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STRENGTHS USE, DEFICIT CORRECTION, AND WORKLOAD IN ONSITE, HYBRID, AND REMOTE WORK

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Purpose: We applied the Strengths Use and Deficit Correction (SUDCO) model to compare employee developmental efforts and developmental opportunities in onsite, hybrid, and remote work models. The aim of this study was to investigate whether the SUDCO elements – such as strengths use, deficit correction, perceived organizational support (POS) for strengths use, perceived organizational support (POS) for deficit correction – and quantitative workload vary among onsite, hybrid, and remote employees. Moreover, the relationships between workload and the elements of the SUDCO model were tested in the total sample.
Design/methodology/approach: We examined 129 Polish employees working in distinct work models within an online cross-sectional study. The participants provided sociodemographic data, reported their current work model, and completed two self-report measures – the Quantitative Workload Inventory (QWI) and the Strengths Use and Deficit COrrection (SUDCO) questionnaire.
Findings: Remote employees reported lower workload and higher deficit correction and POS for deficit correction than onsite employees. We found no significant correlations between workload and the four components of the SUDCO model.
Research limitations/implications: Our findings suggest better-perceived working conditions in terms of the lower amount of one's work, higher developmental opportunities, and more proactive behaviors aimed at reducing own incompetencies in remote work than onsite work. Workload emerged as not a crucial job demand that contributed to the employees` developmental efforts and perceived organizational support for them. As our study is based on a relatively small sample collected through the snowball sampling method during the COVID-19 pandemic, the results should be replicated in the future in post-pandemic conditions on a larger sample.
Practical implications: Our findings could support managers and HR practitioners in providing more effective employee development strategies and accurate assessment of employee potential. Moreover, the understanding that onsite, hybrid, and remote work arrangements offer distinct development opportunities might help the employees make more conscious vocational choices.
Originality/value: This study adds to our knowledge of differences in using individual's potential, developmental efforts, developmental opportunities, and workload among onsite, hybrid, and remote employees. The use of the integrative SUDCO model broadens the perspective of analyzing distinct work models thanks to involving both strengths- and deficit-based approaches.

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1. Introduction

The fully remote and hybrid work models gained popularity in the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic (Socolic, 2022). Since then, the organizational literature has mainly focused on the potential negative consequences of working remotely or hybrid and made recommendations regarding the most effective management practices or work designs in flexible work arrangements (Lamovšek et al., 2025; Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022). In contrast, little emphasis has been placed on the differences in the employees` developmental perspectives and proactive organizational behaviors directed to ensure professional growth within distinct work models. Therefore, the current study aimed to shed new light on the competence development opportunities and developmental efforts in the onsite, hybrid, and remote work models. Based on the Strengths Use and Deficit Correction (SUDCO; van Woerkom et al., 2016) model arising from the positive organizational scholarship, we examined how onsite, hybrid, and remote work arrangements differ in strengths use, deficit correction, perceived organizational support (POS) for strengths use, and perceived organizational support (POS) for deficit correction.

In addition, we included in our study quantitative workload (i.e., the amount of one's work) due to the prevalence of this organizational stressor (especially within the remote and hybrid work models) and its potential detrimental role in employee's functioning at work (Bowling, Kirkendall, 2012; Grzegorczyk et al., 2021). Excessive quantitative workload involves so many job tasks that it might lead to partial goal blocking and neglecting some elements of the job and life (Spector, Jex, 1998). Thus, as a form of job demand, workload may hamper employees' developmental initiative, add to the perceptions of the workplace as unsupportive, and differ in onsite, hybrid, and remote workers. Therefore, we also tested whether the quantitative workload is related to the four elements of the SUDCO framework and differentiates those working within various work models.

This study focuses on the understudied aspects of working within distinct work models regarding the active organizational behaviors aimed at fulfilling one's potential at work and organizational support for employee developmental efforts. In particular, prior research has not tested the differences in the SUDCO elements among onsite, hybrid, and remote workers despite plausible disparities in employee developmental initiative and developmental opportunities in distinct work arrangements. Thus, this study fills the gap in the organizational science literature by testing whether onsite, hybrid, and remote employees vary in applying their strong points at work, reducing deficiencies, and perceived organizational support for such

proactive behaviors in the workplace. In addition, the present research proposes a new multidimensional approach, arising from positive organizational psychology, in analyzing the differences among onsite, hybrid, and remote work models. Applying the integrative SUDCO framework, including strengths and deficits at work, improves understanding of distinct aspects of using one's competencies, reducing incompetence, and receiving organizational support for developmental efforts in various work models.

The present study also broadens our knowledge about job demands – represented by workload – that might potentially diminish developmental efforts and opportunities among onsite, hybrid, and remote workers. Previous studies have not examined the relationships between quantitative workload and the SUDCO elements. However, this job demand might hinder employee developmental initiative and make the workplace unsupportive. Furthermore, differences in job characteristics among onsite, hybrid, and remote work might contribute to higher workload in some work models (Lamovšek et al., 2025; Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022). Despite this, previous research has not directly focused on differences in workload among onsite, hybrid, and remote employees. Hence, this study tested whether the quantitative workload is related to diminished levels of the SUDCO components and varies among employees working within distinct work arrangements. The findings might increase awareness of potential organizational factors contributing to lower strengths use, deficit correction, POS for strengths use, and POS for deficit correction among organizational researchers and practitioners.

1.1. Onsite, hybrid, and remote work models

In recent years, the nature of work has dramatically changed due to digital transformation caused by the dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICT) in organizations. These new communication tools made it possible to perform job tasks outside the organization's physical location, leading to the popularization of novel forms of work, such as hybrid and remote work, constituting the alternative to traditional onsite work (Lamovšek et al., 2025). The COVID-19 pandemic, due to the sanitary restrictions, had provided an additional impulse for the shift in organizations from onsite work to hybrid and remote work practices (Ingusci et al., 2021; Sokolic, 2022). In the post-pandemic era, alternative work models have become widespread (Vartiainen, Vanharanta, 2024).

