

REMOTE, HYBRID, AND IN-OFFICE WORK: MANAGERIAL DECISIONS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES IN ARAD, ROMANIA DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

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Abstract

This paper examines why multinational companies from Arad, Romania, scaled back remote and hybrid work models after COVID-19, by providing a dual perspective from employees and their managers and supervisors, on topics such as performance, collaboration and costs. This research fills a local evidence gap by focusing on decision-making in Arad multinationals, an area which was not previously documented. This study contributes to the post-crisis work design literature by showing that a systematic manager-employee perception gap regarding performance and collaboration can help explain the return-to-office decisions even when remote work is perceived to reduce costs.

To conduct this research, the quantitative approach was used to provide empirical results from a structured survey grounded in Contingency Theory and Kotler's Change Model. The survey was applied to employees and managers from 5 multinational companies headquartered or operating in Arad. The survey was sent to both regular employees and their direct managers or supervisors to capture matched organisational viewpoints. The survey received 343 valid responses, comprising 312 regular employees and 31 managers or supervisors. Responses were coded and analysed in IBM SPSS.

Employees report that working from home increased their performance and improved relationships with co-workers compared with in-office work. Managers report the opposite, indicating perceived performance and collaboration were better in the office. Both groups agree that remote or hybrid arrangements reduced company costs.

This study explains why 5 multinational companies in Arad reverted to in-office from remote or hybrid work models, despite perceived cost savings.

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Managerial perceptions, workplace flexibility, multinational companies, contingency theory, Kotter's change model

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