

Finding a Balance Between Remote and Office Work

A qualitative study on the experiences of knowledge workers on hybrid work arrangements

Management & Organisation

Master's thesis

Author:

Julia Darlington

Supervisor:

FT Markku Jokisaari

27.5.2024

Turku

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master's thesis

Subject: Management and organization

Author: Julia Darlington

Title: Finding a balance between remote and office work

Supervisor(s): Markku Jokisaari

Number of pages: 106 pages + appendices 3 pages

Date: 22.5.2024

The use of flexible work arrangements, such as remote and hybrid work, has been gaining popularity globally over the past few decades. Although remote work adoption was already on the rise before the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic significantly accelerated this trend. A new trend that has gained considerable popularity post-pandemic is the hybrid working model, which combines both remote and office work.

This study examines how employees experience hybrid work, discussing the benefits and drawbacks based on their experiences. The data for the study was gathered through 17 qualitative interviews with knowledge workers employed in an organization operating in the financial sector in Finland. By examining various aspects of both remote and office work, such as work-life balance, productivity and community building, this study provides understanding on factors that should be considered when discussing hybrid work arrangements. Based on the findings, this study supports the use of hybrid work arrangements, arguing that they provide the most balanced approach to organizing work post-pandemic. Furthermore, the interviews suggested that hybrid work effectively mitigates the potential drawbacks of excessive remote or office work, allowing employees to benefit from both work modes.

Additionally, this study contributes to existing literature, which has often explored remote and flexible work arrangements through theories that utilize the reciprocal nature of the employment relationship, such as psychological contract theory. This study underscores the pandemic's impact on the psychological contract between employees and employers by indicating the importance of maintaining flexible work arrangements to uphold the psychological contract. It reveals a shift towards valuing flexibility post-pandemic, suggesting that rigid work arrangements may lead to job dissatisfaction and potentially end the employment relationship. The research contrasts with previous studies by highlighting that the lack of flexibility could drive employees to seek new job opportunities altogether. It supports the idea of a balanced approach to remote and office work as the most favourable, emphasizing the necessity for organizations to adapt to changing expectations around work flexibility.

Key words: hybrid work, remote work, flexible work arrangements, office work, psychological contract

Pro gradu -tutkielma

Oppiaine: Johtaminen ja organisointi

Tekijä: Julia Darlington

Otsikko: Finding a balance between remote and office work

Ohjaaja: Markku Jokisaari

Sivumäärä: 106 sivua + liitteet 3 sivua

Päivämäärä: 20.5.2024

Joustavat työjärjestelyt, kuten etä- ja hybridityö, ovat kasvattaneet suosiotaan maailmanlaajuisesti viime vuosikymmeninä. Vaikka etätyön käyttö oli lisääntymässä jo ennen COVID-19-pandemiaa, pandemia kiihdytti tätä suuntausta merkittävästi. Uusi suuntaus, joka on saavuttanut huomattavan suosion pandemian jälkeen, on hybridityömalli, jossa yhdistyvät sekä etä- että toimistotyö.

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, miten työntekijät kokevat hybridityön, ja keskustellaan heidän kokemustensa perusteella hyödyistä ja haitoista. Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin 17 laadullisella haastattelulla, jotka tehtiin Suomessa rahoitusallalla toimivassa organisaatiossa työskentelevien tietotyöntekijöiden kanssa. Tutkimuksessa analysoidaan sekä etä- että toimistotyöhön liittyviä eri näkökohtia, kuten työn ja yksityiselämän tasapainoa, tuottavuutta ja yhteisöllisyyden rakentamista, ja sen tavoitteena on antaa kattava käsitys tekijöistä, jotka olisi otettava huomioon, kun keskustellaan hybridityöjärjestelyistä. Tulosten perusteella tässä tutkimuksessa tuetaan hybridityöjärjestelyjen käyttöä ja väitetään, että ne tarjoavat tasapainoisimman lähestymistavan työn organisointiin pandemian jälkeen. Lisäksi haastattelujen perusteella hybridityöskentelyn koettiin lieventävän tehokkaasti liiallisen etätyön tai toimistotyön mahdollisia haittoja, jolloin työntekijät voivat hyötyä molemmista työmuodoista.

Lisäksi tämä tutkimus täydentää olemassa olevaa kirjallisuutta, jossa etätyöjärjestelyjä ja joustavia työjärjestelyjä on usein tutkittu työsuhteen vastavuoroisuutta hyödyntävien teorioiden, kuten psykologisen sopimusteorian, avulla. Tässä tutkimuksessa korostetaan pandemian vaikutusta työntekijöiden ja työnantajien väliseen psykologiseen sopimukseen osoittamalla, että joustavien työjärjestelyjen säilyttäminen on tärkeää psykologisen sopimuksen ylläpitämiseksi. Tutkimuksessa saadun datan perusteella voidaan todeta, että pandemian jälkeen on siirrytty arvostamaan joustavuutta, mikä viittaa siihen, että jäykät työjärjestelyt voivat johtaa työtyytymättömyyteen ja mahdollisesti työsuhteen päättymiseen. Tutkimus on ristiriidassa aiempien tutkimusten kanssa, sillä siinä korostetaan, että joustavuuden puute voi saada työntekijät etsimään kokonaan uusia työmahdollisuuksia. Tutkimuksessa tuetaan ajatusta tasapainoisesta lähestymistavasta etätyöhön ja toimistotyöhön, mikä oli kerätyn aineiston perusteella kaikkein suotuisinta, ja korostetaan, että organisaatioiden on sopeuduttava työn joustavuuteen liittyviin muuttuviin odotuksiin.

Avain sanat: hybridityö, etätyö, joustavat työjärjestelyt, toimistotyö, psykologinen sopimus

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	8
1.1	Research gap and purpose of the study	10
2	Psychological contract theory and flexible work arrangements	13
2.1	Theories used to study remote work arrangements	13
2.2	Psychological contract theory	14
2.2.1	Adoption of the psychological contract theory on factors related to the employment relationship	15
2.2.2	A framework of the employment relationship based on the psychological contract theory	17
2.3	Psychological contract theory & flexible work arrangements	18
3	From office work to remote work: The path to remote work arrangements and motives behind them	21
3.1	Background and context	22
3.2	Historical perspective on remote work arrangements	23
3.3	Motives behind remote work arrangements	25
3.3.1	Financial benefits related to remote work for organizations	27
3.4	Formal vs. informal remote work	29
3.5	Part-time vs. full time remote work	30
4	Impacts and experiences of employees with remote and hybrid work arrangements	33
4.1	Work-life balance	33
4.2	Job satisfaction	37
4.3	Professional Isolation	39
4.4	Productivity and job performance	41
5	Research design	44
5.1	Research approach	44
5.2	Data collection	45
5.3	Evaluation of the study	47
5.4	Data analysis	49

6	Results	53
6.1	Employee experiences on remote work arrangements	53
6.1.1	Work-life balance	54
6.1.2	Productivity	57
6.1.3	Rest & recovery	60
6.1.4	Remote meetings	63
6.1.5	Feelings of isolation & workplace community	65
6.1.6	Home office ergonomics	69
6.2	Experiences on office work post pandemic	70
6.2.1	Community building and socialization	71
6.2.2	Development work and innovation	75
6.2.3	Orientation of new employees	76
6.3	Experiences on hybrid work arrangements	78
6.3.1	Best of both worlds: provides balance	79
6.3.2	Competitive advantage; attracting and retaining talent	82
6.3.3	Freedom of choice: the importance of flexibility, autonomy & fairness	84
7	Discussion	88
7.1	Theoretical contribution	89
7.2	Managerial implications	93
7.3	Limitations of the study and future research suggestions	94
7.4	Conclusions	96
	Concluding remarks	98
	References	99
	Appendices	107
	Interview questions	107

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 A framework for the application of the psychological contract within the employment relationship.	17
Figure 2 Thematic analysis process	50
Figure 3 Main themes & sub-themes that arose from the collected data & prior literature	52

1 Introduction

Over the past few decades working life has experienced a multitude of changes and disruptions that have significantly altered the way we work and how and where we conduct work tasks. Many of these changes in working life are due to and enabled by major advancements in information and communication technologies (Battisti et al. 2022; Stiles & Smart 2021; Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017; Sewell and Taskin, 2015; Oettinger 2011). The remarkable evolution of technology has opened innovative ways to structure our work, presenting diverse opportunities for how we manage and execute our professional activities (Halford 2005). This has led to concepts such as remote work emerging and becoming an increasingly popular way of describing how work is conducted (Allen et al. 2015). Bailey & Kurland (2002) define remote work as telework referring to work that is conducted remotely, away from the office, often from home or another location other than the traditional office space. To cope with the demands and challenges of working life, many organizations have increasingly been adopting this new form of work (Wang et al. 2023; Groen et al., 2018; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011).

Though remote work practices have been gaining popularity over the past few decades, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this progression dramatically (Asgari et al. 2023; Krajčák et al. 2023; Babapour et al. 2021). The pandemic forced organizations to react to a challenging situation at a very rapid pace and adapt to new ways of working in an unprecedented manner (Wang et al. 2023; Galanti et al. 2023; Ashforth 2020; Shifrin & Michael, 2022; Krajčák et al. 2023). This disruption in the way we work has led to numerous organizations having to change their work policies and in many the changes seem to be permanent (Barrero et al. 2021). Thus, going back to how work was conducted before the pandemic does not seem realistic or even practical (Barrero et al. 2021; Smite et al, 2023; Krajčák et al. 2023; Pulido-Martos et al. 2021; O'Rourke 2021). Throughout the pandemic, various organizations discovered the feasibility and often superior efficiency of remote work, leading to the realization that it could be a preferred method for organizing work in the future, particularly in certain contexts (Barrero et al. 2021; Babapour et al. 2021; Choudhury, 2020). Now that the pandemic has passed, the next question many organizations are pondering is what work arrangements function best when considering multiple different factors such as work performance, employee

well-being and satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance (Smite et al. 2023; Krajčik et al. 2023). A new work model that has emerged during the time post-pandemic is the hybrid working model (Krajčik et al. 2023; Santos & Ralph 2022; Bloom et al 2022; Dent et al, 2021; Gratton, 2021; Cook et al. 2020), which refers to the combination of both remote and office work. Notable though, the term “hybrid work” is rather new and thus has not yet become a commonly used term in academic literature, especially when looking at academic journal publications. In this study, hybrid work is used to refer to the combination of both office and remote work, in which employees work both remotely and at the office on a weekly basis. Also, the term “remote work” is used to refer to work conducted primarily from home, though in academic literature it is also used to refer to situations in which work is conducted in customers' office spaces or other remote or virtual workspaces (Mendrika et al, 2021; Gratton 2021).

In the aftermath of the pandemic many organizations have slowly started to shift from full-time remote work to different forms of hybrid work and thus the topic can be seen as relevant in this day and age. Also, many organizations are faced with the dilemma of how to arrange work after the disruption in working life caused by the pandemic dramatically shifted the way we view work and how it should be arranged (Smite et al. 2023; Krajčik et al. 2023). One of the current topics on work arrangements is how and in what amount should employees be returning to the office (Smite et al, 2023; Gratton, 2021) now that remote work is not compulsory as a safety measure. In many cases, the return to the office is happening after over a few years of predominantly full-time remote work, which can be seen as a significant change for many employees.

The purpose of this study is to deepen our understanding of how employees perceive hybrid work arrangements and examine the potential effects of such flexible work environments on the employment relationship. The research primarily focuses on the personal experiences of knowledge workers with hybrid work in the post-pandemic era. Drawing from these experiences, the study aims to identify the advantages and disadvantages associated with both remote and office work, as well as their integration. Furthermore, the study investigates whether hybrid work arrangements impact the employment relationship between employees and employers through the lens of psychological contract theory.

The objective of the study is to thoroughly examine optimal work structures based on employees' experiences in the post-COVID-19 era. The main research question goes as follows:

How do knowledge workers experience hybrid work arrangements?

The sub-questions of this study are as follows:

What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks related to each work arrangement?

Do hybrid work arrangements influence the psychological contract between the employee and employer?

The study aims to provide comprehensive insights and research data to address the previously mentioned research questions. Data was collected through 17 detailed interviews with knowledge workers at a company operating in the financial sector in Finland. A qualitative research method was selected to facilitate an in-depth investigation into factors associated with hybrid work arrangements and to enhance understanding of their potential effects on the employment relationship. This research focuses on understanding the subjective experiences of knowledge workers in hybrid work environments; thus, a qualitative approach was deemed most suitable for collecting this specific data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The study evaluates the effects of flexible work arrangements through a qualitative methodology to gain deeper understanding on the topic and effectively answer the main research questions.

1.1 Research gap and purpose of the study

Though there is a rather relevant amount of prior research conducted on remote work (Bloom et al., 2015; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999; Richardson & Mckenna, 2014; Groen et al., 2018; Golden & Veiga 2008) and some studies on hybrid work post-pandemic (Asgari et al. 2023; Krajčik et al. 2023; Babapour et al. 2021; Bloom et al. 2022; Smite et al. 2022; Gratton 2021) many studies have noted that past research on remote work and its effects on employees have been rather inconclusive as to how flexible work arrangements are most favorable to arrange (Shifrin & Michel 2022; Kim et al., 2021; Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Charalampous et al.

2019; Nyani et al. 2017; Oettinger, 2011). In addition, past research does note that there is still a lot of knowledge lacking when discussing effects of remote work practices for both individuals and organizations and that need for additional research from new angles does exist (Brunelle & Fortin 2021; Babapour et al. 2021; Nyberg et al. 2021). For example, Kim et al. (2021) state in their study that especially when discussing topics such as organizational and individual work performance, no common consensus can be made from prior literature and thus express the need for further studies on the topic. Though multiple studies disclaim that no conclusive findings have been made on the effects of remote work arrangements, past research on the topic does agree that where work is conducted matters (Golden & Veiga 2008; Richardson & Mckenna, 2014; Brunelle & Fortin, 2021). Halford (2005, 20) mentions this well by noting that “*where work is done makes a difference to working practices and to organizational and personal relationships*”. Another notable factor related to this is that though virtual workspaces may be interchangeable, the physical places in which we work are not (Kompast and Wagner, 1998) and thus where we physically conduct our work tasks can be expected to have some effect on either the work, the individual conducting the work or the organization. Due to the extent and longitude of the pandemic work life seems to have been forever altered (Bakarich et al. 2022) and remote work has gone from a rare form of work to a very common way of conducting work tasks in different positions throughout organizations (Krajčik et al. 2023; Asgari et al. 2023; Babapour et al. 2021). A new trend that has captured huge popularity especially after the pandemic is the concept of hybrid work (Halford 2005).

