



Covid19 impact on employees´ wellbeing

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Abstract

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<p>The author is providing a research-based thesis that intends to highlight the effects of the global Covid19 virus pandemic on society, the workplace, and particularly the human resources sector, where it is crucial, in the author's opinion, to interact with employees directly.</p> <p>Many people's lives and daily routines have changed as a result of the ongoing pandemic. Some people have experienced terrible changes, while others have found benefits despite this unpleasant situation.</p> <p>In order to comprehend what occurred, how it proceeded and is still proceeding, as well as how the system may be improved, the approach utilized in this thesis is the qualitative method of research.</p> <p>The goal of this study is to examine and explain throughout this research how these changes came about and developed over the past two years. Employees will be asked to clarify their positions on how they have found the interaction with individuals who work in human resources and how this has influenced their wellbeing as part of this qualitative research project to address the main question of this thesis.</p> <p>Based on the central idea of this research, the author of this thesis chose to examine a few principles from Hofstede's theory in order to compare Italy and Finland, notably in the area of power distance uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and individualism.</p> <p>Geert Hofstede was a Dutch-born management researcher. He created this theory in 1980 to pinpoint the features of each civilization.</p> <p>His idea focuses on understanding the differences between those cultures in order to grasp and comprehend how business is conducted in multiple cultures across many different countries. It essentially emphasizes on differentiating between various beliefs, traits, and the effects on business life.</p> <p>Furthermore, the workforce during the pandemic in Finland and Italy will be compared, as well as how various governments and businesses have chosen to handle employees' performance during these difficult and perplexing times.</p> <p>The purpose of this study, according to the author, is to determine how a global pandemic can alter employees' work lives. Hoping that the readers will be able to appreciate the significance of this issue and take some time to consider their own opinions about it for the future</p>
Keywords Pandemic, COVID-19, remote-work, wellbeing, culture

1 Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Objectives and delimitations	2
2	COVID-19 pandemic	4
2.1	How the pandemic has impacted business life.....	5
2.1.1	Impact of covid 19 in Finland	6
2.1.2	Impact of covid 19 in Italy	8
2.2	Culture.....	9
2.3	Employees' well-being.....	12
2.4	Remote Work.....	12
2.4.1	Office versus remote working	13
3	Methodology	14
3.1	Research Method	14
3.2	Thesis structure.....	14
3.1.1	Data Collection	15
3.1.2	Data Analysis	15
4	Results	17
4.1.1	Comparison between Finland and Italy	17
5	Discussion and Conclusion	19
5.1	Correspondence between Objectives and results	19
5.1.1	Self-Evaluation	22
5.2	Conclusion and further recommendations.....	23
6	References.....	24
7	Appendices	27
7.1	Interview questions.....	27
7.2	Interview answers in original state	28
7.3	Interview answers translated	29

1 Introduction

This research-based thesis explains how the pandemic that began in 2019 has affected many businesses and workers globally and how their work-life balance has changed. Every country used its best strategy to deal with the crisis while attempting to avoid having a large negative economic impact.

Every government has responded to the epidemic in a unique way; nonetheless, this study will contrast Finland and Italy in order to draw comparisons.

The first one is the place where the author is currently residing and studying, while the second one is the home country where she grew up.

The writer has personally experienced the effects of the pandemic in both countries over the past few years, which is another reason why these two nations were chosen in this research.

1.1 Background

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term well-being is defined as a calque of the Italian concept *benessere* from the 16th-century. A person's well-being is what is good for him or her. Well-being can be defined as the balance in a person's life in various aspects. When mental, physical, emotional, or social needs are met, can affect the subject's life.

These can be affected by many different factors like the achievements of personal goals, the feeling of having a life purpose, having time for physical exercise, money to sustain your life, people you can count on and so on.

To keep this balanced state is important as it define how each human being envision its life, whether it is worth it or not. Once that is reached it will be easy to get even better results whether is at school, work, relationships and every other aspect that matters to the person.

In particular the wellbeing in the workplace is an aspect that every company should take into consideration, "The greater the morale and happiness of your workforce, the greater the productivity."; this includes one's responsibilities, pressure level and expectancy towards them. (Owens, 2019)

The best way for employers to care for their staff is to first create a pleasant environment where they feel heard when they need to raise a concern, acknowledge them when they

successfully complete tasks assigned, or being listened to when they have a valuable insight that could help the business.

Employers should also keep in mind that employees are not just machines; they also have personal lives outside of work, and it's crucial to strike a healthy balance between the two of them.

1.2 Objectives and delimitations

The objective of this study is to determine how human resources departments and companies chose to care for their workforce throughout the current pandemic.

You will be guided by the thesis's author at full length the conduction of the research in order to determine which approach has shown to be more effective and how it might have been enhanced.

The scope of this thesis is not only to be aware on what happened as an historical event, but to know and be well prepared in case a similar situation may arise again, avoiding the waste of time that would lead on trying to figure it all out again in the future.

There were a number of obstacles in the way of performing this research, but the first to be brought up is undoubtedly the fact that it was nearly difficult to travel during the pandemic peak. In actuality, the author's initial flight reservation in the direction of Italy was canceled a day prior to departure.

Another issue was the difficulty of setting up in-person interviews with my interlocutors because, for a long time in Italy, specified hours were set out for going out for leisure. Sometimes, those hours coincided with the schedules of workers, necessitating some encounters to happen over the phone.

While, regarding the project a significant delimitation was the necessity concerning social distances that are required, in order to decrease the prospect of transmission of the virus, that implied delimitations in the workforce, in most cases not allowing people to go physically at their workplace.

Particularly in the beginning of the pandemic, where most countries decided for a total lockdown.

The consequence of it was, in the best-case scenario, to work remotely, while there have been situations where this way was not an option and a percentage of employees ended up losing their job.

In a nutshell, the author's goal in doing this research is to discover the answers to the following questions:

- How did employees work life changed?
- Was this change beneficial or disadvantageous in their work life?
- Which was the best way to achieve the best result concerning work and personal wellbeing?

