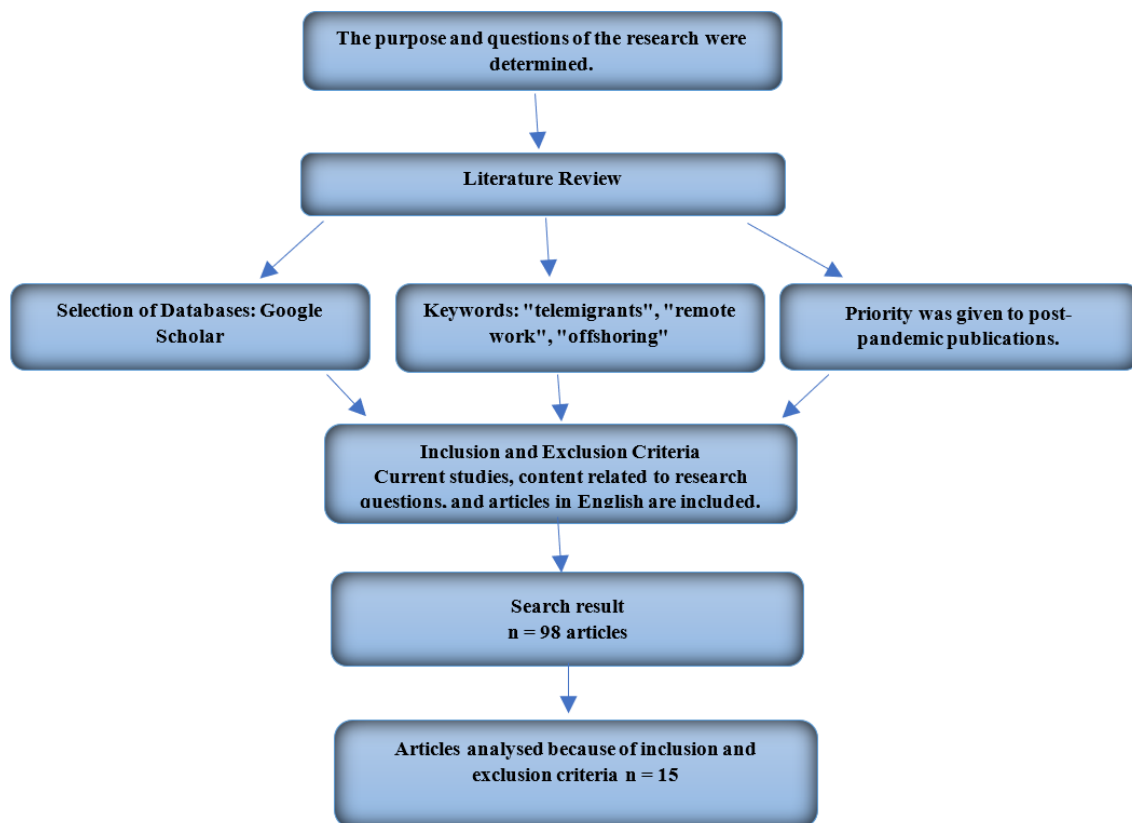


Figure 1. Defining the Search Protocol for a Systematic Literature Review

In this study, to ensure the reproducibility and validity of the systematic literature review, the PRISMA flow diagram shown in Figure 2 was followed (Page et al., 2021).

Articles (n= 90) that included the keywords “remote work” and “offshoring” in the subject, title, abstract or main text of the Google Scholar database were identified. The number of articles that included the key concept of "Telemigrants" was n=8. Irrelevant publications were excluded from these publications. Academic publications were categorised based on key terms, topics, or research questions. As a result of this process, 15 articles were included in the content analysis.

### Findings of the Study

Because of the systematic literature review, various findings were obtained regarding the concepts of telemigration, remote working, and offshoring. Based on the research questions, the findings were examined under four main headings.

### Reasons for the Telemigration Trend

According to the results of the literature review, since the concept of "telemigrant" was first introduced by Baldwin (2019), it was determined that the studies directly focusing on this subject are still limited. Telemigrant is a relatively new concept that has started to find its place in the literature, and it is determined that the relevant research and academic discussions are still in the development stage. Although the number of studies on reemigration is limited, considering the increasing importance of digitalisation and remote work (Aleem, Sufyan, and Ameer, 2023; Leonardi, 2021; Luca and Stanton, 2023; Ozimek, 2020; Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021;