Both remote and hybrid work represent flexible work arrangements, as described in earlier publications, such as telework or working off-site (outside the organization premises), within which the employees can work from home and use some ICT. Fully remote work, which involves working only outside the company's location, appeared before the COVID-19 pandemic. It brings benefits (i.e., lack of commuting, higher autonomy, work-life balance, and productivity) as well as potential dangers (i.e., higher workload, longer working hours, and work-life interference) for employees and organizations (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021).

In turn, hybrid work mixes or blends onsite and remote work due to operating both in the physical space (i.e., outside the main workplace) and virtual space (i.e., using ICT). It shares with remote work virtuality due to the use of ICT. However, compared to remote work, hybrid work has additional characteristics, such as flexibility, adaptability, and autonomy in organizing physical and temporal spaces. Thus, hybridity enables an employee to make individualized, flexible work arrangements in time and space, taking into account the employer's goals and employee needs (Vartiainen, Vanharanta, 2024).

Both remote and hybrid work arrangements are contrasted with traditional onsite work, which lacks autonomy and flexibility due to performing work in the workspace, often within a fixed schedule. These differences in the job characteristics of work models might translate into disparities in organizational outcomes, including employee attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of the workplace (Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022). Consequently, we compared onsite, hybrid, and remote work models with regard to proactive behaviors (i.e., strengths use and deficit correction) and POS for such employee actions. As prior research has mainly focused on differences in task performance (Lamovšek et al., 2025), work engagement, and stress among those working within distinct models (Uru, Gozukara, Tezcan, 2022; Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022), we applied the SUDCO model to provide an integrative view on developmental perspectives and efforts in onsite, hybrid, and remote work arrangements.

1.2. Strength-based and deficit-based approaches in the workplace

Strengths and deficits encompass the contrasting constructs, describing the positive and negative sides of human functioning (van Woerkom et al., 2016). In line with the salutogenic perspective, positive organizational psychology highlights strengths and their role in psychological well-being, health, and optimal functioning of an individual at work. In turn, the employee's weaknesses (or deficits) are emphasized in a traditional pathogenic approach, which focuses on preventing dysfunction and disease (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018). As a result, standard positive prevention and interventions aim to use, develop, and enhance strengths rather than diminish or improve weaknesses (Seligman, 2002). This approach contrasts with the tendency in most organizations to create a deficit culture by taking employees` strengths for granted and focusing on improving their weaknesses. Accordingly, developing one's strengths in the organization rather than minimalizing his or her deficits is usually considered a way to excel instead of avoid failure at work in positive organizational psychology (Miglianico et al., 2020). In line with this view, strengths use is usually considered more important for employees' optimal functioning in the workplace than deficit correction due to its role in regulating motivation through need satisfaction (Gradito Dubort, Forest, 2023).

Nevertheless, some positive organizational scholars have recently suggested the equal importance of strengths-based and deficit-based approaches (Els Mostert, Brouwers, 2016; Mostert, van Woerkom, 2018). According to this newer approach, minimalizing weaknesses and applying strengths constitute complementary actions directed at employee growth and

development. Consequently, strengths use and deficit correction are postulated to be analyzed simultaneously within the same theoretical framework as positive, socially desirable organizational behavior, which helps to achieve organizational goals, limit organizational demands, and develop one's competencies (Stander, Mostert, 2013).

1.2.1. The Strengths Use and Deficit COrrection Model

The Strengths Use and Deficit COrrection (SUDCO) model advanced by Marianne van Woerkom et al. (2016) responds to this conceptual proposal. In particular, the SUDCO theoretical framework integrates or balances the salutogenic and pathogenic perspectives by referring to individual strengths and deficits. This model defines strengths as "specific individual characteristics, traits, and abilities that, when employed, are energizing and allow a person to perform at his or her personal best" (van Woerkom et al., 2016, p. 960). This broad definition includes different types of strengths (i.e., personal, psychological, and physical) and enables participants to give their meaning for strengths (Wood et al., 2011). In turn, deficits (deficiencies, weaknesses) are considered as ""ways of behaving, thinking, or feeling which do not come natural to an individual, which he or she does not enjoy doing, but in which he or she can achieve competent functioning if trained accordingly" (van Woerkom et al., 2016, p. 960). Both strengths and deficits are considered equally important for ensuring an employee's optimal functioning and positive organizational outcomes. Thus, they are simultaneously recognized within the SUDCO model, which combines the strengths-based and deficit-based approaches to human functioning (Els, Mostert, Brouwers, 2016; Mostert, van Woerkom, 2018).

1.2.2. Strengths use and deficit correction in the workplace

According to the SUDCO framework, an employee might undertake two types of proactive organizational behavior – strengths use and deficit correction. Strengths use is related to the personal initiative to use (or apply) one's strong points (strengths) in the workplace. For instance, it might manifest at work by actively choosing by the employees, who are aware of their competencies, the additional job tasks that allow them to use these competencies most effectively at work. In contrast, deficit correction entails the personal initiative of correcting (or improving) one's deficits at work (van Woerkom et al., 2016). In other words, deficit correction behaviors reflect employees` active efforts aimed at their personal development at work (Meyers et al., 2015). Accordingly, deficit correction includes gaining new skills, acquiring or increasing competencies, and decreasing own areas of incompetence. For instance, an employee might deliberately choose job tasks and organizational situations to practice his or her skills to reduce a competency gap (van Woerkom et al., 2016).

Strengths use and deficit correction encompass agentic work behaviors which contribute to the employees` thriving and optimal functioning in the workplace (Moore, Bakker, van Mierlo, 2022). In particular, strengths use has been widely examined in the positive organizational scholarship with regard to a wide range of favorable organizational and individual consequences. For instance, strengths use was related to increased work performance, job satisfaction, work engagement, psychological well-being, proactivity in the workplace,

sense of meaning at work, helping behaviors, and lower counterproductive behaviors, absenteeism, and stress (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018; Miglianico et al., 2020). In addition, strengths interventions aimed at identifying and promoting strengths use and/or development were recognized as crucial for fostering socially desirable organizational outcomes at the individual-, group-, team-, and organizational levels (Ghielen, van Woerkom, Meyers, 2018). Accordingly, meta-analysis indicated their effectiveness in developing human potential at work thanks to increasing employees` personal resources, job performance, workplace, and general well-being (Virga et al., 2023).