2 COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 or the scientific name SARS-CoV-2, is referred to a Corona Virus disease, a severe and acute respiratory syndrome, started in a Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019 and led to a global pandemic in a short amount of time. (Page J, Hinshaw D, McKay B, 2021)

The most common symptoms of this disease are fever, flu indicators such as dry cough, shortness of breath, running nose, fatigue, diarrhea, loss of smell and taste. (Pardhan S, Vaughan M, Zhang J, Smith L Chichger H, 2020, 3)

This illness is transmitted person-to-person through close contact with someone suspected and/or confirmed positive case of Covid-19.

A person contracting this virus tend to be contagious for approximately 10 days, it depends on case to case, and it's imperative that that person stays in quarantine for the time being.

Is important to have precautionary measures such as social distancing, the usage of face masks and ventilate every room

For safety reasons, around April 2020 has been implemented a long lockdown or some sort of restrictions in nearly 90 countries around the world decided by each country government, in order to reduce the spread of this disease, as at that time there have been a total amount of 823 626 positive cases and a total of 40 598 deaths worldwide, based on the World Organization Center the 1st of April 2020.

The lockdown consisted in mainly staying at home, but included also travel restrictions, tracing contacts through apps, the closure, or limitations of businesses as well as entertainment spaces, schools had to implement their programs remotely and these led to forcing many people to not go to work or to do it remotely, for whom it was possible, from their home.

Consequently, there was a significant social and economic disturbance, and people were scared about having enough food at home because they didn't know what the virus was or what it might have caused.

As for now, February 2022, have been registered 5.69 million deaths and 384,430 cases worldwide, it would have been a much bigger number if it wasn't for the help of vaccines. (World Health Organization, 2022)

There are different kind of vaccines to fight the Covid-19 battle, such as Moderna, Pfizer, J&J Janssen, besides others from Russia and China; this help lowering the risk of getting the disease, avoid serious illness and/or death and helps dropping the spread of it. In this present moment most people already got their third dose of vaccine.

2.1 How the pandemic has impacted business life

The Covid19 pandemic undoubtedly had a profound impact on the workforce, the way people worked, how they collaborated, and notably how they interacted with employers and employees.

Two distinct circumstances emerged on a worldwide scale.

In the first scenario, businesses were fortunate to be compelled to move employees' work from the office to their homes, where they were still able to be productive despite missing out on some privileges like in-person meetings and/or travel.

The second scenario, which is the worse in the writer opinion, is that a large portion of the world's people was unable to shift their work to their homes.

Many of these workers are employed in a variety of industries, including hospitality, manufacturing, health, and construction. Unfortunately for them, in the best-case scenario, they have been laid off; while some medium-small business owners, forced to close permanently, having to fire their employees, with any luck before bankrupting.

The statistics chart, in the next page, shows that more than 50% of workers in financial activities, professional and commercial services, and information are able to work remotely from home. Only 8.8% of leisure and hospitality workers can do so. (Gould E, Shierholz H, 2020)

Workers in leisure and hospitality are least able to work from home

Share of workers who can telework, by industry, 2017–2018

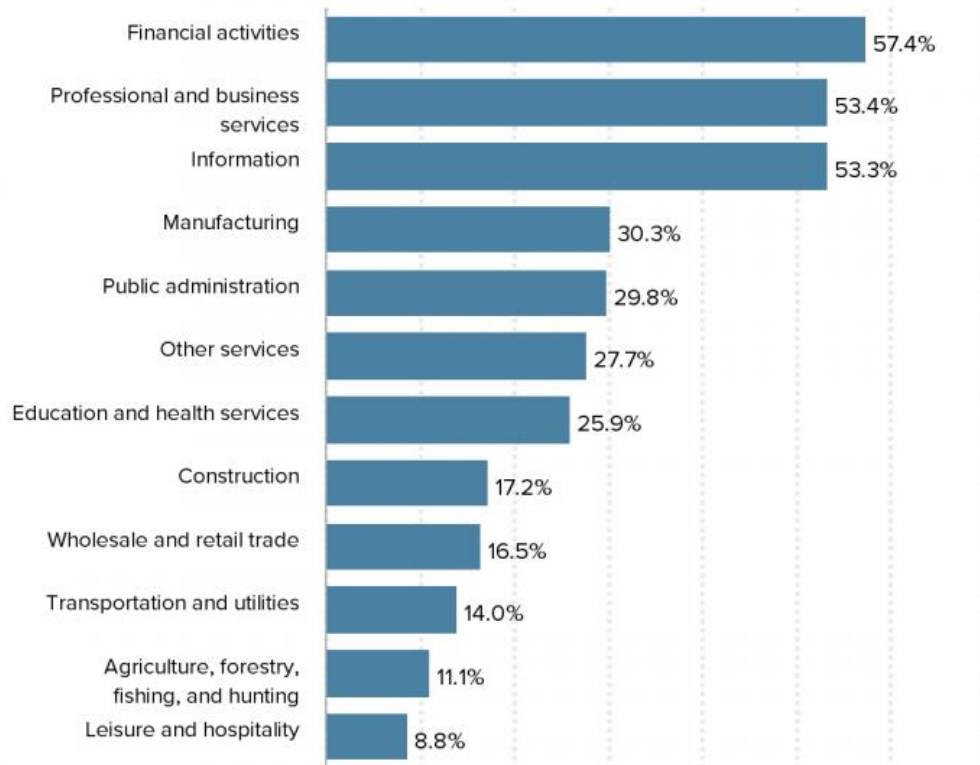


Figure 1. Leisure and hospitality workers have the most difficulty without the opportunity of working from home. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, Job Flexibilities and Work Schedules – 2017 – 2018 Data from the American Time Use Survey)

2.1.1 Impact of covid 19 in Finland

According to the World Health Organization, as of 4 February 2022 Finland has had 514.892 cases, 2.058 deaths and have administered a total of 11.009.180 vaccine doses.

The first case of corona virus in Finland appeared the 24th of January 2020 from a Chinese visitor who was hospitalized with flu comparable symptoms at the Ivalo Health Centre.

Only the day before, workforce on the health center had evolved protocols for managing the ability look of a brand-new coronavirus strain.

