# SCIENTIFIC PAPERS OF SILESIAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT SERIES NO. 206

2024

# THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE'S PARADIGM APPLICABILITY IN RELATION TO HYBRID AND REMOTE WORKING

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**Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to identify instruments for shaping positive employee experience in hybrid and remote working environments. The following research questions were formulated: Can the experience modules – sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioural and relational – be used to explore the possibility of shaping the positive employee experience of hybrid and remote employees? Using the experience modules, can the supervisor shape the positive experience of hybrid and remote employees?, Are there differences between the possibility of shaping the positive experience of hybrid and remote employees?

**Design/methodology/approach**: A critical analysis of the literature, a diagnostic survey method and a statistical method were used to answer the researcher's questions. The subject of the study is instruments for shaping a positive employee experience in hybrid and remote working environments.

**Findings:** The results of the study confirmed that the sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioural and relational experience modules can be used as instruments to shape positive hybrid and remote employee experience. They also showed differences in the assessment of the applicability of the different instruments to hybrid and remote employees.

**Research limitations/implications**: A limitation of the study is the non-random sampling and the small number of respondents. However, despite these limitations, the study may inspire further in-depth research into the (digital) employee experience issue.

**Practical implications:** On the basis of the study conducted, recommendations of a practical nature can be made regarding the possibilities of shaping a positive employee experience for hybrid and remote employees. The proposed catalogue of instruments may be useful to those in managerial roles who recognise the need to shape the employee experience of hybrid and remote employees. Managers should be aware of the importance of positive employee experiences for human resource management practice, especially for attracting valuable employees, retaining and developing them, motivating them to work and increasing their commitment.

**Originality/value:** The issue of employee experience is relatively new and rarely addressed by researchers in Poland. The study extended the research on employee experience to hybrid and remote employees. The results obtained contribute to the literature on employee experience, hybrid working and remote working. They provide a better understanding of the differences regarding the possibilities for shaping the employee experience of hybrid and remote employees. They can be of value to both theoreticians and practitioners of human resource management.

**Keywords:** employee experience, digital employee experience, hybrid work, remote work. **Category of the paper:** Research paper.

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, as a result of the digital transformation, flexible forms of work organisation such as hybrid working and remote working have become more widely used. The process of implementing them in organisations grew by leaps and bounds during the pandemic, when they became – where the nature of the work allowed it – a necessity during periods of lockdown. Remote working is a form of work organisation in which work is provided at a location other than the default place of work (i.e. outside the organisation's headquarters) using means of remote communication (Król, 2023). Hybrid working, on the other hand, is a combination of stationary and remote working (Król, 2024). At the time of the pandemic, it was assumed that after the end of the pandemic both forms of work organisation would become permanent elements of the labour market (Wrycza, Maślankowski, 2020), a kind of 'new normal', and their development trend will continue (Ng et al., 2022). Indeed, after the pandemic, hybrid and remote working has found a permanent place in organisational practice in Poland, although according to the latest data published by the Central Statistical Office (GUS, 2023), the extent of remote working in Poland is not large. At the same time, a number of studies (Kozioł-Nadolna, Suchocka, 2021; Król, 2022; Pełczewski, 2021; Wiśniewski, 2023) indicate that employees value the opportunity to work especially in a hybrid system. However, thanks to the solutions introduced in the Labour Code (Kodeks pracy, 2023), also employees who, as a rule, work at the employer's premises can benefit from so-called occasional remote working, which broadens the spectrum of people whose work experience changes. As a result of these changes, employees have begun to acquire new experiences related not only to the use of modern technology in the workplace, but also to the performance of work at home.

The aim of the study is to identify instruments for shaping a positive employee experience in hybrid and remote working environments. The research process sought answers to the following research questions:

- Can the experience modules sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioural and relational be used to explore opportunities for shaping positive experiences for employees working hybrid and remotely?
- With the help of experience modules, can a supervisor shape a positive experience for hybrid and remote employees?
- Are there differences between the ability to shape positive experiences for hybrid and remote employees?

The structure of the study was subordinated to obtaining answers to the above research questions. For this purpose, the following research methods were used: a critical analysis of the literature on the subject, a diagnostic survey method (CAVI) and a statistical method.

#### 2. Employee experience – a literature review

"Employee experience" (EX) is a management concept that puts the employee first. Morgan (2017), who is considered a pioneer of this concept, views positive employee experience as a product of an organisation's cultural, physical and technological environment, all of which influence employees' assessment of the workplace relating to its positive aspects. These three areas are the source of employee experience from the moment an employee joins an organisation until they leave. Morgan stresses that because employee experience is subjective in nature, which is determined by their perceptions, emotions, attitudes and behaviours, an organisation needs to get to know its employees well in order to shape a positive experience.