In contrast, only single studies have focused on the consequences of deficit correction for employees and organizations. Their results indicated that – similarly to strengths use, but in some cases with lower strength – deficit correction positively predicted such favorable organizational outcomes as thriving (Rothmann, Mahomed, 2019), psychological well-being, task performance, and contextual performance (Gradito Dubort, Forest, 2023). Consequently, both strengths use and deficit correction were identified as essential for positive work outcomes. Therefore, promoting them simultaneously in the workplace using the combined approach was recommended as the most effective way of increasing employee's optimal functioning at work (Mostert, Els, van Woerkom, 2018). Following this suggestion, we analyzed both strengths use and deficit correction in our study.

1.2.3. Perceived organizational support (POS) for strengths use and deficit correction

Strengths use and deficit correction at work depend on the employee's efforts and organizational support (Els, Mostert, Brouwers, 2016). Thus, the SUDCO model distinguishes two additional aspects referring to the organizational context – perceived organizational support (POS) for strengths use and perceived organizational support (POS) for deficit correction. POS for strengths use is defined in terms of employees` subjective evaluations of the active organizational support to use strengths at work. In organizational practice, it might consist of assigning tasks to an employee that fit his or her strong points. Conversely, POS for deficit correction concerns the employees` subjective perceptions of the range of organizational support for improving their own deficiencies at work. For example, it might manifest itself in providing the employees with training, coaching, or other learning opportunities, which help them better perform tasks (van Woerkom et al., 2016).

POS for strengths use and POS for deficit correction constitute the job resources that might be crucial to successful personal development in the workplace and realizing the full potential of an employee (Stander, Mostert, 2013). Accordingly, previous findings indicate the decisive role of employees' belief that the organization supports their proactive organizational behaviors, such as strengths use and deficit correction. Within the SUDCO framework, POS for strengths use was reported to be a positive predictor of strengths use (Luan et al., 2023). Likewise, POS for deficit correction was strongly related to higher deficit correction (Lorenz et al., 2021; van Woerkom et al., 2016).

Through the broader lens of the organizational support theory, both forms of POS embody employees` attributions concerning their favorable or unfavorable treatment by the organization (Kurtessis et al., 2017) concerning personal growth opportunities (Moore, Bakker, van Mierlo, 2022). Consequently, in line with the social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity, POS could lead to increased performance, loyalty, and job-related efforts, which the employees treat as a trade-off for job resources and benefits offered by the organization (Kurtessis et al., 2017). In line with this view, better investigated POS for strengths use positively predicted favorable work-related outcomes, including higher work engagement (Meyers et al., 2020), task performance, and innovative behavior (Ding, Yu, Li, 2022). It was also related to subjective and objective organizational performance via turnover intention, work engagement, and job performance (Mubashar, Harzer, 2022). In addition, POS for strengths use was identified as an organizational factor contributing to thriving at work due to giving the employees opportunities for professional development (Moore, Bakker, van Mierlo, 2022).

However, despite the greater research focus on the positive personal and organizational consequences of POS for strengths use, some researchers postulate the combined approach, in which both types of POS are equally valued and developed. Accordingly, ensuring high levels of POS for strengths use and POS for deficit correction in the working environment simultaneously was identified as essential for positive work outcomes, such as greater work engagement, learning, job satisfaction, and lower turnover intention (Els, Mostert, Brouwers, 2016). Following this recommendation, both forms of POS were considered as equivalent and simultaneously examined in this study.

1.2.4. The SUDCO framework in different work models

To date, the whole SUDCO model and its single elements have been investigated in the organizational context in relation to distinct organizational variables. Following a strengths-use approach, prior studies have mainly focused on the potential individual and organizational antecedents and consequences of strengths use at work (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018). Relatively less research has examined the remaining elements of the SUDCO framework, despite their role in employees` professional growth and fulfilling their potential at work (van Woerkom et al., 2016). Furthermore, no research has been conducted on the differences among employees working within distinct work models (i.e., onsite, hybrid, and remote) in strengths use, deficit correction, POS for strengths use, and POS for deficit correction.

Nevertheless, different job characteristics in individual work models might contribute to discrepancies in developmental efforts and opportunities for professional growth among onsite, hybrid, and remote workers. In other words, distinct work models vary in terms of the perceived features of the work situation (Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022), which might translate into differences in the SUDCO elements. More specifically, onsite work practices lack some appreciated job resources, including flexibility, autonomy, and job control. In contrast, remote work provides higher time control, autonomy at work, work-life balance, and lower stress (Uru, Gozukara, Tezcan, 2022). Similarly to remote work practices, hybrid work offers high

autonomy (Vartiainen, Vanharanta, 2024). Accordingly, in the study comparing work characteristics in those working within distinct working arrangements, fully onsite workers reported lower job control than hybrid workers (Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022).

However, strengths use is positively associated with such valuable job resources as learning opportunities and autonomy at work. Employees, empowered at work due to higher autonomy and participation in decision-making, receive more training opportunities. Consequently, they are more engaged and apt to apply their strong points at work (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018). Job autonomy also seems to be important for undertaking developmental initiatives, which are core for deficit correction (van Woerkom et al., 2016). In particular, onsite workers – who have limited control over how they perform their work – might not only be less likely to demonstrate their own strong points at work but also to less frequently actively engage in working on their own weaknesses. Consequently, given the differences in the characteristics of different work models, we expected that strengths use and deficit correction would be higher among remote and hybrid employees than onsite employees.