The Ivalo Health Center become contacted whilst a 2d visitor, a Chinese female in her 30s, have become sick at Saariselkä the subsequent week on January 28. Helsinki

University Hospital at the time owned the only laboratory capable of identifying new coronavirus strains. (Yle 2021)

Experts call Finland's strategy during this early stage of the coronavirus one of Europe's most effective, shutting down quickly but not completely to control the pandemic and reopening in a few months. alongside similar strategies in Denmark and Norway.

According to Pekka Nuorti, professor of epidemiology at the University of Tampere, it went even further. He states that Finland has a long record of reacting to crises, and people have always been united to endure those situations. Restrictions have been set active. The amazing thing is that people easily changed the behaviour in order to reach the necessary goal, he continued, mentioning that there has been a reduction in interpersonal relationships, 75% to be exact. (Richard Milne, 2020)

Stephanie Höppner on her article for DW in 2020 mentioned the 5 main reasons why Finland succeeded in managing the spread of corona virus compared to other countries.

1. Finland reacted swiftly: the Finnish government reacted quickly imposing a 2-month long lockdown.
2. Coronavirus app was widely accepted: the app was downloaded by the major share of the population.
3. Trust is key: the citizens trusted their government new rules with very little opposition.
4. Technological advantages: smoother transition to remote working and studies.
5. No parties? No problem: as the Finnish society tend to be not very sociable.

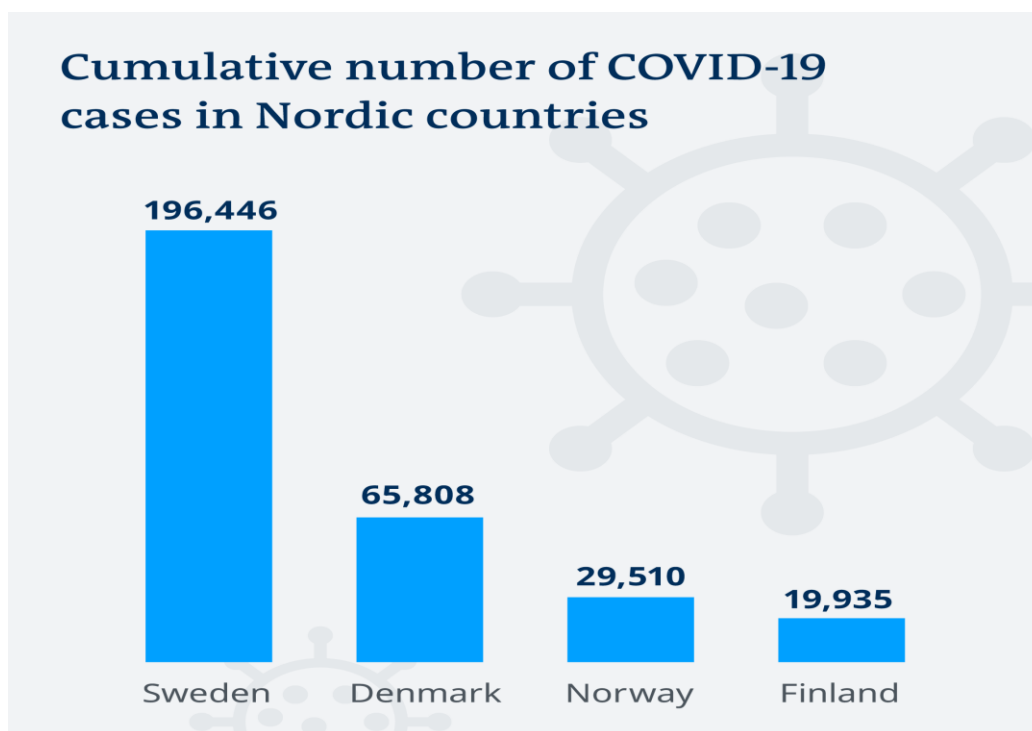


Figure 2. Cumulative number of COVID-19 cases in Nordic countries. (Source: Statista; as of November 18, 2020)

2.1.2 Impact of covid 19 in Italy

It is now true that the coronavirus was circulating in Italy long before China notified World Health Organization that an unknown virus was causing very serious pneumonia on December 31, 2019, according to a study. And there is speculation that the presence of the coronavirus was confirmed in Italy in November and December, and that it may have arrived in Italy at the end of the summer.

A biopsy of a skin patient in November 2019 showed the presence of Covid-19. The 24-year-old is Italy's patient 0 according to the researchers' data. (Fabio Fiorindi, 2021)

But the date that remains impressed in Italian history will be 21st of February 2020, when a 38-year-old man from Codogno went to the emergency room with severe pneumonia, his symptoms could be attributed to Covid-19. On February 21, 2020, he, along with five other patients, was announced as the first case of Covid-19 locally in Italy, not attributable to a return from China. Up until this point, they believed or hoped that the virus would not reach or spread to Italy.

Italy is the first country in Europe affected to document the coronavirus infection, in the world together with Iran and South Korea. (Viola Rita, 2021)

In Italy the pandemic was a catastrophe, several aspects highlight the main limitations of the Italian government in recognizing the scale of the Covid-19 threat, organizing a systematic response and learning from both victories and defeats in the fight against the virus.

Since concrete signs of danger already existed and strategies and countermeasures were used, it can be concluded that the information required for action was not lacking, but the existing information was not paid attention to and was not timely. It was not converted into a countermeasure.

The Italian government addressed Covid 19 by issuing a series of decrees that progressively increased restrictions within the so-called `red zones` and then gradually extended these to the rest of Italy. Therefore, Italy was following the spread of the contagion instead of preceding it. Second, the partial measures may have facilitated the spread of the virus. When the closure decree for northern Italy became public, it caused a massive exodus of people to the south. And this certainly facilitated the spread of the virus to regions where it had not yet arrived. (G.P. Pisano, R. Sadun, M. Zanini, 2020)

2.2 Culture

Based on the meaning given by Nicki Lisa Cole, for the premiere reference site ThoughtCo., the term culture is referred to when addressing different and intangible aspects of social life, by which are more specifically related to practices, language, values, ways of communication, beliefs and values, which define them to as a collective, moreover differ from country to country.

This research is reinforced by a very captivating theory, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory.

Geert Hofstede was a management researcher of Dutch origin. He developed this theory in 1980 in order to identify the areas in which each culture differs.