Hybrid work arrangements have been increasing over the past few years amid organizations in which a return to the office to some extent has occurred or is in the process of occurring. Given the recent changes in work practices following the pandemic, there is a lack of extensive research on how hybrid work arrangements impact employees and what the experiences are of combining remote and office work from the employees' perspective. Recent studies on hybrid work arrangements highlight the lack of research on the topic and call for more extensive studies to gain deeper understanding on the phenomena (Babapour et al. 2021). Especially when taking into consideration that the disruption caused by the pandemic is expected to influence how we view remote work policies and flexible work arrangements in general, it is crucial to conduct studies to affirm whether this is the case or not. Though research on the topic

does exist, most past research on the topic has been conducted either before or during the pandemic rather than after it. The lack of research is to the extent that finding studies on specifically hybrid work arrangements post pandemic rather than the focus being solely on remote work or office work have been hard to find and seem to be scarce. This is most likely primarily due to the relatively short period of time since the “end” of the pandemic and thus new research on remote work after the pandemic has not yet been published. This said, there are studies conducted on hybrid work arrangements done years prior to the pandemic such as Halford (2005). The primary focus of this study, compared to previous research, is to gain a deeper understanding of employee experiences with hybrid work arrangements and to investigate how the pandemic has potentially changed the impact of flexible work arrangements on the employment relationship. This research seeks to offer crucial insights from employee experiences post-pandemic on hybrid work arrangements, aiming to explore how work might be most effectively organized in the future. In addition, this study specifically utilizes the psychological contract theory as mentioned earlier, but from a new perspective arguing that the pandemic has altered the way in which hybrid work arrangements affect the psychological contract between the employee and employer. Psychological contract theory can be used to examine the employment relationship between the employee and employer (Schein 1965). The psychological contract refers to unwritten mutual obligations and expectations that exist between the employee and employer (Schein 2015). Previous research has shown that flexible work arrangements, including remote and hybrid work, impact the psychological contract between the employee and employer, thereby influencing the entire employment relationship (Kim et al. 2021). Consequently, this study investigates how the pandemic might have modified the effects of remote and hybrid work on the psychological contract. Furthermore, this study aims to give suggestions on how work may be desirable and beneficial to arrange in the future and highlights factors that are recommendable to consider when discussing hybrid work arrangements. This study seeks to address questions regarding work arrangements that have not been fully answered and explained in existing research and academia, with the intent of bridging the gaps identified in previous research.

2 Psychological contract theory and flexible work arrangements

This chapter will concentrate on the theoretical framework used in this study to evaluate the effects of hybrid work on the employment relationship. The subsequent sections will review theories previously applied to study flexible work arrangements. Psychological contract theory will be introduced and explored in the context of flexible work arrangements. Finally, this theory will be specifically discussed in terms of remote and hybrid work, and findings from earlier research on the subject will be discussed.

2.1 Theories used to study remote work arrangements

Given that hybrid work essentially involves part-time remote work, theories from previous studies on remote work are applicable in the discussion and analysis of findings concerning hybrid work arrangements. Furthermore, a significant number of studies on remote work conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic primarily focus on part-time, rather than full-time, remote work scenarios (Bailey & Kurland, 2002) and thus can be interpreted as a variant of hybrid work, even if it was not explicitly identified as such at the time the research was carried out. Also notable, that most of the prior research on the topic solely focuses on the remote work aspect (Bloom et al., 2015; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999; Richardson & Mckenna, 2014; Groen et al., 2018; Golden & Veiga 2008), not the combination of both remote and office work. Nevertheless, numerous valuable insights from earlier remote work studies and academic literature on the subject can greatly inform discussions on hybrid work arrangements in the modern workplace. Theoretical frameworks that have been employed to make sense of remote work practices can also be seen as particularly relevant and useful for analyzing hybrid work arrangements, mainly because remote work is a fundamental component of hybrid work models.

Examining previous research on remote work practices reveals that a variety of theoretical perspectives have been applied to analyze issues related to remote work arrangements. For example, Golden & Veiga (2008) use leader-member exchange theory (LMX) in their study related to remote work practices. Kim et al. (2021) use a similar theory, social exchange theory in their study on the motives behind remote work

arrangements. Furthermore, various other academic studies that examine remote work and its impacts on employers and employees also make reference to social exchange theory (Bae & Kim, 2016; Caillier, 2012; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Jeong & Oh, 2017; Kim et al., 2021). In addition to the social exchange theory, Kim et al. (2021) utilize the psychological contract theory, which has also been mentioned in other studies on the topic to help explain organizational performance and employment expectations in relation to remote work practices. Other theories that arise in literature on remote work practices are theories such as self-determination theory (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021), relational cohesion theory (Wang et al. 2020), control theory (Groen et al. 2018) and boundary theory discussed thoroughly in relation to remote work by Greer & Payne (2014). After reviewing prior studies on remote work, it becomes apparent that most studies utilize theoretical approaches that emphasize some type of exchange or reciprocal interaction between the employer and employee (Bae & Kim, 2016; Caillier, 2012; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Jeong & Oh, 2017; Kim et al., 2021; Golden & Veiga 2008, Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010; Sparrow 2000). A good example of this is social exchange theory in which the core idea is that transactions are not solely based on tangible items; they could include intangible aspects like recognition or status. Social exchange theory was first presented by Homans (1958) when he introduced this notion of social behavior being rooted in exchange. While theorists may vary in their interpretations of the social exchange theory, they seem to agree on its core principle. Social exchange theory proposes that social interactions rely on the reciprocation of benefits from others, laying the groundwork for mutually beneficial relationships and interactions over time (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Likewise, to the social exchange theory, psychological contract theory has also been shown to be relevant in remote work research (Kim et al. 2021; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010).

2.2 Psychological contract theory

The psychological contract concept is often attributed to Argyris's early work in 1960 and further developed through the principles of social exchange theory introduced by Blau in 1964. The concept of the psychological contract was also discussed extensively by Schein in 1965. Schein describes the psychological contract in the following manner:

"Ultimately the relationship between the individual and the organization is interactive, unfolding through mutual influence and mutual bargaining to establish a workable psychological contract. We cannot understand the psychological dynamics if we look only to the individual's motivations or only to organizational conditions or practices. The two interact in a complex fashion, requiring us to develop theories and research approaches which can deal with systems and interdependent phenomena." (Schein 1965 p. 65). Yet, psychological contract theory's evolution into the analytical tool we use today was significantly shaped by Rousseau in 1995. Rousseau described the psychological contract as "An individual's belief in mutual obligations between that person and another party such as an employer" (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998, p. 679). Another good definition of the theory is "The perception of both parties to the employment relationship, organization and individual, of the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in that relationship" (Guest & Conway, 2002, p. 22). In other words, psychological contract theory refers to the unwritten set of expectations between an employee and their employer. Unlike formal contracts, which are documented and specify clear terms and conditions of employment, the psychological contract is based on what employees believe they are owed in exchange for their work, such as fair treatment, job security, and career development opportunities, and what employers expect from employees, like hard work, loyalty, and commitment. Psychological contract theory helps explain the dynamics of the employer-employee relationship, focusing on the perceptions and beliefs about mutual obligations. When these expectations are met, the relationship tends to be positive, but when there is a mismatch or breach in these expectations, it can lead to dissatisfaction and conflict (Guest 2004).

2.2.1 Adoption of the psychological contract theory on factors related to the employment relationship

As discussed above, most studies conducted on remote work arrangements focus on theories in which reciprocal relationships are examined. Therefore, this study adopts the same methodology by analyzing hybrid work arrangements through the lens of psychological contract theory. A study supporting the application of the psychological contract theory to analyze hybrid work arrangements is Guest's (2004) examination of employment relations and their effects on both employers and employees. Guest (2004)

points out that psychological contract theory is particularly relevant due to the growing flexibility and decentralization of work, such as through increasing remote work arrangements. A second contributing factor is the growing flexibility and division of the workforce within organizations. This includes varied working schedules, increased outsourcing of secondary tasks, a wider range of employment contracts, and more scattered work locations, such as home offices. These trends complicate the creation, implementation, and oversight of collective regulations aimed at ensuring fair and equal treatment for everyone. They also hinder the formation of a united identity that could lead to cohesive collective resistance against management policies. Moreover, Battisti et al. (2022) recently highlighted findings that indicate that remote work may intensify certain labor market disparities, particularly without effective regulatory measures in place and emphasize the challenges related to this. Additionally, the diversification and dispersion of the workforce pose new challenges for management in terms of coordination and oversight. Within an ever-changing and unstable environment, it is essential to have analytical frameworks capable of effectively examining the evolving nature of the employment relationship and its impacts on both the employer and the employee. (Guest 2004). Another aspect tied to the increased flexibility in work is the trend toward a more diverse workforce, challenging the traditional male breadwinner model and emphasizing the growing importance of work-life balance. This focus is crucial for organizations aiming to attract and retain top talent while managing flexibility. Questions arise about how much organizations are prepared to adapt working hours and locations, provide support for parents with young children, and allow time off for family commitments. While a baseline of rights and opportunities might be established through collective bargaining and legislation, many individual agreements may reflect personal situations and mutual understandings of acceptable arrangements in which psychological contracts may play a key role. As things change, collective agreements are becoming less important except for setting basic rights. The move towards more personal choice, flexibility, and the evolving values of workers, along with how human resources are managed, is making old ways of looking at jobs less useful. There is a need for new ways of understanding and studying work relationships, particularly when traditional group agreements are missing or limited. Guest (2004) suggests the psychological contract theory as a suitable framework for examining these relationships.

2.2.2 A framework of the employment relationship based on the psychological contract theory

Figure 1 demonstrates the psychological contract framework in relation to the employment relationship developed by Guest (2004). The framework displays factors seen as inputs and factors seen as outputs with the psychological contract in the center. Guest (2004) developed this framework as a tool for analyzing and understanding different work-related phenomena from an employee employer relationship point of view. The framework is based on previous literature in which the psychological contract has been used to explain findings. For example, Tsui et al. (1995) emphasize the necessity of taking into account business strategy, ownership, and policies regarding employment relations. Guest & Conway (2002) in addition highlight the importance of considering human resource practices.

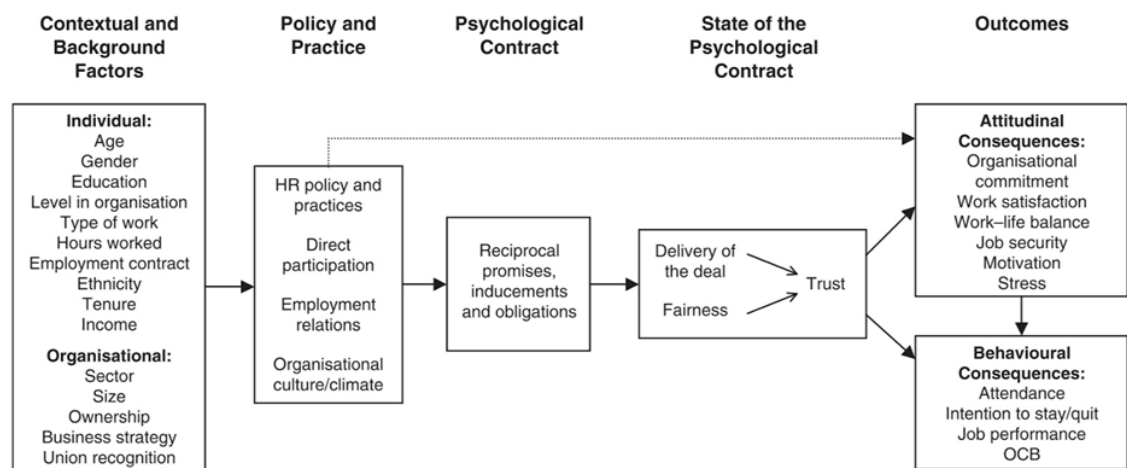


Figure 1 A framework for the application of the psychological contract within the employment relationship (Guest 2004).

Considering both national and organizational cultures is also crucial. It is important to remember that analyzing the inputs and effects on exchange relationships and responses requires considering the broader context and relevant policies within the organization (Rousseau & Schalk 2000; Thomas et al. 2003; Wang et al. 2003). Another aspect that is relevant when discussing the framework are factors related to the individual in which variations are expected in responses due to personal circumstances, as well as differences in work values or career preferences (Schein, 1996). On the left-hand side of

figure 1 inputs are portrayed consisting of factors that contribute to shaping the psychological contract based on organizational and individual elements as well as aspects related to policy and practices. Guest (2004) notes that deeper reflection of these factors supports the analysis of research conducted on employment relationships. The importance of fairness and trust in psychological contract research is still not entirely clear. Fairness, often seen through different aspects of justice, can be seen as part of, influenced by, and a result of the psychological contract. Trust plays a similar role, although it is usually seen as a result. However, this distinction can be challenging, especially in personalized agreements, where fairness and trust can affect how others perceive deals as fair or favoritism (Rousseau, 2004), which in turn can impact their actions and attitudes. Similarly, from an organizational viewpoint, subsequent reactions are expected to depend on the trust in employees to uphold their part of the agreement. Supporting this idea, evidence indicates that fairness, especially trust, mediates the relationship between the fulfilment or breach of contracts and outcomes such as employee commitment and intention to resign. (Clinton & Guest, 2004). Thus, it appears clear that fairness and trust are intrinsically linked to the psychological contract in employment relationships. Therefore, it is valuable to enhance the employment relationship model by incorporating the concept of the psychological contract's state. This state evaluates if promises and obligations have been met, if they have been presumed as fair, and how they affect trust (Guest & Conway 2002). The relationship between the concepts comprising the state of the psychological contract is portrayed in the centre of figure 1. The final part of the model focuses on outcomes. Due to the significant focus on breaches and violations, these topics have received considerable attention in previous research. Issues related to both employer and employee perspectives are commonly explored. The outcomes studied are listed on the right side of Figure 1, distinguishing between factors related to attitudes and behaviours. (Guest 2004).

2.3 Psychological contract theory & flexible work arrangements

As mentioned previously, in general, the psychological contract theory is viewed as an additional implicit agreement that coexists with formal contracts, encompassing expectations regarding behavior. The adoption of new ways of conducting work such as

through remote and hybrid work practices has influenced not only formal employment contracts but also the perceptions, expectations, and informal commitments between employees and their respective organizations. When remote work opportunities are provided to employees either as a perk, to enhance motivation or ease work-life balance there is a possibility that mutual assumptions about responsibilities and commitments may shift, consequently altering the psychological contract. (Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010). An illustrative example of this phenomenon is when employees consider the advantages of remote working, such as heightened flexibility and autonomy, along with the potential time savings from eliminating the need for commuting. However, employees may also perceive additional responsibilities, such as covering internet connection expenses or organizing workspace arrangements independently, as the "cost" associated with being allowed more flexibility (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010). Jaakson & Kallaste (2010) propose that because employees perceive enhanced benefits from remote work, such as improved work-life balance, they are more likely to accept potential shortcomings in organizational support for practical work-related matters. Additionally, they observe that the shift in the psychological contract often results in employees feeling a heightened sense of responsibility for their work due to the increased autonomy afforded by remote work arrangements. Golden (2001) discovered in his research on flexible working models that when employees were granted greater flexibility in their work arrangements, they appeared to be content with working extended hours in return, which supports the findings made by Jaakson & Kallaste (2010). Likewise, Chesley (2010) found in her study that employees might work excessively to repay the granted flexibility offered through remote work arrangements. A similar phenomenon was discovered by Delfino & Van Der Kolk (2021) in their study on the effect of remote work on employees. In their research they found that employees reacted to remote work opportunities by adopting practices to make themselves more visible to their superiors, such as voluntarily working extra hours. Notable though, Delfino & Van Der Kolk (2021) studied the effects of remote work during the Covid-19 pandemic when remote work was compulsory due to safety measures and thus this does differ from the current situation among organizations.

On the contrary, De Menezes & Kelliher (2017) discovered in their study that when remote work was institutionalized as a formal practice across the organization, the perceived value of this working arrangement among employees diminished,

subsequently resulting in a decline in work performance. This occurred because once remote work was formalized, employees viewed it as an entitlement rather than a discretionary benefit provided by the organization. This is an extremely relevant finding when discussing hybrid work arrangements post-pandemic due to the formalization of remote work in most organizations. The findings made by De Menezes & Kelliher (2017) support the notion that when flexible work arrangements such as hybrid work are perceived as a privilege, they may foster more positive results than when they are perceived as a basic right. What the Covid-19 pandemic has led to is the rapid formalization of remote work practices in which these flexible work arrangements have become the new norm. This study suggests a new perspective in comparison to prior literature, in which flexible work arrangements such as remote work and the benefits that occur from it have been found to enhance or strengthen the psychological contract as has been discussed in earlier chapters. Rather than viewing remote work as a way of enhancing positive outcomes and strengthening the psychological contract this study argues that it has become one of the key pillars in upholding the psychological contract all together. The research by Barrero et al. (2021) supports the idea that employees highly value flexibility in their work arrangements, indicating a significant tendency to seek new employment where such flexibility is offered if current workplaces do not adapt. The pandemic has dramatically altered perceptions of work, suggesting that any attempt by organizations to revert to pre-pandemic work practices risks severely damaging or even breaking the psychological contract with employees, which could lead to adverse consequences for the organization itself.