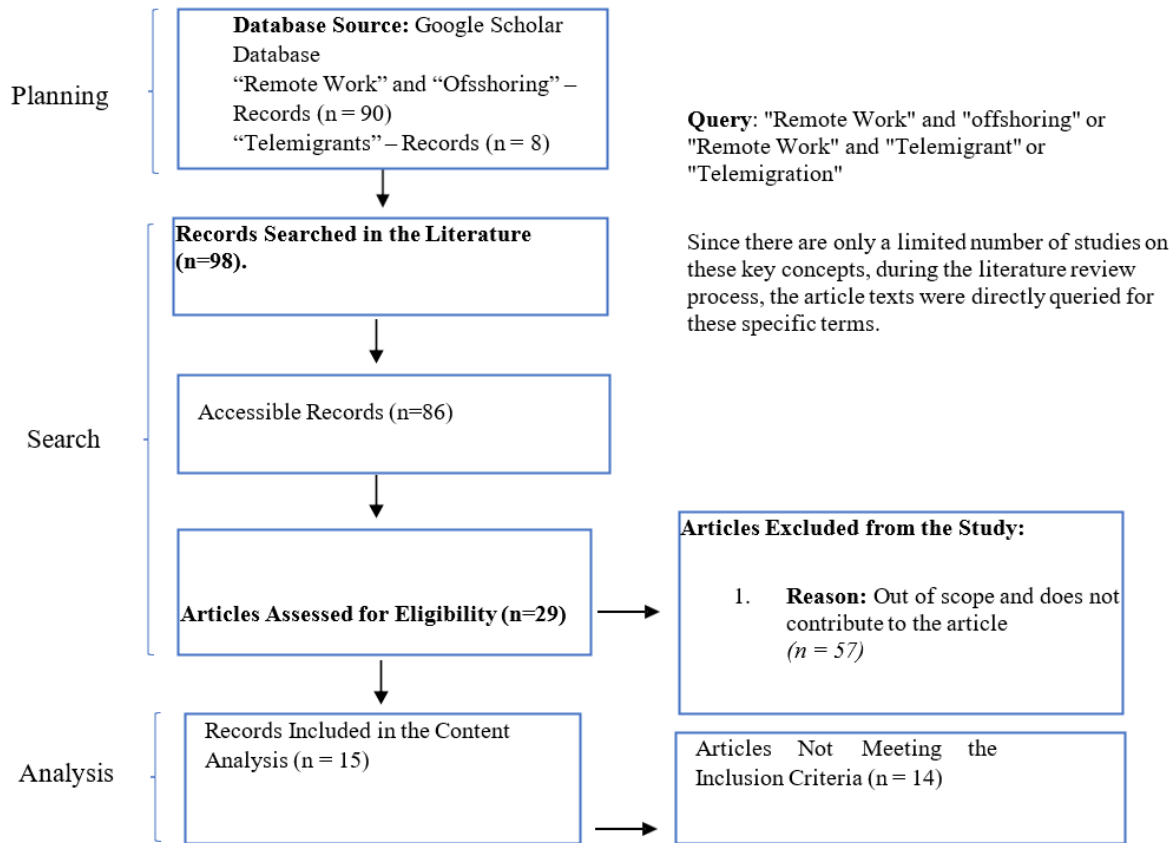


Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram

Mukherjee and Narang, 2023; Kıcır, 2019), it is possible to say that the factors affecting the emergence of new non-standard working models are also valid for the concept of telemigrant. Digitalisation, advances in communication technologies and widespread use of the internet, the rapid development of artificial intelligence technologies, the demand for flexibility of the workforce and the transformation of labour markets by the globalisation process have enabled the workforce to become independent of location (Spasova et al., 2021; Çiğdem, 2020; Erdoğan and Çiğdem, 2018; Yılmaz, 2019; Deselnicu, Lăcuță and Vintilă) and have made possible the emergence of concepts such as telemigrant. In this context, it is seen that similar technological and socioeconomic factors play a role in alternative business models such as the gig economy and platform work.

Studies show that the development of high-speed internet and cloud technologies, in particular, allows employees to work from different geographical locations. Artificial intelligence (AI) is significantly transforming work in various sectors and igniting a new wave of globalisation. Baldwin and Forslid (2020) describe this process with the concept of “globotics”<sup>3</sup> by integrating a new globalisation phenomenon with robotic developments, while Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) refer to this process as the “Second Machine Age”. Machines that can perform physical tasks have now transformed into machines that can complete cognitive tasks, exhibiting extensive capabilities in areas such as pattern recognition, complex communication, and other areas that were previously only human. In addition to powerful and useful artificial intelligence, another new development that promises to accelerate the second machine age is the digital interconnection of the people of the planet . Globalisation and robotics are also rapidly transforming the world economy as they are driven by digital technology that is advancing at extraordinary rates. This process offers signs that service or professional work can now be done without the need for face-to-face communication (Baldwin, 2019; Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2014:84-85). Essentially, automation and globalisation are age-old stories. However, Baldwin brings globalisation and robotics together. He draws attention to the fact that people talk about robots and what they can do every day, but completely miss the idea that the same technology is transforming globalisation (Nelson, 2019). According to Baldwin , “*globotics is putting pressure on our socio-political-economic system through job displacement faster than our system can handle*”. In addition, he claims that “*technology will bring globalisation to the human-centred service sector and cause employment in rich countries to be disrupted much more than the decline in manufacturing in recent years*” (Nelson, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> “Globotics” is a term that describes the economic phenomenon where globalisation and robotics intersect to reshape labour markets and economic structures. The term is often used to discuss how advances in automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are transforming industries and affecting global labour dynamics.



