

Workload, Social Support and Emotional Stability: A Comparative Study of Croatian and German Employees

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Abstract

The following article examines the question of whether factors such as workload and social support from colleagues and superiors have a significant positive or negative impact on the emotional well-being of employees. Additionally, it compares the results between Croatia and Germany in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, a sample of 1,800 employees (900 per country) was used for statistical analysis, using data from the *European Working Conditions Telephonic Survey*. A descriptive analysis and an inferential analysis using the nonparametric *Mann-Whitney U test* were performed for variables such as work-life balance, high-speed work, work under time pressure, work autonomy, perceived well-being, disruptive emotions, presenteeism, and social support from colleagues and supervisors. The results show that Croatians exhibit a higher level of emotional stability than German employees, as they tend to be happier and in a better mood, have a lower workload, and receive more social support from coworkers and managers.

Introduction

Many changes resulted from the restrictions imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. These changes undoubtedly had a major impact on companies, businesses, and institutions in countries, with one of the consequences being a reduction in the working day for employees, many of whom had to fulfill the same work obligations in less time (Howell & Demuynck, 2021, p. 65). The stress caused by the new working hours and the associated changes in working conditions had a severe impact on many of these employees, affecting not only their physical health but also their mental and emotional well-being. Attempts to quantify the extent to which this was the case on a general level have only recently begun, as the priority of authorities and institutions at the time was to contain the pandemic and care for patients affected by the coronavirus (Greenier et al., 2021, p. 46).

In the specific case of the impact of the pandemic on the emotional health of workers, it is assumed that the response of workers in European countries varied, as each of these countries has different labour laws and cultures, although the extent of the pandemic has only recently become known. The following research paper is a comparative study that aims to shed light on the extent to which the changed working conditions in Croatia and Germany had different effects on the emotional health of employees during this period of forced confinement. Specifically, the question is whether Croatian employees were more emotionally stable than German employees, or vice versa. The structure of this article will comprise the following: the first part will describe the fundamental concepts associated with this topic through an exhaustive review of the literature, concluding this section with the hypotheses that will be outlined in the study. Subsequently, the appropriate methodology that will allow us to respond to the research hypotheses will be detailed. Next, the study's results will be described, detailing both the descriptive and inferential analyses, which will then be analyzed and contrasted with the existing literature. Finally, the conclusion will be presented, summarizing and supporting the important findings obtained in this study.

Literature Review

European Working Conditions Telephone Survey (EWCTS 2021)

The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) has been conducted for several decades, beginning in 1990, and provides a valuable and reliable tool for understanding working conditions across different European countries. The survey is conducted every five years. This information gathering instrument is carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND). One of the main functions of this body is to provide knowledge and advice on the working and living conditions of citizens. This system provides information on variables related to work, change management, and the characteristics and conditions of life in Europe (Eurofound, 2021). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the surveys had to be conducted through a special process and were not face-to-face. Instead, the EWCS surveys were conducted using a different method and were a special edition for 2021, as they were conducted by telephone interview. The information-gathering process was known as the European Working Conditions Telephone Survey (EWCTS, 2021). This type of method

generates variation and presents differences from the previous method for analysing trends over time.

Variables of the Study

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to the ability to maintain a healthy separation between work tasks and personal activities. This balance can be influenced by the design and functionality of an optimal work environment that allows employees to work comfortably, which in turn contributes to shorter working hours in the performance of a given activity and improves the company's productivity, enabling employees to spend more time on their personal lives. To lead a healthy and fulfilling life, people need a balance between work and personal life that allows them to respond appropriately to the needs of both areas. They also require sufficient time to rest and disconnect from work during their free time (Schwartz et al., 2019, p. 44).

According to Kalliath, "work-life balance is understood as the perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with the priorities of employees and their life development" (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p. 24).

Work Demands and Intensity

Work intensification refers to an increase in the intensity, effort, and thus wear and tear at work, which is related to the "pace" of work beyond its extension. Work intensity and work intensification are not new concepts, having been used frequently since the industrialisation era. They are, in fact, a central subject of work sociology, particularly in what is known as work process theory, whose origins are often linked to Braverman's (1974) studies on Taylorism (Somers et al., 2019, p. 51). Work intensification, defined as the production of more work in the same amount of time or the production of the same work in less time, not only increases physical fatigue but also challenges the meaning of work, leading to deterioration in mental, physical, and psychological health. Performing work requires the use of both physical and mental skills and abilities to develop the worker's competencies.