3 From office work to remote work: The path to remote work arrangements and motives behind them

In this chapter the origins of remote work practices will be discussed and factors that have led to the development of flexible work arrangements. Specifically remote work arrangements will be looked at in more detail to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding as to where and why this form of work has originated from. Additionally, the various terms and concepts used in academic literature on the subject will be discussed and clarified.

Based on prior literature this chapter aims to answer why organizations have adopted this form of work in a progressive manner and continue to do so post-pandemic. In addition, motives behind the allowance and implementation of remote work practices will be contemplated. While the Covid-19 pandemic compelled many organizations to adopt remote work arrangements, this practice had been in use globally by various organizations for decades prior to the pandemic (Kim et al. 2021; Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Bae & Kim, 2016; Bloom et al., 2015), however to a much lower extent than after the pandemic (Asgari et al. 2023; Barrero et al. 2021). Exploring the origins of remote work is crucial to comprehend the development of remote work practices and the primary motivations behind the adoption of flexible work arrangements. By examining the anticipated or desired outcomes of remote work as identified in prior research and academic literature, we can compare these insights with the findings of this study, discussing any potential similarities or differences. Furthermore, by reviewing and discussing studies on remote work conducted before the pandemic, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of why remote work arrangements were becoming increasingly popular even at a time when such a work model was considered a voluntary choice for most organizations implementing it. This is important because, since the pandemic, flexible work arrangements like remote and hybrid work are no longer considered mandatory but are seen as voluntary and optional for the organization to allow. By examining literature from both the present and before the pandemic, we can gain a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of the factors that need to be considered to achieve successful hybrid work practices.

3.1 Background and context

Though remote work has become an eminent aspect of modern working life, when looking at literature on work arrangements, one could conclude that there is no universally accepted term for this form of work (Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010). A notable factor is that in academic literature on the topic of remote work there seems to be a large variety of terms being used to describe this form of work (Shirmohammadi et al. 2022, 164). In articles referred to in this study terms such as home-based work (HBW), flexible work, work from home (WFH), telecommuting, e-work, virtual work and telework have been used when discussing work conducted away from the office primarily from home (Bloom et al., 2015; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999; L. Golden, 2001; Nätti et al., 2011; Richardson & Mckenna, 2014; Golden & Veiga 2008; Smite et al. 2023; Charalompous et al. 2019). One of the earliest terms used to describe the concept of working remotely was "telecommuting" (Nilles, 1975), which is still used today to refer to work conducted from home. Song & Gao (2020) use a similar term "telework" in their study on work arrangements and define it as "conducting formal, paid work, from home during normal business hours' ". Groen et al. (2018) likewise define telework as employers allowing employees to conduct work tasks away from the office, most commonly from home. Though the focus of this study is not on remote work alone, it plays a key role in the discussion on hybrid work arrangements (Babapour et al. 2021; Asgari et al. 2023) and hence it is important for the reader to be aware that there are multiple different terms being used in academic literature when discussing remote work. Also, as discussed earlier the term "hybrid work" has not yet become a commonly used term in academic literature and thus many of the previous studies looked at in this thesis discuss terms such as telework or remote work though in many cases this could also be categorized as hybrid work. This is because, in many pre-pandemic studies on remote work, the extent of remote work performed by employees was not full-time, thus these studies can also shed light on factors relevant to hybrid working models. Additionally, instances of part-time remote work have been labelled as remote work, although they could be considered equivalent to what is defined as hybrid work in this study. Caillier (2013, p. 73) defines remote work as "virtual working whereby employees are allowed to work a few hours a week or full time at a location other than the traditional office". Definitions as such indicate

that remote work was often conducted part-time, especially before the pandemic, and thus, within the context of this study, it can also be considered as hybrid work.

3.2 Historical perspective on remote work arrangements

According to multiple past studies and academic publications on remote work, this form of work had already been gaining increasing popularity in organizations over the past few decades prior to the covid-19 pandemic (Bae & Kim, 2016; Bloom et al., 2015; Charalampous et al., 2019; Duxbury & Neufeld, n.d.; Sewell & Taskin, 2015; Song & Gao, 2020; Oettinger 2011). Even in the early 2000's remote work arrangements were expanding globally, experiencing an annual growth rate of over 11% (Office of National Statistics, 2005; Society for Human Resource Management Foundation, 2001). Though initially limited to administrative or home-based jobs, remote work had already become widespread among professional-level employees by the end of the 20th century. Major corporations had established company-wide programs that allowed employees to spend a portion of their workweek working remotely (Baruch, 2000).

Song & Gao (2020) mention in their study on remote work arrangements that in the US the number of employees allowed to conduct work tasks remotely from home had more than doubled by the year 2015 when compared with the number of employees allowed to work remotely in 2005. In addition, Song & Gao (2020) note that it was reported that almost half of the US workforce had jobs in which remote work arrangements were utilized, at least to a part-time extent, by the year 2019. Similarly Bloom et al. (2015) mention a survey that was conducted during the years 2012-2013, in which employees from over 3000 medium-sized manufacturing companies participated in. According to the survey, out of the respondents close to 50% of managers in the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States were permitted to work remotely during their regular working hours. In addition to this another interesting finding was that remote work practices were becoming increasingly popular in developing countries as well. Based on survey answers, the rise in remote work practices in developing countries was due to factors such as increased availability of information and communication technology, improved cell-phone connectivity and a rise in traffic congestion (Bloom et al., 2015). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), in 2018, nearly one-quarter of wage and salary workers had the option to work from home at least on occasion. Notable

though, flexible work arrangements such as remote work have most often been available to knowledge workers due to the possibility to conduct work tasks using information and communications technology (Hislop, 2013). Knowledge workers typically enjoy more autonomy, having increasing freedom to choose their working methods and practices (Pyöriä, 2005). For instance, occupations in computer and mathematical fields, as well as those in the information and communication sector (such as software developers and publishers), are highly suitable for remote work, with an estimated 89% of their tasks being performable from home (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020). The pandemic significantly advanced the adoption of remote work arrangements, to the point where almost any job that could be performed remotely through information and communications technologies was conducted in that manner (Asgari et al. 2023; Barrero et al. 2021). The teleworkability index indicates that 36% of jobs in the EU can be performed remotely, even once pandemic restrictions have been removed (Sostero et al. 2020). Many studies indicate a general preference among workers to telecommute 1–3 days per week, although preferences vary with some favouring exclusive home or office work. This diversity in preferences suggests that employers should maintain flexibility in work arrangements, avoiding mandatory full-time remote or office policies (Barrero et al. 2021; Bloom 2020). Such findings suggest that remote work practices have demonstrated significant advantages, including solving issues like commuting, even before the pandemic, thus gaining in popularity. Moreover, it is not just organizations recognizing the potential of remote work arrangements; governments are also showing increasing interest and support for flexible working models. This is reflected in laws designed to promote and facilitate flexible working arrangements. For example, in Australia and the UK there are laws that legally allow employees to request the possibility of remote work arrangements. (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). The EU has also issued legislation that aims to ensure that employees have the right to have a say on where and when they conduct work tasks (European Commission, 2012). The notable growth in remote work arrangements before the pandemic indicated that flexible work models, like remote work, were on the rise. The pandemic, however, served to fast-track this trend significantly.

3.3 Motives behind remote work arrangements

As has been discussed earlier, most literature on remote work practices to date highlights that the trend towards adopting remote work arrangements in organizations has been increasing over the past several decades (Bae & Kim, 2016; Bloom et al., 2015; Charalampous et al., 2019; Duxbury & Neufeld, n.d.; Sewell & Taskin, 2015; Song & Gao, 2020) referring to the fact that the motives behind these work arrangements have existed long before the pandemic. In fact, the development of remote work is often linked to organizational needs to provide employees with strategies for a better balance between work duties and personal life demands (Richardson & Mckenna, 2014; Sullivan, 2003). Implementing remote work and other flexible work options demonstrates an organization's commitment to supporting its employees in achieving a healthy work-life balance (Shockley and Allen, 2007). The increase in dual-working parent families has heightened the need for improved work-life balance solutions for employees. In the United States, for instance, the proportion of families where both parents are employed rose from 40% in 1970 to 62% by 2012 (Bloom et al. 2015). Additional studies point out that the rise in dual career families with children has intensified the challenge of achieving a better balance between work and family commitments (Albrecht 2003; Caillier, 2016). Indeed, a strong connection has been established between employee well-being and significant improvements in performance and reductions in organizational turnover (Guest, 2017; Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Therefore, alleviating the stresses of working life for employees can also be seen as a strategy by organizations to enhance their overall business performance and achieve greater success. Bae & Kim (2016) similarly suggest that for organizations aiming to enhance employee job satisfaction—a key aspect of employee well-being—they should consider the adoption and widespread implementation of remote work practices. Furthermore, the desire to boost job satisfaction among employees serves as one of the primary motivations for incorporating remote work practices within organizations.

Another topic noted in prior literature on remote work is the rise of women in the workforce. In his research on the significant expansion of telework practices in the United States from 1980 to 2000, Oettinger (2011) discovered that the substantial increase in employment among women played a key role in the growth of home-based work arrangements. He suggests that this trend is likely because women often face greater challenges in balancing work responsibilities with family duties. Likewise,

Kopelman et al. (2006) and Caillier (2016) highlight that the increase in full-time employment among women has significantly contributed to the adoption of remote work practices in organizations. Past research does in fact point out that companies are progressively implementing more "family-friendly" policies to assist employees in managing their work and family commitments more effectively (Allen 2001). In her study, Allen (2001) discovered that organizations with "family-friendly" policies are often viewed more favourably by their employees. This positive perception has been linked to improvements in work-family conflict, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions to stay or leave. Allen (2001) emphasizes in her study that flexible working arrangements stand out as one of the most effective measures to help employees balance their professional and personal lives. Therefore, such findings reinforce the notion that a significant reason for offering remote work options to employees is to aid them in managing a balance between their professional duties and family life.

Prior research on remote work also suggests that organizations offering telework options may see increased organizational commitment and loyalty from their employees. This is attributed to the valued benefits of flexibility, autonomy, and more efficient use of resources like time, thanks to reduced commuting (Wang et al. 2020). Brunelle & Fortin's (2021) study on remote work effects on employee's job satisfaction highlights that in today's knowledge-driven economy, organizations are more and more dependent on their employees as internal resources to maintain competitiveness. As a result, fostering organizational commitment and loyalty is becoming ever more crucial. Callier's (2012) study reinforces the idea that effective remote work policies, which lead to employee satisfaction with remote work arrangements, can significantly boost organizational commitment, thereby potentially reducing organizational turnover. Correspondingly, in their study, Bae & Kim (2016) found that remote work often results in greater job satisfaction within organizations, which in turn typically indicates a positive level of organizational commitment. However, Callier (2012) highlights that frequent remote work (such as more than two days a week) may lead to a decrease in organizational commitment, attributing this decline to the reduced face-to-face interaction necessary for maintaining strong workplace bonds. Likewise, Golden's (2006) research suggests that the benefits of remote work decrease with its increased frequency, implying that remote work's positive impacts are maximized when it forms

only a part of an employee's work schedule. This finding supports the concept of hybrid work arrangements, where the fundamental strategy involves splitting work between the office and home on a weekly basis, providing a more balanced approach to remote work arrangements. Gajendran & Harrison (2007) also observed that remote working more than 2.5 days a week could lead to more negative than positive effects for employees. Callier (2012) further suggested that excessive access to what is initially a benefit could ultimately harm both the organization and its employees. Therefore, finding a balanced remote work frequency that aligns with the needs of both employees and employers, thereby minimizing potential disadvantages of remote work, is advisable for organizations.

3.3.1 Financial benefits related to remote work for organizations

Reviewing the literature on remote work reveals extensive research into its impact on organizational expenses. Many studies have identified remote work as a cost-reducing measure, which is a primary factor in its growing appeal to employers (Bloom et al. 2015; Groen et al. 2018; Oettinger 2011; Marshall et al. 2007). There are several factors contributing to these reductions in costs. Oettinger (2011) highlights in his study that advancements in technology have made the organization and implementation of remote work practices more affordable and feasible for organizations. Organizations can also benefit financially by reducing overheads related to maintaining physical office spaces (Barath and Schmidt 2022a). Bloom et al. (2015) discovered that remote work enhances employee productivity and thus reduces organizational costs. Their research on the impact of remote work revealed that allowing employees to work remotely significantly reduced company costs, by approximately \$2,000 per remote working employee, primarily due to decreased office space requirements and improvements in employee performance and lower turnover rates. A crucial outcome of their analysis indicated that minimizing employee turnover emerged as a major contributor to cost savings. It was discovered that remote work significantly positively impacted employees' intentions to stay, thereby notably decreasing turnover rates. At the company where the research was carried out, the expense incurred for training a new employee amounted to the equivalent of an eight-week salary. Additional expenses involved in hiring included processing applications, conducting interviews, and selecting candidates. By making job

roles more flexible and contributing to a better work-life balance, remote work resulted in employees being less likely to search for new job positions than when they were required to be physically present at the office. Bloom et al. (2015) found that remote work arrangements significantly reduced employee turnover rates, with a nearly 50% decrease compared to a control group. Findings like these highlight possible benefits of remote work arrangements such as reduced employee turnover and, consequently, lower organizational expenses. However, it is important to note that the study by Bloom et al. (2015) was conducted in a unique context: the company was located in Shanghai and was the only call-centre in the area to offer remote work arrangements at the time, which could have contributed to the significant reduction in turnover rates due to remote work practices. A very recent study by Singh & Sant (2023) found that allowing specifically hybrid work arrangements positively impacted employee turnover. The study explores the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention, highlighting the moderating role of the work arrangements utilized (hybrid or remote). Key findings indicate that employee engagement significantly reduces turnover intention, with this negative relationship being stronger in hybrid workplaces compared to remote ones. The study suggests that hybrid work environments better support employee engagement and may thus be more effective in reducing turnover intentions. Similarly, Bloom et al. (2022) found in their study on hybrid work arrangements that when employees were allowed to work according to a hybrid working model attrition rates reduced significantly. Golden et al. (2008) found an unexpected result in their research on the implications of remote work for employees, noting that increased feelings of professional isolation led to lower intentions among employees to leave their jobs. This finding suggests that while remote work may distance employees from their colleagues and workplace, it could simultaneously decrease their desire to seek employment elsewhere surprisingly. While this study presents intriguing results, it is important to recognize it as just one piece of research, cautioning against broad generalizations of its findings. However, the study does illuminate the potential for unexpected outcomes from flexible work arrangements, suggesting that the impacts of such work models can be surprisingly varied for both individuals and organizations. Other studies also indicate that allowing employees to work remotely often results in reduced rates of employee turnover and through these reduced organizational costs (Kim & Dirks 2023; Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Charalampous et al. 2019; Golden et al. 2008).

