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**WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN THE AGE OF REMOTE WORK: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BALTIC AND SOUTHERN EU COUNTRIES**

Master's thesis

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I have written this Master Thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

Abstract

The research aims to evaluate how the upward trend of remote work induced by COVID-19 impact work-life balance and compare the results for the Baltic and Southern EU region. The study also focuses on evaluating other factors that may contribute to the impact of work-life balance. The author used a logistic regression analysis to compare the Baltic and Southern EU regions and utilized the Eurofound Living, Working, and COVID-19 survey dataset from 2020, 2021, and 2022. The findings suggest that remote work, well-being, job sector, and partner's employment status have significant correlations with work-life balance in the Baltic countries. However, their impact is less pronounced in the Southern EU countries as only remote work and life satisfaction significantly correlates with the work-life balance. Overall, individuals from the Baltic countries report higher job and life satisfaction levels than those from the Southern EU countries.

Keywords: COVID-19, Remote work, Work-life Balance, Well-being, Baltic countries, Southern EU, Logistic regression analysis, Microdata.

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1. Introduction

The arrival of the global COVID-19 pandemic has offered numerous prospects for research and continuing study. Even after three years since its inception, there remains a substantial extent of ground to be covered in identifying its worldwide impact (Rawat et al., 2021). Originating in China, the pandemic promptly reached every corner of the world, causing widespread social and financial downturns (Jiloha, 2020). The EU countries, including the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), are acknowledged for their fastest technological progress, startup culture (Leppilampi & Suorsa, 2019), (Lankhuizen, 2000) and FinTech companies (Masso et al., n.d.), were not immune from the challenges imposed by the outbreak, facing a significant slowdown aligned with the rest of the world. Moreover, the Baltic countries are also recognized for their work ethics (Taagepera, 2002), (Barnowe et al., 1992). On the other hand, several southern EU countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) are well known for their charismatic landscapes and weather, which makes these countries lucrative destinations for digital nomads (Thompson, 2019) and have been Europe's most common immigrant and tourism destinations (Mendoza, 2022), (Benítez-Aurioles, 2020) (Williams et al., 1997) according to the existing pieces of literature.

As of 2021, the employment rates of immigrants in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain are 50.3%, 59.1%, 66.8%, and 52.3%, respectively (*Statistics / Eurostat, 2021a*). The foreign-born population that migrated to Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain for employment reasons are 234K, 2,589K, 59K, and 2,288K, respectively (*Statistics / Eurostat, 2021b*), while the numbers of immigrant workers are 5.15%, 10.78%, 1.2% and 10.12% of the total active persons in the labor force for Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain respectively (*Statistics / Eurostat, 2021c*). This implies that besides their tourism economy, these countries are desirable to foreign workers who can contribute to their economies. Therefore, in both cases, the countries are distinctive in their ways. That is why the question remains, to what extent has the worldwide pandemic shifted the dynamics of these countries with such prevailing rich heritages and cultures?

The global COVID-19 pandemic has initiated persistent and significant changes to the world as we know it. The outbreak resulted in worldwide lockdowns, leading to the beginning of many new approaches to minimize the impact of the pandemic. While the virus has restricted human activity in many ways, it has also encouraged the adoption of alternative strategies (Rudnicka et al., 2020) to maintain stability and productivity (Jena, 2020). For instance, the

trend of working from home has appeared as the leading solution for continuing work, making it possible to keep the world functioning amidst the outbreak (Stewart, 2021). Despite the presence of remote work or teleworking prior to the outbreak, it was not commonly implemented in most workplaces (Wang et al., 2021). However, in the wake of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, remote work became a requirement for workplaces to sustain their businesses. The employers and employees had to adopt this setting almost immediately without proper training or guidelines (De Vincenzi et al., 2022). In addition to the Baltic countries' tech innovation and existing exposure to remote work, Italy and Spain implemented strict measures, including stringent restrictions and a significant rise in remote work adoption, due to the severe COVID-19 outbreak (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). Thus, the trend of remote work became the new normal (Abdullah et al., 2020), and it continued for the whole COVID-19 lockdown period all over the world.

Following the pandemic and lockdown, employers and employees swiftly switched to remote work without adequate training. Although this enabled the world to function from remote settings, the absence of a daily commute smeared the boundaries between professional and personal life (Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta et al., 2022). While the impact was initially ignored, as the borders between professional and personal life started to overlap repeatedly, some companies began to exploit the prospect of demanding more productivity from their workers (Delfino & Van Der Kolk, 2021). It resulted in a significant impact on the work-life balance and overall well-being of employees.

Currently, with the slow disappearance of COVID-19, the world is steadily returning to normality. However, the sudden shift in the work culture dynamic has pointed to a re-evaluation of conventional work practices, with work-from-home becoming a widespread trend among most workplaces (Vyas, 2022). Therefore, a visible upward trend in the remote work culture allows workers to approach employment with a renewed perspective. So, it is anticipated that this renewed perspective will have some noticeable impact also.

Therefore, the following questions will be addressed in this research: **RQ1.** *In the age of remote work induced by COVID-19, how can the role of remote work in work-life balance be investigated in the Baltic states compared to the Southern European countries?* The reason for choosing the Baltic and Southern EU countries is discussed earlier. Therefore, it is important to explore how the remote work trend is changing the social dynamics and work patterns in such regions with prevailing innate backgrounds. **RQ2.** *What other contributing*

factors impact these shifting dynamics of work-life balance in Baltic and Southern EU countries? The author developed a statistical model to investigate the relationship between work-life balance and various independent variables, including job sector, partner's employment status, well-being, and control variables such as education level, age group, and gender. This model was applied to each country in the study, and the resulting data were compared to identify potential regional differences. The objective of this analysis is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that impact work-life balance across different geographic locations while controlling for key demographic variables.

Work-life balance is an essential indicator of high quality of life and overall well-being (Moore, 2006), (Lee & Sirgy, 2018), (Drobnič, 2011). A healthy balance between professional and personal life can result in higher productivity and physical and mental satisfaction (Guest, 2002). Therefore, it is crucial to ensure work-life balance in this shifted dynamic of the remote work era, and there is enough time to pursue personal interests or spend time with family. Using the microdata of all five rounds from the Eurofound Living, Working, and COVID-19 survey (2020, 2021, 2022), factors that impact work-life balance are determined using the logistic regression analysis. The timelines for each round are Round 1 (9 April 2020 to 11 June 2020), Round 2 (22 June 2020 to 27 July 2020), Round 3 (15 February to 30 March 2021), Round 4 (October to November 2021), Round 5 (29 March to 2 May 2022). The most updated survey from the Round 5 demonstrates how the pandemic has changed lives in European countries.

The reason for comparing the Baltic countries with the South EU (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) is that while both regions are distinctive from the economic and social perspective, the Baltic countries are mainly inclined to technological innovation. In contrast, the South EU countries primarily depend on tourism and foreign workers. Thus, a difference in work culture, expectations of employees, and types of available jobs is anticipated. Therefore, this comparison can explain the connection between remote work, work-life balance, overall well-being, and other contributing factors in two different scenarios.