Autonomy

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND) conducted a study

in 2007 to measure job satisfaction, finding that the degree of perceived personal autonomy is often the most important and positive predictor of job satisfaction. It concluded that conceptual autonomy contributes to improving job satisfaction in four areas: (a) commitment, (b) participation, (c) performance, and (d) motivation in the workplace. Hackman and Oldham developed the job characteristics model, which identifies five basic dimensions of work, their interrelationships, and their impact on employee productivity, motivation, and satisfaction. The basic dimensions are: (a) skill variety, (b) task identity, (c) task significance, (d) feedback, and (e) autonomy (Rasool et al., 2021, p. 3). These authors defined autonomy as "*the extent to which a job offers individuals considerable freedom, independence, and discretion in planning work and determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out.*" According to Navarro, Llinares, and Montañana (2010), however, autonomy is "the degree to which the job provides independence, freedom, and discretion in planning work and choosing the procedures by which it is carried out" (Riasudeen & Singh, 2021, p. 13).

General Well-Being in Life

The study of psychological well-being has recently focused on personal development, style, and the way in which people face life's challenges, as well as on the efforts and enthusiasm they put into achieving their goals. Originally, Ryff proposed six psychological dimensions in 1989, which were later reiterated by Ryff & Keyes (1995): autonomy, life goals, self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, and personal growth. Both traditions represent two theoretically related but empirically different conceptions of well-being, i.e., they are interested in the same psychological process but use different indicators to measure it, indicators that have been arranged along a double dimension: personality traits and styles, and sociodemographic variables (Maziriri et al., 2019, p. 4).

Emotional Demands

Emotional demands are among the psychosocial risks at work, which are defined as "those characteristics of working conditions, and especially their organisation, that affect human health through psychological and physiological mechanisms" (Greenier et al., 2021, p. 8). The emotions experienced at work are ambivalent in nature and can have both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, they can lead to job satisfaction, a sense of personal achievement, and increased self-efficacy. On the other hand, they can also

result in emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, or psychosomatic complaints (Kundi et al., 2021, p. 38).

Emotional stability is a highly valued personality trait that significantly contributes to psychological well-being and individual resilience. It is characterized by the ability to remain calm and rational, along with a high level of self-control and self-awareness, which are key aspects that define an emotionally stable person (Firmante, 2023, p. 10). The concept of well-being includes different domains related to the individual and society; one of these domains that can be compromised by oral health status is psychological: tooth loss and oral disease can compromise the patient's emotional state and be associated with symptoms such as depression, feelings of disability, and personal and social dissatisfaction, which in turn compromise their well-being and quality of life. According to the WHO-5 items for assessing well-being, workload, and social support, these assessments are based on the fact that well-being includes different domains related to the individual and society; one of these domains that the state of health can compromise is psychological variables. This instrument is a scale consisting of five questions that inquire about the presence of aspects related to emotional well-being, measured as a single factor. These questions include, for example, "Have I felt cheerful and in good spirits?" and "Has my daily life had interesting things for me?" The total time required to apply this scale is between one and three minutes. The Likert-type response scores indicate the frequency of occurrence of the studied aspects, ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (always). Therefore, the final scores can range from 0 to 15; the higher the score, the greater the well-being, and the lower the score, the more clinically significant depressive symptoms (10).

Presenteeism

The term "presenteeism" refers to the presence of employees at work despite their inability to perform their duties due to illness, stress, or physical or mental exhaustion. Even if they are physically present at their workplace, their performance is impaired. In contrast to absenteeism, where an employee fails to show up at work on time, presenteeism refers to physical presence but with low productivity (Han, 2016). Presenteeism is just as detrimental to the employee as it is to team management and the overall productivity of the company. A key factor in the emergence of this phenomenon is the productivity demands of companies, which force employees to show up for work under uncertain conditions, contrary to employers'

expectations, leading to a decline in productivity (Kim et al., 2018, p. 7).