Conversely, some studies indicate that remote work can lead to an increase in employee turnover rates (Singh & Sant 2023; O'Donnell et al. 2008). In their study, Singh & Sant discovered that remote work could lead to higher employee turnover due to diminished engagement, while hybrid models mitigate these effects. Therefore, they conclude that hybrid arrangements—combining remote and office work weekly—may result in the most beneficial outcomes for reducing employee turnover in organizations. These results advocate for the adaptation of hybrid work models as an optimal strategy to blend office and remote work, leveraging the advantages of both while minimizing their respective disadvantages. Interestingly some recent studies have shown that employees are willing to accept lower salaries in turn for more flexibility with their work such as being allowed to work remotely (Battisti et al. 2023; Yoon et al. 2023) This indicates a growing trend among employees to prioritize the flexibility and adaptability of their work arrangements, even if it means accepting lower pay. Such findings, while not universally applicable, underscore the significant value placed on flexible work conditions. Employees appear to prioritize such adaptability above many other employment factors, highlighting the crucial importance of offering flexible work options not only to save costs but also to enhance general organizational activities.

3.4 Formal vs. informal remote work

Exploring the literature on remote work before the pandemic reveals that not every aspect of remote work is formally recognized within organizations. Indeed, previous studies have documented the prevalence of informally negotiated work arrangements, including those related to remote work, indicating a significant gap between policy and practice in many organizations (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). Formal telework policies allow employees to utilize a benefit provided by their employer. When these policies are in place, there is a possibility that employees may feel a sense of entitlement to this benefit, diminishing the likelihood of them feeling a need to reciprocate or express gratitude towards their employer for providing such flexibility (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017) as discussed above in chapter 2.3. De Menezes & Kelliher (2017) discovered in their research that formal remote work negatively impacted employee performance, as previously noted. Conversely, informal remote work, arranged between a line manager and an employee without being a standardized organizational practice, appeared to

boost performance. This improvement is attributed to employees perceiving informal remote work as a unique privilege, thereby feeling more compelled to reciprocate with higher job performance and effort. This sense of reciprocity aims to secure the continuation of remote work privileges in the future. While the COVID-19 pandemic has normalized flexible work arrangements like remote and hybrid models, De Menezes & Kelliher's (2017) insights prompt consideration of their impact on employee experiences. From the viewpoint of psychological contract theory, the formalization of such work practices might diminish their perceived exclusivity among employees, potentially weakening their sense of obligation to reciprocate. This suggests a nuanced relationship between the formality of flexible work arrangements and their psychological impact on employees. While these outcomes should not be generalized, they do hint at the significance of whether remote and hybrid work arrangements are formalized policies. This suggests that the nature of these work arrangements—whether they are formally recognized or not—can influence their effectiveness and reception among employees.

3.5 Part-time vs. full time remote work

In their examination of remote work research, Bailey and Kurland (2002) provide an essential insight. They observed that the impact of remote work on employees varies with the amount of remote work conducted. They point out that much of the research published up until 2002 predominantly views remote work as a full-time endeavour, neglecting to explore the nuances of part-time remote work which is comparable to hybrid work. They highlight that different remote work intensities might affect employee outcomes significantly. Similarly, Song & Gao (2020) observed that the degree of remote work conducted notably influences its effects on employees, suggesting that the amount of remote work performed plays a crucial role in shaping its impact on workers. Furthermore, Callier (2012) found that part-time remote work positively influences employee motivation and job satisfaction, with occasional remote workers feeling more satisfied and engaged in their work than those not permitted to remote work at all. Conversely, regular and frequent remote work was linked to decreased motivation and satisfaction, highlighting the crucial role remote work frequency plays in determining its effects on employees. The study by Callier (2012)

emphasizes the importance of exploring how the frequency of remote work can impact its effects on employees. An early study conducted on remote work arrangements and the effect of frequency on the effects on employees is the study conducted by Belanger (1999). Her research on remote work effects found minimal differences between part-time remote workers and office workers, challenging the assumption that remote working even a few days a week would isolate employees from office networks. Although Belanger's findings are preliminary and caution against drawing definitive conclusions, they underscore the role of remote work frequency in shaping workplace interactions and the experience of remote work arrangements.

Before the pandemic, examining various organizations' remote work data indicates that part-time remote work was more commonly practiced by employees than full-time remote work (Kim et al., 2021; Song & Gao 2022; Golden et al. 2008; Sullivan, 2003). In their research, Kim et al. (2021) found that an average of only 4% of employees would remote work 4-5 days a week. They also note that 35% of remote work was conducted on an ad hoc basis meaning that it was conducted on an occasional and irregular basis. Research indicates that the duration and amount of remote work conducted significantly moderates its effects on employees, suggesting the amount of time spent remote working is a critical variable in studying its impact. The significance of understanding the dynamics of hybrid work models, where remote work is intended to be part-time, is emphasized further. In hybrid models, integrating both office and remote work into the normal workweek is at the core of the model. Thus, exploring how the quantity of work performed remotely affects employees and the resulting outcomes is essential. By examining previous research on the frequency of remote work and identifying the most effective frequencies, we can potentially gain insights that may help us optimize hybrid work arrangements for the better. Various investigations into remote work outcomes have shown that its benefits, compared to office-based work, increase when remote work is occasional or part-time (Song & Gao 2022; Kim et al., 2021; Golden et al. 2008; Bailey and Kurland 2002) supporting the adoption of hybrid work arrangements. For instance, in their study on remote work arrangements in relation to professional isolation and implications of it Golden et al. (2008) found that longer durations of remote work intensify the negative impacts of professional isolation on job outcomes. Conversely, increasing face-to-face engagements and enhancing access to communication technologies can alleviate these adverse effects. In conclusion, while

there are scenarios where part-time remote work may have more pronounced negative effects, generally, the impacts are constrained due to the limited number of days spent working outside the office (Golden et al. 2008).

4 Impacts and experiences of employees with remote and hybrid work arrangements

This section reviews literature on remote work's impacts and effects on employees, exploring topics widely discussed in academic literature, hence deemed relevant for deeper examination within this research. The goal of exploring the impact of remote and hybrid work arrangements on various factors is to deepen the comprehension of their effects on crucial aspects such as work-life balance, job satisfaction, social isolation, productivity, and job performance. Reviewing previous research on remote and hybrid work provides an appropriate context for examining, comprehending, and reflecting on the outcomes of this study. This section aids in understanding how the findings of this study, which will be discussed in the following chapter, correspond with results from earlier research. Such comprehension informs organizational leaders about crucial considerations for implementing hybrid models, focusing on areas identified by prior research as pivotal in shaping employee experiences in remote and hybrid settings.

4.1 Work-life balance

As discussed in chapter 3.2, one of the primary reasons organizations have increasingly implemented remote work arrangements has been to alleviate the stress employees face juggling work and family obligations. High demands from both work and family commitments can lead to employee exhaustion, stemming from the struggle to balance responsibilities in both areas effectively (Golden 2012; Vega et al., 2015). Hobfoll (1989) conservation of resources theory posits that during periods of recovery, individuals focus on preserving and accumulating resources like time and energy to counter future resource depletion. This approach has been claimed to enhance long-term well-being and performance. However, when work and family obligations intrude on recovery periods, preventing the accumulation of these vital resources, individuals face a heightened risk of exhaustion (Golden 2001; Golden et al. 2006). The widespread embrace of remote work, both before and after the pandemic, is often attributed to the belief that blending home and work environments might reduce work-related exhaustion and alleviate the conflict between work and family duties. This integration offers a potential easing of the pressures encountered in managing both simultaneously (Bloom

et al. 2022; Golden, 2012; Kopelman et al. 2006). A better work-life balance facilitated by flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, can be viewed both as a motivating factor for allowing remote work as discussed earlier and as a result of it. Bloom et al. (2015) observed in their research that employees granted remote work opportunities experienced less work exhaustion. Similarly, the OBERGO study in France demonstrated that employees that are allowed remote work possibilities enjoy an improved work-life balance, attributing this to the conversion of commute time into moments for personal endeavours, family engagement, and participation in local social activities (Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017). Similarly, Babapour et al. (2021) reported in their study on remote and hybrid work arrangements that employees valued the commute-free aspect of remote work, utilizing the saved time for activities often neglected during regular workdays. This extra time allowed for moments of reflection and the incorporation of physical exercise, like walking, jogging, or engaging in fitness activities during lunch breaks, enhancing overall well-being. Employees also noted additional advantages such as the ability to spend more time outdoors, conducting walk-and-talk meetings, and enjoying quality time with family and friends. These benefits made their daily routines more manageable and enjoyable. In relation to commuting, remote work was recognized for its role in reducing carbon emissions through decreased commuting. Participants expressed hope that these environmentally friendly practices would persist beyond the pandemic's end. In addition, participants highly valued meeting colleagues at the office, engaging in informal socialization, and having spontaneous interactions, viewing these as the benefits of hybrid work, in which office work occurred weekly. The combination of remote work and in-person office time, supported by adequate flexibility, led to an improved work-life balance for the participants. (Babapour et al. 2021). Findings like these highlight the potential of hybrid work in enhancing personal time, physical activity, community and family involvement, while simultaneously enabling face-to-face contact and interaction with colleagues on office workdays.

Existing research on work-life balance suggests that its impact on job satisfaction, psychological distress, organizational commitment, life contentment, and turnover intentions can be considerable (Bloom et al. 2022; Babapour et al. 2021; Bloom et al. 2015; Golden, 2001; Frone et al. 1992; Higgins & Duxbury 1992). Another term often used as a synonym of work-life balance is work-family conflict that is also used in

literature on the topic (Jostell & Hemlin 2018; Golden 2012; Golden 2001). Contrary to the findings discussed above, Golden's (2012) study on the impact of remote work on work-family conflict found that extensive remote work led to an increase in this conflict, causing greater exhaustion among employees. However, the degree of remote work conducted played a crucial role, suggesting that part-time remote work might not significantly impact work-family conflict and could potentially have positive effects, supporting the implementation of hybrid working models. Additionally, offering flexible work options like remote work can enhance employee commitment and loyalty to their organization by alleviating work-family pressures (Kopelman et al., 2006). Kopelman et al. (2006) discovered that work-life balance initiatives benefit not only employees with families but also those without children who may plan to start families in the future. Furthermore, they observed positive impacts on individuals with grown children, underscoring that work-life balance practices have broad and favourable effects across different stages of employees' lives. Their findings suggest that adopting more work-life balance initiatives is beneficial, aligning with the principle that "the more the better" in supporting employees' needs and preferences.

In contrast to what was discussed above, some studies also highlight the issues related to work and non-work life being too intertwined, for example through remote work. These studies highlight that in the context of working from home, employees may often find their work schedule overlapping with domestic responsibilities and social engagements within the family setting (Xue and McMunn 2021). Studies like the one conducted by Song & Gao (2020) note that there seems to be significant differences in how remote work is experienced depending on parental status. Their research revealed a direct impact of parental status on remote work's effectiveness. They observed notable differences in the experiences of remote work among non-parents, parents, and between genders. Fathers found remote work during weekdays particularly stressful, whereas mothers reported lower happiness levels. Overall, parents experienced higher stress levels when working from home during the week, especially fathers. For non-parents, the difference in stress levels between working from home and the office was minimal, suggesting remote work's impact varies significantly with parental status. This insight underscores the importance of considering parental status in remote work policies for organizations aiming to optimize their effectiveness. Song & Gao (2020) suggest that challenges related to remote work, especially for parents, might stem from more frequent household conflicts, interruptions by children, and the blending of chores and

leisure activities, which disrupts a peaceful work setting. They suggest that while remote work is designed to offer flexibility and alleviate work-life balance pressures, it may inadvertently heighten stress levels for those working from home due to these interferences. Other studies also highlight that the presence of children at home can pose difficulties for those working remotely, adversely impacting the balance between work and personal life (Ipsen et al. 2021; Bloom 2020). Dockery & Bawa (2015) found in their study on remote work and work-life balance that remote work can enhance family relationships and, for example, promote a fairer distribution of household duties among couples with children. Their findings suggest that remote work can generally support families in achieving a more balanced work-life dynamic, despite some potential drawbacks such as disturbances during workdays. However, it is important to consider the presence and availability of childcare for parents with young children during remote workdays. If children are in daycare or otherwise cared for outside the home, the potential negative impacts of remote work on these parents could potentially be avoided.

On the other hand, Smoder (2021) suggests that working from home often results in employees putting in more hours, negatively impacting work-life balance and relationships. This increase in work hours also reduces downtime, potentially leading to adverse effects on both physical and mental health, such as musculoskeletal issues, stress, feelings of loneliness, and depression (Tavares 2021). Additional research emphasizes that remote employees find themselves working overtime more often (Bloom et al. 2022; Bloom et al. 2015; Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017) causing work to easily intrude on personal time and detract from family moments (Dockery & Bawa 2015). The blend of home and work settings can challenge the establishment of clear boundaries, particularly in today's "always on" culture, propelled by technology. Thus, discussions around remote and hybrid work's impact on work-life balance must consider the difficulty of separating work from personal life. In fact, in their study Bellmann & Hubler (2021) found that remote work had a negative impact on work-life balance and hence they emphasize that when it comes to remote work arrangements and agreements employers should specifically have structures in place that minimize the risk of employees working overtime and provide support for managing boundaries between work and non-work life. For example, they suggest that employers should avoid setting overly tight deadlines, ensuring that employees can

complete tasks within the given timeframe without experiencing undue stress or job strain which in turn may encourage overtime work.

While previous studies have highlighted certain drawbacks and challenges of remote work on work-life balance, working from home is generally regarded as beneficial, supporting employees. The flexibility to complete tasks from locations other than the traditional office is often seen as enhancing work-life balance, providing employees with the autonomy to integrate work and personal life more seamlessly. This flexibility facilitates the balancing of work responsibilities with personal and family commitments, providing a structure that can adapt to individual schedules and the need to fulfil both work-related and personal obligations enhancing the employment relationship. (Krajčák et al. 2023).

4.2 Job satisfaction

Numerous studies have consistently shown that remote work positively impacts job satisfaction (Bloom et al. 2022; Bae & Kim, 2016; Bloom et al., 2015; Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Caillier, 2012). Job satisfaction stems from an individual's appreciation for certain aspects of their work or work environment, as identified by Locke (1969). A key reason for looking at job satisfaction is because based on prior literature it has been found to serve as an indicator for crucial workplace behaviours, including performance (Judge et al., 2001) and employee turnover (Bright, 2021; Tschopp et al., 2014; Laschinger, 2012). In their 2015 study, Bloom et al. (2015) observed that employees with the option to remote work experienced significantly higher levels of job satisfaction compared to those without the option. Moreover, employees engaged in remote work often displayed a more favourable outlook towards their job responsibilities. In their research, De Menezes & Kelliher (2017) discovered that the flexibility and autonomy provided by remote work played a key role in promoting higher levels of job satisfaction among employees. Similarly, Brunelle & Fortin (2021) examined 211 remote workers and 237 office-based employees, discovering higher job satisfaction among the employees allowed to work remotely from home. This increased job satisfaction was linked to better fulfilment of employees' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Notable though, the company involved in the study had implemented measures to counteract potential negative aspects of telework,

like social isolation, by encouraging social interaction through informal activities, including sports and events, thereby enhancing direct engagement among all employees. These measures likely contributed to the positive findings related to remote work and job satisfaction. In similar fashion, in their investigation into remote and hybrid working models, Babapour et al. (2021) discovered that a significant benefit of remote work is the increased autonomy and flexibility it offers. This benefit enables workers to tailor their work schedules and approaches to suit their individual requirements, consequently fostering a sense of empowerment and elevating job satisfaction among many employees. Likewise, to the findings made by Brunelle & Fortin (2021), Babapour et al. (2021) and Vega et al. (2015) also propose that remote work can enhance daily job satisfaction, noting that even the option to work remotely once a week can significantly uplift employee job satisfaction on those days. Nonetheless, it is important for employers to consider potential drawbacks of telework, including the risk of employee isolation (Wang et al., 2020) and heightened work-family conflicts (Golden et al., 2006), such as the ones discussed in chapter 4.1.