POS for strengths use and POS for deficit correction might also vary among distinct work models. In general, employees give a symbolic meaning to organizational support, treating it as an indicator that the organization values them and takes care of their well-being. Distinct forms of support (organizational, supervisor, coworkers, and technological) were identified as particularly important for remote and hybrid workers, who face different challenges resulting from new, flexible ways of work. For instance, working from home evoked the need to cope with new digital tools, multitasking, the imbalance between career and personal life, and a lack of physical contact with supervisors and other organization members. These changes in work practices, which have become more intense due to the COVID-19 pandemic, force the necessity of a holistic approach to organizational support from managers to ensure effective full and part-time remote work (Errichiello, Pianese, 2021). Prior research supported the role of organizational and managerial support in remote work as an external job resource strengthening positive organizational outcomes (Buonomo et al., 2024; Chatterjee, Chaudhuri, Vrontis, 2022; Brown, Leite, 2023) and alleviating psychological stress arising from remote work (Deepa, Dharshini, 2024). Organizational practitioners are becoming more conscious of the importance of different forms of organizational support in the remote and hybrid work models (Errichiello, Pianese, 2021), which might translate into their higher support for strengths use and deficit correction in the alternative work models than in the onsite work. Moreover, more favorable perceptions of the work characteristics, such as job control, among remote and hybrid employees (Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022) might also contribute to their greater POS for strengths use and POS for deficit in comparison to onsite employees.

1.3. Workload

In occupational health psychology, workload is defined in terms of an individual's subjective perception of their work or as an objective construct, essentially free from personal subjective evaluations. It might take various forms, from quantitative (referring to the amount of one's work) and qualitative (reflecting the difficulty of one's work) to mental (mainly leading to physical illness) and physical (primarily resulting in physical illness) (Bowling, Kirkendall, 2012).

In this study, we analyzed quantitative workload, which is understood as a perceived quantity (amount) of employees' work concerning the pace of volume. This type of workload generally reflects how much work is required from an employee and refers to task characteristics rather than interpersonal relations at work (Spector, Jex, 1998). Quantitative workload represents a job demand, including the need to work fast, multitask, provide quick responses, and simultaneously complete distinct projects (Ingusci et al., 2021).

Regardless of its manifestations, excessive workload (overload) is widely recognized as a severe organizational stressor, bringing negative personal and organizational consequences. In particular, meta-analysis indicated that workload was negatively related to psychological and psychical well-being and affective organizational commitment and positively – to turnover intention, absenteeism, and emotional withdrawal (Bowling et al., 2015). Given the detrimental effects of excessive workload on employees` functioning at work, workload is postulated as a matter of concern for organizational researchers and practitioners (Bowling, Kirkendall, 2012).

1.3.1. Workload in relation to the SUDCO components

To date, little research has analyzed only some aspects of the SUDCO model (such as strengths use and POS for strengths use) with regard to organizational stressors or job demands, such as workload (van Woerkom, Bakker, Nishii, 2016). No studies have been conducted on the relationships between quantitative workload and all components of the SUDCO framework, despite the significant role of workload in predicting proactive organizational behaviors (Sonnentag, Spychala, 2012) and perceived organizational support (Bowling et al., 2015).

The potential associations between workload and different aspects of the SUDCO model might stem from limited autonomy and development opportunities linked with excessive workload, which might hamper strengths use and deficit correction (c.f., Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018). In general, quantitative workload refers to the amount of one's work (Bowling et al., 2015), reflecting the number of job tasks and job requirements specific to a given job (Spector, Jex, 1998). As some jobs inherently have higher or lower job autonomy and learning opportunities, they offer distinct chances for undertaking proactive behaviors aimed at professional development, such as strengths use and deficit correction in organizations (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018). Furthermore, heavy quantitative workload is accompanied by time pressure and/or task overload. Such job conditions might make the employee concentrate on

urgent tasks instead of engaging time and energy in developmental efforts (Bowling et al., 2015). Consequently, those who experience excessive workload in their job could be less prone to invest in their professional growth by actively undertaking proactive behaviors directed to apply own competencies and reduce areas of incompetence at work. Thus, increased workload would be related to diminished strength use and deficit correction.

In addition, high job demands represented by work overload might foster more negative employees` perceptions of the working environment as supportive. Consistently, meta-analysis showed that workload was negatively associated with perceived supervisor support and coworker support (Bowling et al., 2015). Therefore, employees who experience higher workload might perceive fewer chances to do their best at work and evaluate their organization as less supportive and taking care of their professional development. As a result, they might report diminished POS for strengths use and POS for deficit correction. Accordingly, we expected that quantitative workload would be negatively related to strengths use, deficit correction, POS for strengths use, and POS for deficit correction.

1.3.2. Workload in different work models

Quantitative workload refers to the number of job tasks to make (Spector, Jex, 1998). However, it might vary within different work models, which have various job demands or job characteristics (Lamovšek et al., 2025). Remote work could be particularly endangered by work overload due to the accompanying potential imbalance between work and personal lives (Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022). Work overload (encompassing workload and techno overload) was indicated in prior research as a common problem among remote employees, in particular during the COVID-19 crisis. The rapid changes in work practices due to the pandemic (i.e., longer or modified working hours, a need to work faster due to the use of information and communication technology) have enhanced job demands, including perceived workload, within remote workers. Remote employees were also at higher risk of techno-overload, referring to the excessive workload caused by the use of technology, including longer hours and a faster pace of work than usual (Ingusci et al., 2021).

Similarly, hybrid work – as partially located in the remote workspace – contributes to higher workload, longer working hours, and interference of work in personal. In particular, asynchronous communication (mainly via e-mail), popular in hybrid work, enhances distractions at work. Furthermore, digital communication includes different tools and applications, which forces constant availability. Both aspects of communication increase overload within the hybrid work model (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021).

In turn, onsite work is related to a less stimulating work environment, as job complexity is characteristic of flexible work arrangements. As overload accompanies more complex jobs with a wider variety of tasks (Lamovšek et al., 2025), onsite workers might be less exposed to excessive workload than those working remotely or hybrid.

2. Methods

2.1. Research objectives

This study had two aims. The primary aim was to calculate the differences in workload and the SUDCO model components among the three groups of employees, depending on how they perform their work: onsite, hybrid, and remote. In addition, we tested the direct relationships between workload and the elements of the SUDCO model: strengths use behavior, deficit correction behavior, POS for strengths use, and POS for deficit correction. The study was conducted within a broader research project on the correlates of strengths use and deficit correction in the workplace, which received the prior approval of the Ethics Committee of the University of Silesia in Katowice (the number of approval: KEUS.69/01.2021).