In order to grasp and comprehend how business is performed in numerous societies across many different countries, his theory focuses on comprehending the contrasts between those cultures. In essence, it emphasizes on distinguishing variety of nations, their characteristics, and their impact on business.

In order to compare Italy and Finland, the author of this thesis decided to examine certain principles from Hofstede's theory, specifically power distance uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and individualism, based on the key concepts of this research.

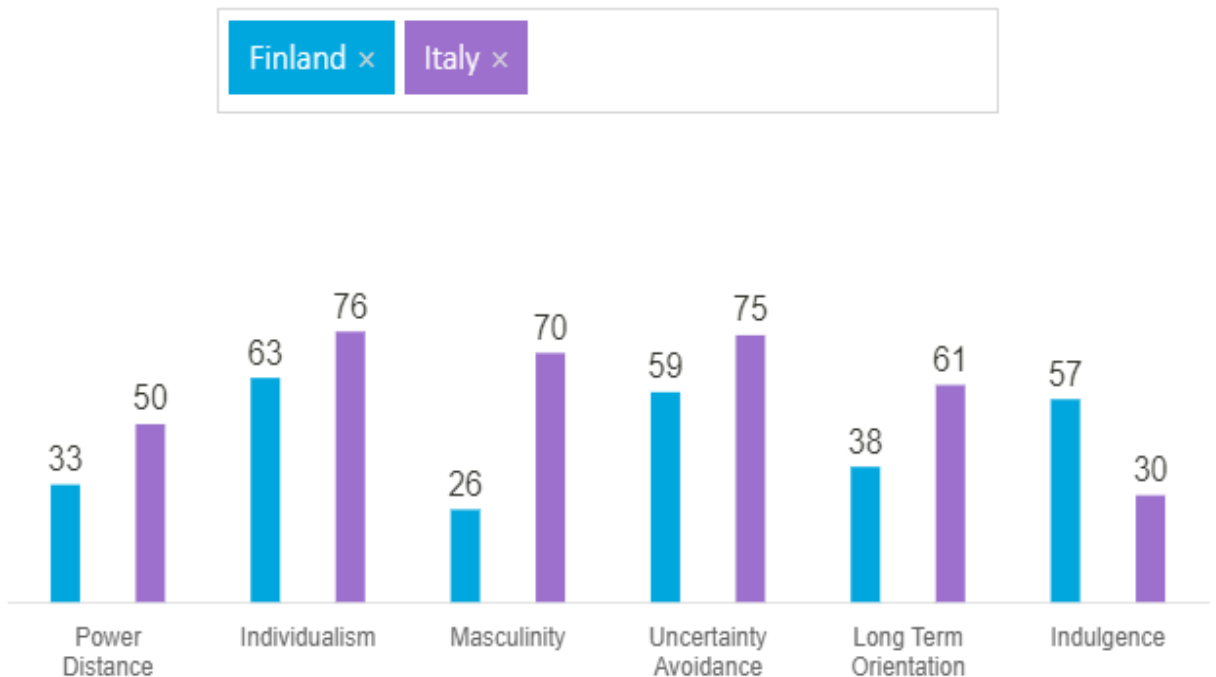


Figure 3. Country comparison, Finland – Italy (Source Hofstede Insights)

As seen in the graphic above, there are significant variances between the two countries in some sectors, while these changes are typically relatively slight in others.

The degree to which the less important leaders of organizations and institutions within a nation assume and recognize that dominance is allocated unequally is known as Power distance.

This component deals with the fact that not all people in civilizations are created equal; it expresses how the culture views these differences between people.

As we can see, Finland score on power distance is significantly low. Being in control is not in any way appreciated; in fact, one typically addresses one's superiors by their first name. Power is not vested solely in the management; rather, it is shared by all employees, who enjoy the utmost respect and are actively engaged in decision-making.

Therefore, independence, justice with a hierarchy that only exists because it is necessary, the ability to communicate with one's superiors without substantial obstacles, and the opportunity to advance professionally are the fundamental traits that define the Finnish culture.

It is common to make distinctions between Italy's north and south, which are typically almost the exact opposite. The people of northern Italy, particularly the younger generation, favour teamwork over managers having authority over them. Fairness and having a say in decision-making are priorities for them.

The manner by which a community responds to the notion of an uncertain future is referred to as uncertainty avoidance. This may cause fear, leaving people unsure about what they should do in unfamiliar circumstances and leading them to develop what they perceive to be the most effective coping mechanisms.

The population of Finland tend to favour certainty over uncertainty, need regulations they can follow, and are generally intolerant of unconventional views. They really ought to feel secure, and this usually happens when things remain the same, thus they are not huge fans of change. Being punctual and precise are two of the most important principles among Finnish citizens.

Italians have a far higher level of uncertainty avoidance, which makes them feel quite uneasy in strange situations. Italians are aware of the most crucial laws to observe, even though this puts them under stress. The Italian nation contains so many different laws that it would be difficult for an outsider to adapt. They do require specific periods of the day to unwind and let off steam because of it.

When referring to long-term orientation, we imply a dimensional sphere in which we take account of whether various nations are receptive to the innovation that the future may bring or tend to be at ease in the methods of doing things adopted in the past. The highest scorers are more pragmatic and are motivated to put forward suggestions for the future.

The fact that the Finnish inhabitants ranked relatively low indicates that they favour conventional methods and have a tendency toward normative thinking. Because of their much higher level, Italians are generally better at adapting to their own circumstances in light of the context, time, and environment. This positive outlook makes it simpler to get results.

Finally, we have Individualism, this idea focuses on a nation's residents' level of independence, namely whether or not their society, the group they belong to, or their own individual needs come first.

Finland is an individualistic nation where people are more likely to look out for themselves, their immediate family, or at the very least those with whom they have a close personal relationship with. This implies that interpersonal connections outside of the group are founded on merit or mutual benefit.

Individualism is also a common trait in Italy, especially in the big northern towns. There, people typically prioritize their personal fulfilment, accomplishing their professional and personal goals, over relationships with other individuals.

In contrast, it is exactly the opposite in the southern regions of Italy, where people are described as being friendly and supportive of one another.