Social Support

In the work context, social support refers to all actions in which an employee offers and/or receives help and support from colleagues, superiors, and/or subordinates. Social support is defined as interpersonal behaviour between a provider and a recipient in a specific situation, in which one of the parties offers emotional, informational, or material support to enhance the motivation, work performance, and effectiveness of the recipient. This type of support encompasses a wide range of behaviours, such as helping with tasks, mentoring, networking, and adapting to the work environment, providing emotional support, and offering material resources or recognition to the employee (Koydemir et al., 2021, p. 46).

Method

Research Design

To confirm or reject hypotheses H_1 and H_2 , a non-probability sample survey was conducted. The sample consists of 1.800 employees divided into two country groups: 900 Croatian employees and 900 German employees. The data was obtained directly from the EWCTS 2021, which was conducted by Eurofound. The data was then processed and thoroughly cleaned by removing empty fields (null values) and incorrect values that did not match the measurement scales of the selected variables. This left $N = 900$. The sample was then described by country, gender, and age using Microsoft Excel software to perform statistical analysis of the data, which consisted of both descriptive and inferential analyses, both of which were conducted using IBM SPSS software. It is worth noting that a normality test was conducted to determine whether a parametric or non-parametric statistical model was appropriate for the conclusions, based on the data distribution. Finally, the results obtained were discussed by comparing them with the selected literature in order to confirm or reject the research hypotheses and formulate the corresponding conclusions.

According to the literature review and availability of data, the following two hypotheses have been formulated:

H_1 : Croatian employees tend to be more emotionally stable than German employees because they experience

a lower workload in their jobs.

H_2 : Croatian employees tend to be more emotionally stable than German employees because they receive more social support from their colleagues and superiors at work.

Variables

Table 1 presents the various types of variables to be analyzed, along with their measurement, as per the EWCTS (2021). Table 2 presents the definitions of the variables and their classification into the dependent variable (country) and the independent variables.

Table 1

Variables and their measurement scale

Variable	Scale	Meaning
1. Age	Number	Age of respondent in years
2. Gender	1	Male
	2	Female
3. Country	6	Germany
	13	Croatia
4. Work-life balance	1	Very good
	2	Good
	3	Not very good
	4	Not good
5. Highspeed, 6. Tightdead and 7. Autonomy method	1	Never
	2	Rarely
	3	Sometimes
	4	Often
	5	Always
8. Who5 cheerful, 9. Who5 relaxed, 10. Who5 active, 11. Who5 rested, and 12. Who5 interesting	1	All the time
	2	Most of the time
	3	More than half the time
	4	Less than half the time
	5	Sometimes
	6	Never
13. Emot disturb	1	Rarely
	2	Sometimes
	3	Often
	4	Always
	5	Yes
14. Presenteeism	1	Not probably
	2	Never
15. Support colleagues and 16. Support manager	1	Rarely
	2	Sometimes
	3	Often
	4	Always
	5	Age of respondent in years

Source: EWCTS 2021

Table 2*Definition of variables used in the model*

Variable	Definition
<i>Independent variable</i>	
Country	Country of the respondent.
<i>Dependent variables</i>	
Work-life balance	How do you balance your work schedule with your family or social commitments outside of work?
High speed	Do you have to work at a very fast pace in your job?
Tight deadlines	Do you have to meet tight deadlines in your job?
Autonomy method	Are you able to choose or change your working methods, set your own working hours, and work more freely and independently at your workplace?
Who5 cheerful	How often have you felt cheerful and in a good mood in the last two weeks?
Who5 relaxed	How often have you felt calm and relaxed in the last two weeks?
Who5 active	How often have you felt active and energetic in the last two weeks?
Who5 rested	How often have you felt refreshed and rested in the last two weeks?
Who5 interesting	How often has your everyday life been full of things that interest you in the last two weeks?
Emot disturb	How often do you find yourself in emotionally disturbing situations at work?
Presenteeism	Have you worked while sick in the last 12 months?
Support colleagues	Your colleagues help and support you.
Support manager	Your manager helps and supports you.