Another key factor related to employee job satisfaction in remote work is the frequency of remote work conducted. It has been observed that when remote work exceeds a certain threshold, such as more than two days per week, its impact on employee job satisfaction may become negative (Caillier, 2012; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Golden (2006) found in his study that remote working up to two days a week was associated with increased job satisfaction. However, as the frequency of remote work rose beyond this point, the impact on job satisfaction turned negative. This suggests that the frequency of remote work plays a critical role in determining its positive or negative effects on job satisfaction. Suh & Lee (2017) conducted a study that explores the concept of technostress among remote workers and its impact on job satisfaction, examining how technology and job characteristics together influence this stress. The study found that technology characteristics, like IT complexity and the pace of IT change, along with job characteristics such as autonomy and task interdependence, contribute to technostress. Interestingly, the effect of technostress on job satisfaction varied with the intensity of teleworking, yet again highlighting the importance of remote work frequency on outcomes. The study concludes that understanding and managing technostress is crucial for enhancing remote workers job satisfaction and overall effectiveness of remote work programs. Moreover, Bloom et al. (2022) found in their

study that examined the impacts of a hybrid work experiment on 1612 graduate engineers, marketing and finance employees of a large technology firm that hybrid work significantly improved job satisfaction. Findings like this support the notion that hybrid working models, in which remote work is never full-time, could potentially mitigate these negative effects of remote work and on the contrary increase the benefits of such flexible work arrangements.

4.3 Professional Isolation

In academic literature on remote and hybrid work, the topic of isolation frequently emerges as a prominent concern (Zoonen & Sivunen 2022; Hickman 2019; Mulki & Jaramillo 2011). A term often used and discussed in academic literature on remote work is the term professional isolation (Golden et al. 2008) which refers to the mental state or perception of being disconnected from colleagues in the workplace (Diekema, 1992). In essence, professional isolation signifies the belief that one does not have an adequate connection to “critical networks of influence and social contact” (Miller, 1975, p. 261). An employee's sense of belonging within an organization is developed through various factors, including daily social interactions and communication with colleagues and managers. Transitioning to remote work has decreased the chances for such interactions, affecting the availability of support, feedback and community (Golden & Veiga 2008). Understanding the possible experience of isolation among remote workers is essential due to its potential adverse effects. Increased isolation can have serious repercussions, including disengagement from work, low job satisfaction, diminished wellbeing, and decreased performance (Marshall et al. 2007). In their study, Marshall et al. (2007) use the term workplace isolation when discussing issues related to isolation among remote workers. They describe workplace isolation as a concept with dual components, highlighting the feeling of being disconnected from both coworkers and the organization's support structure. This comprehensive view reflects an individual's experience of separation and lack of engagement within their work environment, emphasizing both social and institutional aspects of isolation. Marshall et al. (2007) found that remote working employees who sense a lack of mentorship, support, or guidance from their managers may be more prone to feeling isolated. This sensation of isolation can adversely affect their job satisfaction and dedication to the organization, indicating a negative association between feelings of isolation and positive workplace

attitudes. To mitigate the sense of physical isolation among remote workers, studies recommend that organizations and their managers should facilitate opportunities for direct, in-person interactions among team members (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden et al., 2008). For enhancing connections in international settings, making occasional visits to the workplace is often advised to strengthen bonds between colleagues (Nurmi & Hinds 2020). Prior research also points out how remote work frequency may affect feelings of professional or social isolation. Engaging in remote work for more than 2.5 days a week has been associated with a weakening of connections among colleagues in the workplace (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) and therefore, hybrid work models may serve as an effective strategy to reduce social isolation among remote employees. On the other hand, other studies have not established a clear link between how frequently employees work remotely and their feelings of isolation, even in situations where remote work is extensive (Bentley et al., 2016; Golden et al., 2008; Montreuil & Lippel 2003). Marshall et al. (2007) note that while physical distance might seem to intensify feelings of isolation, it is not solely responsible for these perceptions. Being physically distant in itself does not automatically result in feelings of isolation. For example, regular use of communication technologies can alleviate some of the obstacles related to feelings of isolation faced by remote workers (Nurmi & Hinds 2020) as these technologies can serve as essential tools for maintaining relationships among employees (Ter Hoeven et al. 2016). Research often indicates that the challenges associated with remote work can be effectively addressed through the strategic use of information and communication technology (ICT) that supports remote working practices (Lal & Dwivedi, 2009; Sewell & Taskin, 2015; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012). Zoonen & Sivunen (2022) found in their study that although the frequency of remote work can lead to feelings of isolation, the frequency of communication through digital means appears to lessen these feelings of isolation. Furthermore, the study underscores a two-way relationship between psychological distress and isolation, indicating that stress can both heighten feelings of isolation and stem from being isolated. Likewise, Babapour et al. (2021) uncovered in their research that remote work significantly impacted the social dynamics within the workplace, with numerous participants expressing feelings of loneliness, isolation, and a sense of detachment from their colleagues. They particularly missed the casual interactions, shared laughter, and the development of close bonds that naturally occur in an office setting. The challenge of maintaining strong connections was exacerbated by

communication hurdles and the absence of spontaneous, informal interactions, leading to a perceived weakening of workplace relationships. The challenges posed by remote work made fostering trust and building relationships more complex, notably affecting the integration of new team members. The lack of direct interaction compounded the difficulty in establishing strong connections with newcomers. Babapour et al. (2021) also note that the social dimension of work presents significant hurdles in remote working environments, leading to the anticipation that future office designs will increasingly aim to bridge this social gap. Offices are expected to evolve into spaces that foster relationship building, creative collaboration, and reinforce a collective sense of purpose and culture, addressing the need for interpersonal connections lost in remote work settings and attainable in hybrid work arrangements. Other prior studies also agree that social isolation is a downside of remote work, with employees based in the office experiencing significantly more feelings of inclusion compared to those working from home, satellite offices, or client sites (Morganson et al. 2010; Bartel et al., 2007; Golden et al., 2008; Montreuil and Lippel, 2003). When addressing remote and hybrid work models, organizations should carefully consider the issue of isolation. It is essential to design hybrid work setups in ways that reduce feelings of isolation. One strategy could be coordinating in-office days among team members to facilitate direct interaction and foster a sense of community.

4.4 Productivity and job performance

A primary concern for organizations considering the adoption of remote and hybrid work is understanding its impact on overall employee job performance and productivity (Karnowski & White, 2002). Productivity is described as the efficiency with which employees utilize their skills to finish tasks within a specified period (Ruch, 1994), or in simpler terms, productivity can be understood as the quality of work generated relative to the time required to produce it. Given the increased flexibility and the absence of structured supervision characteristic of remote work, a prevalent worry is whether remote workers can maintain the same level of personal productivity as their counterparts in a conventional office setting. Managers often express concern that remote employees might be less productive due to neglecting their responsibilities (Barrero et al., 2020) or due to challenges like insufficient oversight, distractions, social isolation, and various other problems (Larson et al., 2020). Yet, despite these concerns,

most of the research on remote and hybrid work appears to indicate that being allowed to work remotely actually improves individual productivity and performance (Bloom et al. 2022; Bloom et al. 2015; Choudhury et al., 2021; Angelici & Profeta, 2020; Boell et al., 2013; Halford, 2005; Vega et al., 2015). For instance, research on patent examiners granted the flexibility to work remotely from any location discovered that such employees boosted their work output by 4.4% without any decline in the quality of their work (Choudhury et al., 2021). Another study conducted within an Italian company in the multi-utility industry revealed that employees granted the freedom to work without location or time restrictions exhibited increased productivity, as measured by the number of reports they processed (Angelici & Profeta, 2020). Bloom et al. (2015) conducted a study on the impact of remote work at a Chinese call-centre by contrasting a group of remote workers with office-based counterparts. Employees were randomly chosen from volunteers that had similar job tasks, responsibilities, and salaries, isolating the work location as the sole variable. The study revealed that remote workers showed a 13% increase in job performance, largely due to spending more time working—attributed to fewer breaks and less sick leave days. The convenience of working from home was cited as a reason for increased work hours and, consequently, improved job performance. As a result, the call-centre company that implemented this remote work trial saw an overall increase in total factor productivity ranging from 20-30%. Similarly, a study involving employees at U.S. call centres demonstrated an increase in productivity ranging from 8% to 10% (Emanuel & Harrington, 2020). Delanoëije & Verbruggen (2020) also explored the impact of remote work on job performance, finding outcomes similar to those of Bloom et al. (2015). They discovered that being allowed to work remotely led to employees reporting elevated levels of job performance, underscoring the potential benefits of remote work in enhancing employee output. In their study, Delanoëije & Verbruggen (2020) utilized surveys and questionnaires to measure job performance among remote workers, with results reflecting self-reported data. This approach suggests the findings could be influenced by respondents' desire to sustain remote work arrangements, potentially biasing their responses towards more favourable outcomes to encourage the continuation of remote work practices. This said, research indicating assessments of performance by others, rather than self-evaluations by employees, does demonstrate that remote work boosts individual performance. A specific study revealed that employees working remotely received higher ratings from their supervisors regarding job performance, commitment

to work, and their support for fellow employees. Moreover, the amount of remote work (that is, the number of hours worked remotely each week) was also found to be a predictor of these three aspects of performance. (Gajendran et al., 2015). Indeed, a comprehensive review of 46 studies on remote work conducted in real-world environments, encompassing over 12,000 employees, highlighted the advantages of remote work on both performance as rated by supervisors and performance measured through objective means. Additionally, it demonstrated that remote work positively influences other crucial aspects like perceived autonomy, job satisfaction, performance outcomes, intentions to leave the job, and levels of work-related stress (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Similarly, a meta-analysis of 39 studies involving more than 4,000 employees revealed that those who had more control over their work schedules, a form of flexibility commonly associated with remote work, showed higher productivity levels (Baltes et al., 1999). Various studies also highlight the beneficial outcomes of remote work during the pandemic, such as a notable rise in productivity among a large segment of the workforce (Ispen et al. 2021; Bolisani et al. 2020). On the other hand, some studies note that employees may easily work beyond the hours stipulated in their contracts when working remotely, leading to adverse effects on their well-being and productivity (Nemțeanu and Dabija 2023). Such findings underscore the necessity of sensibly organizing remote work and preventing work-related matters from encroaching upon personal time. Remote work does provide enhanced schedule flexibility, potentially increasing concentration and output if certain conditions in the home office environment, like sufficient visual privacy, low noise levels, and minimal distractions, are achieved (Yang et al. 2021; Gratton 2021).

5 Research design

The next chapters will discuss the research design of the study. The research design outlines the strategy for addressing the study's research questions and demonstrating its validity. This segment explains the selection of the qualitative research method and defends its use. It details the study's empirical aspect by explaining the chosen research approach, the methodology for gathering the data, assesses the reliability of the research findings and lastly describes the analysis of the gathered data.

5.1 Research approach

This research adopts a qualitative approach due to its suitability for exploring the selected topic, providing a means to deeply engage with, critically examine, and reflect on a specific real-world phenomenon. In this study, the choice of a qualitative research methodology facilitates an in-depth examination on factors related to hybrid work and allows for deeper understanding of employee experiences on hybrid work arrangements and the possible effects these work arrangements may have on the psychological contract between employee and employer. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 1-2). This research aims to gain understanding of the subjective experiences of knowledge workers on hybrid work arrangements and hence a qualitative study is seen as the most suitable method of collecting such data. This method differs from quantitative techniques that prioritize statistical analysis, explanation, and hypothesis testing. Instead, qualitative research focuses on interpretation and achieving a comprehensive insight into the research topic, emphasizing context-specific understanding (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The qualitative research methodology was also seen to be particularly appropriate for this study, since the sample was selectively chosen rather than through random selection. This deliberate selection is a typical feature of qualitative research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018).

Methodology refers to the study of methods used to collect and analyse data relevant to the research topic, including a variety of data gathering and analysis strategies.

Selecting the appropriate research methodology is crucial for any study to effectively answer its research questions. Various research methods employ distinct data collection techniques. Understanding the methodology is key; it outlines the strategies for

investigating a problem, focusing on different research execution and data gathering methods. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 16). Given the specific focus of this study, quantitative methods would not have suited the main objective and hence based on the arguments provided above, a qualitative study was deemed the most suitable. It is important to note that this study focuses not on drawing statistical generalizations but on exploring specific insights and understandings related to hybrid work arrangements. This study looks to utilize the subjective experiences of employees to better understand the phenomena of hybrid work on a more in-depth level. Through this, the study aims to understand how hybrid work arrangements affect the employment relationship providing employers with critical information on work arrangements and their effects for both individuals and organizations.

5.2 Data collection

The most common ways in which qualitative research data is collected is via observation, interviews or from the analysis of existing documents (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). This study utilized semi-structured interviews for data collection, offering the flexibility to concentrate on the main objectives while allowing for minor customization of questions to suit each participant's role. This approach is suitable for both understanding the "what" and examining the "why" behind a topic, facilitating a thorough yet conversational approach to gathering insights (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). 17 qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted during the spring and autumn of 2023. Interviewees were all chosen from a company operating in the financial sector in Finland. The organization that the sample for this study was chosen from employs around 450 employees and thus can be categorized as a large organization. In the study the organization that the study has been conducted in will be referred to only as the research organization, due to the promise of anonymity of the organization in relation to the study. The research organization has developed a hybrid working model as a result of the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic had on working life and the company's work arrangements. During the pandemic the research organization had a full-time remote work policy but has since transitioned to a hybrid working model. The model requires employees to work at the office a minimum of one day a week. As the main purpose of the study was to gain deeper understanding on employee experiences of hybrid work arrangements and through this gain

comprehension on possible drawbacks and benefits of such work arrangements, conducting 17 interviews was regarded as an appropriate number to meet the research objective. In addition, this was seen as a sufficient number of interviewees in terms of understanding the effects of hybrid work arrangements on the employment relationship. The selection process of participants focused on emphasizing different job tasks from different departments of the organization to allow for broader insight as to how hybrid work arrangements are experienced by employees working in different positions with different job roles and requirements. Notable though, managers with subordinates or executives were not selected for interviews because the focus of this study was not on the dynamics between leaders and subordinates within a hybrid working model and so none of the interviewees had managerial roles. In determining the number of interviews needed for the study the principle of saturation was also taken into account. Saturation is achieved in a study when additional data does not yield new understanding and the data collected begins to repeat itself, showing that further interviews are not adding any new insights that would be seen as relevant to the research's aims (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 87). Within this study, a total of 17 interviews were sufficient to reach saturation. All 17 interviews were carried out using the video streaming platform Microsoft Teams, which allowed for camera-enabled conversations to foster an open and relaxed environment for dialogue. With the consent of all participants, the sessions were voice recorded and transcribed via Teams to facilitate later analysis of the gathered data. Additionally, it should be highlighted that not every employee who was invited to the interviews was able to join or chose to do so. This inevitably had an impact on the composition of the final group of participants.