2.3 Employees' well-being

According to the definition of employee wellbeing, the physical and emotional health of employees is dependent on factors both inside and outside of the workplace. These include their interactions with co-workers, how they use tools and resources, how big corporate choices affect them personally and professionally, and a variety of different aspects. (Alexandra Marinaki s.a.)

Employers are responsible for providing the necessary support and care for their workers' physical and mental health. Feel-good strategies can foster feelings of value and support in employees. In addition, you can increase employee engagement and drive success for teams across your organization.

When a company member is feeling pleased, they typically work better. The result is increased employee productivity and healthier habits. Research shows that happy workers are 13% more productive. Employers can improve well-being by encouraging behaviour such as healthy and consistent work-life balance policies by management. Additionally, these practices ensure business continuity even during peak times. (Maria Waida, 2021)

2.4 Remote Work

According to the VMware terminology, "remote work" is the practice of having employees perform their responsibilities and tasks away from an employer-operated central office. A worker's home, a co-working space, another communal area, a private office, or any other site other than the typical corporate office building or campus could be considered such places.

2.4.1 Office versus remote working

Since many businesses had not yet adopted this method of working, the idea of working remotely at first seemed unreliable. However, the outcome ended up being better than expected because it allowed employees to save time by not having to commute or get ready for work. Additionally, the employers' cost-effective conclusion must be mentioned, along with the company's increased productivity and speed.

But not everything is as amazing as it seems, since it became difficult for employees to separate their personal lives from their professional lives, considering that everything was taking place in the same accommodation. In addition, in many cases, the employee might be living with another family member, which can cause them to become easily distracted or disturbed.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Method

The method used in this thesis is the qualitative type of research, it will be described the actual situation we are in, in order to understand what happened, how did it go and is still going and how the system can be improved.

This qualitative research will be supported with the help of interviews.

The author decided to interview five people overall, two of them residing in Finland, including the writer experience, and the other three residing in Italy

3.2 Thesis structure

The structure of this thesis will be a first general overview of what actually Covid-19 is, how it has impacted the everyday life, the business life, and consequently the economy of the world. Then more accurately in both Finland and Italy, making a final comparison.

After that it will proceed specifically referred to both countries chosen and how they have dealt with what they assume was the best solution to keep the workflow continuing without numerous repercussions.

The meaning of remote working is being explained and the differences between this way and being present physically in the office. Additionally, the fundamental principles of culture and wellbeing are being emphasized.

Then the thesis will progress with the research by including the interviews with the employees, in order to understand how their situation is, if it changed during these two years, their point of view of the status, if they have found it better or if in their personal opinion there is still space for improvements.

Later on, it will be discussed with them their wellbeing, how they have felt and are still feeling, the benefits they have found in this situation and the limitations.

Important is as well if this aspect has been taken into consideration from their employers and how they have managed to do so, or, in the opposite case, where their presence felt missing.

Last but not least important, the sums will be drawn, highlighting the main points and main differences, finding a better solution for future purposes.

3.1.1 Data Collection

Therefore, the author of this research decided to find out how managers both in Italy and Finland decided to run their companies and focus as well on their employees' wellbeing during this terrifying pandemic time by interviewing people in the personal space of her life.

Her first two interlocutors are close friends, Ronaldo and Viviana, the first work in the back office of a major Italian eyewear company, while the second one, who works at the same company, is part of the logistics department.

The next interview is with the author's mother, Mitselal, who works for a company that deals with refrigerators for one of the most famous supermarket brands. She works in the factory, so most of her work is manual.

The fourth interview draws a contrast, that is with Musse, who works as a full-stack developer at a Finnish company, and the author himself, who worked as a waitress at a Finnish restaurant will compare at the end her own personal experience.

Interviews were conducted primarily in person or by telephone for those whom the authors unfortunately were unable to meet in person. They were each asked the same question about how their work was organized during this time, whether their manager made any effort to ensure workers wellbeing in the job, and if their answers were affirmative, they It also explained how it was done.

3.1.2 Data Analysis

The data in this research were analysed qualitatively, so that one can get a general idea of what the situation was like at the peak of the pandemic.

It is qualitative data because it is not about numbers, the results depend on the personal experience of the interviewer, so the author observed, listened and reported the necessary information.

Qualitative data in statistics is also called categorical data. This is data that can be classified according to the attributes and characteristics of things or phenomena.

In this case, collecting data in this technique helps identify who your employees are, the matters and difficulties they faced, and what management needs to focus on to identify

the issues and problems and find solutions for a future situation. As well as it goes deeper in term of research, with the gaining of insight and motivation through the discussion.

First of all, the author decided to arrange the data by converting the information gained in text format and exported into a spreadsheet. The order is specific as the writer goal is to compare Italy and Finland, the focus was first in the order of the country and then in the type of the job.

Then review the entire answer to get the big picture. Read the entire responses left by the respondent during the interview. And when reached the end of the passage, the next step was to write down the overall theme interpreted from it.

4 Results

In the dissertation, thesis, or other formal academic work results chapter, authors present the results of their own qualitative analysis in an unbiased and objective manner.

Only the authors' results are reported and explained in this chapter, they will not yet be interpreted. The author of this research will then provide own thought, idea, and hypothesis in order to analyze the implication of her own findings in the discussion chapter.

In this scenario, the author will lay out the results section by main subject or, in other words by content that emerge from data analysis.

Starting with general conception about what the data show around each topic, such as:

1. Continual agreements and contestations
2. Trends and motives
3. Particular concentration in each answer

The author of this research has therefore decided to report the answers received from her interlocutors, with the questions in the foreground and the answers below in a specific order, PI being the one who works professionally in Italy, PF the one who works professionally in Finland, FI1 the one who works in logistic, FI2 also in Italy working in production, but in another company and FF, who would be the writer will give her answer in a separate section, as waitress in Finland.

The writer will translate the answers in Italian and will attach to the appendices and image from the spreadsheet with the original responses.

4.1.1 Comparison between Finland and Italy

What the writer noticed when comparing the various answers given, is that there is a considerable difference between Italy and Finland, but the difference between the different job sectors is not subtle either.

As we can see, and as is also normal given the type of work to be carried out, those who can work from home are only those who work mostly with a computer, while the rest either had to stay at home in the hope that things would soon return to normal, or they had to go to work with the risk of contracting the virus.