Plaskoff (2017) emphasises that in a market of experience there is not only a need to redefine the approach to human resources in the organisation, but also the relationship between employer and employee. Employees in a workplace form different groups with different expectations. Identifying these groups allows the organisation's management to shape the employee experience to match their expectations. In this view, employees are treated as consumers in the labour market. The benefit to the employee of a positive experience is satisfaction with the workplace. In contrast, an employer who applies human resource management practices that shape positive employee experiences gains engaged and productive employees, a good reputation in both internal and external labour markets (Soni et al., 2017), which can consequently have a positive impact on the retention of current employees and the ability to attract new valuable employees (Durai, King, 2018).

Mahadevan and Schmitz (2020) point out that employee experience should only be considered in a positive context. This is because it encompasses all the employee's interactions with the organisation from applying for a job, through onboarding, training, promotion and finally leaving the organisation (Panneerselvam, 2022). Thus, it refers to the entire 'journey' of an employee within an organisation (Başar, 2024). The basis of the measures taken regarding employee experience is to build a strong bond between the employee and the organisation, facilitated by the identification of the employee's needs and expectations. It should also be emphasised that employee experience is related to the feelings an employee has towards their employer (Tucker, 2020). Shaping positive employee experiences is also fostered by involving employees in management processes (Itam, Ghosh, 2020) and shared responsibility between employers and employees (Mohanty, Kulkarni, 2023).

According to Minkyung and Boyoung (2023), organisations should build a culture of trust, honesty and collaboration to shape positive employee experiences. It is important that employees in such an organisational culture feel safe, engaged, valued and supported. This requires personalised and authentic experiences that meet the individual needs and preferences of employees. In order to shape a positive employee experience, organisations should take a variety of measures, some of which include: building relationships with co-workers, promoting work-life balance, using fair compensation and management systems. Başar (2024) emphasises that an organisation seeking to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace should redesign human resource management practices to prioritise the employee experience, taking into account employees' emotions, ambitions and expectations.

A new approach to human resource management that takes into account the employee experience should also take into account the specific characteristics and expectations of the generation entering the labour market (Dolot, 2018; Schroth, 2019). For Generation Z employees, gaining new, positive experiences can not only have a motivational value, but also build their commitment to work. Employee engagement, not just from the youngest generation, may now be influenced more by opportunities for professional development and work-life balance than by additional financial rewards (Singh et al., 2023).

The concept of 'Employee Experience' is relevant in the context of the increasing prevalence of flexible working arrangements in the field of work regarding not only where, but also how and when people work (Panneerselvam, 2022). Flexible forms of work organisation such as hybrid working and remote working fit into this context. The development and application of digital technologies in work processes has contributed to the emergence of a new type of experience, known as digital employee experience (DEX). The digital employee experience is the holistic employee experience of the digital workplace supported by information technology (Ameu et al., 2024). It influences an employee's physical and mental wellbeing (Kong et al., 2019), their work performance, the experience offered to customers, and the organisation's financial performance (Panneerselvam, 2022).

As the results of the Global Human Capital Trends (2024) survey of 14,000 HR leaders from 95 countries show, many of the changes currently taking place in the labour market, such as the emergence of virtual worlds, the development of artificial intelligence, for example, or transformational changes in the way people think about work and where they work, are shaping the employee experience. For many organisations, the employee and their human capital are paramount, so leaders focus on their sustainability. On the other hand, the development of artificial intelligence may give rise to employees' fear of neglecting their development. However, as the results of the report show, employers in their operations are seeking to use modern technology to enhance employees' potential in more creative tasks. Shaping a positive employee experience is also fostered by implementing a micro-culture in the workplace. Microculture can refer to the introduction of small differences in the performance of work in individual teams or different locations. These changes can influence better results in both individual and business activities. However, it is difficult to measure employee experience and estimate its impact on organisational performance. However, attempts to both construct appropriate indicators and make such measurements are being made (Itam, Ghosh, 2020).