The interviewer reached out to potential informants through email to request their participation in the interviews. A brief outline of the research subject was included in the invitation, but the specific interview questions were intentionally withheld until the actual interview. This strategic decision was made to capture genuine, spontaneous reactions and insights. The study aimed to explore authentic views and experiences concerning remote, office, and hybrid work models, thus the preference for unpremeditated responses. While semi-structured interviews offer flexibility, Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018) note that questions should not be improvised on the spot. Instead, inquiries should aim to gather information that aligns with the research's objectives and questions. The interview themes consisted of questions focusing on (1) work in general,

(2) remote work, (3) office work and lastly (4) hybrid work. The interviews began with general inquiries about work smoothness and flow to discern if participants would reference remote, office, or hybrid work without being directly asked about these topics. This approach aimed to identify if work arrangements were considered critical to workflow and smoothness by respondents. Notably, none mentioned specific work settings in their initial responses. Other elements like constant distractions and meeting practices were highlighted as more influential on work efficiency and smoothness than the location of work. Hence suggesting that work location is not necessarily a primary concern regarding work efficiency and smoothness based on the responses gathered. Due to this the results of the study focus on the 3 last themes of the interview questions: remote work, office work and hybrid work. At the conclusion of the interviews, time was allocated for reflective questions, allowing the interviewer the opportunity to insert comments or address any topics they believed were crucial but remained unexplored, ensuring the study's comprehensiveness. In this study, one-on-one interviews were conducted, allowing each participant to share their perspectives in a private setting to ensure confidentiality.

5.3 Evaluation of the study

To ensure the reliability of this research, various steps have been implemented to tackle typical concerns associated with the integrity of qualitative studies. This includes adhering to a widely recognized four-part framework for ensuring quality developed by Lincoln & Guba (1985). Based on this framework, trustworthiness of the study is evaluated through four dimensions: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *conformability*, offering a comprehensive framework to assess the reliability of the study's findings.

Credibility involves the accuracy with which the findings reflect actual conditions, achieved through extensive engagement, continuous observation, and the use of multiple sources or methods for verification. (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 296-307). The credibility of research is enhanced by the researcher's deep understanding of the subject, comprehensive data collection, and the use of diverse viewpoints to neutralize biases (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294). A practical method to assess credibility involves verifying that the data gathered in the research substantiates the researcher's claims about the main findings (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In this study, the researcher

dedicated a significant amount of time to thoroughly immerse herself in the subject being studied, achieved through detailed analysis of academic literature on the topic. This included incorporating not only recent but also past literature on the topic, referring to academic writings from a timespan of over 20 years. By doing this the researcher aimed to truly gain comprehensive understanding on the phenomena being studied. In addition, the researcher has had direct involvement in the field of hybrid work arrangements through working remotely and at the office on a weekly basis. The data analysis method was also chosen carefully. The analysis's validity is supported by the dual role of the researcher as both the interviewer and the one who transcribed the interviews. Additionally, the use of NVivo software contributed to the enhanced robustness of the analysis. A considerable amount of time was invested in the analysis of the gathered data.

Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be generalized to other contexts, essentially assessing their external validity. It requires researchers to link their findings to existing literature and thoroughly describe the setting and premises of their study. This approach enables readers to evaluate whether the results can be applied to various populations, environments, and times, thus making their own determinations regarding the study's broader applicability. (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 290-291; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294). The research setting, approach and methods have been detailed extensively in this study. In addition, the findings made are in line with those of prior studies, enhancing the credibility of the study's applicability to broader contexts.

Dependability concerns the research's reliability and the thorough documentation of the research process (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 300). Dependability also emphasizes providing readers with sufficient details to verify the research's coherence and traceability (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This issue was addressed by offering justifications for the selected research methodology and detailing the background and rationale behind the research topic.

Confirmability concerns the study's neutrality and the extent to which it is free from the researcher's subjective bias, focusing on how the findings are grounded in the participants' experiences and evidence rather than the researcher's personal viewpoints (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 300-324). Hence, the study's conclusions and interpretations must be directly tied to the gathered data in a manner that others can easily comprehend and replicate (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294). Confirmability was enhanced by incorporating numerous direct quotations from interviewees and clarifying the context

of these remarks to enable readers to form their own opinions on the study's outcomes and add to the transparency of the study. Furthermore, the inclusion of charts and tables aims to simplify the comprehension and navigation of the research.

This research is committed to upholding research ethics and the principles of sound scientific practice. Ethical protocols included providing informed consent forms to all participants, anonymizing participant, and company information, and adhering to ethical governance standards. After establishing the study's reliability, the next section will explore the key findings of the research.

5.4 Data analysis

One of the most crucial and important elements of any research is the analysis of the collected data. Through the analysis, the researcher aims to decode, organize, and shape the collected data into a structured form that aids in addressing the research questions. This involves a detailed examination, categorization, and synthesis of the data to explain its significant components and their connections to the research problems. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 209–211). One of the most common ways to analyse data is content analysis which can be conducted in a variety of ways, which consist of systematic techniques that allow researchers to analyse textual data. (Forman et al. 2007, 39.)

In the initial phase of analysis, it was crucial to assess the relevance of the data. This involved scrutinizing the data to identify, highlight, and assemble elements relevant to the research focus while discarding irrelevant information. Subsequently, the relevant data was organized by categorization, thematization, or typing, leading to the creation and construction of a comprehensive summary (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). This research applies thematic analysis for examining the data, utilizing the six-phase method described by Braun and Clarke (2006), which will be discussed further. A key advantage of thematic analysis is its adaptability, enabling detailed and precise analysis of data without being strictly bound to theoretical models, unlike many other qualitative analysis methods. Its objective is to uncover, examine, and ultimately present the recurring themes found within the data. (Braun & Clarke 2006, 78–82). A theme aims to reveal significant insights related to the research question, showing a recurring pattern in the data. A single theme may include various ideas. The role of the researcher in thematic analysis involves defining the scope and importance of a theme, which is not merely about the frequency of its appearance in the data. The critical factor is the

theme's relevance and significance to the research question, not just how often it is mentioned. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 82.) The analysis was approached with openness, integrating research questions throughout as relevant themes emerged. Determining the ultimate themes required time due to the variety of potential themes identified for further examination. The coding of transcripts was facilitated by NVivo, a specialized text analysis software designed to assist with the coding process. Figure 2 shows the process of thematic analysis, focusing on how coding leads to the development of themes, which will be discussed in further detail next.

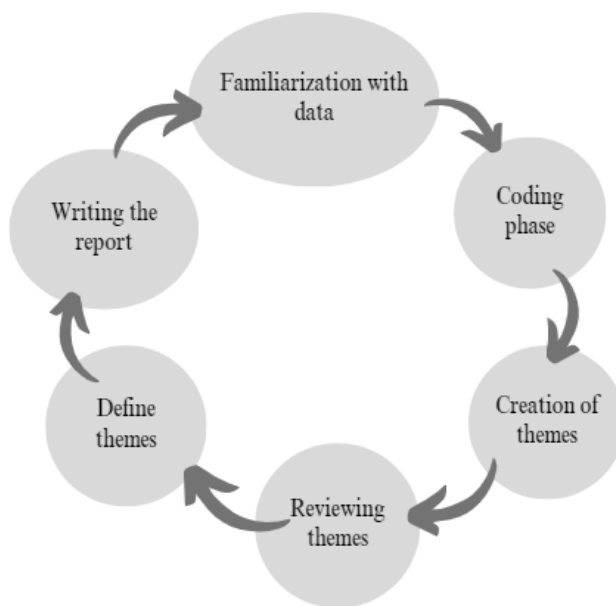


Figure 2 Thematic analysis process (adapted from Braun and Clarke 2006, 87)

Braun and Clarke (2006, 86–87) point out that the analytical process begins with familiarization with the data, which can start as early as the data collection phase by identifying repeating patterns. Figure 2 illustrates that this stage ends with the presentation of findings discovered within the data. During the data collection phase all interviews were documented, with the interviewer actively taking notes during the sessions and recording additional observations afterwards. Because all interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams, transcripts were available immediately due to the live transcript function of the platform. These automatically generated transcripts were later further examined and studied by the researcher. Transcribing the interview recordings is

a key component of the initial phase illustrated in figure 2. (Braun & Clarke 2006, 86). It is important to note that since the interviews were conducted in Finnish, the researcher translated the collected data into English. This translation process might result in slight variations in the phrasing and expression of certain ideas. Therefore, this aspect should be kept in mind when evaluating the findings. The English transcriptions were done in Microsoft Word and special attention was paid to the original spoken words, before importing the document into NVivo. With the transcription phase complete, the next step involved thoroughly reading through the interviews to become acquainted with their content. Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006, 87) approach, the material was read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the gathered data, with a focus on identifying patterns during each review. Alongside this process, the researcher made comments directly in the NVivo software. The following phase involved creating preliminary codes. During this phase, the emphasis was on thoroughly coding the data, capturing a wide range of themes, including those that were less conventional and differed from the focus of the study. After completing the coding, the process moved to the third phase, where the codes were organized and grouped into potential themes. (Braun & Clarke 2006, 88–89.) It is notable that themes are carefully crafted by the researcher to suit the research objectives, they do not automatically emerge from the data. They can be developed deductively, based on existing theories and prior research, or inductively, derived directly from the data itself. Sometimes, a mixed approach is employed, blending both deductive and inductive strategies to form themes. (Braun & Clarke 2006, 83.) In this study, the themes have been created via this mixed approach combining both deductive and inductive strategies. The theoretical framework and literature review of the study directed the formation of themes used in the semi-structured interviews. These interview themes were also used to guide the formations on the analysis themes. Initially, NVivo was used to explore themes, but outlining them on physical paper also aided in drafting the initial themes. Themes and sub-themes were identified and arranged into an initial thematic map, following the approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, 90). The fourth stage of the analysis consisted of analyzing the identified themes. During this process, some initial themes were combined to form a new theme. The thematic map evolved through the integration of these themes, subsequently leading to an assessment of how the themes interact with the entire data set. In accordance with Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 91), an assessment was made to determine the internal consistency, coherence, and distinctiveness of the

themes. During this process, some initial themes were combined to form a new theme. The thematic map evolved through the integration of these themes, subsequently leading to an assessment of how the themes interact with the entire data set. The material was reviewed again to ensure that all relevant aspects were observed. (Braun & Clarke 2006, 91.)

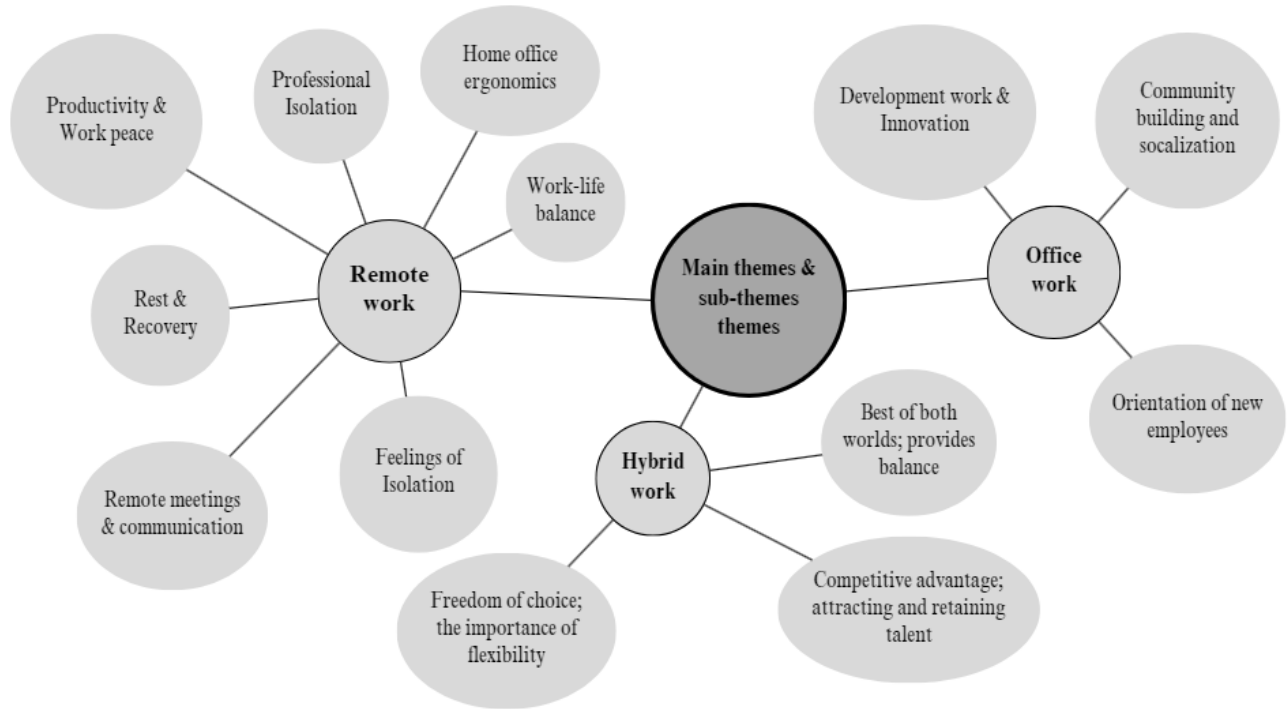


Figure 3 Main themes & sub-themes that arose from the collected data & prior literature

6 Results

This section of the study focuses on the empirical findings made based on the collected data. It aims to address the primary research questions concerning employee experiences with hybrid work arrangements and the potential impacts of these arrangements on the psychological contract between the employee and employer. The study organizes its key findings into three main themes, each encompassing several sub-themes derived from the data, which are portrayed in figure 3. The first section examines remote work, touching on work-life balance, productivity, work peace, rest, recovery, and isolation. Office work, covered in the second section, explores social interactions, community feeling, creativity, and development work. The final section focuses on hybrid work models, combining insights on both remote and office settings to understand employees' perspectives post-pandemic. This approach aims to provide a balanced view on combining remote and office work constructively.

The intent behind focusing on remote work and office work separately was to identify specific advantages and challenges associated with each arrangement. By acquiring detailed insights into both remote and office work, we can better comprehend how their integration may benefit both employees and employers. The last theme discusses hybrid work arrangements. Arranging the results and the emerging themes from the data in this specific order and format was also considered the most logical and reader-friendly approach. To maintain the confidentiality of the respondents, the title and specific job tasks were intentionally excluded from the reported results. The analysis of hybrid work arrangements is presented last, as insights from both remote and office work individually aid in comprehending the outcomes related to hybrid work. Furthermore, given that the main research question targets a broad understanding of hybrid work arrangements, an in-depth examination of the two forms of work involved—remote and office work—was considered an appropriate and logical method to discuss the findings.

6.1 Employee experiences on remote work arrangements

The following subchapters will explore themes emerging from the data collected on the remote work component of hybrid work. Given that the research organization allows a substantial amount of remote work (up to four days a week), it is crucial to examine

employees' experiences with remote work and identify the main issues that surface in this context. This analysis aims to enhance our comprehension of the effective practices and possible challenges in remote work. The themes that arose from the data in relation to remote work include work-life balance, productivity and work peace, rest and recovery, the dynamics of remote meetings and engagement of participants, experiences of isolation, and lastly home office ergonomics. These themes were identified from both the gathered data and the review of literature on the topic. Though the themes were initially selected based solely on the data, they aligned surprisingly well with what previous literature on remote work highlights, which supported the choice of these specific themes. For each theme, the discussion will cover findings relevant to how the participants perceive the impact of remote work in relation to each theme. This section will specifically spotlight the opinions and experiences of the respondents concerning remote work.

6.1.1 Work-life balance

As discussed in chapter 4.1 work-life balance is often addressed in relation to remote and hybrid work. Consistent with previous studies, all participants reported an improvement in work-life balance as a result of remote and hybrid work setups. Respondents mentioned that the option to work remotely provided them with the flexibility and time during weekdays to handle tasks related to both work and family. Respondents described remote work as a way of easing the pressures of everyday life. Furthermore, remote work enabled them to attend to personal errands and family obligations, even in the middle of the day if necessary.