There are several studies on various topics about these countries separately, but comparing these two regions based on the upward trend of remote work, which was induced by the worldwide pandemic, is the novelty of the study. Since the world has returned to normal very recently, the COVID-19-induced trend of remote work and its impact on work-life balance is quite a new topic yet to be explored. This research aims to investigate a previously unexplored area while also providing a definitive touch of distinctiveness through the

comparison of these regions. By analyzing and comparing the unique features of these regions, this thesis seeks to shed light on new insights and perspectives that have yet to be fully explored.

Based on the first research question, the author proposes a hypothesis that due to the higher emphasis on technological advancements and innovation in the Baltic countries, there will be a significant positive correlation between overall well-being, remote work, and job sectors that can be conducted from home with work-life balance. Conversely, in the Southern EU countries, where there is a higher proportion of fieldwork and immigrant workers in their workforce, remote work and job sectors that can be conducted from home will have a less significant impact on the work-life balance.

The structure of the research is as follows: Section 1 provides an overview of the overall understanding of the post-COVID-19 scenario and the induced upward telework trend due to the pandemic in the Baltic and southern EU countries. Additionally, several relevant kinds of literature regarding the pandemic and remote work are presented in this section to formulate the background of the study. Section 2 explores existing observations and literature regarding the trend of remote work before and after the pandemic, work-life balance, and overall well-being scenarios in the Baltic and Southern EU countries. Section 3 describes the data and methodology used to obtain statistics and correlation among the variables. Section 4 shows the empirical results and discusses significant findings. Section 5 draws the limitations and conclusion of the study.

CERCS: S180 Economics, econometrics, economic theory, economic systems, economic policy.

2. Literature Review

There have been many studies on the effects of COVID-19, both during and after the pandemic. In parallel, the impact of remote work on work-life balance has been extensively studied in the literature. However, a significant research gap concerns the effects of the remote work trend induced by the pandemic on individuals' lives now that the pandemic is subsiding and society is returning to its pre-pandemic state. In light of this, the present study seeks to bridge this gap and investigate the impact of remote work on work-life balance in a post-pandemic context. The following section reviews pertinent literature on this topic.

Elbaz et al. (2022) studied the impact of COVID-19-induced telework on work-life balance, psychological condition, and performance worldwide. The paper gathers data from Europe, Asia, South, and North America, including Oceania, from January 2020 to December 2021. Results were mixed and varied by factors such as gender and telework frequency. Most studies found positive impacts on well-being, except for those with dependents.

The previous studies suggest that the work-life balance and well-being variables are determined through regression analyses (El-Habil, 2012). In a study based on the Eurofound dataset “Living, Working, and COVID-19”, the authors explored the impact of remote work on well-being through job satisfaction and work-life balance in the Baltic countries. The findings suggest that the arbitrary enforcement of remote work due to COVID-19 resulted in some employees facing negative experiences (Franken et al., 2021). They still do not prefer the remote work setting even though they have options. On the other hand, employees without any negative experience during imposed teleworking have no issue continuing remote work and even prefer remote work over traditional work settings for Baltics (Erro-Garcés et al., 2022).

A study conducted by Sullivan (2012) emphasized remote work and work-life balance. It found that while remote work can benefit job performance and well-being, it may reinforce traditional gender roles in domestic and paid work. The study explored perspectives on remote work related to gender equity, domestic labor, childcare, and organizational quality. Another study investigated the impact of wage compensation measures during the COVID-19 crisis on gender imbalances in employment income in Estonia using detailed administrative datasets and the EUROMOD microsimulation model. The findings suggest that the COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on employment income for both men and women. However, the wage compensation implemented in 2020 helped cushion the effects, especially for women (Laurimäe et al., 2022).

İlhan (2021) stated that remote work in response to a pandemic like COVID-19 is a temporary solution for Turkey as the country’s labor law and legislation are not yet prepared to take it as something permanent. There are positive and negative consequences of continuing remote work, whereas positive outcomes include flexibility, and the negative consequence is mostly the inability to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Ünal & Dulay, 2022).

Xiao et al. (2021) explored the impact of remote working during the pandemic on the well-being of workers using multinomial regression, chi-square tests, and linear regression. An online survey of 988 respondents worldwide was used to explore the factors contributing to the

mental and physical well-being of the workers. The authors found a decline in overall well-being associated with satisfaction (Fan & Moen, 2023) with workspace, adjusted work hours, communication with colleagues, children at home, distractions, etc.

Felstead & Henseke (2017) explored that remote work can benefit employees and employers and lead to work intensification and work-life imbalance. Their study used multivariate and logistic regression analyses on Labor force survey (LFS) and Skill and employment survey (SES) data to explore contributing factors such as work effort, job satisfaction, skill level, and work-life balance in the pre-covid scenario for the United Kingdom. Highly skilled remote workers may choose to work remotely even if it means working longer hours, but this can lead to blurred boundaries between work and family life and negatively impact their work-life balance, as mentioned in a study of European Union countries by Grzegorzczak et al. (2021).

Rodríguez-Modroño & López-Igual (2021) conducted a study on a sample of 35,756 employers from the Sixth European Working Conditions Survey to assess the effect of types of remote work on different dynamics of job quality through a multivariable technique. The findings suggest that types of remote work by workplace, gender, and use of technology are key factors that affect job quality. The respondent group who does remote work occasionally has the best job quality and work-life balance. In contrast, remote workers with higher levels of mobility have the worst work-life balance and quality of the job. The authors also emphasized the teleworkers based on gender and showed that women working from home have a better situation than mobile teleworkers.

A study based on 211 respondents from Greece during the COVID-19 for both teleworkers and non-teleworkers was conducted to determine the correlation between servant leadership and work-life balance & job burnout through Pearson correlations, mediation analyses, and exploratory factor analyses. The findings showed that perceived organizational support is a significant mediator in the correlation, whereas perceived supervisor support was not a significant mediator in the correlation (Lamprinou et al., 2021).

A study of systematic literature reviews about the impact of telework in the pre-COVID scenario illustrates a more profound image of how the remote work culture both positively and negatively impacts (Keeling et al., 2015) both the professional and personal lives of the workers of London and Reading. While most of the research suggests positive consequences, there are also negative impacts, including isolation in professional and social scenarios and potential

hazards in career advancement, as studied by Charalampous et al. (2019) on global databases, but especially in the UK, USA, Australia, and Germany.

Angrisani et al. (2020) conducted a logistic regression analysis to estimate the impact of work-life balance on employment decisions in the US population's Health and Retirement Study (HRS) database. They found that the correlation between work-life balance is highly significant in many scenarios. For instance, employees with children and older guardians to look after are highly affected by work-life balance (Daipuria & Kakar, 2013). They are more likely to leave their jobs if the balance is not maintained. Moreover, the work-life conflict is also highly correlated with gender and the nature of employment (full-time, part-time). The authors also considered the respondents' spouses' health status. The study concluded that women are more likely to leave a job regardless of the nature of employment if their spouse's health issues and work-life imbalance.