Source: EWCTS 2021

Data analysis

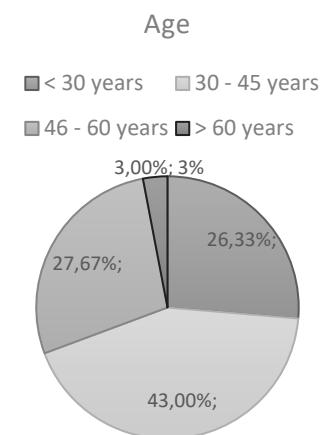
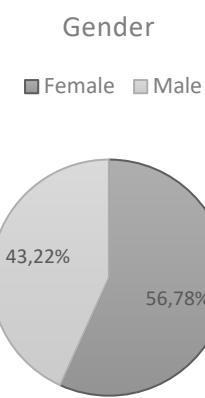
For the statistical analysis of the results, a normality test was performed beforehand. This type of test has the advantage of providing an objective assessment of normality and varies according to the sensitivity of the sample size. Since the number of respondents exceeded 50, it was decided to apply the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test instead of the commonly used Shapiro-Wilk test to each of the variables in the German and Croatian datasets. The Shapiro-Wilk test is applied when the sample size is small. Therefore, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied in this case. The null hypothesis applied in this case is that the data have a normal distribution, and the alternative hypothesis states that the data do not have a normal distribution. Since the data analysed do not have a test distribution, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied.

This non-parametric test, also known as the Wilcoxon rank sum test, compares the medians of the quantitative variables analysed, as well as categorical and qualitative variables. For the comparative analysis of the two samples (Croatia and Germany), based on the variables selected in this study, the Mann-Whitney U test was chosen.

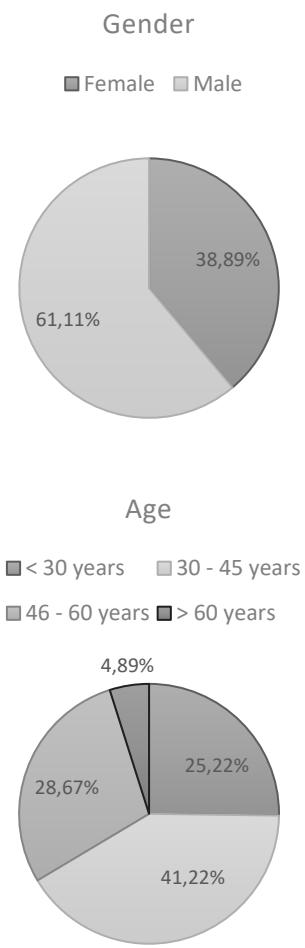
Results

Description of the sample

Figure 1 and 2 shows the Gender and Age of both countries. The sample comprises 900 employees from Croatia and 900 employees from Germany. More than half of the employees in the sample from Croatia (56.78%) are female, while the majority (43%) are between 30 and 45 years old, as shown in Figure 1. In contrast, most employees in the German sample (61.11%) are male, and, similar to Croatia, the majority of employees (41.22%) fall within the 30-45 age range, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1*Description of the Croatian sample by gender and age group*

Source: Own elaboration in Microsoft Excel, based on EWCTS (2021)

Figure 2*Description of the German sample by gender and age group*

Source: Own analysis in Microsoft Excel, based on EWCTS (2021)

Descriptive Analysis

For the descriptive analysis presented in Tables 3 and 4, the mode result is used to indicate the most frequently selected answer for each variable, allowing for comparison of the results between the two countries based on the Likert scale value for each response.

Regarding the variable Work-life balance, Croatia responded with "very good" and Germany with "good" to the question of how well they can balance family and social commitments with their professional commitments. As for the frequency of high-speed work, Croatians responded with "sometimes", while Germans responded with "often". Related to variable Tight deadlines, in the category of working under time

pressure, Croatians responded "sometimes" and Germans "often". In terms of the freedom and independence that employees enjoy in their workplace (Autonomy method variable), the majority of respondents from Croatia responded that they have this "sometimes". In contrast, respondents from Germany responded that they "often" have autonomy at work.

For the five categories in Who5 (cheerful/relaxed/active / rested / interesting), the majority of both Croatian and German respondents answered "almost always" when asked how often they felt cheerful, in a good mood, calm, relaxed, active, energetic, fresh, rested, and with an everyday life full of interesting things in the last two weeks.