We may be witnessing a new transformation process. The first transformation, which Karl Polanyi called the ‘Great Transformation’, began in the early 1700s. It shifted the focus of value creation from land to capital, moving people from farms to factories and from rural areas to cities. During this period, there was a massive migration of labour from rural areas to cities to work in factories, which caused radical changes in social and economic structures (Polanyi, 1986). According to Touraine and Mayhew (1971), the second transformation that brought economies to a post-industrial society is called the ‘service transformation’. This began in the early 1970s when workers began to move from factories to offices. The ‘service transformation’, which is an important turning point in the transition to a post-industrial society, indicates significant changes in the structure of the economic structure and the labour market. During this period, jobs in the industrial sector began to be replaced by jobs in the service sector. As workers moved from factories to offices and from businesses to the service sector, the nature of economic activity and ways of doing business also began to change. (Touraine and Mayhew, 1971:55-58). Since the third global transformation has just begun, we are witnessing the developments live. No one knows for sure what the future of business will look like 5 years . In the initial period of globalisation, the focus was on the transportation of goods to different geographies. Transportation costs were reduced with technologies such as steam power, and barriers to trade were largely removed. In the next stage, the transfer of knowledge and technical ideas came to the fore, and this process became possible through information and communication technologies (ICT). Today, thanks to the development of digital technologies, the costs of face-to-face interactions have decreased, and this has started a new phase of globalisation (Baldwin and Forslid, 2020:5).

Pauwelyn (2019) attempted to understand and explain this process by asking the question “Is Globalisation Rebalancing?”. According to him, globalisation has created an unbalanced situation against the worker. Labour is treated worse than a commodity. Therefore, rebalancing is inevitable. Furthermore, this can be achieved by “levelling the playing field” for labour. Because capital, in order to obtain the highest return, crosses borders and subcontracts goods and services to places where they can be produced or traded more cheaply. In this process, only labour remains largely immobile due to its nature and regulations. Indeed, most workers cannot migrate to places where wages will be higher. When a worker suffers a loss, he usually has the right to appeal only to domestic law and local courts, not to international law or courts (Pauwelyn, 2019:2).

Since the 1990s, globalisation has created imbalances against the workforce, emphasising the free movement of goods and capital. However, advances in digital technologies can rebalance this imbalance by enabling the phenomenon of telemigration. In the past, while it was easy to transport physical goods across borders, it was more difficult to provide services internationally, because services had to be consumed where they were produced. Although globalisation usually brings to mind trade in goods, economic factors also play an important role in the international transportation of services. For example, considering that an accountant in the USA earns five times more than his colleague in Poland, it is impossible for an accountant working in Warsaw to physically commute to an office in New York every day. Although this technology is not yet fully developed, this problem can be partially solved thanks to digital advances. Even if people do not physically go to another country, they can work remotely and take part in jobs in different countries through digital technologies (Baldwin, 2019: 64).

Another important development that has made telemigration possible is the emergence of digital labour platforms. Just as eBay makes it easy to buy and sell products online, these platforms also make it easy to buy and sell services from freelancers online. Baldwin says that these platforms *will be “like the container ships of remote migration.”* Companies in rich countries find telemigrants from poor countries through these platforms, do business with them, and even pay them through the platforms (Baldwin, 2019: 65). With this type of migration, a person crosses the virtual borders of their country and actually works outside their country of residence without leaving it.

There are approximately 1.57 billion freelancers in the global workforce<sup>4</sup>. Upwork alone has approximately 12 million freelancers and approximately 814,000 active clients from 180 countries as of 2024. Upwork is considered the largest freelance marketplace globally and supports a significant portion of the gig economy<sup>5</sup>. In 2023, approximately 2,500 freelancers worked on Upwork projects. This is significantly higher than the 1,950 independent contractors reported in 2022. Freelancer.com<sup>6</sup> has a significant membership base of over 67 million users as of 2023.<sup>7</sup> GitLab Inc., which deals with software integration and positions itself as the world’s largest fully remote organisation, has over 3,000 employees living and working in 65 countries<sup>8</sup>. Automatic Inc., which specialises in developing and maintaining software for websites, has approximately 1,955 employees working remotely in 94 countries with a population that speaks 118 languages.<sup>9</sup>

Baldwin (2019) echoes the warnings that 800 million jobs will be displaced by automation in the next decade. According to consulting firm Staffing Industry Analysts, the global gig economy, also known as the human cloud, where job tasks are divided

<sup>4</sup> (see: <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/freelance-stats>)

<sup>5</sup> (see: <https://www.demandsage.com/upwork-statistics/>)

<sup>6</sup> (see: <https://backlinko.com/upwork-users>)

<sup>7</sup> (see: <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/freelance-stats>)

<sup>8</sup> (see: <https://about.gitlab.com/company/team/>)

<sup>9</sup> (see: <https://automattic.com/about/>)

and performed by freelancers all over the world, is already an \$82 billion industry. While much of this will be driven by AI, another factor is telemigration (Nelson, 2019).

A study of Upwork contracts by Horton, Kerr and Stanton (2017) found that the top three countries employing telemigrants were the high-wage English-speaking countries of the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. In contrast, the top three sources of telemigrants were the Philippines, India and Bangladesh (Horton, Kerr and Stanton, 2017).

### **Interaction of Telemigrant, Remote Working, and Offshoring**

As a result of the twin forces of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the COVID-19 recession, the remote work model (World Economic Forum, 2020:5) has now entered our lives as a new norm (Serinikli, 2021; Yürekli, 2020; Özkanan, 2022; Gavin, Poorhosseinzadeh, Arrowsmith, 2022; Vyas, 2022). In the pre-Covid era, only the most flexible employers allowed employees to work remotely. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted labour markets and laid the foundation for a “new normal” that includes flexible work arrangements and new relationships with centralised work environments. While governments have imposed curfews to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, a large portion of the world’s workforce has found themselves working from home. Even organisations that thought the cost of managing remote staff was too high have increased their interest in remote work as workers quickly adapted their work and home lives to the new conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a “great work-from-home experiment” (Berg, Humblet & Soares, 2021:16). Because it has led to a reconceptualization of the nature of work and the workplace and accelerated the shift of government services and people’s livelihoods to virtual and digital platforms. Digitalisation has enabled workers to be more mobile and work remotely as employees or freelancers. Remote work or working from home/anywhere has become the new norm (Charles, Xia & Coutts, 2020: 20).

