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The Impact of the “Zoom Fatigue” Phenomenon and Ways of Managing It

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Abstract

The context of the COVID 19 pandemic has forced managers and entrepreneurs to review how they run their businesses and guide their employees. The new normality has brought with it a number of challenges and changes that have produced immediate and profound effects both in the way business is conducted, the online negotiations giving a formal and less human character, and in the way the employees perceive the work carried out exclusively online. Research has revealed a new phenomenon called "Zoom Fatigue" which is reflected in the human psyche through exhaustion and burnout, a phenomenon caused by the intensity and long duration of video calls and frequent online meetings. Additional cognitive processes required by video calls, the concentration required to absorb all the information transmitted, the lack of visual breaks, multitasking, as well as the merging of professional activity with the familiar environment from the comfort of our home, have led to psychological consequences, such as pronounced fatigue, exhaustion or irritation. All these effects are felt differently by men and women, the latter suffering more from videoconferencing and online work. At the same time, extroverts were found to be less tired than introverted people, feeling the effects of the "Zoom Fatigue" phenomenon differently. For the proper conduct of work and for the creation of a healthy organizational climate and an ethical organizational culture, the role of managers in knowing employees at a human level is of outmost importance, in order to best manage such situations and to identify appropriate measures for motivation and support aimed in particular at female and vulnerable personnel. Orientation towards setting a precise schedule for organizing video conferencing, recommending to avoid multitasking and reducing on-screen stimulus, setting visual breaks, avoiding the use of video calls in their spare time are some of the measures that managers can implement among their employees.

Keywords: ZOOM fatigue, pandemic, human resources, women, ethical organizational culture.

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1. Introduction

The context of the SARS-CoV2 pandemic has shown us all that our lives can change quickly and deeply. Changes that were expected by scientists to be implemented not by 10-15 years have been adopted in 2020 by states across the globe, with reflections in (effects on?) public administrations, and companies of all sizes. These rapid changes had an effect on people's psyches and the emergence of a new phenomenon called by scientists "Zoom fatigue", a phenomenon still under investigation and not completely known. The Zoom name is associated with the online video conferencing platform, but it is not limited to it, referring to all online meetings applications and platforms. The findings revealed that the use of videoconferencing has a strong impact on users in terms of cognitive learning. At the same time, the fact that during these meetings we tend to do multiple things, such as checking email notifications or chats on the mobile-phone, doing household chores (multitasking), was proven to induce the feeling of burnout and has been discovered to cause ADHD.

Research has shown that women have been most affected by the pandemic we are going through, with regards to unemployment, gender equality, productivity, self-image, anxiety, maintaining a regular diet program and exercise and, last but not least, the internal perception of the phenomenon "Zoom fatigue".

The result shows that the biggest cause of Work Interferes with Family on Working Women are strain-based conflicts. Based on interview with respondents, married female nurses at Hospitals in Bandung feel exhausted and stress due to pressures at work, so they have no energy left to do family activities, hobby, or to do house chores (Sari et al., 2021).

Since online meetings are likely to remain a part of our lives and a daily habit because we got accustomed to it and employees will choose to work from home and to reduce commute time and/or distance, it is important to understand the implications of using them.

2. Problem Statement

The decimation wrought by the infection pandemic, adds one more piece of direness to the calls for change. Furthermore, given that numerous huge and compelling business associations, for example, the Business Roundtable in the US have embraced a portion of these change recommendations, there is recharged power in checking whether organizations can change and work in an unexpected way (Freeman, 2020).

The phenomenon is yet to be defined, but along the encountered definitions, the one that suits best is: "Zoom fatigue," the term being utilized to portray the sleepiness, tension, or stress coming about because of abusing these virtual stages (Wolf, 2020).

Nadler Robby through the article Understanding "Zoom fatigue": Theorizing spatial dynamics as third skins in computer-mediated communication has shown the phenomenon implications: "Zoom fatigue"—conjectured as a feature of a bigger involvement with computer-mediated communication (CMC) depletion—has arisen as a typical negative encounter through delayed utilization of CMC stages. Notwithstanding CMC weariness' pervasiveness, the generally original wonder has caused a lot of hypothesis for its underlying drivers with little data pinpointing why it happens. The subsequent change and our bodies applying generous intellectual endeavors to interface with this change are hypothesized to deliver CMC weariness (Nadler, 2020).

Fauville, Geraldine and Luo, Mufan and Queiroz, Anna C. M. and Bailenson, Jeremy N. and Hancock, Jeff, through the article Nonverbal Mechanisms Predict Zoom Fatigue and Explain Why Women Experience Higher Levels than Men, published 5th of April 2021, have affirmed a few speculations. In the first place, Zoom weariness expanded with recurrence, length of gatherings, and burstiness (i.e., more limited time between gatherings). Nonverbal components were identified with weariness and clarified right around 33% of the fluctuation in the Zoom and Exhaustion Fatigue (ZEF) Score. Ladies experienced more weariness than men, even in the wake of controlling for contrasts in utilization, socioeconomics and character. On the side of this sex weariness impact from the ZEF Scale, the content examination uncovered that ladies were additionally more probable than men to utilize terms identified with booking and weakness while depicting their video gathering experience in their open-finished reactions.