Table 3*Measures of central tendency of Croatian variables (N=900)*

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mode	Median	Mean	Std. dev.
Work-life balance	1.00	4.00	1.00	2.00	1.74	0.80
Hightspeed	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.24	1.16
Tightdead	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.07	1.18
Autonomy method	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.25	1.16
Who5 cheerful	1.00	6.00	2.00	2.00	2.54	1.22
Who5 relaxed	1.00	6.00	2.00	3.00	2.77	1.30
Who5 active	1.00	6.00	2.00	3.00	2.80	1.28
Who5 rested	1.00	6.00	2.00	3.00	3.07	1.47
Who5 interesting	1.00	6.00	2.00	2.00	2.69	1.25
Emot disturb	1.00	5.00	1.00	2.00	2.31	1.16
Presenteeism	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.65	0.48
Support colleagues	1.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.31	0.87
Support manager	1.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.12	1.08

Source: Own elaboration in IBM-SPSS, based on EWCTS (2021)

When asked how often they experienced emotionally disturbing situations at work (Emotional disturbance variable), Croatians mostly answered "never", while Germans answered "rarely". Regarding Presenteeism, in both Croatia and Germany, the majority of respondents answered "no", when asked if they had gone to work sick in the last 12 months. Both Croatians and Germans responded "always" in most cases when asked whether they received social support from their colleagues, employees, and superiors.

Table 4

Measures of central tendency of variables for Germany (N=900)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mode	Median	Mean	Std. dev.
Work-life balance	1.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	1.77	0.75
Highspeed	1.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	3.46	1.07
Tightdead	1.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	3.39	1.18
Autonomy method	1.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	3.69	1.11
Who5 cheerful	1.00	6.00	2.00	2.00	2.41	1.16
Who5 relaxed	1.00	6.00	2.00	3.00	3.01	1.40
Who5 active	1.00	6.00	2.00	2.00	2.77	1.33
Who5 rested	1.00	6.00	2.00	3.00	3.06	1.51
Who5 interesting	1.00	6.00	2.00	2.00	2.85	1.38
Emot disturb	1.00	5.00	2.00	2.00	2.36	1.13
Presenteeism	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.66	0.47
Support colleagues	1.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.15	0.96
Support manager	1.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	3.76	1.22

Source: own analysis in IBM SPSS, based on EWCTS (2021)

Normality Analysis

Table 5

Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality analysis of Croatian variables

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Kolmogorov-Smirnov p-value
Work-life balance	0.277	< 0.001
Highspeed	0.184	< 0.001
Tightdead	0.202	< 0.001
Autonomy method	0.187	< 0.001
Who5 cheerful	0.243	< 0.001
Who5 relaxed	0.210	< 0.001
Who5 active	0.213	< 0.001
Who5 rested	0.182	< 0.001
Who5 interesting	0.222	< 0.001
Emot disturb	0.201	< 0.001
Presenteeism	0.419	< 0.001
Support colleagues	0.303	< 0.001
Support manager	0.272	< 0.001

Source: Own elaboration in IBM-SPSS, based on EWCTS (2021)

Since the number of respondents was over 50, it was decided to apply the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test instead of the commonly used Shapiro-Wilk test to each of the variables in the German and Croatian data sets, as shown in Tables 5 and 6. The result was a p-value of less than 0.001, rejecting the normality hypothesis for all variables in both datasets and selecting an inferential, non-parametric test with which hypotheses H1 and H2 can be accepted or rejected.

Table 6

Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality analysis of variables for Germany

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Kolmogorov-Smirnov p-value
Work-life balance	0.251	< 0.001
Highspeed	0.240	< 0.001
Tightdead	0.229	< 0.001
Autonomy method	0.251	< 0.001
Who5 cheerful	0.302	< 0.001
Who5 relaxed	0.235	< 0.001
Who5 active	0.266	< 0.001
Who5 rested	0.239	< 0.001
Who5 interesting	0.258	< 0.001
Emot disturb	0.210	< 0.001
Presenteeism	0.423	< 0.001
Support colleagues	0.247	< 0.001
Support manager	0.229	< 0.001

Source: Own analysis in IBM SPSS, based on EWCTS (2021)

Conclusive Analysis

The Mann Whitney U test was chosen as a non-parametric test for the comparative analysis of the two samples. The results of the significance tests are shown in Table 7, which shows that the variables "Highspeed", "Tightdead", "Autonomy method", "Who5 cheerful", "Who5 relaxed", "Support colleagues", and "Support manager" have p-values of less than 0.05, which proves that these results are not a product of chance and that there are significant differences between the two data sets for these variables. On this basis, the mean rank differences between the two countries for these variables are shown below, along with the group they favour.

