The Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic Period to Remote Work - Case Study in a Finnish Higher Education Institution

Kari-Pekka   Heikkinen
University of Oulu, Finland
kari-pekka.heikkinen@oulu.fi

Teppo Räisänen
Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Finland
teppo.raisanen@oamk.fi

Jussi Kangasoja
Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Finland
jussi.kangasoja@oamk.fi

Abstract

The objective of this study is to provide knowledge for higher education institutions (HEI) organisations utilising remote work. The study focused on finding out the amount of remote work done before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the perceived necessary and unnecessary practices and effects of remote work. This longitudinal case study was performed among the staff of Finnish University of Applied Science during the pandemic in spring 2020 (N=78) and in spring 2021 (N=145) by collecting quantitative and qualitative data analysed by three researchers utilising mixed methods.

The study found out the necessity of maintaining physical interaction with students and colleagues. The decreased amount of interaction raised the need for social relations and student guidance. On the other hand, roughly a quarter of the respondents were mostly satisfied with their arrangements of remote work practices. The study also found out the load of remote work effects, in particular non-stop work and perceived poor occupational ergonomics.

According to this study, working remotely potentially leads to a decrease in social interactions among staff, which can negatively affect their well-being and also lead to a decrease in the creation of new ideas and knowledge within the organisation. The results of this study support in general the earlier studies of remote work conducted at the COVID-19 pandemic period. The knowledge generated by this study can be used to guideHEI's remote work to be more purposeful in the pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

Keywords: remote work, coronavirus, higher education institutions, social interaction, well-being, knowledge creation