After the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in remote working (Grupta, 2023), but we can say that we are faced with a new remote working reality. The pandemic has rapidly changed expectations regarding remote working, making it more possible for remote workers to be located offshore rather than at the headquarters of a business. In some cases, the new reality of remote working is that the worker is not only separated from the employer’s workplace, but even from the country where he or she is located (Countouris et al., 2023:191). Remote working has eliminated geographical limitations, making it easier to access a global talent pool.

With the spread of remote work and a new global platform work, it is seen that offshoring practices have also become a part of the new normal in the post-pandemic world and the work structure has also started to change, especially with the offshoring of white-collar services (Klimek, 2021: 70). In this context, on the one hand, the question of “*Are offshoring practices dying?*” (Mukherjee et al., 2023) continues to be discussed, while on the other hand, the issue of offshoring of white-collar labour in particular takes the dimension of the discussion to a different place. Behind these developments lies the idea that employers can use remote work to replace established workers with cheap overseas workers. Although this is not a new discussion, the unprecedented growth in remote work may be an indication that offshoring has begun to evolve in this direction.

In fact, this process has created a feedback loop that could be the most destructive force to hit the job market since the blue-collar apocalypse of the 2000s (Van Dam, 2022). Companies that have observed that the productivity of those working from home has maintained and even increased in the remote work model have adopted this way of doing business and have turned to the search for cheaper and more skilled labour from abroad. In a survey conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, 7.3% of senior executives in the US stated that they are considering moving more work abroad as a result of remote work (Tsipursky, 2023). While many businesses are calling their employees back to the office after the pandemic is over, some companies prefer to continue the remote work model and source labour from abroad. In this way, they save significantly on labour costs. Johnny Taylor Jr., CEO of the Virginia-based Society for Human Resource Management, told The Wall Street Journal in an interview that he decided to outsource some workers to take advantage of remote work. Taylor said he decided to outsource work to workers in India, saving about 40% on labour costs. Chris Bakke, CEO of the tech recruiting platform Laskie, previously told Insider that “U.S. tech companies can hire an engineer in the United States for \$300,000, but you can hire someone internationally who has great qualifications with very similar experience for \$75,000” (Zinkula, 2023).

Data from a business survey of over 1,500 business leaders in the UK, conducted by the BCG Growth Centre, shows that almost a third of business leaders have resorted to hiring fully remote workers due to labour shortages (Ruparel and Fox 2023). The more an economy relies on knowledge-intensive service activities, the more likely its workforce is to work remotely. For this reason, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that only 13% of jobs in the Global South are remote, compared to 27% in high-income countries (ILO, 2020:4). Boeri, Caiumi, and Paccagnella (2020:62) report that the potential for home-based work is 23.95% in Italy, 28.22% in France, 28.70% in Germany, 25.44% in Spain, 30.74% in Sweden, and 31.38% in the UK.

The article by Ishizaka et al. (2019) titled “*Outsourcing and Offshoring Decision Making*” discusses the conceptual connection between remote work and offshoring primarily in the context of how these strategies affect decision making in global supply chains. The article states that companies with strong remote work capabilities are in a better position to integrate offshoring into

their business strategies because they can effectively manage remote operations, and that cost savings and improved management efficiency, which are the goals of remote work policies, also affect offshoring decisions. Remote work capabilities are seen as an integral part of the unique business models that support offshoring. These models often require the synchronisation of tasks across geographies. It is emphasised that this has been facilitated by effective remote work systems that have developed thanks to technological advances in recent years.

“*Offshoring Knowledge and Service Work: A Conceptual Model and Research Agenda*” by W. Youngdahl and K. Ramaswamy (2008), the connection between offshoring, backshoring and telecommuting was investigated and a conceptual model that relates telecommuting arrangements to offshoring, particularly in the context of knowledge and service industries (Youngdahl and Ramaswamy, 2008). In his article “How Many US Jobs might be Offshorable”, Blinder (2009) developed a method for classifying jobs that can be done remotely without loss of quality while assessing the potential for offshoring. This methodology was used to determine the extent to which occupations and job functions could be performed remotely, depending on the technical infrastructure and the nature of the job. Blinder suggests that between 22% and 29% of all jobs in the US could be offshoring within one to twenty years. This means that a significant portion of service sector jobs in developed countries, especially those that can be worked remotely, may be vulnerable to being displaced to lower-wage economies through remote migration. The jobs most probably sent abroad through remote migration include service sector jobs, which are characterised by tasks that can be easily digitised and transferred across borders (Blinder, 2009).

Other studies have reached similar conclusions. Van Welsum and Vickery (2005:185) estimate that 20% of the total service employment in the US is outsourceable. Similarly, Jensen and Kletzer (2010) found that 38% of US workers are employed in outsourceable service occupations.