2.2. Participants and procedure

In this study, the data was collected from 132 working adults from the Polish general population. Three individuals were removed from the original database, as they were sent on unpaid leave by the employer and were not actively performing work when the study was conducted. As a result, the final sample comprised 129 participants. To estimate the effect size for the sample consisting of 129 participants and $\alpha = 0.05$ in a one-way omnibus ANOVA with fixed effects, we conducted post hoc power analysis in the G*Power version 3.1 software. Its result showed that the sample, including 129 respondents, had excellent power of 99% to detect large effect sizes ($f = 0.40$) and power of 71% to detect medium effect sizes ($f = 0.25$).

In the final sample, 100 (77.5%) individuals were women, and 29 (22.5%) – were men. On average, the respondents were 28.47 years old ($SD = 8.48$, $Me = 25$), ranging from 18 to 58 years. The sample was diverse in terms of the occupational areas of the respondents, including education, information technology, business, public services, and others. The average organizational tenure was 3.43 years ($SD = 4.28$, $Me = 2$), with a maximum value of 21 years and a minimum of less than one year. The average number of their working hours per week was 34 ($SD = 20.68$, $Me = 40$). With regard to the form of employment in the current workplace, 36.4% of participants were working under a permanent employment contract, 31% – under a civil law contract (including mandate contract, contract for a specific work, agency agreement, and management contract), 21.7% under a fixed-time employment contract (including a replacement contract), 6.8% were running one's own business, and the remaining 4.7 % were working under other forms of work. The size of the organizations employing the respondents (determined based on the number of their employees) was differentiated. Most of the participants were working in large enterprises with more than 250 employees (28.7%), followed by 27.1% of respondents working in small enterprises (having from 10 to 49 employees), 24% working in micro-enterprises (having less than 10 employees), and the remaining 20.2% were working in medium-sized enterprises (having from 50 to 249 employees).

With regard to the work model, 68 individuals (52.7%) were working onsite, 36 (27.9%) – were working within the hybrid work model, and 25 (19.4%) – were working remotely. None of the respondents declared working under the alternative work model by selecting the option "No of the above` regarding their current way of work.

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the total sample and the three subgroups analyzed in this study.

Table 1.
The sociodemographic characteristics for the total sample and the employees working within onsite, hybrid, and remote work models

Variable	Total sample (N = 129)	Onsite (n = 68)	Hybrid (n = 36)	Remote (n = 25)	Between-group differences		
	n/M(%/*SD*)	*n/M*(%/*SD*)	*n/M*(%/*SD*)	*n/M*(%/*SD*)	χ^2	*F*	*p*
Age (in years)	28.47 (8.48)	27.96 (8.82)	28.17 (8.53)	30.32 (7.47)	–	0.74	0.479
Sex					2.21	–	0.331
women	100 (77.5%)	51 (75%)	31 (86.1%)	18 (72%)			
men	29 (22.5%)	17 (25%)	5 (13.9%)	7 (28%)			
Organizational tenure (in years)	3.43 (4.28)	3.43 (4.40)	3.38 (4.36)	3.52 (3.99)	–	0.01	0.992
Working hours per week	34 (20.68)	34.65(25.83)	33.64(12.81)	32.72(13.21)		0.09	0.917
Type of work contract					6.57	–	0.584
permanent work contract	47 (36.4%)	23 (33.8%)	12 (33.3%)	12 (48%)			
fixed-time employment contract	28 (21.7%)	16 (23.5%)	8 (22.2%)	4 (16%)			
civil work contract	40 (31.0%)	22 (32.4%)	12 (33.3%)	6 (24%)			
own business	8 (6.2%)	3 (4.4%)	4 (11.1%)	1 (4%)			
other	6 (4.7%)	4 (5.9%)	0	2 (8%)			
Size of the organization					23.98	–	0.020
micro-enterprise (less than 10 employees)	31 (24.0%)	20 (29.4%)	7 (19.4%)	4 (16%)			
small enterprise (from 10 to 49 employees)	35 (27.1%)	23 (33.8%)	7 (19.4%)	5 (20%)			
medium-sized enterprise (from 50 to 249 employees)	26 (20.2%)	11 (16.2%)	12 (33.3%)	3 (12%)			
large enterprise (more than 250 employees)	37 (28.7%)	14 (20.6%)	10 (27.8%)	13 (52%)			

Source: Own study.

The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Chi-square test (χ^2) demonstrated that most sociodemographic characteristics did not differentiate between onsite, hybrid, and remote employees. Based on the ANOVA, no significant differences between the three compared groups of employees were found in age ($F(2,126) = 0.74$, $p = 0.479$), organizational tenure ($F(2,126) = 0.01$, $p = 0.992$), and working hours ($F(2,126) = 0.09$,

$p = 0.917$). The chi-square test (χ^2) showed no significant differences between those working within distinct work models with regard to sex ($\chi^2 = 2.21$, $p = .331$) and type of work contract ($\chi^2 = 6.57$, $p = 0.584$). The only sociodemographic variable differentiating the three analyzed subgroups was the organization's size, described in terms of the number of employees ($\chi^2 = 23.98$, $p > 0.05$).

The data was collected using the snowball sampling method. The respondents were invited to participate in an online study on the psychological aspects of strengths use in the workplace. Initial participants were recruited via social media (Facebook) and e-mail and included working adults from the Polish general population who differ in sociodemographic characteristics. To provide the diverse snowball sample, they were asked to distribute the study invitation within different social networks, including professional contexts, online platforms, and local communities. Participation in the study was anonymous, voluntary, and without financial compensation. The study was conducted on the Lime Survey research platform and took about 15 minutes. After giving written informed consent to participate in the study, the respondents were asked about the basic sociodemographic data and gave responses in the self-report measures. The study was conducted into a broader research project concerning the organizational and individual correlates of strengths use and deficit correction at work.

2.3. Measures

The Quantitative Workload Inventory (QWI; Spector, Jex, 1998; the Polish adaptation: Baka, Bazińska, 2016) was utilized to measure the employee's perceived amount (quantity) of work. The scale consists of 5 statements assessed on a 5-point response scale (1 – ‘'less than once per month or never," 5 – "several times per day"). The respondent is asked to evaluate the frequency of experiencing five situations at work, e.g., ‘'How often is there a great deal to be done?". Cronbach's alpha was 0.83.