Reading the answers, it does not seem to be a big difference between the Italian and Finnish work situation, and instead, very often it is the small things at the back of one's mind that carry the most weight and importance.

But there is, and it is exactly how these people felt psychologically and emotionally. Of course, leaving aside the fact that the pandemic changed the world for everyone and made things more complicated, we can see the difference between Finland and Italy based on how the workers felt.

The main thing was definitely how much people were scared and lost, in Italy people were not allowed to go to the supermarket but some of them had to work with 500+ colleagues. The media painted the situation as if it was the end of the world, the majority of citizens denied the existence of this virus, so they wouldn't be socially careful and of course this made it easy for the virus to spread. This is why it had a negative impact going to work and they were afraid. To the shop you can choose whether to go or not, who to be near to or not, but at work you didn't have such freedom in Italy.

In a nutshell, in Italy, the situation was experienced in a very disorganized way, by the government, which consequently bewildered employers who finally did not know how best to manage their business and their workers.

As you may have noticed, the concept of working from home was something that had never been heard of before, whereas in Finland it had been applied even before the pandemic began, so there was no crisis or doubt as to whether it had worked for the latter.

In Finland, honestly speaking, the situation was calmer, people cooperated from the very beginning by respecting the rules, so everyone, pretty soon, all went back to work safer.

Surely, the working world has changed, perhaps for the better thanks to the new working methods, but let's say that in Finland the change was not as tragic as in Italy.

Especially in many Finnish workplaces, particularly for professional workers and students, support of all kinds has been given, from psychological visits to substituting 'Friday after work beers' on Zoom, or other methods of entertaining and socializing with one's colleagues.

While in Italy the most they could do was to have the covid-test for free or simply stay at home, as the employers thought they were doing their employees a favor.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this final chapter, the author will react to the queries she had set for herself as research objectives to evaluate how she had been able to do it in accordance with the findings of her qualitative analysis as well as suggestions for the future.

The author will then discuss the methodology used for the thesis and how she was able to complete it.

A self-evaluation section will also be included, where he will discuss the insights, and lessons she gained from carrying out this activity.

In order to complete the thesis, she finally chose to include some personal remarks and gratitude.

5.1 Correspondence between Objectives and results

During the introductory chapter of the thesis, the author interrogated herself with three specific questions that would later help her during the course of this research.

Those were:

1. How did employees work life changed?
2. Was this change beneficial or disadvantageous in their work life?
3. Which was the best way to achieve the best result concerning work and personal wellbeing?

When comparing Italy and Finland, there is a tiny but significant difference that can be seen when analyzing the responses from the data collected during the interviews.

As was already established, the government of Italy is where the issue first arises in Italy, not the employers or the human resources division.

The chaos that ensued in Italy most likely would not have occurred if the Covid-19 crisis had been treated seriously from the start when a terrifying pandemic had already been started in China.

The author here tries to demonstrate that the Italian government should have previously thought of a strategy to be enacted in case it spread to Italy when the first word of this virus appeared in the international media.

This did not occur; instead, without a plan of regulations to communicate to the populace, the initial positive patient grew like wildfire, placing Italy top in the world for positive cases.

Then came the bosses, who originally either forced the workers to wear masks while working or temporarily left them at home. For those who could, a perplexing hybrid style of employment was developed, and on the contrary those who unfortunately were left at home indefinitely or even terminated.

As a result, it is clear from the answers that work-life adjustments were significant.

People were required to spend the most of their time at home or at work during the lengthy lockdown period, which was perplexing because it varied from region to region based on the number of positive cases, but from the previous days, so this was in constant change and not up to date.

Many businesses were forced to close in order to avoid bankruptcy, leaving many employees at home without a job guarantee and without access to government assistance, which put families in a difficult situation with no idea how to maintain themselves for a significant yet undefined amount of time.

Furthermore, there are also those who have managed to keep working, sometimes without strict guidelines, aside from the requirement to wear a mask, and without assistance or support from the human resources department.

After all, in accordance with some people opinion, they should have noticed that they had a monthly income, which as it turned out was not something to be taken for granted.

Free COVID tests were offered by certain employers, but depending on the results, there was still uncertainty about whether the employee or coworker was truly negative or whether it was too early to perform the test, even when the symptoms were already present.

Subsequently, we discuss about those who had the opportunity to work from home, they were fortunate enough to continue working. Not having the risk of being infected by colleagues, but being this a method rarely, if ever, implemented in Italy was certainly confusing at first.

As the lockdown lasted for a long time, they found themselves unable to separate the sphere of work from the one of personal life at home, not having the change between one and the other and not having the possibility of leaving home.

While in Finland, the situation was handled in a totally different manner and timing.

Surely there were employees who were laid off or lost their positions, but thanks to financial assistance, they were able to endure until the situation improved or found another job smoothly.

In this scenario, the government, recognized by experts as one of the most efficient in Europe, imposed an immediate and brief lockdown in comparison to other nations, and most importantly, not everything was fully shut down, which is highly significant and beneficial to Finnish residents.

Rules were established from the beginning that were strictly followed by everyone, preventing the virus from spreading in great numbers.

Working from home was not a huge difficulty for workers because this approach had previously been introduced by many organizations in Finland long before the virus existed, thus continuing from home without going to the office for a while was not a significant change.

Furthermore, as previously stated, there was a distinct difference between the two countries; in Finland, workers received extensive support from their human resources department, both professionally and psychologically; no worker felt obligated to return to the office if they did not feel up to it; interviews with their manager were provided where they could talk calmly about their work and personal situation; and psychological visits were made available for those who considered necessary them.

This method is not to be ignored in normal circumstances, and having these options, especially during the pandemic, undoubtedly supported the workers greatly.

5.1.1 Self-Evaluation

This thesis is qualitative research, and the writer found it more challenging than quantitative research because she felt more competent working with precise figures and statistics, thus it was definitely a challenge with herself.

It necessitated a great deal of effort to do the proper research, to find the correct opportunity to select the individuals to interview and the approach to use to conduct it.

It was additionally extremely important to analyse the data gathered and determine how to create the presentation of this research in order for everyone to comprehend it.