Shirmohammadi et al. (2022) explored the impact of remote work and the work-life balance for both pre-COVID and post-COVID scenarios through literature analysis to explore how the dynamic changed. The authors suggest that while remote work can potentially affect the work-life balance, it still is preferred by the workers to have the option of remote work in employment. Also, they suggested that the workers should be made aware of the pros and cons of prolonged exposure to remote work and its impact on their well-being, which was also suggested by Ninaus et al. (2015) from Austria and Hongkong's perspective.

A literature analysis study conducted by Popovici & Popovici (2020) on remote work and relating the works of literature to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that managerial positions have a lot to ensure to uphold the morale of the workers during continuous remote work periods. Even after the pandemic, the trend of remote work is still in practice so, and workplaces have to seek ways to diminish the hazards like work-life imbalance, as suggested by Parham & Rauf (2020) as well, that might cause by remote work and to ensure that the benefits of telework are thoroughly enjoyed. Therefore, policymakers should address the issue and ensure proper implementation (Rudnicka et al., 2020). The policy may incentivize companies to move in a positive direction (Veitch et al., 2012).

Shui et al. (2020) conducted a multinomial logistic regression study on 380 rural women from Sichuan, China, to determine the impact of work-family disputes on their well-being. The author concluded that most respondents are very satisfied with their lives and that work-family imbalance and conflict management only affect their subjective well-being.

Another study through Paired sample t-test on 379 women working in the service sector in India found that work-life balance is correlated with high quality of personal and work life (Bhola & Nigade, 2016).

Through literature analysis, Anderson & Kelliher (2020) highlighted the context of the nature of remote work. The authors argued that when remote work is a choice by the workers themselves, it is much different when enforced due to health concerns like COVID-19. The paper differentiated the impact and stated that the scenario is more positive when the remote work is taken by choice but in the case of enforced telework, the scenario has a more negative impact, especially for the women and mothers, also suggested by a study conducted by Muralidhar et al. (2020) on employees of Hyderabad, India.

Another study on 253 health professionals from 5 hospitals in Tamil Nādu, India, by Devi & Hajamohideen (2018) used multinomial logistic regression to determine work-life quality. The study found that 67.2% of nurses are unsatisfied with their work-life quality. The quality of work-life is significantly predicted by work environment & engagement (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012), monthly income (Gunawan & Amalia, 2015), and educational level (Lewis et al., 2001) (Royuela et al., 2008). The authors conclude that a considerate work culture by the authority is crucial to ensure good work-life quality (Goodman et al., 2001).

A multinomial logistic regression was conducted on a primary dataset of 220 respondents from West Bengal, India by Das (2016) to determine the impact of human resources practices on personal-professional conflict and engagement in work through the variables like working conditions, job security, well-being, compensation, performance evaluation, etc. Since the variables were categorical and had ordinal responses with more than two categories, the multinomial regression analysis was used to estimate the model Kwak & Clayton-Matthews (2002). The author concluded that working conditions, well-being, and performance evaluation variables could create variations in the personal-professional conflict. In contrast, compensation, working conditions, and job security significantly impact work engagement.

Rony et al. (2023) supervised a study on the health professionals of Bangladesh through the multinomial regression analysis and revealed the most prominent parameters of work-life imbalance. The authors suggested that work-life imbalance positively correlates with the employees' unhappiness, which was also suggested in a study by Oliveira et al. (2021) in Portugal and Brazil, adverse setting of the family career and lousy state of career the family.

The authors concluded that the work-life balance of healthcare professionals is crucial for increasing their productivity and ensuring quality healthcare delivery.

In a study on SMEs in Bangladesh after the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors explored the consequences of imposed remote work culture in response to COVID-19 on employers and employees without having proper training (Islam et al., 2021). They expressed concern about the impact of remote work on work-life wellness. According to the authors, work-life wellness is essential for determining positive work culture and interactions in the workplace. Since long-term remote work can negatively affect work-life wellness and work-life balance, the authors indicated that workplaces should create opportunities to train their workers to handle such situations well, as mentioned in a study in North America (Como et al., 2021).

The impact of work-life balance on international business travelers following COVID-19 was determined through logistic regression by Kumpikaite-Valiuniene et al. (2022). The data was collected through an online survey. The estimated model suggested that the decrease in job demand impacted the work-life difficulties of international business travelers. The respondents had less stress and better well-being and reported superior work-life balance.

Table 1 summarizes the primary papers on remote work, COVID-19, and work-life balance geographically.

Table 1

Selected studies from the Literature Review

Author name	Method	Country	Data	Result
Erro-Garcés et al. (2022)	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	Baltic Countries	Living, Working, and COVID-19 by Eurofound (2020)	The responses of the first round of this survey suggested that most Baltics prefer remote work and only those with negative experiences regarding remote work during Covid-19 do not prefer remote work settings.
Rodríguez-Modroño & López-Igual (2021)	Multivariate analysis of variance (ANOVA, MANOVA), Ordinary Least	EU countries	35,765 respondents from the Sixth European Working Conditions	The level of mobility, job type, and gender significantly impacts telework.

	Squares (OLS) regression		Survey (EWCS)	
Lamprinou et al. (2021)	Pearson correlations, mediation analyses, and exploratory factor analyses	Greece	211 respondents (both teleworkers and non-teleworkers)	Perceived organizational support is a significant mediator in the correlation between servant leadership and, work-life balance & job burnout.
Felstead & Henseke (2017)	Multivariate and Logit regression analysis	United Kingdom	Labor Force Survey (LFS) and Skills and Employment Survey (SES)	Remote workers are inclined to put extra effort into having the option of working in a flexible location. They overwork sometimes and cannot draw boundaries between personal and professional life, which affects their work-life balance.
Angrisani et al. (2020)	Logistic regression	US population	Health and Retirement Study	Work-life balance is significantly impacted by work hours, work-life conflict, and spouse's health condition.
Xiao et al. (2021).	Multinomial logistic regression, linear regression, and Chi-square test	Worldwide	Primary survey of 988 respondents	There is an overall decline in well-being due to remote work during Covid-19, and the decline is linked to work hours, children at home, distractions, etc.
Shirmohammadi et al. (2022)	Thematic analysis, Meta-analysis	Worldwide	More than 40 empirical studies from high-impact factor journals.	The workers prefer to have the option of remote work, and the authors suggested that workplaces address the pros and cons of prolonged exposure to remote work on well-being.
Devi & Hajamohideen (2018)	Logistic regression	Tamil Nādu, India	Primary data (253 nurses) was collected through interviews.	The work-life quality is predicted by educational status, work environment, and monthly income. 67.5% of respondents are not

				satisfied with their quality of work life.
Das (2016)	Multinomial logistic regression	West Bengal, India	Primary data (220 respondents from 20 insurance companies).	The employees' well-being and work condition can impact work-family conflict, and job security and compensation can affect the employees' work engagement.
Rony et al. (2023).	Multinomial logistic regression, Pearson correlation	Bangladesh	Primary data (656 nurses) was collected through interviews and surveys.	The work-life balance is negatively affected by overall well-being and disorder in households. Ensuring work-life balance is crucial for quality work.