The SUDCO model components were measured with the 24-item Strengths Use and Deficit COrrection (SUDCO) questionnaire (van Woerkom et al., 2016). Each diagnostic statement is rated on a 7-point response scale, ranging from 0 ("almost never’') to 6 ("almost always"). The questionnaire measures four aspects differentiated within the SUDCO model: strengths use (6 items: ‘'I capitalize on my strengths at work"), deficit correction (6 items: ‘'In my job, I work on my shortcomings"), POS for strengths use (7 items: "This organization makes the most of my talents’'), and POS for deficit correction (5 items: "In this organization, my development plan aims to better my weaknesses’'). The back-translation procedure was used to prepare the Polish version of the measure. Cronbach's alpha was 0.93 for strengths use, 0.86 for deficit correction, 0.95 for POS for strengths use, and 0.82 for POS for deficit correction.

The working model was identified using a single-item measure: ‘'How do you currently perform your professional work?". The respondents were asked to choose one of the options referring to their current way of doing the job: onsite (‘'I only work at my place of employment."), hybrid ("I work partly at my place of employment and partly remotely from

home, e.g., on selected days of the week."), and remote ("I only work remotely from home"). As the present study was conducted during the prolonged crisis in the job market and the significant reduction in the activity of many organizations due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Kniffin et al., 2021), the respondents could also choose the fourth option: ‘'I was sent on unpaid leave." In addition, the answer "No of the above` was possible to select.

2.4. Statistical analyses

All statistical analyses were conducted in the IBM SPSS Statistics, version 28. Firstly, the descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis) and Pearson's correlation coefficients for the study variables in the total sample were calculated. Secondly, we examined the differences between the three groups of employees working within distinct work models (i.e., onsite, hybrid, and remote) in terms of the SUDCO model components and workload using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). We also computed the eta squared values (η^2) to determine the effect size for ANOVA models. In addition, Tukey’s HSD post hoc tests were performed to indicate significant differences in the four SUDCO aspects and workload among the onsite, hybrid, and remote employees.

3. Results

3.1. Relationships between the study variables

The descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) and the zero-order correlations for the SUDCO elements and quantitative workload in a total sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficients between the study variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*S*	*K*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Strengths use	32.03	6.96	-0.78	1.03	-				
2. Deficit correction	29.05	6.73	-0.09	-0.64	0.78***	-			
3. POS for strengths use	33.83	9.62	-0.63	0.11	0.88***	0.76***	-		
4. POS for deficit correction	20.77	6.60	-0.23	-0.42	0.52***	0.68***	0.65***	-	
5. Workload	15.42	4.97	0.00	-0.83	0.09	0.16	0.10	0.10	-

Note. POS = perceived organizational support. ***$p < 0.001$.

Source: Own study.

All components of the SUDCO model (i.e., strengths use, deficit correction, POS for strengths use, and POS for deficit correction) were positively intercorrelated. In contrast, workload was not significantly correlated to any of the SUDCO elements. Given these insignificant intercorrelations, we did not conduct the simple regression analyses with workload as a predictor and the four SUDCO components as the outcome variables.

3.2. Differences among onsite, hybrid, and remote employees

Table 3 displays the results of the one-way ANOVA models, with the work model included as the independent variable and the workload and the SUDCO components as the dependent variables.

Table 3.
One-way ANOVA results and Tukey's post hoc test results for the three work model groups

Variables	Onsite (1) (n = 68)		Hybrid (2) (n = 36)		Remote (3) (n = 25)		ANOVA		η^2	Tukey's post hoc tests (significant only)
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*		
Strengths use	31.43	7.27	32.19	6.54	33.44	6.75	0.78	0.463	0.012	-
Deficit correction	27.79	7.06	29.56	6.32	31.72	5.64	3.38	0.037	0.051	1-3, p = 0.33
POS for strengths use	32.16	9.69	34.75	9.89	37.04	8.25	2.65	0.075	0.040	-
POS for deficit correction	19.09	6.81	21.72	6.07	23.96	5.40	5.92	0.003	0.086	1-3, p = 0.004
Workload	16.46	4.98	14.69	5.01	13.60	4.31	3.68	0.028	0.055	1-3, p = 0.036

Note. POS = perceived organizational support. Work models: (1) onsite, (2) hybrid, (3) remote. η^2 = eta squared.
Source: Own study.

A one-way ANOVA indicated no significant differences in strengths use among those working onsite, hybrid, and remotely, $F(2, 126) = 0.78$, $p = 0.463$. Similarly, POS for strengths use did not differentiate the three analyzed groups of employees, $F(2, 126) = 2.65$, $p = 0.075$.

In contrast, we found significant differences in deficit correction among people working within different models, $F(2, 126) = 3.38$, $p < 0.05$. However, the effect size for deficit correction was small ($\eta^2 = 0.13$). The comparisons of three subgroups using Tukey's post hoc tests demonstrated that deficit correction was significantly higher for remote employees than onsite employees ($p < 0.05$). No significant differences in deficit correction were revealed among the onsite and hybrid groups. Deficit correction also did not differ between remote and hybrid employees.

The ANOVA for the work model on POS for deficit correction was also significant, $F(2, 126) = 5.92$, $p < 0.01$. The effect size was small ($\eta^2 = 0.18$). Tukey's post hoc tests revealed that POS for deficit correction was significantly higher among remote employees than onsite employees ($p < 0.01$) and did not significantly differ from those working hybrid. The difference in POS for deficit correction between hybrid and fully remote employees was also insignificant.

In addition, there were significant differences in workload among the compared groups, $F(2, 126) = 3.68$, $p < 0.05$. The effect size was small ($\eta^2 = 0.14$). Tukey's post hoc tests showed that onsite employees experienced significantly higher workloads than those working fully remotely ($p < 0.05$). Nevertheless, hybrid employees did not significantly differ in workload from the onsite and remote groups.