“Working remotely also makes it possible to conveniently incorporate errands like dropping off or picking up a family member at any point during the day, even midday, which is practical. It also adds variety to the week, and I personally like that you don't have to head to the office at 8 am and return home only after 4 pm every day. All this really supports a good work-life balance.” (R15)

“Yes, remote work allows for a stress-free lifestyle arrangement. It significantly eases the integration of work and other aspects of life, as you can more easily schedule daily tasks. For example, if you have a dentist appointment or another commitment in the

middle of the day, remote work enables you to organize your schedule so that you can accommodate both". (R10)

Some respondents pointed out that remote work facilitates the coordination of their children's activities, including transporting them to hobbies and after-school programs. Additionally, many mentioned that the flexibility of remote work also allows them the time to pursue their own hobbies, not just manage their children's activities and hobbies. This was perceived as extremely important by multiple respondents highlighting that this increased their overall well-being. Several respondents pointed out that without the possibility of remote work, time for personal activities would be limited due to the busy nature of life with children. This suggests that allowing remote work provides the necessary time to focus not only on children's hobbies but also on their own.

"Remote work helps a lot with managing daily life; it allows me to take the kids to school and to their activities and after school hobbies, and I even manage to exercise on top of all that, which I find very important. If remote work weren't an option, I genuinely believe I wouldn't be able to exercise as much, because with kids, there simply isn't time for everything." (R1)

"For example, on days when my daughter has horseback riding after school, I always work remotely because otherwise, I wouldn't be able to take her to practice on time and prepare dinner". (R10)

In addition, respondents that did not have small children or children living at home reported that remote work supported a better work-life balance and in general supported everyday scheduling between work and free time. These respondents also emphasized that remote work allowed for more time during the workweek for leisure activities and socializing, which they viewed as essential for maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

"Combining work and free time is much smoother when you have the option to work remotely if you wish. It significantly eases daily life, even though I no longer have young children". (R11)

"Even though my children are no longer young and don't require as much time and attention, and they don't live at home anymore, I still feel that remote work significantly supports the integration of work and other aspects of life. It allows for much easier scheduling of daily routines and tasks that need to be managed alongside work." (R5)

"Yeah, remote work really supports the integration of work and other aspects of life. For instance, the time you would otherwise spend commuting can be used for things and activities that are meaningful to you and that genuinely brighten your daily life. It's really important to find time for that as well."(R7)

Findings like these suggest that when remote work is allowed it significantly helps employees balance their work demands with their family responsibilities. Even in cases where respondents did not have children or lived alone, being allowed the possibility to work remotely enhanced feelings of work-life balance in multiple different ways. Most respondents credited the enhanced work-life balance to more time for free time activities and time spent with family and friends. Many also noted that remote work allowed them the possibility to work from their summer cottage or visit family or friends that may live further away by being able to work from these remote locations. None of the respondents were of the opinion that the possibility to work remotely part of the work week would weaken their work-life balance suggesting that as prior literature on the topic suggests (Asgari et al. 2023), hybrid work arrangements seem to be the most favourable when it comes to work-life balance. Though most respondents worked remotely more than half of the work week the common consensus was that remote work supported a healthy work-life balance. This was actually rather surprising, due to the fact that prior literature does suggest that remote work may hinder work-life balance due to challenges related to working overtime and work intruding on personal life, especially when remote work is conducted more than 2.5 days a week (Golden 2012). Unexpectedly none of the respondents viewed remote work as a drawback when asked about its effect on work-life balance and seemed to agree that it only enhanced work-life balance furthermore suggesting that the hybrid work arrangement applied in the research organization successfully supports work-life balance, even though remote work can be considered extensive.

6.1.2 Productivity

Participants in this study indicated that they experienced heightened productivity and efficiency while working remotely. Most respondents reported being significantly more productive and managing tasks more efficiently at home than at the office. Many also mentioned that in the office environment, considerable work time was consumed by coffee breaks and conversations with colleagues and that a lot of focus was also on other matters than just work. Though this was deemed a positive aspect in its own way, respondents did agree it made the office a less productive work environment. In contrast, when working remotely, the entire workday was dedicated exclusively to completing tasks, which enhanced the perceived efficiency of task completion. When respondents were asked when they feel it is optimal to work from home many gave answers such as:

"In my opinion, home is a good place to handle tasks that require concentration and peace. Such tasks can be completed efficiently and well at home without unnecessary interruptions, allowing for a strong focus." (R17)

"Remote work mostly evokes positive feelings in me because it offers personal tranquillity. It allows for focused attention on tasks without unnecessary distractions. When I work remotely, I feel that I am the most productive and really get stuff done. Maybe it is because in this medical profession, having been accustomed to patient care, the privacy of one's own room contributes to work peace. Similarly, I believe the best work peace is achieved when working from a home office." (R9)

"I would say that I am most efficient and get the most work done when I am working remotely. Being at the office, surprisingly a lot of time goes into coffee breaks and chatting, which is fun but if we are talking about efficient working, in my opinion, remote work supports it best." (R2)

Some participants pointed out that, unlike remote workdays, they did not anticipate being highly productive on office days due to the frequent social interactions, group

meetings and other distractions and interruptions throughout the day. According to the responses, some even strategically scheduled their week to include enough remote workdays before an office day, ensuring that a less productive office day would not impact their overall productivity.

"One often approaches office days with the awareness that they might not necessarily accomplish much workwise, because the day can easily be spent in meetings or otherwise socializing. So, I don't really expect to be very efficient on office days." (R12)

"Actually, I try to make the most of remote days before office days so that I can efficiently handle all the critical tasks. That way, even if I don't have enough time to manage my own work on office days, it doesn't matter as much." (R6)

"Well, let's say if I know that Thursday is an office day, then I try to take care of the most critical work tasks at home on Wednesday, so that I can then be more relaxed at the office the next day."(R3)

A few respondents also highlighted that when they were able to work from home, they could fully control their surroundings and hence were able to focus on job tasks better. Some also noted that they specifically designate certain work tasks for remote workdays because they felt that when it came to tasks that require focus and concentration, like preparing a presentation or writing text, they managed to conduct tasks like these more effectively from home. Similarly to the comments discussed above, multiple respondents said that they do plan remote workdays differently than office workdays when it comes to task completion, which suggests that there are certain tasks that are more favourable to conduct remotely and others that are more favourable to complete from the office.

"Concentration is easier in remote work because I can completely control my environment, thus minimizing distractions. So quantitatively, yes, more work gets done and much more efficiently in remote work than in the office". (R9)

"I often save certain tasks that require a lot of concentration for remote workdays because I can get them done best then. Somehow, when working remotely, there aren't

the same 'temptations' to take coffee breaks or chat with colleagues as much, so naturally, more time is available for work." (R4)

"I usually leave tasks like writing assignments to be done remotely, or other tasks that require concentration and peace at home. In my opinion, certain tasks just work better remotely, but of course not all of them. There are also, of course, many work tasks that I think might be smoother or more practical to handle face-to-face in the office." (R11)

Several participants also mentioned that in the context of remote work, they perceive an increase in the strictness of monitoring outcomes and task completion compared to previous settings. This heightened scrutiny has introduced additional stress for some, who recalled a more relaxed work pace prior to remote work, where taking time to complete tasks was acceptable. With remote work, these participants experienced a notable increase in the pressure to maintain productivity. They also observed that despite feeling most productive at home, particularly with tasks requiring concentration, the rigorous monitoring compelled them to continuously seek ways to enhance their productivity.

"Yes, I do feel that I am efficient when working remotely, but at the same time, it has, in my opinion, increased pressure and urgency in a certain way. Nowadays, performance and efficiency are monitored much more closely than before, and this certainly brings its own stress, even though one might be efficient at home" (R6)

"Yes, I am more efficient when working remotely, but at the same time, there is also a great pressure to be efficient, as I need to somehow prove that I am doing my job well. Or at least, I feel that nowadays the pressure to increase efficiency is constant, and I believe that remote work has perhaps contributed to this." (R5)

The responses discussed above emphasize that while remote work is seen to enhance productivity, it could also introduce pressures to maintain high productivity levels. This pressure might lead to adverse effects like heightened stress or burnout. These responses highlight the need to ensure that employees do not, for example, work overtime, to meet the expectations of increased productivity and that enough time during the day is allocated for lunch and coffee breaks. The findings do suggest that though employees

generally feel they are more productive when working remotely, they may feel increased pressure related to being productive, which in turn may hinder their productivity and well-being in the long run, if this perceived pressure is not addressed and discussed. Nevertheless, the results gathered do suggest that when working remotely employees are the most productive, at least with tasks that require focus and concentration.

6.1.3 Rest & recovery

Another theme that arose from the collected data was that being allowed to work remotely supported rest and recovery. Similarly, previous studies on remote work arrangements have also found that working remotely can lead to improved health-related behaviours and results, such as increased duration of sleep (Hallman et al. 2021). Respondents reported comparable experiences, listing more sleep and time for rest as a clear benefit of remote work.

“When I don’t have to get up early to get ready to go to the office by doing my hair and makeup, for example, I actually get to sleep longer and feel more energized because of this” (R12)

“Mornings are definitely more relaxed when you don't have to leave early for the office. You can, for instance, sleep in a bit longer which supports my overall readiness”. (R17)

“On the days that I do remote work I can basically just get up and start to work with no commute time or other time lost in the process of going to the office, this also means I can sleep in more, till like 8:30 if I want to. I have definitely noticed that I have more energy on days that I work remotely and one reason for this is probably because I get more sleep” (R7)

Respondents also noted that on remote workdays movement during the workday was also possible, which enhanced feelings of satisfaction and well-being at work. Even movement during meetings, like walk-and-talk meetings were noted as possible during remote workdays which multiple respondents regarded as very beneficial. Respondents

mentioned such walks and breaks as extremely good ways of ensuring recovery even during the workday.

“One particularly good aspect of remote work, in my opinion, is that if you're in a meeting where you're just listening and not presenting anything, you can effectively listen to the training or meeting remotely while on a walk, for instance. I think this is excellent and supports recovery even during the workday”. (R15)

“I think it's very convenient that if there's a meeting where you don't need to present anything or lead the discussion, you can go for a walk during the meeting. In my opinion, this is a fantastic and efficient use of time” (R6)

In contrast to this, some respondents reported that on office days general movement increased due to movement that occurred at the office and during commuting. Unintentional movement seemed to be higher on office days but deliberate activity, like walks and runs, were reported as more common on remote workdays. Overall, it appeared that remote workdays provided more time for leisure activities, which were seen as beneficial for both mental and physical rest and recovery from work.

“On the other hand, going to the office means unintentionally moving around a lot during the day, like walking up the stairs for lunch break or having a longer walk to the restroom. Somehow, you end up taking more steps at the office, which is likely influenced by the commute as well. At home, you might find yourself sitting in the same spot without getting up to move at all for hours. On the other hand, on remote workdays there is more time for other activities outside working hours” (R7)

“On office days, those steps just seem to accumulate without really noticing it. In remote work, it's easy to neglect moving, and as a result, I tend to stiffen up quickly. I feel that when working from home, one really needs to consciously take care of moving if they want to get enough exercise, as it's easy to spend the days sitting in the same spot. When visiting the office, I naturally move around and change positions more. But then again, on remote workdays I might often go for a longer walk or something after work, and there is more time to relax” (R5)

Responses like these indicate that deliberate activities like running and walking are more frequent on days when working remotely, whereas spontaneous movement tends to increase on days spent in the office. Generally, the feedback emphasized that remote work boosts overall energy levels and affords more downtime for recovery, as noted by most respondents. Additionally, respondents mentioned that remote work offers the possibility of slower-paced days following busy office days, which they felt contributed to a well-balanced workweek and provided time for rest and recovery.

"I think it's nice to have a remote day after an office day, which allows for better recovery from the previous day's hectic pace. Remote workdays bring a good balance to the work week and enable better recovery from work. If I had to go to the office every day, I feel that I would be much more tired, and I really don't know if I could handle such a routine anymore." (R10)

"Yes, I do believe that even though it's nice to go to the office, it's really important for our endurance that we get to work remotely and have a sufficient number of remote workdays, because otherwise our stamina might be tested. Remote work provides better time for recovery and, in my opinion, really supports work endurance well and thus is an important part of the work week". (R7)

A somewhat concerning observation made by several respondents concerned rest and recovery during illness. Many mentioned that remote work enabled them to continue working even with minor illnesses like a flu or fever. Respondents indicated that they were less likely to take sick leave when remote work was an option because many felt they could still perform some work tasks from home even when unwell. The ability to stay at home reduced the threshold for working while sick. This tendency was often attributed to work pressures related to completing tasks or meeting customer obligations, leading individuals to work through illness to avoid falling behind.

"Remote work is especially beneficial when you have a cold or flu. Instead of coming to the office with a runny nose, which used to be the norm, or taking sick leave, you can work from home, which I find very convenient". (R10)

"Well, remote work certainly makes it easier to prepare for busy periods and client meetings from home, even when you're dealing with a cold or feeling slightly under the weather." (R7)

These responses illustrate that although remote work was perceived to support rest and recovery, it is sometimes used in situations where work should not be done at all. Such feedback underscores the importance for employers to ensure that employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities to take sick leave when ill and to fully rest, rather than trying to work from home while unwell. According to the answers, this practice appears to be quite common, with employees using remote work as a coping mechanism to attempt resting while simultaneously working when sick, which is far from ideal. In general, though, responses clearly indicate that remote work facilitates rest and recovery both during the work week and in general. Multiple respondents did indicate that if they were required to commute to the office daily, it would hinder their recovery and potentially lead to exhaustion. Such findings demonstrate how incorporating remote work, as seen in hybrid models, can enhance recovery and mitigate the stresses of office work in a practical way. Most respondents mentioned enjoying their time in the office but also noted the importance of having the option for remote workdays, especially when feeling fatigued from office activities. This practice can also be problematic, as employees have reported working even when ill, which is an issue that needs to be addressed to support healthy work habits. This said, based on the feedback, hybrid work arrangements, which significantly incorporate remote work, appear to effectively support the rest and recovery of employees.

6.1.4 Remote meetings

Another issue raised by several respondents concerned remote meetings. They observed that there are challenges related to remote meetings that hinder effective and good communication. These communication problems often stemmed from not using cameras and diminished engagement in conversations and discussions on the meeting agendas. Numerous respondents addressed the problem of participants preferring not to turn on their cameras during remote meetings, which they felt adversely affected the quality of communication.

“I believe it's a challenge in remote meetings when people don't have their cameras on and we can't see their body language at all. In my opinion, this can more easily lead to misunderstandings during these remote times — Also, it can be really challenging to understand people through remote connections. By this, I mean that it can be difficult to interpret how they are doing or how they feel when we aren't meeting face-to-face or can't even see each other through the camera” (R9)

“So, it really does complicate social interaction when people don't have their cameras on in remote meetings. It's pretty dull talking to a dark screen. So, people really need to learn to turn their cameras on, as that would greatly facilitate remote communication. I do not understand why people are so reluctant to use their cameras, or in general, participate in the conversation when we have remote meetings.” (R7)

“One issue I find difficult with remote work is the use of cameras during meetings. People, for some reason, do not like to turn them on, and you always must specifically ask them to do so, yet still, they often aren't turned on. It's unpleasant when you're leading a presentation or meeting and you only see icons, not anyone's expressions or faces; I find that quite terrible. I actually find such meetings to be really mentally exhausting”. (R15)

Many respondents noted that the lack of being able to see facial expressions and body language obstructed communication in remote settings, especially when meetings included more participants. In fact, most respondents were of the opinion that in one-on-one conversations the quality of communication was almost as good remotely as face to face, but as soon as there were more participants in the remote meeting the quality of communication suffered. They especially noted that when there were more participants, general conversation suffered significantly when meetings were held remotely and that many participants did not involve themselves at all in the conversation.