The author chose this topic because it represented an issue close to her heart. She was frightened for her near and dear ones due to her being away from home for a very long time, hearing the news and reading the headlines on the internet. Residing in Finland and knowing first-hand how things were handled here, to be in contact with friends and relatives complaining about how things were handled caused a sense of frustration in herself and of righteousness. The reason is that it was not fair that underprivileged people have to lose out because of poor organization.

She travelled to Italy when she had the opportunity, to observe for herself how things were progressing and to those close to her.

Many thoughts about how the issue may have been handled better appeared in her mind, so she determined to address this delicate but significant matter in case a similar circumstance arose in the future.

Personally, the author believes she was able to obtain the knowledge and responses she required to achieve her objectives. It was certainly not always simple, because despite having given herself strict deadlines, she was unable to complete the project on the time wished, as this research was a large personal project that demanded a lot of time and attention.

The author define herself as extremely good at time management and self-management, remarkably this was notable during her studies and professionally. Contrastively, this research needed a lot of extra time mostly to focus on, was tough to organize. Additionally, there is life and its numerous surprises.

Alongside afterwards, what the writer considered fascinating during this project was the multitude of thoughts, the comparison with other people, and the countless investigations conducted in seek of the finest approach to explain what she desired.

With the hope that this will benefit others.

One area of work that has absorbed a significant amount of her time and attention has indeed been academic writing, which she needed to put in a bit more effort to improve, but that has definitely served her for her future.

5.2 Conclusion and further recommendations

In conclusion, the author in this thesis and other research, have acknowledged that Finland's approach to the pandemic was undoubtedly the strongest.

First of all is necessary to take control of the situation right away and dealing with it; do not however wait to see what occurs beforehand.

Second, develop a strategy to safeguard those who, regrettably, lost their jobs. For the reason that those individuals are contributing taxation, they have a right for support in times of need.

Third, if employers and, most importantly, the human resources department expect their employees to perform more effectively on the workplace, they must provide them with the following benefits: work and psychological support, conduct one-on-one interviews to determine areas where to improve.

The author appreciates the interest shown in studying and comprehending the situation, in hope that this effort will be acknowledged and applied in future similar situations.

Particularly appreciation to the educators who contributed with interesting lessons and add knowledge.

Notably to those who helped with the creation of this project by assisting the writer in illuminating the issues that have emerged and identifying workable solutions.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Interview questions

1. Are you working on site, remotely or on a hybrid mode?
2. Which way do you prefer? Why?
3. How do you think this way has impacted your work both in positive and negative way?
4. What's is your own understanding of wellbeing?
5. Did these changes affect your wellbeing?
6. Have you been well looked after by your employers during this difficult time? Do you think that the human resources people have been really helpful to you and that they focused on your physical and mental well-being?

7.2 Interview answers in original state

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
10	ANSWERS						
11		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
	PI - Ronaldo	ibrido, 5gg ufficio, sabo smart (ma ho anche fatto un lunghissimo periodo solo smart)	"preferisco l'ufficio perché per il lavoro che faccio io è più semplice e diretto reperire informazioni quando sono effettivamente presente"	"non bisogna sottovalutare i temi di infrastruttura nel senso che anche se ho una buona connessione a casa come l'operatività è rallentata a causa del fatto che lavoro con file piuttosto pesanti"	Per me il benessere è trovare un equilibrio tra casa e lavoro, essere in grado di svolgere i propri compiti in modo efficiente e con una buona mentalità.	"per quanto sia bello non dover fare i soliti 25 min di strada per arrivare al lavoro per me lo smart working non è una buona alternativa perché innanzitutto per me è fondamentale avere un distacco fra casa e lavoro, lavorare nella stessa stanza sove dormo molto è straniante/alienante (visto che spesso mi capita di lavorare oltre il mio orario normale succedeva che non vedessi nessun'altro posto oltre a casa mia) Per questa ragione secondo me è anche più facile andare in burn out più facilmente ma ripeto, questa penso sia una cosa altamente soggettiva specifica per le mia situazione Ah, poi stando a casa il mio movimento si riduceva a 0 quindi dal punto di vista di salute fisica non penso fosse proprio buona"	Non proprio, solo che quando non potevamo andare fisicamente in ufficio potevamo lavorare da casa, cosa che prima non era possibile fare".
12	PF - Musse	I work 100% remotely. As my company's office is in a different city (7h drive). But I can visit the office if it's required by the company	I prefer remote working. I wouldn't mind visiting office. But if I have to choose I prefer remote work. Because it will save me a lot of commuting time. In addition to this, I am more efficient and focused when I work alone with less distraction	I have more enough time after work to do my own thing and to spend my time with my family and friends I can do some important personal errands at working hours and compensate my working hours is easier when working remotely cons: Less interaction with colleagues. Some things work better when meeting physically and working together in a team	Wellbeing is keeping oneself both physically and mentally sane.	In the beginning yes. Learning the art of work-life balance while working remotely was a bit challenging in the beginning. Physically: less movement, sitting long hours. As there is no need for commuting, it was difficult to build the habit of going out for health sake , unscheduled eating habit - work and meetings keep pushing the lunch time quite often when working remotely Mentally: Not limiting the working hours. This eventually create some stress Less human interaction	Yes: I would say our company is working hard on this issue. They hired psychologist and related professional consultants to give us advice on our physical and mental well-being. They have been consistent holding this session quite frequently. Also the 1-1 meeting with my manager is more open and usually brings some solution after the meeting. This shows that the human resource and upper management people are caring for the employees.
13	FI1 - Viviana	"ho lavorato durante il covid andando sempre in fabbrica"	"secondo me lo Smart working è stato molto utile ed efficace per chi ne aveva l'opportunità"	non so risponderti	"stare in un ambiente sereno, educato, con persone con la quale si può avere uno spirito di squadra"	avrei preferito stare a casa, perché in quel periodo era un rischio uscire e essere in contatto con altre persone	L'unica cosa che hanno fatto è stata avere a disposizione tamponi da poter fare al lavoro gratuitamente per essere sicuri di non essere positivi, ma non si sa mai perché il test potrebbe risultare positivo dopo qualche giorno ma avere già il virus e contagiare altri
14	FI2 - Mitselal	Ci è stato detto di rimanere a casa per un periodo di tempo X finché non avessero trovato una soluzione per farci lavorare in sicurezza.	Putroppo lavorando in fabbrica non c'è l'opportunità di scegliere, però sicuramente lavorare da casa è stata una buona scelta per chi riusciva	Ovviamente la paura di questo nuovo virus e di prenderselo c'era, e anche molta	Stare bene al lavoro, senza conflitti, poter fare il proprio e avere la possibilità una volta uscita di avere il tempo per altro	All'inizio, il non sapere quando la fabbrica avrebbe riaperto, avendo spese e una famiglia da mantenere, visto le situazioni che si sentivano tv, avevo il timore sicuramente di come sarebbero andate le cose, ma una volta riaperto diciamo mi sono tranquillizzata come potevo	Non proprio, non direi
15	FF - Writer	The restaurant has been closed in the first lockdown, then we had to opportunity to open it for a specific amount of time and past that we were able only to make take away orders	I was not able to work from home as a waitress, but I was able to do my university internship remotely and combine both of them in my daily life	I have not be impacted negatively by the pandemic, as I am not a very social person, I managed to finish my school courses, my internship while working full time, so for me in that sense was positive, but on the other side it was very hard to travel to be with my family and close friend for a while.	All that both inside and outside of the workplace affect an employee's physical and mental well-being.	Luckily I did not have an important changes impact based on the work	No, on this side nothing particularly happened except having information from our manager regarding the evolution of the situation in Finland.
16							