4. Discussion

4.1. Relationships between the study variables

This study indicated high intercorrelations among the four components of the SUDCO model. These results reflect the common conceptual core of the four constructs that form the SUDCO framework – the general focus on employees` development within the organization (van Woerkom et al., 2016). They are also in line with prior research (Els, Mostert, Brouwers, 2016; Lorenz et al., 2021), which demonstrated a strong predictive role of POS in strengths use for strengths use, and POS for deficit correction for deficit correction, and moderate positive intercorrelations for the remaining pairs of the SUDCO elements.

However, the relationships of workload with the SUDCO domains were insignificant. These findings suggest that quantitative workload might not be a decisive organizational factor contributing to the employees' developmental efforts and the perceived organizational encouragement of them. In particular, individual factors (including personality traits) could determine whether and to what extent an employee undertakes strengths use and correction efforts. For instance, previous research showed that those high in core-self evaluations (Ding, Lin, 2020), extraversion, and emotional stability tend to engage more frequently in strengths use behaviors (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018). As personality traits are relatively stable across lifespans and situations, they could manifest in the increased employee tendency to use their own competencies and developmental efforts to minimize incompetencies regardless of external organizational factors, such as workload. Alternatively, various people might interpret job demands differently. Thus, workload could be seen as a work stressor or a challenge, depending on the individual subjective interpretation of the work situation (Spector, Jex, 1998). Consequently, employees might differ in their attitudinal and behavioral reactions to workload based on how they perceive it. For example, high workload could be seen as a sign of trust in the employee's competencies from the manager, resulting in increased efforts to do one's best at work, undertaking developmental initiatives, and more positive beliefs about the organization. Conversely, the same large number of tasks at work might be perceived as an attempt to exploit the employee and limit his or her developmental opportunities, leading to diminished strengths use, deficit correction, and less favorable views of the organization.

The lack of significant relationships between workload and the SUDCO domains might also reflect the curvilinear correlation between both variables. Prior research demonstrated that task performance was the highest when workload was medium, suggesting that different levels of workload might promote more or less positive organizational outcomes (Bruggen, 2015). Otherwise, in line with prior research (van Woerkom, Bakker, Nishii, 2016a), workload might be a moderator in the relationships between the SUDCO elements and work outcomes rather than directly predicting the SUDCO components. However, future studies should examine the

potential moderating role of workload on the SUDCO elements and work-related outcomes and whether the linkages between workload and the SUDCO elements are nonlinear.

4.2. Differences among onsite, hybrid, and remote employees

From the organizational theory perspective, this research adds to the knowledge about the differences in proactive organizational behavior and perception of the organizational context among those working within different models. More specifically, the present findings shed new light on the discrepancies in proactive behaviors represented by strengths use and deficit correction at work among onsite, hybrid, and remote workers. They also highlight the differences in the aspects of organizational context (i.e., POS for strengths use, POS for deficit correction, and workload) within distinct work arrangements.

With regard to the tested differences between the three groups of workers, remote employees reported significantly higher levels of deficit correction, POS for deficit correction, and lower workload than their onsite counterparts. These results might reflect that remote work arrangements offer more autonomy as well as learning and developmental opportunities (cf., Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018) due to a more supportive working environment and more favorable working conditions (represented by lower quantitative workload) compared to traditional, onsite work model. Consequently, remote employees more frequently undertake actions aimed at reducing their own incompetence at work than those working onsite. In line with prior research (Vinueza-Cabezas et al., 2022), these differences between both work models might reflect the disparity in work characteristics among the three forms of work. In particular, they seem to stem from the lowest perceived control over the work situation in onsite workers compared to remote workers. Remote work arrangements enable the employees to independently decide from the manager how to organize work and perform tasks to a greater extent than onsite work. Higher perceived influence on the work environment among remote (or even hybrid) workers contributes to their more positive attitudinal and behavioral responses to job tasks at work (including greater work engagement) than onsite workers (Wontorczyk, Rożnowski, 2022). Accordingly, remote workers may be able to shape their work environment in a way that enables them to develop their competencies and minimize incompetence. Thanks to increased job autonomy, they can choose more tailored development activities at work that meet their needs. For example, they can participate in training, workshops, and other learning activities at work or deliberately choose job tasks that help them acquire new skills and knowledge.

In turn, remote work can also encourage employees` engagement in working on their own weaknesses than onsite work, thanks to higher POS for deficit correction in this form of work. Perceived organizational support was identified as an essential element of a remote work environment, contributing to higher motivation, work engagement, organizational commitment, and employee job performance. Full-time and part-time remote employees who receive distinct forms of support (organizational, supervisor, and technological) have the chance to meet the

new and demanding job requirements and face the challenges within remote work arrangements, including changed work routine, virtual relationships, digital work tools, and blended workspace (Errichiello, Pianese, 2021). Accordingly, leadership and organizational support were identified as an external resource that might contribute to alleviating the stress arising from remote work and maintaining high work engagement (Deepa, Dharshini, 2024). Consequently, a supportive and engaging remote work context, which offers a holistic approach to organizational support, might foster developmental initiative among remote workers. In particular, solutions intended for remote work (i.e., training development programs increasing competencies needed in remote work, providing reliable feedback from remote coworkers about individual's strengths and weaknesses, and a performance management system directed to remote workers) could enhance employees` self-awareness and encourage professional development (Errichiello, Pianese, 2021). In contrast, onsite work arrangements might be more endangered by work design disturbances, which might contribute to employees` less favorable subjective evaluations of organizational support for professional growth and their lower tendency to engage in developmental actions (Lamovšek et al., 2025).

No significant differences in strengths use and POS for strengths use among the three forms of work arrangements were found. These findings suggest that individual factors could play a greater role in strengths use and POS for strengths than type of work model. In particular, strengths knowledge, emotional intelligence, and stable personality traits (i.e., proactive personality, emotional stability, extraversion, core self-evaluations) were identified as individual-level predictors of strengths use at work (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018; Ding, Lin, 2020). These personal characteristics (in particular personality traits) are mainly dependent on the employee and relatively unchanging. Consequently, they might manifest themselves in a relatively stable pattern of strengths use behaviors in a given employee, regardless of the work context, including the work model. Alternatively, other organizational factors might be decisive for a lack of differences in strengths use among remote, hybrid, and onsite workers. In particular, the type of job tasks, task allocation, and higher work autonomy in some jobs could foster strengths use in each work model (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018).