The shaping of positive employee experiences can be studied and described, for example, on the basis of experience modules corresponding to specific experience types. The following five modules are distinguished: sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioural and relational (Lipka, Król, 2021; Lipka, 2022). The sensory module in human resource management is related to influencing the employee's experience through his or her senses, i.e. through visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory and tactile stimuli. The emotional module is related to maximising the positive and minimising the negative emotions of employees. The emotional experience of employees is part of their engagement. Greater engagement is associated with experiencing positive emotions such as satisfaction, contentment, joy, pride and a sense of fulfilment. In contrast, lower engagement occurs when experiencing negative emotions, e.g. anger, discouragement, frustration, disappointment, stress (Juchnowicz, Kinowska, 2023). The intellectual module is related to the completion of challenging professional tasks and the learning process. It also relates to the exchange of experiences between employees, attracting new employees increasing the creativity of teams, promoting non-standard ways of thinking, building a creative working environment (Pietruszka-Ortyl, 2023). The behavioural module is related to employee behaviour and how it is shaped. The relational module, on the other hand, is related to the formation of bonds between employees and between employees and the organisation. The relational module is linked to, among other things: conflict theory, managing intergenerational diversity, building workspace, using electronic tools for communication (Lipka, 2022).

#### 3. Research procedure and method

The research procedure was carried out in two steps. In a first step, four instruments each were identified from the literature analysis with which organisational managers can shape the positive experiences of hybrid and remote employees, under five modules: sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioural and relational. A statistical method was then used to assess whether the adopted set of instruments is relevant and shapes the positive experiences of hybrid and remote employees.

In a second step, a diagnostic survey using an online survey technique was conducted between 16 January and 19 April 2024. The research tool was a survey questionnaire, which consisted of two tabular questions. In both questions, using a 5-point Likert scale (no, rather not, neither no nor yes, rather yes, yes), respondents rated a set of twenty instruments shaping positive employee experiences, with the first question referring to hybrid employees and the second to remote employees.

The choice of the research sample was purposive. It consisted of people in leadership roles (owners, CEOs, directors, managers, team leaders), while also being supervisors of hybrid or remote employees. A total of 131 respondents took part in the survey, including 68 women (51.9%) and 63 men (48.1%). In terms of age of respondents, those aged 41-50 were the most represented, accounting for 41.2% of the survey sample. Respondents under the age of 40 accounted for 24.4% and those aged 51 and over for 24.4% of the total. The majority of respondents (97.7%) had a university degree, with the remaining 2.3% having a high school education. Respondents held management positions in organisations of varying sizes; from entities with up to nine employees (6.1%), through those with 10 to 49 (13.0%) and 50 to 499 (74.8%) employees, to those with 500 or more employees (6.1%). The majority of these were entities operating in the market for more than 10 years (94.7%).

# 4. Shaping experiences and hybrid and remote working – survey results and discussion

Using the concept of experience modules, twenty instruments were identified, four within each module, through which a supervisor can shape the experience of employees. There are five different modules:

- I. Sensory module:
  - 1. arranging the environment of the employee's workplace (e.g. through the colour scheme of the room, the aesthetics of the furnishings),
  - 2. eliminating excessive acoustic stimuli (loud conversations of other employees, noise generated by equipment used in the work process),
  - 3. the use of various virtual communicators in the communication process with employees,
  - 4. taking care of the aesthetics of the word and linguistic politeness in conversations with staff.
- II. Emotional module:
  - 5. fostering a friendly working atmosphere,
  - 6. enabling you to work with a competent and friendly colleague,
  - 7. creating conditions for a good work-life balance,
  - 8. alleviating the feeling of loneliness in doing one's job.

- 9. supporting staff development aspirations,
- 10. creating opportunities to learn from other employees,
- 11. supporting the intergenerational exchange of experiences, e.g. through the use of mentoring,
- 12. fostering an atmosphere conducive to employee creativity and innovation.
- IV. Behavioural module:
  - 13. organising staff team-building events,
  - 14. accepting flexible and out-of-the-box behaviour from employees,
  - 15. directly influencing employee behaviour,
  - 16. eliminating excessive working hours by employees.
- V. Relational module
  - 17. creating conditions for teamwork,
  - 18. providing support to employees,
  - 19. building staff confidence in the organisation,
  - 20. building bonds between employees and between employees and the company.

The reliability of the highlighted set of instruments was then assessed using Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis ( $\alpha$ ). The values obtained for both hybrid working ( $\alpha = 0.872$ ) and remote working ( $\alpha = 0.925$ ) confirmed that the adopted set of instruments could be used to explore the possibilities of shaping the experiences of employees working hybrid and remote (Tab. 1). Thus, there was a positive answer to the first research question.

#### Table 1.

#### Statistics of reliability

Type of work	Alfa Cronbacha
Hybrid work	0.872
Remote work	0.925

Source: Own elaboration.

Cronbach's alpha values were also calculated after excluding each instrument in turn from the set separately for the hybrid and remote work (Tab. 2). The values obtained after exclusion are close to the Cronbach's alpha total for hybrid working and Cronbach's alpha total for remote working, respectively, meaning that the exclusion of none of the instruments improved the level of reliability, and therefore all instruments shape the experiences of employees working hybrid and remotely.