Source: compiled by the author

The literature reviewed for this study shows that much research exists regarding the work-life balance, telework before COVID-19, and telework trends induced by COVID-19 in the Baltic region, European and Asian countries. Based on the main findings of the literature review, research questions can be formulated to shed light on the impact of remote work on work-life balance. While previous studies have examined variables such as income, benefits, household conflict, partners' health, and employment flexibility as factors influencing work-life balance, there is a gap in the literature concerning the comparison of regions based on their job culture and sectors. This study aims to fill this void by investigating remote work's role in potential work-life balance changes. It compares two regions based on their diverse work culture, job sector, and partners' employability. The variables and methods used for this study are parallel to the findings of the reviewed literature.

3. Data and Methodology

The author conducted seven separate models to explore the impact of remote work on work-life balance and how the overall well-being of the employees might be affected. Then the models are compared to investigate the impact region-wise. The first three models are for the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), and the following four are for the South EU countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain). The reason for choosing these regions and comparing them is already explained. Therefore, the author anticipates an exclusive conclusion while exploring and comparing these two regions with such a classifiable backdrop.

The dataset is collected from Eurostat statistics to compare the average employment rate (%), job satisfaction with mean commuting time, job location (at home), and overall quality of life by year for the countries chosen for this study. The dataset is then analyzed and visualized in Microsoft Excel and Power BI tools. Firstly, the percentage of employed adults working at home is compared in a graph for the seven countries. The figure shows data from 2012 to 2021, so it is easier to notice how the remote work trend grew after the pandemic. Secondly, the average employment rate, job satisfaction with mean commuting time to work, and quality of life of these countries are compared in separate illustrations. The dataset is customized to consider adults above 18, all levels of education & gender, and regardless of their number of children to draw a consistent illustration for the country-wise data and fair comparison. Finally, logistic regression is conducted on the Eurofound Living, Working, and COVID-19 survey dataset (2020, 2021, 2022). Logistic regression is carried out to determine the relevant variables' impact on the work-life balance. The number of respondents for the Baltic countries is 15,227, and for the Southern EU countries is 36,501. The variables taken for this study align with the existing and similar literature. However, this study will address the research gap in comparing the Baltic and Southern EU countries. The comparison will allow us to understand the direction, extent of impact, and significant contributing factors for the impact.

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the remote work trend has become more regular. Moreover, the pandemic also impacted our lives in various ways, including life satisfaction, employment rate, stress about work (which impacts the work-life balance), etc. Everything was affected worldwide; however, this study will assess the situation for the Baltic and Southern EU countries. Therefore, a microdata analysis is necessary. The author used the Eurofound Living, working, and COVID-19 survey dataset (2020, 2021, 2022) comprising 15,227 respondents from the Baltic countries and 36,501 from the Southern EU countries. The number of respondents from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are 3851, 3973, and 7403, respectively. On the other hand, the number of respondents was from Greece. Italy, Portugal, and Spain are 12165, 7756, 8911, and 7669, respectively. When the logistic regression was conducted, the number of rows was adjusted to avoid the N/A variables.

3.1. Logistic Regression Analysis

The author attempted to obtain the estimates through logistic regression analysis on the Eurofound Living, Working, and COVID-19 survey dataset (2020, 2021, 2022) while estimating descriptive statistics from the Eurostat statistics dataset.

There are several previous kinds of literature where authors estimated the correlation between work-life balance and other relevant variables using logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression analysis is instrumental when the dependent variable is binary (e.g., presence or absence of work-life balance) and the independent variables are either continuous or categorical (Hilbe, 2009). Logistic regression estimates the probability of an event (e.g., work-life balance) occurring based on the values of the independent variables. Therefore, it can help identify the significant predictors of work-life balance and the relevant independent variables and quantify the strength and direction of their relationships (Menard, 2002).

The study used the Eurofound dataset, which included variables with multiple categories and N/A values. To address this, categories were grouped into two outcomes, and logistic regression analysis was used to estimate the impact of remote work and independent variables on work-life balance. Logistic regression is a powerful tool for analyzing relationships between multiple independent variables and an outcome variable while accounting for confounding factors. The study identified significant predictors of work-life balance in remote work, providing insights for employees and employers. This study thoroughly investigates work-life balance in the modern work environment using a robust dataset and logistic regression analysis.

The logistic equation used for this study is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \textit{Work - Life Balance (WLB)} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \textit{satisfaction} + \beta_2 \textit{remote_work} + \beta_3 \textit{job_sector} \\
 &+ \beta_4 \textit{partner_employment} + \beta_5 \textit{education} + \beta_6 \textit{age_group} + \beta_7 \textit{gender} \\
 &+ \varepsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

Table 2 presents a clear and organized summary of the types of variables, research questions, and value labels used in the study, providing a reference for understanding the methodology and analytical techniques employed.

Table 2

Explanation of Variables

Variable	Question	Type of variable	Categorical responses	Coding used in R
Work-life balance (Extra work)	Over the last month, how often have you worked in your free time to meet work demands?	Dependent variable	1 Every day 2 Every other day 3 Once or twice a week 4 Less often 5 Never	1-3 Frequently 4-5 Rarely
Life satisfaction (reference- not satisfied)	All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life these days?	Explanatory variable	Please answer on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied	5-7 Satisfied 8-10 Highly Satisfied
Remote work (reference - No)	During the COVID-19 pandemic, did you work at home?	Explanatory variable	0 No 1 Yes	Yes
Job sector (reference- Not from home)	What is the main activity of the company or organization where you work?	Explanatory variable	1 Agriculture 2 Industry 3 Construction 4 Commerce and hospitality 5 Transport 6 Financial services 7 Public administration 8 Education 9 Health 10 Other services	6-8 From home
Partner employment (reference - Not Professionally Employed)	Which of the following best describes your spouse's/partner's current situation?	Explanatory variable	1 Employee 2 Self-employed with employees 3 Self-employed without employees 4 Unemployed 5 Unable to work due to long-term illness or disability 6 Retired 7 Full-time homemaker/fulfilling domestic tasks 8 Student	1-3 Professionally Employed 8 Student
Education level (reference - Primary)	What is the highest level of education you have	Control variable	1 Primary 2 Secondary 3 Tertiary	Secondary Tertiary

	successfully completed?			
Age group (reference Adult)	How old are you? -	Control variable	Respondents from 18 and above	18-35 Young 60+ Elder
Gender (reference Male)	How would you describe yourself? -	Control variable	1 Male 2 Female	Female

Source: Explanations prepared by the author based on the Eurofound (2020, 2021, 2022), Living, Working and COVID-19 dataset, Dublin, (<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/covid-19>), compiled by Author.

In the above table (Table 2), Work-Life Balance (extra_work) is the dependent variable, whereas satisfaction, remote work, sector of job, and partner_emp are the independent variables. The education level, age group, and gender variables are control variables. The reference levels are also shown in the table above.