7.3 Interview answers translated

1. Are you working on site, remotely or on a hybrid mode?

PI: "Hybrid, 5 days in the office and Saturdays remotely, but in the beginning of the pandemic I have worked a long amount of time remotely."

PF: "I work 100% remotely. As my company's office is in a different city (7h drive). But i can visit the office if it's required by the company."

FI1: "I had to go to work on site since the job is manual, even during the first wave of the pandemic."

FI2: "We were told to stay home for 1 month or more amount of time until they could find a solution for us to work safely."

FF: "The restaurant has been closed in the first lockdown, then we had to opportunity to open it for a specific amount of time and past that we were able only to make take away orders."

2. Which way do you prefer and why?

PI: "I prefer the office because for the work that I do, it is easier and more direct to find information when I am actually present."

PF: "I prefer remote working. I wouldn't mind visiting office. But if I have to choose i prefer remote work. Because it will save me a lot of commuting time. In addition to this, I am more efficient and focused when I work alone with less distraction."

FI1: "In my opinion, smart working has been very useful and effective for those who had the opportunity."

FI2: "Unfortunately, working in a factory there is no opportunity to choose, but certainly working from home was a good choice for those who could."

FF: "I was not able to work from home as a waitress, but I was able to do my university internship remotely and combine both of them in my daily life."

3. How do you think this way has impacted your work both in positive and negative way?

PI: "one should not underestimate the issues of infrastructure in the sense that even if I have a good connection at home as the operation is slowed down due to the fact that I work with files rather heavy files".

PF: "I have more enough time after work to do my own thing and to spend my time with my family and friends, I can do some important personal errands at working hours and compensate my working hours is easier when working remotely; cons: less interaction with colleagues. Some things work better when meeting physically and working together in a team."

FI1: "I couldn't say."

FI2: "Obviously, the fear of this new virus and of catching it was there, and a lot too."

FF: "I have not been impacted negatively by the pandemic, as I am not a very social person, I managed to finish my school courses, my internship while working full time, so for me in that sense was positive, but on the other side it was very hard to travel to be with my family and close friend for a while."

4. What's is your own understanding of wellbeing?

PI: "For me wellbeing is to find a balance between home and work, being able to do your tasks efficiently and with a good mindset."

PF: "Wellbeing is keeping oneself both physically and mentally sane."

FI1: "To be in a serene, polite environment with people with whom you can have a team spirit".

FI2: "Being well at work, without conflicts, being able to do one's own and having the possibility once out to have time for something else."

FF: "All that both inside and outside of the workplace affect an employee's physical and mental well-being."

5. Did these changes affect your wellbeing?

PI: "As nice as it is not to have to make the usual 25 min commute to work for me, smart working smart working is not a good alternative because first and foremost for me it is fundamental between home and work, working in the same room in the same room where I sleep a lot is alienating/alienating (given that I often working beyond my normal hours happened that I didn't see any other place other than my home).

For this reason, in my opinion, it is also easier to go into burn out but repeat, this I think is a highly subjective thing subjective thing specific to my situation, then staying at home my movement was reduced to 0 so from a physical health point of view physical health point of view I don't think it was really good.

PF: "In the beginning yes. Learning the art of work-life balance while working remotely was a bit challenging in the beginning.

Physically: less movement, sitting long hours. As there is no need for commuting, it was difficult to build the habit of going out for health's sake, unscheduled eating habit – work and meetings keep pushing the lunch time quite often when working remotely

Mentally: not limiting the working hours. This eventually create some stress and less human interaction."

FI1: "I would have preferred to stay at home, because at that time it was a risk to go out and be in contact with other people."

FI2: "At first, not knowing when the factory would reopen, having expenses and a family to support, seeing the situations that were heard on TV, I was definitely afraid of how things would turn out, but once it reopened let's say I calmed down as much as I could."

FF: "Luckily I did not have an important changes impact based on the work."

6. Have you been well looked after by your employers during this difficult time?
Do you think that the human resources people have been really helpful to you and that they focused on your physical and mental well-being?

PI: "Not really, except when we were unable to go physically to the office we could've work from home, thing that before was not an option."

PF: "Yes: I would say our company is working hard on this issue. They hired psychologist and related professional consultants to give us advice on our physical and mental well-being. They have been consistent holding this session quite frequently.

Also, the 1-1 meeting with my manager is more open and usually brings some solution after the meeting. This shows that the human resource and upper management people are caring for the employees.”

FI1: “The only thing they did was to have Covid-test available to take at work free of charge to make sure employee were not positive, but you never know because the test could come back positive after a few days but already have the virus and infect others.”

FI2: “Not really, I wouldn't say.”

FF: “No, on this side nothing particularly happened except having information from our manager regarding the evolution of the situation in Finland.”