#### Table 2.

Reliability statistics a	ifter removal	of the	instrument in	auestion	for each	<i>type of work</i>
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No.	Name of instrument	Cronbach's alpha after removal of the instrument			
		hybrid work	remote work		
1	Arranging the environment of the employee's workplace (e.g. through the colour scheme of the room, the aesthetics of the furnishings)	0.869	0.925		
2	Eliminating excessive acoustic stimuli (loud conversations of other employees, noise generated by equipment used in the work process)	0.870	0.926		
3	The use of various virtual communicators in the communication process with employees	0.878	0.927		
4	Taking care of the aesthetics of the word and linguistic politeness in conversations with staff	0.865	0.922		
5	Fostering a friendly working atmosphere	0.866	0.920		
6	Enabling you to work with a competent and friendly colleague	0.869	0.921		
7	Creating conditions for a good work-life balance	0.869	0.924		
8	Alleviating the feeling of loneliness in doing one's job	0.864	0.920		
9	Supporting staff development aspirations	0.864	0.920		
10	Creating opportunities to learn from other employees	0.864	0.919		
11	Supporting the intergenerational exchange of experiences, e.g. through the use of mentoring	0.864	0.919		
12	Fostering an atmosphere conducive to employee creativity and innovation	0.861	0.918		
13	Organising staff team-building events	0.867	0.924		
14	Accepting flexible and out-of-the-box behaviour from employees	0.879	0.925		
15	Directly influencing employee behaviour	0.862	0.921		
16	Eliminating excessive working hours by employees	0.864	0.921		
17	Creating conditions for teamwork	0.857	0.918		
18	Providing support to employees	0.865	0.919		
19	Building staff confidence in the organisation	0.863	0.920		
20	Building bonds between employees and between employees and the company	0.860	0.920		

Source: Own elaboration.

For the purpose of assessing which instruments respondents felt could be used to shape the positive experiences of those working hybrid and those working remotely, a categorisation of the rating scale was introduced (no and rather no – cannot be shaped; neither no nor yes – neutral; rather yes and yes – can be shaped).

Respondents were more likely to cite the ability to shape a positive experience for hybrid than remote employees. The percentage of indications confirming the possibility of shaping positive experiences ranged from 51.9% to 96.9% for hybrid working and from 16.8% to 91.6% for remote working (Tab. 3). According to respondents, the greatest opportunity for shaping a positive experience for those working hybrid is 'shaping a positive working atmosphere' (96.9%); for those working remotely, this is the seventh indication (76.3%). Instruments such as: "providing support to employees" (95.4%), "building employees' trust towards the organisation" (95.4%), "creating conditions for reconciling work and private life" (94.7%), "taking care of the aesthetics of words and linguistic politeness in conversations with employees" (93.9%), "supporting employees' development aspirations" (93.9%), "fostering an atmosphere that encourages employees' creativity and innovation" (93.9%), "creating

opportunities to learn from other employees" (93.1%), "enabling work to be done with a competent and friendly co-worker" (90.1%) and "supporting the intergenerational exchange of experience, e.g. through the use of mentoring" (90.0%). Respondents attributed the least opportunity to directly influencing employee behaviour (51.9%). For those working remotely, the assessment of the feasibility of using the same instruments was lower and only for one at above 90%. The highest-rated instrument was 'attention to the aesthetics of words and linguistic politeness in conversations with employees' (91.6%). In the context of hybrid employees, this instrument ranked fifth. The possibility of shaping a positive experience for remote employees was rated relatively high - above 80% - with instruments such as: "creating conditions for reconciling work and private life" (84.0%), "supporting employees' development aspirations" (83.2%), "providing support to employees" (81.7%), "building employees' trust towards the organisation" (80.9%) and "using various virtual communicators in the communication process with employees" (80.1%). On the other hand, the least potential was found in reducing loneliness at work (45.0%), directly influencing employees' behaviour (29.8%), eliminating excessive acoustic stimuli (loud conversations of other employees, noise generated by equipment used in the work process) (27.5%) and, above all, arranging the employee's work environment (e.g. through the colour scheme of the room, aesthetics of equipment) (16.8%). The results confirm that it is possible to shape the positive experiences of hybrid and remote employees using experience modules, and that there are differences in the ability to shape the experiences of these two groups of employees, thus answering the second and third research questions.