The author chose these variables to determine the correlation because, as seen from the existing literature, these variables can successfully affect work-life balance. From the Eurofond Living, Working, and COVID-19 survey dataset (2020, 2021, 2022) dataset, these variables showed a significant correlation with the dependent variable in the logistic regression.

3.2. Descriptive Statistics

This section aims to analyze the comparison of various significant indicators visually. First, Figure 1 shows the percentage of adult employees working from home from 2012 to 2021. The figure shows the remote work trend from way before the pandemic to understand how rapidly the trend grew from 2020. Estonia and Portugal had more employees in 2012 working from home. However, the number of respondents for Portugal is higher than that of Estonia. Therefore, only Estonia had higher remote workers in the pre-COVID scenario for the Baltics, and Portugal had higher remote workers from the Southern EU countries. However, a drastic increase in remote work is observed in pre- and post-COVID scenarios.

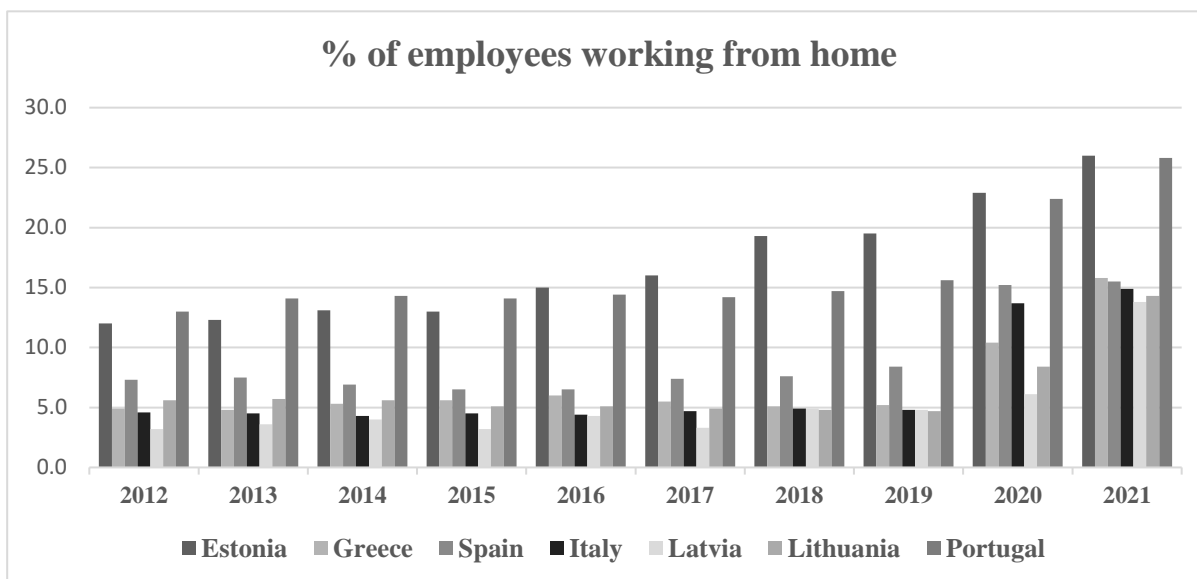


Figure 1. Percentage of employed adults working at home in chosen countries yearly.

Source: Eurostat and compiled by the Author

Figure 2 represents the minutes employees require to commute to work (one way). The illustration shows that the highest commute time was in Latvia, which was 48.9 minutes as of 2015. The job satisfaction bars show the average job satisfaction rating on a scale of 10. Estonia assesses the highest job satisfaction, valued at 7.6 out of 10 as of 2018. The lowest assessment of job satisfaction is reported by Greece at 6.2, and Portugal reported the lowest time to commute.

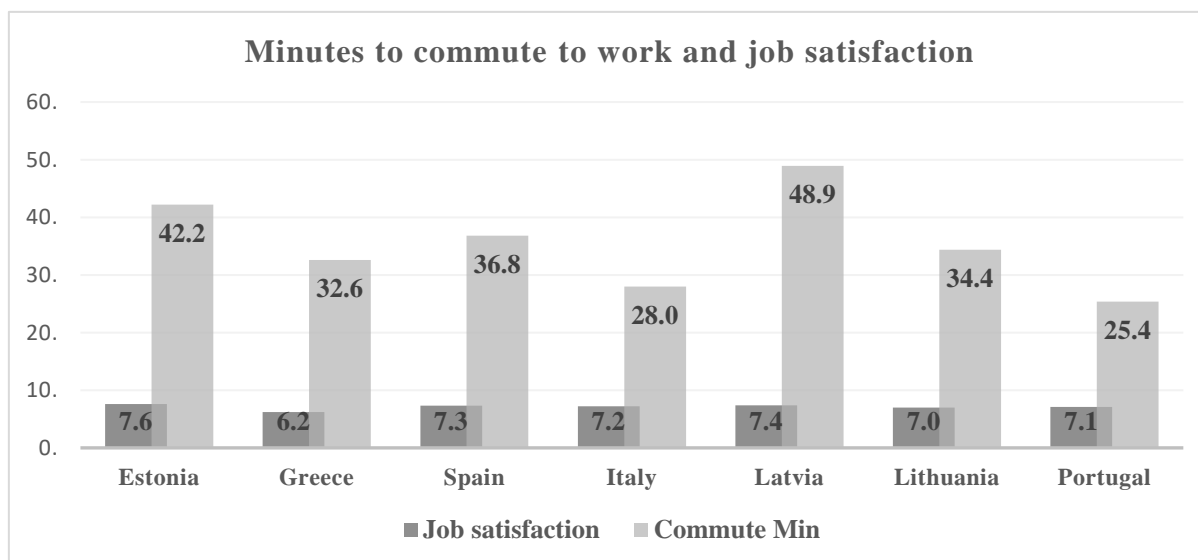


Figure 2. Average satisfaction rating and Mean duration of commuting time one-way between work and home.

Source: Eurostat (2018), Eurofound (2015) and compiled by the Author

Figure 3 demonstrates the average employment rate percentage by year. Estonia had the highest employment rate, 55.5%, as of 2021, whereas Greece had the lowest employment rate (37.3%) on average.