4.3. Practical implications

Through the lens of organizational practice, the current study highlights the role of organizational support in encouraging an employee to undertake proactive organizational behavior. In line with previous findings and the SUDCO conceptual framework (van Woerkom et al., 2016), POS for strengths use and POS for deficit correction emerged as organizational resources essential for strength use and deficit correction at work. These results suggest that managers should consider the role of their own decisions regarding shaping the work environment in evaluating the willingness to develop the competence level among their subordinates. In particular, this study emphasizes that fulfilling one's own potential and high performance at work through applying one's own strengths and minimalizing deficiencies is

hindered without organizational support. Thus, shaping the workplace that supports and encourages organizational learning by managers seems crucial for sustaining the highly competent workforce in the competitive and changing business environment.

Our findings also demonstrated the differences in the perception of organizational support, the frequency of proactive organizational behaviors aimed at personal development, and quantitative workload among employees working within different work models. In particular, the onsite work model was identified as offering relatively lower developmental perspectives from the employees' point of view than remote work arrangements. Managers, HR specialists, and employees need to address these differences in their daily decisions and actions in the organizations. In managerial and HR practice, knowledge about the specifics of individual work models should be considered when developing strategies to enhance employee growth and shape a supportive work environment. Most notably, the supervisors ought to choose the competency development tools that align with the characteristics of each work model. Moreover, competency and potential assessment should be tailored to individual work arrangements, considering their limitations in terms of professional development opportunities. Thanks to considering differences between work arrangements, it will be possible to accurately identify strengths, weaknesses, training and developmental needs, and potential for growth among those working online, hybrid, and remotely. Adopting such a discriminative approach would also help managers create and support a learning culture in the workplace, in which workers are open to work on their weaknesses, increase their skills and knowledge, and reach their full potential. In the long term, a better understanding of differences in the developmental opportunities between work models would help the managers and HR specialists to more effectively encourage developmental initiatives, enhance engagement, and increase worker job performance.

For employees, a better understanding of the differences in the possibilities of developing competencies between work models would help them make more informed career choices. Knowledge about relative differences in opportunities and support for professional development within distinct work models could also contribute to better person-organization fit. At the selection stage, this is possible thanks to the job candidates' choosing the work environment that aligns with their personal developmental needs and plans. For already employed workers, understanding the differences between the work models increases individual accountability for their own proactive organizational behaviors and professional development.

4.4. Limitations and future directions

The results should be interpreted with regard to several limitations. Firstly, as the current study was preliminary, the sample size was relatively small. Future studies on the differences among distinct work models should be based on larger research samples to grasp the significant results better. Secondly, this study was correlational, which does not allow us to determine

causality and examine changes in employees` proactive organizational behavior over time. Hence, experimental or longitudinal studies should be conducted in the future to establish the cause-effect relationships between workload and strengths use and deficit correction or follow up on those working within different work models over time. In addition, we used the snowball sampling method to collect the data, which does not ensure the sample is representative. We tend to collect a diverse sample by asking the participants to share the invitation to our study on different social networks. However, the respondents might have distributed the invitation among those with similar characteristics. Therefore, it is worth replicating this study using a random sampling method to provide a representative sample.

Another limitation of this study is its theoretical basis, primarily not including additional information about the specificity of the hybrid work of the individual participants. Hybrid (or blended) work models might take various forms in which onsite and remote work arrangements are mixed in different proportions and with different intensities (Hopkins, Bardoel, 2023). As a result, taking into account these subtle differences (e.g., in the number of days or hours spent by an individual working from home per week/month or its frequency) might add to a better understanding of the differences in workload and the SUDCO elements among employees working hybrid. A further potential shortcoming of this study stems from including only one type of organizational stressor: quantitative workload. In addition, there are other categories of job stressors (e.g., interpersonal conflicts, organizational constraints) or job demands (e.g., emotional demands), which might be related to strengths use, deficit correction, and POS for both forms of organizational behavior (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018; Spector, Jex, 1998). Moreover, POS for strengths use and POS for deficit correction represent organizational factors strongly related to strengths use and deficit correction (van Woerkom et al., 2016). Nevertheless, there are other personal (e.g., core self-evaluations, self-efficacy, self-esteem, positive affect) and job resources (e.g., feedback, role clarity, autonomy, opportunities for development) that could contribute to greater strengths use and deficit correction at work (Bakker, van Woerkom, 2018; Luan et al., 2023).

The results of this study should be analyzed with caution given the unique data collection period. Our study was conducted during the COVID-19 crisis, which constituted a unique context that might not reflect usual work conditions. The pandemic has substantially contributed to the changes in the work environment, especially those involving the popularization of more flexible working arrangements, such as remote and hybrid work models (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021; Sokolic, 2022). At the same time, it was a unique period in the labor market, which might be specific to this socio-economic context. For instance, the pandemic restrictions required emergent changes in work practices (i.e., longer working hours in medical professions; the prevalence of telework; virtual teams, leadership, and management) and for workers (social distancing and loneliness). They also forced employers to send employees on unpaid leave or even dismissal from work in some sectors of the economy (Kniffin et al., 2021). Therefore, our study should be replicated in the post-pandemic conditions to validate the present results.

5. Summary

This study examined how the three basic work models (i.e., onsite, hybrid, and remote) differ with regard to the two forms of proactive organizational behavior (i.e., strengths use and deficit correction), perceived organizational support (POS) for them, and quantitative workload. The present findings demonstrated that remote employees reported significantly higher deficit correction, POS for deficit correction, and lower workload than individuals working remotely. These results suggest that remote work arrangements provide greater opportunities for professional development aimed at eliminating employees` own areas of incompetence in comparison to onsite work. In addition, remote workers had a lower quantitative workload than onsite workers, suggesting more favorable working conditions in terms of the number of required tasks among this group of employees than among those working onsite. Our findings might be applied in the managerial and HR practice, particularly in the area of creating effective employee development strategies and conducting an accurate assessment of employee potential. Moreover, the awareness of the different development opportunities within the individual work arrangements might help the employees make more thoughtful decisions about developing their own professional competencies.

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