Table 7
Mann Whitney U significance analysis of the variables

Variable	p-value	p-value < 0.05
Work-life balance	1.03E-01	No
Hightspeed	2.10E-05	Yes
Tightdead	6.12E-09	Yes
Autonomy method	6.30E-18	Yes
Who5 cheerful	9.74E-03	Yes
Who5 relaxed	6.46E-04	Yes
Who5 active	2.64E-01	No
Who5 rested	6.61E-01	No
Who5 interesting	5.64E-02	No
Emot disturb	2.49E-01	No
Presenteeism	7.28E-01	No
Support colleagues	1.74E-04	Yes
Support manager	2.53E-11	Yes

Source: Own elaboration in IBM-SPSS, based on the EWCTS (2021)

Table 8
Mean rank for each variable determined by the Mann-Whitney U test (N=900)

Variable	Country	Average rank
Hightspeed	Germany	950.75
	Croatia	850.25
Tightdead	Germany	969.42
	Croatia	831.58
Autonomy method	Germany	1002.64
	Croatia	798.36
Who5 cheerful	Germany	870.39
	Croatia	930.61
Who5 relaxed	Germany	941.07
	Croatia	859.93
Support colleagues	Germany	858.15
	Croatia	942.85
Support manager	Germany	823.06
	Croatia	977.94

Source: Own analysis in IBM-SPSS, based on the EWCTS (2021)

Table 8 exhibits the average rank levels for variables, where the differences between the two groups of employees are statistically significant. Considering the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, it can be concluded that:

- German employees work at a faster pace than Croatian employees.
- German employees work with tighter schedules than Croatian employees.
- German employees enjoy more freedom and independence in their work than Croatian employees.

- Croatian employees feel happier and more cheerful than German employees.
- German employees feel calmer and more relaxed than Croatian employees.
- Croatian employees feel more social support from their colleagues than German employees.
- Croatian employees feel more social support from their managers than German employees.

Discussion

Based on the results of the inferential analysis of the present research, which was conducted using the EWCTS 2021 data for Croatia and Germany obtained in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, based on the above-mentioned variables, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Although German employees enjoy a higher degree of workplace autonomy and tend to feel calmer and more relaxed, which leads to higher job satisfaction, this is not sufficient to bring about an improvement in their emotional stability. The key to better emotional stability lies in the employee's ability to maintain a good mood, be happier, and remain in a positive state (Howell & Demuynck, 2021, p. 65). In this respect, Croatian employees performed better than their German counterparts.
- Flexible working hours that allow employees to work at a pace they can maintain over a more extended period without the pressure of having to complete more tasks in less time are crucial for employees' emotional stability (Chuang et al., 2016, p.67). Croatian employees have been shown to be ahead of German employees in this respect.
- Another important factor that significantly influences the health and emotional stability of employees is the feeling of being supported by colleagues and superiors in the company, which contributes to a more pleasant and tolerable working atmosphere, enabling them to perform their work in a more relaxed manner (Park et al., 2021, p. 23). In this case, it was proven that Croatian employees feel more supported by their colleagues and superiors than German employees.

Based on the above, hypotheses H₁ and H₂ of the research paper are finally accepted: "*Croatian employees tend to be more emotionally stable than German employees due to the lower workload they experience at their workplace*" and "*Croatian employees tend to be more emotionally stable than German employees due to the greater social support*

they receive from colleagues and superiors at their workplace."