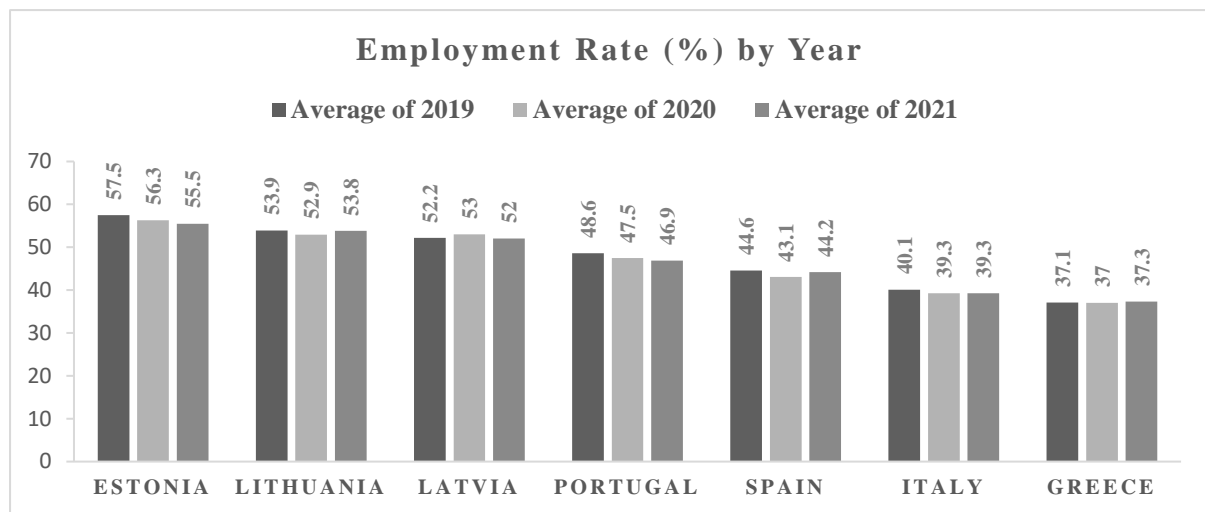


Figure 3. The employment rate of adults (%) of chosen countries.

Source: Eurostat and compiled by the Author

Figure 4 displays the distribution of job satisfaction ratings among individuals in the chosen countries. The countries are ranked by the proportion of respondents who reported high job satisfaction, with Estonia ranking highest at 33.3%, while Greece ranked the lowest. This figure provides a clear visual representation of the distribution of job satisfaction ratings and highlights the differences in job satisfaction levels across these countries.

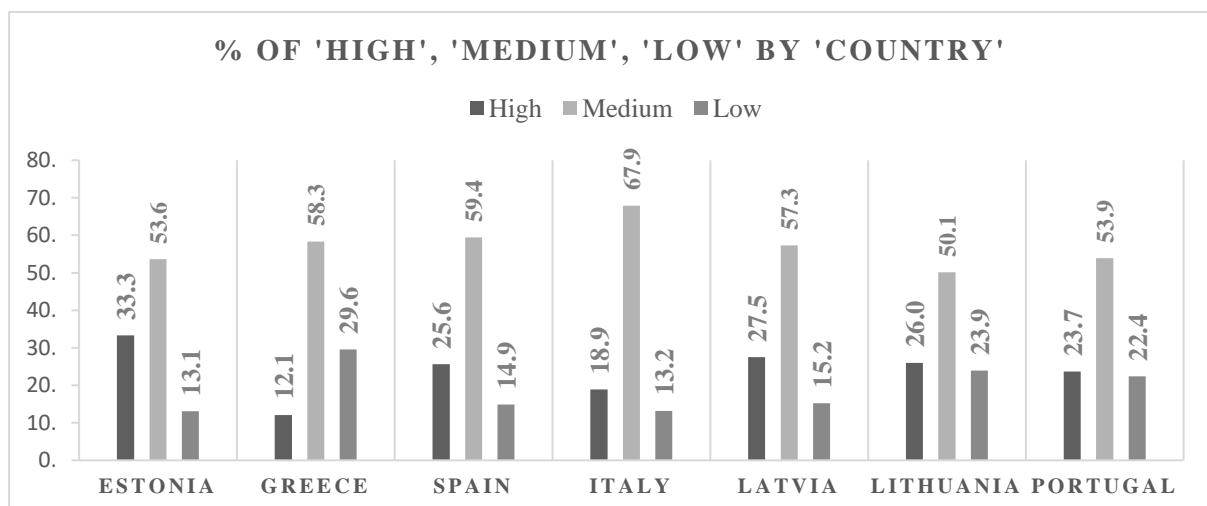


Figure 4. Percentage of the population rating their satisfaction as high, medium, or low of chosen countries.

Source: Eurostat (2018) and compiled by the Author

The four descriptive statistics presented in this section provide a comprehensive overview of significant employment and work-life balance indicators across selected countries. Specifically, these statistics include the percentage of employed adults who work from home, the average satisfaction rating, the mean duration of commuting time, and the employment rate of adults.

In addition to these descriptive statistics, the accompanying dodged bar charts represent how these indicators have changed. By comparing the trends across different countries, proper insights can be gained into how employment and work-life balance have evolved and how they may impact the well-being of workers. Overall, these statistics and charts provide a valuable reference for understanding the current state and trends related to employment and work-life balance.

4. Empirical Result and Discussion

The following section aims to interpret the results obtained from the logistic regression analysis and compare them within countries to observe any trends. The main objective is to describe and interpret the microdata extracted from the large dataset of Eurofound using the author's calculation. The analysis will seek to identify if there is any typical pattern in the data for both regions.

4.1. Factors Affecting Work-life Balance in the Baltic Countries

The section examines the impact of remote work, partner's employment status, job sector, education level, age group, and gender on work-life balance in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The dependent variable is "frequency of work in free time to meet work demands," with value labels ranging from "Frequently" to "Rarely".

For Estonia, holding other variables constant, individuals who work remotely are about 0.5771 times less likely to report working in their free time to meet work demands at a 5% significance level compared to those who do not work remotely. Similarly, for Latvia and Lithuania, individuals are 0.4714 and 0.5668 less likely, respectively.

For Estonia, the odds of working in their free time to meet work demands are about 1.77 ($\exp(0.5726)$) times higher for individuals who are satisfied with their overall life satisfaction at a 10% significance level and 2.31 ($\exp(0.8365)$) times higher for those who are highly satisfied at a 5% significance level, compared to those who are not satisfied, holding other factors constant. This suggests that individuals who are satisfied with their life are more

likely to be able to manage their workload during regular working hours and are, therefore, less likely to have to work in their free time to meet work demands. For Latvia, individuals who report being highly satisfied with their overall life satisfaction are 0.53764 times less likely to frequently work in their free time to meet work demands than those who are not satisfied with their overall life satisfaction at a 10% significance level, holding other factors constant. For Lithuania, there is no significant correlation between the frequency of work in free time and life satisfaction.

For Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the odds of frequently working in free time to meet work demands for individuals working from home are approximately 0.5301, 0.7007, and 0.6570 times lower than the odds for those not working from home, respectively. In the case of Latvia, the result is significant at 10%.

Based on the study's findings, there is a significant positive correlation between work-life balance and the employment status of a partner who is professionally employed in Estonia at 10% significance level. However, this variable was observed to have no significant correlation with work-life balance in Latvia and Lithuania. These results suggest that having a professionally employed partner in Estonia may positively impact an individual's work-life balance. In contrast, factors like remote work and the job sector, which can be worked from home, play a significant role in shaping work-life balance in Latvia and Lithuania.

Table 3 summarizes coefficients, standard errors, and p-values from the logistic regression analysis for the Baltic countries.

Table 3

Findings from the Logistic Regression Model-based analysis investigating the factors influencing work-life balance.