Baldwin and Dingel (2023) examined the potential for offshoring of remote jobs and its potential impact on the labour market. The authors argue that the integration of global labour markets through remote work could put pressure on wages in high-income countries. The ability of companies to easily access an international pool of workers willing to work for lower wages could weaken the bargaining power of local workers, leading to stagnation or decline in wages (Baldwin and Dingel, 2023). Alan Blinder (2006), “Offshoring: The Next Industrial Revolution?” In his article, he argued that the outsourcing of service sector jobs from the US and other rich countries to mostly poorer countries, while a small phenomenon to date, is likely to become a major phenomenon in the coming decades. He even claimed that this would occur on a scale that would constitute a ‘new industrial revolution’. He argued that many jobs, especially in the service sector, would be outsourced to low-wage countries and that many tasks could be performed from remote locations without significant loss of quality. Blinder’s analysis highlights the need for strategic changes in education policies and job training programs to prepare for a future in which offshoring and automation play a dominant role in shaping labour markets. (Blinder, 2006: 19).

The report titled “*Members of the Steering Committee – Authors of The Final Report*”, prepared with the support of the Colombian National Planning Department (DNP) and the Colombian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, with the contributions of the World Bank and presented by Professor Ricardo Hausmann from Harvard University, discusses the ability of Colombians to work remotely for companies abroad and the concept of “remote migration”. The report outlines the relationship between remote migrants and offshore, emphasising that remote migration offers significant opportunities for countries like Colombia. According to the report, telemigration allows countries like Colombia to access job opportunities in more developed economies without the need for physical relocation. It emphasises that this not only opens up higher-paying jobs for local workers but also helps to close the wage and economic gap between developing and developed countries. However, no direct details are given about the relationship between this type of work arrangement and social rights (Hausmann, 2021).

In recent years, there has also been a tremendous increase in digital and ICT-based studies that offer a new approach to the existing literature examining the conditions and main actors of home-based work since the mid-1980s (Schulz et al., 2019; Berg, Humblet, & Soares., 2021; Mariana et al., 2023; Vučeković et al., 2022; Yao, Baker, Lohrke, 2022; Graham, Hjorth, Lehdonvirta et al., 2019). In the studies conducted; It is argued that the development of digital and information and communication technologies (ICT) has significantly facilitated the adoption of remote working practices, reduced geographical and logistical barriers to employment by allowing companies to benefit from a global talent pool, and that the transition to remote working has profound effects on traditional business models and labour markets, potentially requiring a redefinition of workspaces and employee roles (Mariana et al., 2023); digital labour platforms offer significant advantages for the long-term sustainability of remote working models, and that platforms are seen as essential tools that mediate remote work. These platforms diversify remote working opportunities by facilitating transactions between entrepreneurs connected to the platform and customers. It is emphasised that digital labour platforms are an indispensable part of the remote working order in today’s modern business world (Yao, Baker, and Lohrke, 2022). According to the report prepared by Alexander et al. (2021), the pandemic is rapidly changing the expectations of remote working. This reveals the fact that it can lead to an increase in remote workers located offshore rather than in a company’s headquarters (Alexander et al., 2021:8-9). Indeed, it is. Firms facing financial constraints are turning to low-cost talent from different countries to outsource work to remote workers (Rani and Dhir 2020). For this, firms often opt for outsourcing through individual contractors

or online labour platforms (Wilke and Bowen, 2022). While an agile workforce model is emerging, the pandemic has also made it easier for firms to hire remote workers from other countries (Brynjolfsson et al. 2020), which has helped increase the number of remote workers. In particular, the rise of digital labour platforms has made a new generation of remote work possible, which can be understood as “remote platform work”. The rise of online labour platforms, including talent, freelance and microtasking platforms that allow firms to outsource work to workers with various skills from around the world on a global scale, and the emergence of new generation call centres that provide AI-enabled services using human labour have accelerated and facilitated this process (Rani, 2023:29).

In this process, the evolution of the workplace phenomenon and the role of digital technology in the transformation of work have attracted a wide literature in social sciences and digitised offshoring practices. There is talk of a potential wave of “digital” offshoring (“virtual offshore” or “telemigration”). This discussion has been fuelled by the shift to remote working and the rapid growth of digital technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not surprising that, to continue to increase competitiveness and reduce costs, companies have tended to move other services and knowledge-intensive activities to countries with lower labour costs, such as IT services and call centres in the past. Even if only 1 in 4 remote jobs were moved abroad, this still saves 7% of labour costs (Carias and Louis, 2021). Digital offshoring, the relocation of jobs overseas to cheaper locations using digital technologies, is seen as one of the long-term effects of the recent remote work boom. In other words, services are going through a period of globalisation similar to that experienced by the manufacturing sector in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Sytsma, 2022). The change in the scope of these offshoring operations has led to what we have described as the “new wave of globalisation.” Advances in digital technology have made offshoring a vital part of any quest for sustainable competitive advantage and therefore global strategies (Pellicelli, 2023). Sytsma (2022) referred to this shift as the “globalisation of remote work”. According to the author, remote work offers organization opportunities to trade across borders in services and offshoring (Sytsma, 2022:3). Although most developing economies are rapidly catching up with education and technological advances, labour costs remain significantly lower than in developed economies. More and more workers in developing countries are equipped and trained to do office work. This creates a labour pool that can be exported to richer countries at a fraction of the domestic cost (Carias and Louis, 2021:2). For example, JPMorgan Chase announced that it will add 6,000 more jobs to its workforce in India, focusing on artificial intelligence, cloud computing and cybersecurity (The Economist, 2022). The ILO’s World Employment and Social Outlook Trends report (2021) shows that in 2020, around 35% of the labour supply on major English-language digital labour platforms was in India alone, followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan, while around 40% of the labour demand came from the US, followed by the UK.