Reliable with mental exploration on self-centered consideration and negative effect, ladies experienced more mirror uneasiness related with oneself view in video conferencing than men, and mirror tension was an essential arbiter for the sexual orientation impact on weakness. Significantly, the intercession design was seen in both oneself report and phonetic information, with ladies utilizing more first-individual particular pronouns than men, and this pronoun contrast interceded the sex weariness impact. Given that creation of the principal individual particular has been utilized widely as a proportion of self-centered consideration, these are convincing conduct information that ladies were more self-centered while depicting their video meeting experience than men. Notwithstanding mirror nervousness, the nonverbal instruments of hyper look and feeling truly

caught likewise interceded the sex impact of weakness, as delivered nonverbal conduct, in spite of the fact that less significantly.

At long last, exploratory investigation showed less weariness for outgoing individuals than for loners, for more established individuals than for more youthful individuals, for social settings than for work settings, and for white individuals contrasted with different races. The more noteworthy weakness for ladies contrasted with men, be that as it may, stayed in any event, while controlling for these extra factors (Fauville, 2021).

In the study above, 14,760 participants completed an online survey and the respondents were exclusively daily basis video conference users. The data collection took place between February 22nd and March 12th, 2021.

Jeremy N. Bailenson through the article *Nonverbal Overload: A Theoretical Argument for the Causes of Zoom Fatigue*, zeroed in on nonverbal over-burden as a possible reason for weariness and gave four contentions illustrating how different parts of the current Zoom interface probably lead to mental results. The contentions depended on scholarly hypothesis and examination. The article zeroed in on four potential clarifications for Zoom weakness: inordinate measures of close-up eye stare, intellectual burden, expanded self-assessment from gazing at video of oneself, and imperatives on actual portability (Bailenson, 2021).

Fosslien Liz and Mollie West Duffy in the article "How to combat zoom fatigue" published on Harvard Business Review 29 (2020), indicated ways to combat Zoom fatigue, including:

- avoiding multitasking: research showed that attempting to do different things without a moment's delay cuts into execution. Since individuals need to turn certain pieces of the cerebrum now and again for various sorts of work, exchanging between assignments can cost as much as 40% of useful time. Analysts at Stanford found that individuals who perform multiple tasks can't recall things just as their all the more uniquely engaged companions;

- building in breaks: Taking small scale parts from video during longer calls by limiting the window, moving it to behind open applications, or simply turning away from the PC totally for a couple of moments at this point and afterward, will allow the eyes to rest and feel somewhat refreshed;

- reducing onscreen stimuli: research shows that when we are on video, we tend to spend the most time gazing at our faces and also the space surrounding our colleagues. It will help if we will hide ourselves from view. The cerebrum needs to handle these visual natural signals simultaneously. To battle mental exhaustion, it urges individuals to utilize plain foundations (for example a banner of a quiet sea shore scene), or concur collectively to have every individual who isn't talking turn off their video.

- making virtual get-togethers select in: virtual social meetings ought to be kept pick in, which means whoever claims the occasion makes it unequivocal that individuals are gladly received, yet not committed, to join;
- switching to phone calls or emails where that is possible in order to avoid another virtual social session;
- for external calls, avoiding defaulting to video: a video call is genuinely private and can even feel intrusive in certain circumstances (Fosllien & Duffy, 2020).

This article aims to highlight various researches in the field with the indication of the most vulnerable categories of employees, with the list of techniques that can improve and combat the effects of the phenomenon "Zoom fatigue", exemplifying the effects of the pandemic in terms of work in Romania, as well as specifying future research lines.

3. Aims of the research

The purpose of this research is to highlight the fact that the phenomenon being debated is also manifested in Romania, although it is not measured, as, bound by circumstances, both public and private authorities have adopted work from home and have taken steps to physically distance employees, the latter being victims of the effects, being exposed to the same stimuli as the persons of the research presented. The report will highlight the need for senior staff, managers, and entrepreneurs to have knowledge of the mental well-being of employees and to focus their attention on the categories most vulnerable to the effects of "Zoom fatigue". The aim is to indicate methods by which negative effects can be improved and combated, methods that can be easily applied by managers, entrepreneurs, and senior staff.

At the same time, concerning the fact that women were most affected by the new normality, we will draw attention to the fact that, according to statistical data, in Romania, women have been more affected by the effects of the pandemic, the unemployment rate among them being much higher than among men.

4. Research Methods

The present article provides empirical and theoretical research in the field of "Zoom fatigue", respectively its effects, as well as methods of flattening, with applicability in the business environment and the public environment of Romania.

5. Findings

The research highlighted the following:

- First point: the phenomenon "Zoom fatigue" exists and manifests itself differently depending on age, gender or temperament. It has cognitive and emotional implications.