	Estonia			Latvia			Lithuania		
	B	(se)	P	B	(se)	p	B	(se)	p
Satisfaction (reference- Not satisfied)									
Satisfied	0.5726 .	0.3281	0.08095	0.02959	0.26380	0.910680	-0.28074	0.26138	0.28279
Highly satisfied	0.8365 *	0.3284	0.01086	0.53764 .	0.28786	0.061805	0.12158	0.26777	0.64979
Remote (reference – No)									
Yes	-0.5497 *	0.2291	0.01643	-0.75209 ***	0.19847	0.000151	-0.56775 **	0.18663	0.00235
Partner employment status (reference- Not Professionally Employed)									
Professionally Employed	0.4559 .	0.2647	0.08497	-0.17784	0.25260	0.481421	0.23540	0.23835	0.32335
Student	-0.4039	0.8375	0.62960	0.48948	1.20407	0.684362	14.11500	422.93511	0.97338

Sector (reference- Not from home)									
From home	-0.6346 **	0.2317	0.00617	-0.35562 .	0.19728	0.071450	-0.42002 *	0.19462	0.03092
Education level (reference – Primary)									
Secondary	15.3198	535.4113	0.97717	0.27797	0.60329	0.644971	1.04175	1.44877	0.47211
Tertiary	14.3793	535.4113	0.97857	-0.03647	0.59456	0.951084	0.75607	1.44165	0.59997
Age group (reference – Adult)									
Elder	-0.1072	0.2717	0.69314	-0.08929	0.27563	0.745972	0.21157	0.26437	0.42356
Young	0.1383	0.2985	0.64316	-0.21606	0.21076	0.305286	0.24992	0.23796	0.29361
Gender (reference- Male)									
Female	0.2184	0.2258	0.33343	0.29347	0.18873	0.119950	0.11279	0.18618	0.54463
Signif. codes: 0 ‘***’ 0.001 ‘**’ 0.01 ‘*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1									

Source: calculations prepared by the author based on the Eurofound (2020, 2021, 2022), Living, Working and COVID-19 dataset, Dublin, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/covid-19>

Therefore, from the above discussion, it can be concluded that the work-life balance variable taken for this model is significantly impacted by the independent variables like life satisfaction, remote work, job sector, and partner’s employment status in the case of the Baltic countries.

4.2. Factors Affecting Work-life Balance in the Southern EU Countries

The following section explores the effects of remote work, partner's employment status, job sector, education level, age group, and gender on the frequency of work in free time to meet work demands as the work-life balance variable in four Southern EU countries: Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

The impact of remote work on the work-life balance is significant for Greece, Italy, and Spain but not significant for Portugal. The direction of the correlations is negative for all three countries. It implies that For Greece, holding other variables constant, individuals who work remotely are about 0.6494 times less likely to report working in their free time to meet work demands compared to those who do not work remotely. Similarly, for Italy and Spain, individuals are 0.6209 and 0.4583 less likely, respectively. The finding implies that working remotely is associated with a lower likelihood of reporting the need to work during free time to meet work demands.

The results indicate that respondents from Greece have a significant positive correlation between work-life balance and reporting high levels of satisfaction. Conversely, respondents from Italy and Portugal (10% significance level) report higher levels of overall life satisfaction compared to those who are not satisfied while holding all other variables constant. The findings

suggest that people who have a high level of satisfaction with their life are more likely to effectively manage their workload within regular working hours, thereby reducing the likelihood of having to work during their free time to meet work demands. However, respondents from Spain do not exhibit any significant correlation between work-life balance and overall life satisfaction.

Respondents with a tertiary education level in Italy are about 0.1655 times less likely to work in their free time to meet work demands at a 10% significance level compared to those with a primary education level in Italy. Moreover, female respondents in Greece are approximately 1.3784 times more likely to report working in their free time to meet work demands than men 10% significance level. Other than these, no other independent variables exhibit a statistically significant impact on work-life balance in the Southern European countries included in the study.

Table 4 summarizes coefficients, standard errors, and p-values from the logistic regression analysis for the Baltic countries.

Table 4

The Impact on work-life balance variable in the Southern EU Countries in Logistic Regression Model

	Greece			Italy			Portugal			Spain		
	B	(se)	P	B	(se)	P	B	(se)	P	B	(se)	P
Satisfaction (reference- Not satisfied)												
Satisfied	0.57238**	0.17701	0.00122	0.46809	0.29979	0.11843	0.14965	0.28552	0.6002	0.004969	0.416121	0.990473
Highly satisfied	0.95836***	0.23506	4.56e-05	0.91487**	0.33590	0.00646	0.49510	0.29914	0.0979	0.382656	0.428593	0.371954
Remote (reference – No)												
Yes	-0.43163 *	0.19356	0.02575	-	0.20462	0.01988	-	0.18908	0.2455	-	0.228979	0.000656
				0.47650*			0.21957			0.780210**		
Partner employment status (reference- Not Professionally Employed)												
Professionally Employed	0.18799	0.17624	0.28613	0.06329	0.23583	0.78841	0.08539	0.22908	0.7093	-0.003817	0.260681	0.988318
Student	-1.11175	1.13511	0.32737	0.69057	1.22310	0.57234	-	-	-	-0.514270	1.272378	0.686080
Sector (reference- Not from home)												
From home	-0.05368	0.16027	0.73766	0.04557	0.20988	0.82810	-	0.20007	0.4500	-0.261983	0.257188	0.308373
							0.15112					
Education level (reference – Primary)												
Secondary	13.78173	535.41125	0.97946	-	1.07451	0.52415	0.27457	1.26599	0.8283	16.979911	834.325623	0.983763
				0.68443								
Tertiary	13.18535	535.41124	0.98035	-	1.06138	0.09021	-	1.25065	0.6710	16.190202	834.325574	0.984518
				1.79828			0.53131					
Age group (reference – Adult)												

Elder	0.35531	0.25649	0.16597	0.20068	0.28298	0.47823	0.07108	0.26461	0.7882	-0.223157	0.330273	0.499247
Young	0.15209	0.24279	0.53104	0.06079	0.27870	0.82732	-	0.30285	0.6787	-0.019691	0.386986	0.959419
Gender (reference- Male)												
Female	0.32096	0.16551	0.05247	-	0.19885	0.22187	0.08233	0.18378	0.6542	0.150455	0.220638	0.495298
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1												

Source: calculations prepared by the author based on the Eurofound (2020, 2021, 2022), Living, Working and COVID-19 dataset, Dublin, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/covid-19>

In summary, the impact of various independent variables on the work-life balance of respondents from the Southern EU countries has been discussed. The findings suggest that for most countries, the work-life balance is significantly impacted by life satisfaction and remote work, while other variables do not have a significant impact. However, in the case of Italy, the education level is significant, and for Greece, the gender female has a significant correlation with work-life balance. Overall, the work-life balance variable is mainly affected by life satisfaction and remote work for the Southern EU countries, with a few exceptions.