Simon (2021) provides similar examples in the Financial Times: A Canadian starts working at a bank in the US, but does not have to move to the US and works from his home in Toronto. Similarly, a company in Paris hires graphic design professionals from South Africa for lower wages than in Paris. Now, high-skilled jobs in developed countries are moving to the rest of the world. Global remote working is thought to be particularly beneficial for highly educated people with disadvantaged passports, while the victims of global remote working may be large business centres such as New York, London, San Francisco and Toronto, because so many highly skilled people around the world can speak English. Companies in developed countries can now tap into a global talent pool and hire highly skilled workers for much lower wages. Even Silicon Valley tech giants may find it no longer feasible to offer free meals, massages, laundry services and other great amenities to thousands of their employees, or ESG advocates may find it appealing that people do not have to commute to their offices every workday. Highly paid software engineers may even be replaced with the same talent from lower-cost countries (Kelly, 2022; Kuper, 2021). Indeed, well-educated and well-paid white-collar professionals now tend to work more remotely (Başol and Çömlekçi, 2021:755).

“Podcast host and chief economist for Moody’s Analytics, Mark Zandi, stated that “*American companies can and will hire people from all over the world.*” This is expected to become increasingly common as technology improves and companies optimise around remote work (Van Dam, 2022).

While the phrase “if it can be done from home, it can be done abroad” is certainly an exaggeration, the idea of a partially globalised virtual workforce is increasingly appealing to companies. This trend is not new. Countries such as India or the Philippines have already established offshoring centres for ICT and business services. Economies with low labour costs and a high potential for remote workers, such as Indonesia or Brazil, also seem well prepared to follow this path. This also applies to countries with relatively strong human and technological capital, like Poland. While China and Russia are ideal virtual offshore destinations on paper, rising geopolitical and cybersecurity tensions with the West will be a major obstacle. What has changed, however, is that remote working is now ubiquitous (Carias and Louis, 2021:2-3).

### **Telemigration and Its Impact on Industrial Relations**

In recent years, the employer-employee relationship has fundamentally changed. In the past, employers preferred to employ long-term employees to ensure productivity. The traditional employer-employee relationship was the norm and labour laws were built around this relationship. Today, we are witnessing the increasing prevalence of new flexible working models (Tronsor, 2018: 182). The latest report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work points to the potential for “future expansion” of new

forms of remote flexible working (Global Commission, 2019: 44). The demand for greater flexibility is particularly driving the growth of such forms of work (European Commission, 2017: 64-65; OECD, 2019: 15). The days of long-term social contracts between companies and their employees are over. Instead, companies are opting for workers hired on short-term contracts rather than traditional employees.

The tendency of employees towards flexible working models is a historical feature of capitalism, and this flexibility has become more evident in the modern economy, especially with the explosion of precarious, temporary jobs. As McDowell and Christopherson (2009) have noted, it has become a distinctive feature of the new economy. Such contracts refer to short-term or temporary working arrangements where workers lack job security and have become widespread due to the impact of digitalisation and globalisation (McDowell and Christopherson, 2009). To avoid dealing with unionised labour and providing their employees with the rights required by labour laws such as health insurance, retirement, and overtime pay, employers have begun to classify their workers as freelance independent contractors (Kessler, 2015). Freelancers are thought to operate outside a traditional employment relationship because they sign service contracts with their clients. Instead of being subject to a permanent hierarchical relationship, freelancers have a more independent working arrangement. Therefore, freelancing is a purely market relationship rather than a managerial relationship (Sisson, 2008, p. 14). One consequence of the increased use of self-employed workers who are not subject to a permanent management relationship is an expected decrease in collective action, as this work model does not tend to create inherently adversarial relations. Self-employment creates a structure that weakens traditional workplace ties among workers, making organised collective action difficult (Wood and Lehdonvirta, 2021:1372).

A new worker classification would be a first step to help workers regain employment protections in the new gig economy, but the legal model for collective bargaining should also be changed. Currently, collective bargaining takes place between a union covering all workers in a given bargaining unit and a single employer (Tronsor, 2015:187).

In this context, the European Parliament adopted a text on 17 June 2017 proposing regulating the platform economy, where independent contractors are involved. The text calls on Member States to “consider, in cooperation with the social partners and other relevant stakeholders, the need to proactively modernise existing legislation, including social security systems, to keep up with technological developments and ensure the protection of workers” (European Parliament, 2017).