#### Table 3.

No.	Name of instrument	Hyb	Hybrid work			Remote work			
190.	Name of mstrument	_*	_/+	+	-	_/+	+		
1	Arranging the environment of the employee's workplace (e.g. through the colour scheme of the room, the aesthetics of the furnishings)	16.8	9.9	73.3	71.8	11.4	16.8		
2	Eliminating excessive acoustic stimuli (loud conversations of other employees, noise generated by equipment used in the work process)	8.4	3.8	87.8	62.6	9.9	27.5		
3	The use of various virtual communicators in the communication process with employees	9.9	16.8	73.3	10.7	9.2	80.1		
4	Taking care of the aesthetics of the word and linguistic politeness in conversations with staff		5.3	93.9	3.8	4.6	91.6		
5	Fostering a friendly working atmosphere	0.8	2.3	96.9	10.7	13.0	76.3		
6	Enabling you to work with a competent and friendly colleague		8.4	90.1	12.2	15.3	72.5		
7	Creating conditions for a good work-life balance		3.0	94.7	7.6	8.4	84.0		
8	Alleviating the feeling of loneliness in doing one's jobSupporting staff development aspirationsCreating opportunities to learn from other employeesSupporting the intergenerational exchange of experiences, e.g. through the use of mentoringFostering an atmosphere conducive to employee creativity and innovation		19.1	67.9	31.3	23.7	45.0		
9			4.6	93.9	4.6	12.2	83.2		
10			5.4	93.1	15.3	13.7	71.0		
11			9.2	90.0	18.3	13.0	68.7		
12			4.6	93.9	13.7	13.7	72.6		

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13	Organising staff team-building events	11.5	21.3	67.2	24.4	12.2	63.4
14	Accepting flexible and out-of-the-box behaviour from employees	11.5	24.4	64.1	16.8	25.2	58.0
15	Directly influencing employee behaviour	19.9	28.2	51.9	40.4	29.8	29.8
16	Eliminating excessive working hours by employees	10.7	14.5	74.8	33.6	15.2	51.2
17	Creating conditions for teamwork	3.8	10.7	85.5	22.9	20.6	56.5
18	Providing support to employees	0.0	4.6	95.4	8.4	9.9	81.7
19	Building staff confidence in the organisation	1.5	3.1	95.4	9.2	9.9	80.9
20	Building bonds between employees and between employees and the company	9.2	9.2	81.6	17.6	13.7	68.7

#### Cont. table 3.

\* - cannot shape (sum of 'no' and 'rather not' answers).

-/+ – neutral (answer 'neither yes nor no')

+ - can shape (sum of "rather yes" and "yes" answers).

Source: Own elaboration.

Although assessing the (digital) employee experience is important for organisations, research on this issue is still at an early stage. So far, neither models nor specific frameworks relating to (digital) employee experience have been developed. Attempts to rank the factors shaping employee experience are few and varied. One attempt was made by Panneerselvam (2022), who included among the elements of employee experience: meaningful work, a supportive culture, supportive technology, flexible HR processes and practices, and inclusive leadership. A different approach was presented by Başar (2024), according to whom the employee experience consists of manager support and cooperation, organisational identification and development, and career-oriented HR practices. In contrast, Ameu et al. (2024) proposed a different set of (digital) employee experience components, including: business strategy, technology, physical environment, leadership, career, brand and organisational culture.

No studies of employee experience of hybrid and remote employees implemented using the five experience modules were encountered in the course of the literature analysis. Therefore, a discussion of the results obtained and their comparison with other studies is not possible. Instead, the study presented here can be seen as a pilot study to test the research tool.

#### 5. Summary

Research has shown that the following experience modules can be used to explore the possibilities of shaping positive experiences of hybrid and remote employees: sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioural and relational.

Using appropriately selected instruments within the experience modules, the supervisor can shape the employee experience of both hybrid and remote employees. According to respondents, there are differences in the opportunities to shape positive experiences for hybrid and remote employees, with the opportunities being greater for hybrid working. Thus, a different configuration of instruments should be used to shape positive experiences for hybrid and remote employees. In both cases, the shaping of experiences within the intellectual and emotional modules is more important than the relational and sensory, and especially the behavioural. The differences in assessing the potential for hybrid and remote employees to shape positive experiences are due to their different working arrangements - in the former case, both on-site and off-site; in the latter, exclusively off-site.

Both managers and HR professionals should be aware of the importance of positive employee experiences and how they are shaped, especially in the age of the experience market, for the entire HR management process and, above all, for attracting valuable employees, retaining and developing them, motivating them to work and increasing their commitment. It is therefore worthwhile to continue researching the employee experience in relation to employees providing a service of work wholly or partly outside the employer's premises.

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