4.3. Comparison between the Baltics and the Southern EU countries

The descriptive statistics clearly illustrate how the regions differ regarding employment culture and practices. For the percentage of employees working from home, it is clear that the trend of remote work is increased during the global pandemic, and only Estonia reports the highest number of remote workers, being the only higher among the Baltic countries. Portugal reports the second highest, followed by Greece and Spain. When considering the average percentage of remote workers in both regions, it can be observed that there is a similarity between the Baltic countries and the Southern EU countries, as both regions have an average of 18% of their workforce engaged in remote work. The time to commute to work is reported higher for the Baltics, averaging approximately 42 minutes (Latvia being the highest), than the Southern EU countries, averaging 33 minutes (Portugal being the lowest). Job satisfaction is seen as highest in Estonia and lowest in Greece. On average, it is seen that for Baltic countries, the overall job satisfaction is reported at 7.33, and for the southern EU, it is 6.95. The average employment rate for 2021 in the Baltic countries is about 53.76%, and for the Southern EU countries, it is 41.92% approximately. Lastly, the respondents reporting their job life as highly satisfied in the Baltics averaged about 29% and 20% approximately for the Southern EU countries. To summarize from the descriptive statistics, job satisfaction, average employment rate, and higher assessment of work life are reported higher by the Baltic region than the Southern EU countries, while the time to commute is lower for the latter than the Baltics.

For the Baltic countries, it is seen that the work-life balance is significantly affected by remote work, life satisfaction, job sector, and partner's employment status at 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels. In contrast, only life satisfaction and remote work significantly correlated with the work-life balance for the Southern EU countries. Moreover, when people work remotely, they are less likely to report working in their free time to meet job demands for all the Baltic countries, but it is not valid for all the Southern EU countries.

The logistic regression estimated the correlation between work-life balance and the independent variables: life satisfaction as a proxy of overall well-being, remote work, job sector, partner's employment status, and control variables: education level, gender, and age group. The work-life balance variable is the frequency of work in free time to meet work demands, with value labels ranging from frequently to rarely. That means the respondents having to work frequently to meet work demands in their free time have less work-life balance than the respondents reported rarely.

Similarly, the job sector that can be done from home is significant for all the Baltic countries at 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels. However, there is no significant correlation between the job sector (from home) with work-life balance for the Southern EU countries. The findings of the study support the hypothesis that the work-life balance is influenced more significantly by remote work and job sectors in the Baltic countries due to their technological advancements. However, the correlation between these factors and work-life balance may not be as pronounced in the Southern EU countries due to differences in work cultures and the nature of work.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the impact of remote work and other contributing factors affecting work-life balance in the Baltic and Southern EU countries and compare the findings. The study found that the work-life balance of employees in both regions is significantly impacted by remote work and life satisfaction, while other variables have a varying level of impact on work-life balance, depending on the region. The study also found that the Baltic countries report higher levels of job satisfaction, higher employment rates, and higher work-life assessments than the Southern EU countries.

The descriptive statistics highlighted the differences between the employment cultures and settings of the two regions. The Baltic countries report a higher percentage of remote

workers and longer commute times than the Southern EU countries. However, the Southern EU countries report lower levels of job satisfaction and employment rates than the Baltic countries.

The logistic regression analysis revealed that remote work, life satisfaction, job sector, and partner's employment status are significant factors affecting work-life balance in the Baltic countries. In contrast, only remote work and life satisfaction are significant factors in the Southern EU countries. The study also found that when people work remotely, they are less likely to report working in their free time to meet job demands in all the Baltic countries but not in all the Southern EU countries. The job sector that can be done from home is also significant for all the Baltic countries but not for the Southern EU countries.

The results of this study align with the hypothesis that the technological advancements in the Baltic countries, which have a higher level of exposure to remote work, exert a more substantial influence on work-life balance compared to the Southern EU countries. The Baltic countries have adapted to remote work more efficiently and have a more flexible job sector mainly because of their startup and FinTech revolution, which allows employees to maintain a better work-life balance. In contrast, the Southern EU countries may need to invest more in technological advancements and adapt their job sectors to be more flexible to improve work-life balance.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the factors affecting work-life balance in the Baltic and Southern EU countries. It highlights the importance of remote work and life satisfaction as significant factors in both regions. The study also emphasizes the other contributing factors that can impact the work-life balance, including job sector flexibility, partners' employment status, education level, and gender.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the factors affecting work-life balance in the Baltic and Southern EU countries. The study emphasizes the importance of remote work and life satisfaction as significant factors affecting work-life balance in both regions. Future studies could consider additional factors when formulating policies to improve work-life balance.

5.1. Limitations

It is important to note that the study has some limitations. Firstly, the microdata from Eurofound Living, Working, and COVID-19 survey dataset (2020, 2021, 2022) used in the

regression analysis is a self-assessment for the respondents. The survey responses were based on the individual perceptions of the respondents, which means that the answers may not be entirely accurate since each person may interpret the questions differently. Secondly, although the dataset included information from 5 survey rounds, the specific variables used in this study had many missing (NA) values due to changes and additions made to the survey questions over time with successive rounds. Future research endeavors can explore this topic with datasets that are more comprehensive and richer in information.

5.2. Managerial Implications

The thesis findings offer some potential managerial implications that can apply to both the public and private sectors. One of the implications is the implementation of new policy measures by the government to encourage remote work culture and enhance work-life balance.

Additionally, the study can potentially be utilized to facilitate and assess the efficacy of remote work in both the Baltic and Southern EU regions. To achieve this, new surveys could be conducted, and the outcomes before and after a particular period could be compared to generate novel ideas.

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Resümee**TÖÖ- JA ERAELU TASAKAAL KAUGTÖÖ AJASTUL: BALTI JA LÕUNA-EU
RIIKIDE VÕRDLUSLIK ANALÜÜS**

Refat Noor Etu

Uuringu eesmärk on hinnata, kuidas COVID-19 põhjustatud kaugtöö kiire levik on seotud muutustega töö- ja eraelu tasakaalus analüüsidest olukorda ning võrreldes tulemusi Balti riikide ning Euroopa Liidu Lõuna piirkonna riikide andmete näitel. Lisaks kaugtööd iseloomustavatele näitajatele on uuringus analüüsitud ka muid tegureid, mis võivad mõjutada töö- ja eraelu tasakaalu. Uuring tugineb Eurofoundi elu-, töö- ja COVID-19 uuringute 2020, 2021 ja 2022 aastate andmetele. Analüüsi meetodina on põhiliselt kasutatud logistilist regressioonianalüüsi. Uuringu tulemustest nähtub, et kaugtööl, healul, majandussektoril ja partneri hõiveseisundil on oluline seos töö- ja eraelu tasakaaluga Balti riikides. Euroopa Liidu lõunapoolsetes riikides on töö- ja eraelu tasakaaluga statistiliselt olulisel määral seotud vaid kaugtöö ja eluga rahulolu näitajad. Üldiselt märgivad Balti riikidest pärit inimesed kõrgemat rahulolu tööga ja eluga kui ELi lõunapoolsete riikide inimesed.

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