While the field of modern industrial relations focuses on unions and collective bargaining, economies around the world are witnessing a significant and sustained decline in the proportion of workers who claim to be union members (Visser, 2001). Unions have long played an important role in facilitating worker organisation and supporting collective bargaining processes (Taş, 2012). However, the rapid growth of new employment models presents both new organising opportunities and organisational challenges for the union movement. While traditional union structures are based on fixed employment contracts and permanent employment, gig and platform workers often work in flexible, temporary and precarious employment models. This has led unions to reconsider their strategies for representing these groups of workers and defending their interests (ILO, 2016). For example, gig workers have already begun to collaborate on online platforms to reduce information inequalities and alleviate the disadvantages they face in an under-regulated sector. However, it is important to distinguish between traditional worker organising methods such as strikes and collective bargaining and more flexible organising tools such as blogs and Facebook groups. According to Aloisi (2015:678), these flexible methods are often seen as important first steps towards formal unions that result in real-world interaction (Aloisi, 2015:678). The FairCrowdWork example can be seen as a new type of mediation model between platform workers’ forums and unions. FairCrowdWork collects information about crowdwork, app-based work and other “platform-based work” from the perspective of workers and unions. The site also provides ratings of working conditions on different online labour platforms based on surveys of workers (<https://digitalplatformobservatory.org/initiative/fair-crowd-work-se/>).

Remote work leads to the physical and temporal fragmentation of traditional office and workplace structures. “Spatial fragmentation” refers to the fact that remote workers perform their work outside the office, in different locations (e.g. at home or any other location). “Temporal fragmentation” refers to the fact that remote workers may work in different time zones from their colleagues or according to their own preferred working hours. These two fragmentations are seen as factors that make it difficult for unions to function traditionally and for workers to come together and organise in the workplace. In addition, employers may terminate existing employment contracts and re-employ remote workers as freelancers, which may further fragment the workplace structure. This working model weakens social ties among unionised workers, while also damaging relations with workplace representatives; both situations weaken union norms. Remote work may weaken existing social ties among unionised workers, as well as relations between these workers and workplace representatives. These factors contribute to the erosion of union norms. In addition, remote work may prevent the establishment of union awareness and norms among young employees who are new to the workplace, which may increase their tendency not to benefit from union rights and contribute. Spatial and temporal fragmentations also reduce the possibility of remote workers coming together and interacting in common areas (such as corridors, kitchens, press rooms) in the workplace. Such interactions are essential elements for building trust and solidarity for collective action (Ranganathan and Das, 2022).

Remote working tends to pose a threat to existing union norms and can also make it difficult for new union structures to form. However, remote working can also encourage new (bottom-up) initiatives, such as employees communicating online via social media platforms. In this way, despite spatial and temporal fragmentation, the connection between employees can be maintained (Vandaele and Piasna, 2023: 107).

Social media and online communication technologies are increasingly making it easier for unions to interact with their members more effectively, mobilise them, and connect with a wider audience. These technologies increase the capacity of unions to reach their members through digital platforms, adding a new dimension to the processes of organising and mobilising. (Carneiro and Costa; Hennebert et al. 2021; Wesley Hansen and Hau 2022; Wood 2020). Such online communities are sometimes perceived as replacing the roles undertaken by unions. These platforms emerge as alternative structures that can replace union structures in the processes of organising, solidarizing, and defending workers' rights (Kalum Schou and Bucher 2022; Kougiannou and Mendonça 2021; Wood and Lehdonvirta 2021).

Since the countries where telemigrants working remotely work and live may differ, regulations such as labour rights, social security, and working conditions may become a complex structure of two different legal systems. This requires a redefinition of traditional employer-employee relations. Telemigrants working from different countries may be deprived of traditional channels of unionisation and organisation because they are not physically present at the workplace. This also necessitates the development of new union structures and digital solidarity platforms that can defend the rights of telemigrants. Telemigrants are often employed temporarily, on a project basis, or as freelancers. These flexible working models can lead to telemigrants losing their rights such as job security, salary continuity, health insurance and retirement. This creates new challenges in industrial relations. Organising remote work is not easy and simple, and puts unions in a difficult position. Unions and employee representatives must find ways to reach previously unorganised groups of employees through remote work arrangements and the use of digital technologies. Krzywdzinski (2022) highlights the advantages of remote work as well as its disadvantages, such as the reduction of face-to-face contact between employees. He notes that unions can reach out to groups they would not normally have contact with, such as temporary workers, engineers and developers, through meetings organised through digital technologies and new communication channels. This can help to organise and compensate for the lack of communication caused by remote work (Krzywdzinski, 2022). For example, forums, which are widely used among geographically dispersed and isolated workers online, have become an important tool for solidarity and knowledge sharing. These forums help employees share their experiences, learn best practices and, above all, maximise their earnings. They also enable employees to see the differences between platforms, distinguishing between more egalitarian employers and those who make exploitative demands (Johnston and Land-Kazlauskas, 2018:20). Such platforms allow employees to come together, increase their control over their working conditions and feel that they are not alone in the digital world. Employee forums can be seen as a digital form of collective action and can create a kind of collective power against the injustices of the gig economy.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines and discusses the effects of these developments on industrial relations by considering the concept of telemigrant with remote working and offshoring configurations. The findings obtained because of the systematic literature review show that digitalisation and globalisation processes are gradually transforming the labour market. While traditional business models make room for new forms of work such as telemigrant work, it has been determined that this change creates significant challenges and opportunities in the industrial relations system.