- Second point: In Romania, telework was legislated by Law number 81 of March 30, 2018, on the regulation of telework activity. It is characterized as the type of work association through which the worker, on a customary and willful premise, satisfies his obligations explicit to the position, occupation, or exchange he holds, in a spot other than the work coordinated by the business, no less than one day out of every month, utilizing data and correspondence innovation, and the telecommuter is any representative who does his movement under the conditions referenced previously. The mentioned document also establishes the conditions in which the telework activity is carried out, there being provisions regarding the attributions of the teleworker, as well as of the employer. Although the telework activity was regulated, the share of employees who worked from home in the last three years placed Romania in the penultimate place in 2018 and respectively on the last one in 2019, in the European Union, according to Eurostat (2020). If three years ago, only 0.4% of employees in Romania worked from home, in 2019 the figures did not increase much, reaching a share of 0.8% of total employees working in telework. Romania was at the bottom of the ranking on work from home and this is because the average of the European Union was 5.2% in 2018 and 5.4% in 2019. The onset of the pandemic in 2020 caused by the spread of the SARS-COV2 virus also forced public authorities to introduce work from home, as a measure to protect employees. In the context in which, under different conditions, telework represented a benefit and a motivating factor in choosing a job, it became an obligation and a measure taken in a situation of force majeure.

- Third point: the Minister of Labor stated on the 8th of May this year that the number of unemployed women in Romania increased by 50% due to the pandemic, while the share of unemployed men by 16%. The undisputed reality is that women have paid a higher cost of the Covid crisis than men. Eurostat statistics show that 84% of employees aged 15 to 64 in the services most affected by Covid - HORECA and tourism, childcare, retail, are women. In Romania, in human health activities, the share of women in front-line services was 80%, compared to 20% men. Also, women are more exposed to unemployment, being more involved in the informal economy and much more affected by inactivity in the labor market, due to the responsibilities of home care (Marina, 2021).

6. Discussions

The facts stated above show a small part of the effects on humans, the research being yet at a very small level, considering the restrictions on social and physical distance, work from home and online events have been implemented worldwide for a few years and have been going on for more than a year. From practice, we also see that states, such as Romania, have accelerated the process of working from home and digitizing the administration, which indicates that working online is here to stay. Nationally related research can highlight how "Zoom fatigue" has been estimated and based on nationality, culture or educational level. At the same time, quantitative and qualitative research can confirm theories about what "Zoom fatigue" actually means, what triggers effects at the psychic level and how they can be prevented, combated or improved.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, research has revealed the existence of a new phenomenon, particularly accentuated by the restrictions imposed globally through the prism of the pandemic, which leave traces in the psyche of those who carry out their work working at home and who use video conferencing platforms. At the same time, the practice has shown us that work from home in Romania it is legislated and the regular office has been moved at home, as well as by public authorities, and by private companies, and statistics show that women have been more affected than men in terms of the repercussions of restriction measures.

Given that the pandemic has imposed new normality on us, and the changes brought about have been deeply reflected in the human psyche, it is important, to maintain an ethical and scientific organizational culture, that Romanian managers, both in the private system and in the public system, take steps to know their employees and take into account their emotional well-being. Ethicist can be engaged with partnerships on various levels: they can be directors or chiefs (utilized by the organization), outside advisors, or be an 'free' individual from a morals advisory group (Demuijnck, 2020). Knowledge of temperament and personality of the employees can be achieved through particular discussions with them, by reporting on what desires and grievances they have. Companies may choose to use the services of a professional, psychologist or a properly trained person in the human resources department, who could highlight the emotional deficiencies of employees, their source, as well as how to resolve them. Putting employees

in a particular profile can help take the right steps, train cohesive teams, and indicate the right motivational techniques to make the most of each person's potential.

Fruitful an organization in accomplishing its proposed reason relies upon individuals from a hierarchical responsibility (Widyanti, 2020).

At the same time, considering that mental health is sensitive and increasingly in the spotlight, classic motivational techniques existing in the field of human resources management must be known to people with leadership and guidance functions and adapted to the working environment in order to be properly applied.

We consider it vital for entrepreneurs to focus on participating in training courses in the field of mental well-being of employees for a better knowledge of the stimuli that affect people and combat the negative effects of changes of any kind, as well as for knowing the approaches for the personalized guidance of employees according to the needs of each of them. Of course, all these steps contribute to an organizational climate conducive to high productivity and profit-making, as well as to a good reputation of the company.

Today, a company's profile is enhanced by the internal and organizational environment. People put the mental state and atmosphere at work at the expense of remuneration, as well as ethical organizational culture.

Methods such as those described above can help and support employees in overcoming the outcomes of the effects that occur as a result of the restrictions imposed and adopted globally.

As future research, we consider it appropriate to investigate the effects of the phenomenon on Romanian employees in various fields, as well as on children and students who have made intensive use of online video conferencing platforms while participating in the online school.

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