Based on the results, it is clear that organisational leaders must understand the importance of job satisfaction and be prepared to take steps to improve it. This involves paying attention to employees' expectations and needs, recognizing and rewarding their performance, fostering a positive work environment, and facilitating communication and teamwork. Emotions are intrinsically related, as many share similar effects and, often, one emotion can be the consequence of another. It can be concluded that the emergence of one or two emotions can prevent job satisfaction, which is the goal of most workers (Cho et al., 2019).

Workplace well-being lies in the quest to improve the daily activities carried out by an organisation's employees, while promoting the social well-being of individuals and their families. In companies, various activities are performed, which are typically carried out consistently over extended periods of time (Chen & Eyoun, 2021).

It is essential to understand the importance of overall employee well-being, as it motivates them, promotes personal development, and maintains their optimal health. In this way, the organisation will benefit from having a high-performing workforce, while employees will feel comfortable and committed to their work. The focus on strengthening personal resources can also have positive consequences for the organisation through the development of positive emotions, cooperation, credibility, creativity, and the implementation of resources that help change negative work situations, as well as a greater determination towards well-being (Cho et al., 2019).

Based on the above, an important goal is to understand how employees feel in their workplace in order to reorient management practices toward achieving organisations that are profitable over time, organisations made up of people who are emotionally involved in their work, participating with better attitudes, skills, and competencies, so that they put each and every one of

their potentials into practice, until a virtuous circle is achieved, characterized by the alignment of expectations and needs, both individual and organisational (Awwad et al., 2022).

Conclusion

During the *COVID-19 pandemic*, Croatian employees proved to be more emotionally stable than German employees, as they were better able to improve their mood. This means that they tended to be happier and in a better mood. Croatian employees proved to be more emotionally stable than German employees due to their lower workload. Croatian employees proved to be more emotionally stable than German employees due to greater social support from colleagues and superiors.

The results and descriptive analysis were well-focused, and it was possible to obtain results and answers based on the set objective. Based on the subject of the study and the literature, it is argued that the emotional component is key to understanding the current organisational culture and the job requirements of many positions that involve working with people (Kundi et al., 2021, p. 37). This is because the new organisational culture incorporates a series of emotional norms in relation to the customer that workers must know how to manage: Organisational culture also reflects a series of emotional norms that professionals must know how to manage as a skill or competency in their daily work in relation to the customer (Maziriri et al., 2019, p. 43). Work organisation under this paradigm emphasizes the emotional aspects of employee-customer, employee-manager, and employee-employee interaction processes, and control over worker performance is not focused solely on quantitative aspects in terms of production, but also on qualitative aspects related to workers' ability to incorporate emotional management into the performance of their work (Greenberg et al., 2020, p.22). The human-centered leadership approach in management practice corroborates the findings of this study. In periods of intense economic competition for profit, the human element can prove to be a pivotal factor in determining success.

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Delovna obremenitev, socialna podpora in čustvena stabilnost: primerjalna študija hrvaških in nemških delavcev

Izvleček

V članku obravnavamo vprašanje, ali imajo vidiki, kot so delovna obremenitev in socialna podpora sodelavcev in nadrejenih, pomemben pozitiven ali negativen vpliv na čustveno zdravje zaposlenih. Poleg tega primerjamo rezultate med Hrvaško in Nemčijo v kontekstu pandemije covid-19. Za ta namen smo za statistično analizo uporabili vzorec 1800 zaposlenih (900 na državo) iz podatkov *Evropske telefonske raziskave o delovnih pogojih*. Za spremenljivke, kot so ravnovesje med delom in zasebnim življenjem, hitro delo, delo pod časovnim pritiskom, avtonomija pri delu, zaznano dobro počutje, moteča čustva, prisotnost na delovnem mestu in socialna podpora s strani sodelavcev in nadrejenih, je bila izvedena deskriptivna analiza in inferenčna analiza z uporabo neparametričnega *Mann-Whitneyjevega U testa*. Rezultati kažejo, da hrvaški delavci kažejo višjo raven čustvene stabilnosti kot nemški delavci, saj so lahko srečnejši in v boljšem razpoloženju, imajo manjšo delovno obremenitev in prejemajo več socialne podpore s stani sodelavcev in nadrejenih.

Ključne besede: delovna obremenitev, socialna podpora, čustvena stabilnost, Hrvaška, Nemčija