A development that brought the concept of the telemigrant to the agenda is the rapid advances in digitalisation and telecommunication technologies. Joseph Schumpeter (1934) argues that the fundamental driving force of development in the capitalist economy is "creative destruction". This concept means that old technologies, products and business models are constantly replaced by new and more effective ones. This process constantly transforms economic structures and market conditions. In this context, the spread of the internet today creates new opportunities and markets by eliminating old technologies, products, and company structures. The evaluation of technologies such as smartphones, tablets, the internet of things, mobile applications, social media, etc. together indicates a structure in which these elements interact with each other and together form new types of economic and social structures (Daugareilh, Degryse and Pochet, 2019:24). Technological advances such as the internet, cloud computing, data security and communication platforms are transforming traditional office-based work arrangements (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021: 603), as Schumpeter also emphasised, such technological advances eliminate old ways of doing business and allow new models to emerge. While remote working has been a form of work since the 1970s when telecommunications developed in the information industry (Nilles, 1975), ICT-based mobile working models that allow employees to work from wherever they want are emerging with the development and proliferation of smaller and lighter wireless devices such as laptops and mobile phones (Messenger and Gschwind, 2016).

As Alvin Toffler argued in 1980, the development of communication technologies enables the workforce to move away from their physical workplaces and work from homes or other remote locations. The COVID-19 pandemic was a significant turning

point that accelerated this process, and companies have become more aware of the advantages of remote working. In addition, the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud technologies has significantly reduced the logistical and organisational difficulties of remote working. This allows companies to access the global workforce more easily and to move jobs to cheaper labour markets through offshoring to reduce costs.

Similarly, Cairncross and Cairncross (2001) claimed that technological developments will increasingly accelerate what they call the "death of distance", that technological advances in communication will create a world where geographical distance is less relevant, allowing remote working on a global scale, and that this will deeply affect international labour markets and economic activities (Cairncross and Cairncross, 2001). Indeed, developments in recent years have reshaped the way we interact, work and maintain relationships around the world. The future of globalisation is inevitably changing. While goods and services are outsourced to places where they can be produced or traded more cheaply, labour alone, by its nature and regulations, remains largely immobile. However, today, the cost of transporting ideas and data is falling much faster than the cost of transporting heavy things (goods). It is obvious that this trend has accelerated even further with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation technologies. (Baldwin and Dingels, 2023: 152; Paulwelyn, 2019: 2).

Telemigration can be considered a combination of remote work and offshoring. While remote work allows employees to continue their work through digital means without going to a physical workplace, offshoring allows employers to access the workforce in low-cost countries. Telemigration is at the intersection of these two trends; workers can join the global workforce through digital means while living physically in different countries. Telemigration offers a new business model that allows jobs to be done through digital platforms regardless of geographical boundaries. In this context, telemigration makes the workforce more global and dynamic, while leading to significant changes in employee-employer relations.

Telemigration is a model in which remote work merges with the global labour market, reshaping employee-employer relations. While traditional business models are generally based on physical workplaces and face-to-face interactions, telemigration largely eliminates this structure. The rapid advancement of digital technologies and the increasing impact of artificial intelligence on the labour market indicate that telemigration will become even more important in the future. As Baldwin (2019) also stated, the development of digital technologies allows talented foreigners to join our workplaces by working remotely and competing in service-oriented professional jobs. Instant machine translation accelerates this process by eliminating language barriers. For this reason, it is predicted that these telemigrations will expand to include several educated individuals soon. Workers can now work for employers in different countries through digital tools, allowing them to access a wider labour pool while reducing costs. The traditional physical labour migration model of offshoring is being replaced by telemigration, which can also be called digital migration. This situation indicates a major transformation in the global labour market by further reducing labour costs and eliminating geographical boundaries.

As a result, telemigration and remote working are deeply disrupting traditional business models and creating new dynamics in the labour market and industrial relations. Adapting to these new forms of work has become a necessity for unions, employers and policy makers. With the spread of remote working and telemigration, the protection of workers' rights and the development of new organisational models suitable for digitalisation processes will become an increasingly important topic in the industrial relations literature.

However, this model can create significant difficulties in terms of workers' rights and union organisation. Telemigration and remote work pose a serious challenge to traditional union structures. The traditional industrial relations system is based on physical workplaces, collective bargaining processes and a structure in which unions play an active role. However, new forms of work such as telemigration and such weaken this structure. Telemigration workers can remain outside unions and collective bargaining processes because they usually work in different countries and legal systems. In addition, the absence of remote workers in physical workplaces can lead to the weakening of social ties in the workplace and a decrease in worker solidarity. This creates difficulties in union organisation and collective action. The dispersion of physical workplaces, the decrease in face-to-face interaction of workers and the complexity of labour laws in different countries make it difficult for unions to organise workers. Despite this, the development of new organisation models through digital platforms and adaptation to digitalisation by unions offers an important opportunity to protect workers' rights. Unions must transfer collective bargaining processes to digital environments and provide faster services to their members. In the future, it will be of critical importance for unions to adapt to the digitalisation process and to transfer collective bargaining and organising processes to digital environments.

This research provides a starting point for understanding the transformations that telemigration has created in the labour market. However, the right losses and union organising difficulties faced by telemigrant workers need to be examined in depth. Future research should focus on how telemigrants can be organised more effectively, especially through digital platforms, and new policies should be developed to protect cross-border workers' rights. At the same time, research should also be conducted on how employers adapt to this new working model and how they optimise labour costs.

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**ORCID ID of the author / Yazarn ORCID ID'si**

Serpil ÇİĞDEM YÜCEL 0000-0002-1600-8547

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