"In my opinion, most work goes very smoothly remotely, but perhaps things that require discussion and development with a larger group, or showing and presenting something, are better done in the office. However, if you need to go over something with a

colleague one-on-one, I think it's just as effective remotely as it would be in the office."
(R4)

"Free discussion isn't as smooth remotely, and of course, it's noticeable that remotely you often don't see people's expressions and reactions, so it's possible that some non-verbal communication is lost. I believe the more people there are in the meeting, the less conversation occurs when the meeting is held remotely. I think it's the opposite when we are at the office, haha. One-on-one conversations on the other hand are very pleasant and effective remotely as well" (R3)

Responses like the ones mentioned above suggest that the number of participants significantly influences the effectiveness of remote meetings and the quality of communication among them. Furthermore, enabling some level of non-verbal communication using cameras appears to be essential. Most respondents pointed out that their engagement drops significantly when cameras are not used, and many expressed frustrations over others' reluctance to turn on their cameras. Overall, based on the feedback, special attention should be given to supporting good communication in remote meetings, such as encouraging the use of cameras and participation in the general conversation. Additionally, it may be beneficial to hold certain meetings in the office to foster better conversation and discussion, particularly when there are multiple participants. For meetings with just a few participants, respondents felt that communication was equally effective remotely as it was face-to-face. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to the type of meetings held remotely versus those that might benefit from being conducted in the office. Notably, one-on-one communications or small group meetings were reported to work quite well remotely, and most respondents preferred to continue having such meetings.

6.1.5 Feelings of isolation & workplace community

Many respondents mentioned that they often experienced professional and social isolation while working remotely, which can be seen as rather unsurprising due to this being a very common issue often connected to remote work (Lal & Dwivedi, 2009).

Multiple respondents described days of remote work as lonely, lacking social bonds, and having insufficient communication with colleagues. Some respondents did however note that they did not mind working alone and preferred to work alone as well.

"Remote work is definitely lonelier, and it greatly lacks the social aspect of work. Even though I like working remotely, a person still misses their friends and colleagues and socializing." (R16)

"In remote work, socializing is significantly reduced, and it is lonelier, although it doesn't really bother me since I also like working alone." (R1)

"Remote work can indeed sometimes be a bit boring because of the loneliness. You end up missing seeing others and doing things together. Also, professionally, I feel that remote work doesn't allow for the same kind of brainstorming with colleagues about work-related matters, which happens very naturally in the office." (R2)

Although the social aspect of work was less prominent in remote environments, respondents mentioned that they stayed in contact almost daily with colleagues they were already familiar with, especially those relationships formed pre-COVID-19 and before the rise of remote work. Many found that remote socializing worked well with colleagues who were also friends, helping sustain some level of social interaction. They pointed out their longstanding in-person work relationships with these colleagues as a key reason for the effectiveness of remote communication and connection. However, they also observed that remote work often resulted in interacting mostly with a few close colleagues, thereby reducing the number of social connections at work. Most respondents agreed that virtual interactions are no substitute for the richness of face-to-face meetings and highlighted the occasional need for in-person interactions. Additionally, some respondents noted that remote work posed significant challenges for integrating new team members, making it tough to build relationships through remote-only communication channels and highlighted the importance of being at the office occasionally in these situations.

"In remote work, I'm mainly in touch with colleagues I already know well. I have my own 'work besties' with whom I frequently call and chat, but of course, this has led to

smaller circles. Especially the fact that you don't accidentally bump into new people in the hallway, and such random exchanges of updates with even those you aren't as familiar with have significantly decreased in this era of remote work. I also sometimes worry about how new team members integrate into the group. It must be quite difficult without having those years of working together in an office setting." (R2)

"Although I am very accustomed to remote work and do a lot of my work remotely, I feel that it has its challenges too. For example, how new employees become part of the organization and the team is somewhat concerning and challenging when so much work is done remotely." (R8)

Many respondents in fact highlighted that remote work had affected team spirit among them and their colleagues in a negative manner by weakening ties between colleagues. Respondents pointed out that during the time before the COVID-19 pandemic, they felt like they knew their colleagues on a deeper level and felt closer as a team due to spending a lot of time together in person, where becoming close happened rather effortlessly. However, multiple respondents did mention that during the time of hybrid work, team spirit had improved due to regular days at the office together as a team and that even a couple of days together mitigated the negative effects of remote work on team spirit and feelings of isolatedness.

"Team spirit has suffered from being remote so much, especially during the COVID era, where it was noticeable that people focused more on their own tasks and there was less sense of community. We kind of became distant from one another" (R11)

"Community spirit does suffer in remote work; it's easy to feel left out, especially if you haven't been to the office in a while. Maintaining a tight team spirit and sense of community remotely is challenging, in my opinion, but even a couple of days in the office can help alleviate this." (R17)

Conversely, some respondents felt that remote work hadn't affected their team spirit or relationships with colleagues, or that it had actually improved these social dynamics. This improvement was attributed to the fact that individuals who didn't get along could more easily avoid each other and not irritate one another. Additionally, respondents

observed that less frequent face-to-face interactions made meetings more cherished, leading people to value their time together more and arrive at the office with a more positive and cheerful attitude.

"In my opinion, remote work has actually supported team spirit, or at least it certainly hasn't weakened it. Before, there might have been a tenser atmosphere in the office, and people could easily get on each other's nerves from having to interact face-to-face every day. Now that we see each other less frequently, I think there's less tension and people really appreciate seeing each other, creating a more relaxed vibe than before in that sense." (R6)

Interestingly, some respondents observed that the isolating nature of remote work can sometimes be beneficial. They explained that on days when they are feeling down or stressed, it is comforting to have the option to stay home rather than being compelled to go to the office and interact with others. Several respondents mentioned that there are days when they need their own space, and it is a relief not to have to force themselves to go to the office on such occasions.

"I feel that remote work is great for days when you're feeling down, sad or stressed and don't want much interaction with others, and need your own space; remote work is really beneficial in such situations" (R10)

Responses from participants indicate that while remote work is often viewed as lonelier and more isolated compared to office work, employees who had established work networks before the pandemic feel they can maintain a degree of social interaction even when working remotely. There was a common concern among respondents about the integration of newcomers into the team. The study suggests that feelings of loneliness and isolation do occur in remote work, but having strong pre-existing relationships with colleagues mitigates these feelings. These strong relationships were often built during periods of daily office interaction, suggesting that significant in-person time is crucial to developing such connections, which then help sustain relationships even in remote settings. Another key insight from the study is the recommendation for sufficient face-to-face interaction for new hires to help them integrate well into the team. It's clear that

forming robust social bonds with colleagues poses significant challenges when in-person interactions are limited or non-existent.

6.1.6 Home office ergonomics

Another topic that was mentioned by various respondents was ergonomics of home offices or remote work setups. The ergonomics of home offices has also been mentioned in prior literature on remote and hybrid work. For example, Babapour et al. (2021) mention in their study that many participants lacked ergonomic setups for their home offices and did not receive assistance from their organizations in establishing a proper workspace. Similarly, respondents in this study noted that home office ergonomics were often inadequate and expressed a desire for more support from their employer in this regard.

"Well, this home workspace is ergonomically worse than the office. At home, it's easy to work in poor postures if you haven't set up a proper office for yourself. I have set up a pretty decent workspace here over the years, but I did it myself." (R2)

"In my opinion, employers could significantly improve and support ergonomics for home offices. Many workplaces have made great strides in ensuring good ergonomics and working conditions in the office, but now the same effort needs to be extended to ensure the ergonomics of home offices. It might be beneficial to conduct a survey to determine whether employees feel that their home workstation ergonomics are adequate, because unergonomic home offices may also easily go unnoticed, if employees do not bring it up." (R15)

Many respondents in fact did comment on the role they feel that the employer should play when it came to ensuring that workstations at home were sufficient and good. Based on respondent answers there also seemed to be differences in what equipment they had received from their employer for their home office setup.

"Well, ergonomics definitely suffer when working from home, since I end up working in all kinds of positions. I have tried to do something about it by getting proper monitors

and setting up a real workstation, but I feel like I should have also received some support from my employer. Actually, I think it's something that should be automatically provided by the employer." (R7)

"I've actually hauled a monitor from the office to my home and received this office chair from my employer, but still, ergonomics suffer at home without a proper desk. I tend to slump in the same position without moving for hours on end. I think the employer could invest more in home office ergonomics. As far as I know, I received these items when the office had to be cleared out for a renovation. At that time, we were allowed to take this equipment home, but I'm not sure what the situation is now." (R5)

Conversations with respondents revealed notable differences in the quality of their remote work setups. While some employees had received equipment from their employer to set up their home offices, others had not. The majority believed that their home office ergonomics could be improved, and many had invested in equipment over the years to enhance their setups. Some respondents suggested that employers should strive to ensure fair and equal home office setups by subsidizing the purchase of office equipment. Others mentioned that being allowed to take office equipment like screens, or keyboards and mice home meant their office setup was lacking when they returned to work. Overall, although some employees had received assistance from the employer with their remote work setups, it was not universally applied and was often deemed insufficient. Respondents recommended that employers should pay more attention to home office ergonomics and conduct surveys, for instance, to assess the state of employees' home setups and determine if there are any deficiencies or necessary improvements to be made. Overall, employees placed a high value on work ergonomics, and having a suitable setup at home was seen as important.

6.2 Experiences on office work post pandemic

The subsequent subchapters will explore themes that emerged from the data concerning office work conducted in the hybrid model implemented in the research organization. These themes include community building and socialization, development and

innovation work, and the orientation of new employees. Notably, fewer themes emerged regarding general office work, and the responses were remarkably consistent about when and why working at the office is advisable. In fact, most respondents focused only on the themes mentioned above, with very few providing divergent views, indicating a broad consensus on office work among employees. The following sections will examine how employees have experienced working in the office at least once a week during the post-pandemic period and will shed light on factors related to these experiences. As previously noted in the chapters on remote work, office work also plays a vital role in hybrid models. Although in the researched organization, the required amount of office work is considered relatively minor, it remains crucial to understand how employees perceive office work today to derive essential insights for determining the most suitable hybrid working model.

6.2.1 Community building and socialization

Regarding community building and socialization, nearly all respondents agreed that office work significantly bolstered these aspects, contributing to a more positive organizational culture and a stronger sense of unity. Many noted that, despite spending several years working almost entirely remotely, the impact on community and togetherness was not as detrimental as one might expect. This resilience was often attributed to the relationships with colleagues that had been established before the pandemic during office-based work times. Once these relationships were formed, remote work did not seem to diminish them significantly. These responses underscored the value of in-person interactions, particularly during orientation, for establishing these connections. However, the feedback also indicated that once strong relationships are in place, the necessity for face-to-face contact diminishes compared to when such relationships are not yet established. Nevertheless, all respondents unanimously agreed that spending time together in person is highly enjoyable and important, and that incorporating face-to-face interactions into the weekly routine is beneficial for maintaining strong social connections at work. Hence, office work was seen to have a positive effect on the work community as a whole and perceived to lead to heightened feelings of togetherness.

"It's really nice to go to the office these days and see colleagues face-to-face. I think it does a lot of good for the sense of community and somehow also reminds me of where I belong or what I am a part of." (R7)

"Well, perhaps it's that remotely, you're more in contact with those with whom you've already established a relationship before COVID and remote work. After all, with many colleagues, I've worked face-to-face for years. With these colleagues, I don't feel a big difference whether we interact remotely or in person. Of course, remote work has narrowed down the "circles," and you easily find yourself only in touch with the same regular people and through this I do think it may weaken the sense of community. But that is why it's so good that we are seeing each other on a weekly basis now, it definitely supports togetherness". (R6).

A few respondents noted that while it was somewhat feasible to foster a sense of community remotely, it was far more seamless and natural when done in person at the office. They observed that spending even just a day or two occasionally in the office could naturally bring people closer together. In contrast, when working remotely, creating a sense of community often felt more forced or less natural than when interacting in person at the office. When working remotely respondents also felt that to build a sense of community specific effort and intent had to be designated to this while in contrast in the office it seemed to occur spontaneously and naturally. Despite the possibility of building community remotely, the office was viewed as the most conducive environment for enhancing and supporting a sense of unity and togetherness.

"Yeah, community building definitely happens very naturally and effortlessly at the office. I do feel that it's possible remotely as well, but it's not as natural and smooth. Remotely, you also have to make a lot more effort and deliberately remember to call and stay in touch with others, whereas in the office it pretty much happens on its own." (R13)

"Yes, being in the office does enhance the sense of community and supports the social aspect of work well. You don't need to see others every day but seeing them regularly is beneficial for the work community." (R17)

Some respondents pointed out a key factor in how office days foster a sense of community, observing that the benefits weren't always achieved due to the absence of colleagues on the chosen days. As a result, there were times when office visits did not yield the anticipated social interactions because colleagues were not around.

Respondents suggested that for office days to deliver the desired benefits, the "conditions" had to be favorable, specifically referring to the presence of colleagues and having time for shared meals and coffee breaks. They noted that even when colleagues were present, they were sometimes occupied with meetings throughout the day, leaving no opportunity for communal lunches or coffee breaks. Respondents believed that addressing this issue required careful planning of office days, coordinating schedules to ensure that days spent at the office together would be most effective in fostering community.

"Sometimes, going to the office can also lead to disappointment because colleagues might not always be there on the same day, or one might have too high expectations of what the day will be like. Somehow, you expect to see many people, but this might not always happen" (R9)

"Well, I feel that if you want to get the most out of going to the office, there needs to be others there on the same day. On some days I come to the office and there's no one there, or other days my colleagues might be in meetings all day and not have time to catch up at all. I think it's important on office days to have time to eat and have coffee together, so that office days can enhance the sense of community." (R2)

"I think one of the biggest benefits of going to the office is that it supports a sense of community, and it's really nice to see everyone in person. My feelings about going to the office are very positive, even though I have to wake up earlier in the morning, haha, because it's really nice to see everyone and spend time together. However, on days when there aren't many people in the office, like during the summer or on Fridays, I feel that the benefits of going to the office significantly diminish." (R14)

Respondents also observed that days spent at the office tended to expand their social networks, noting that after engaging in conversations or coffee breaks together, it became easier to connect online the following day through platforms like Teams. They

mentioned that they were more likely to reach out to someone new via Teams or phone after having met them in person at the office. Answers like these suggest that face-to-face interactions enhance networking within the organization and effectively familiarize employees with each other which in turn strengthens remote ties between employees as well.

"Yes, if you interact with someone new at the office, it somehow becomes easier to connect with them remotely later on. As a result of going to the office, I personally feel that my network has expanded and the number of regular people I message via teams or have calls with has increased." (R13)

"Well, I feel that when I go to the office, my circles, which may have shrunk a due to remote work, tend to expand. Somehow, chatting with someone at the office makes it much more natural to continue communicating remotely as well. On the other hand, if you've never seen or met someone in person, it doesn't really occur to you to reach out to them, unless you need to handle some work-related matter with them, of course." (R12)

Overall, respondents unanimously agreed that office days enhanced the sense of community and positively impacted social connections. They pointed out that spending time together at the office improved team dynamics and brought colleagues closer. They also believed that while it was somewhat possible to build a sense of community remotely, the office provided the most natural and effortless environment for fostering such togetherness. Office days also helped employees become more acquainted with each other, facilitating remote interactions with a wider circle of colleagues beyond just their closest coworkers. Additionally, even a single day at the office significantly boosted feelings of community and had a positive effect on respondents. It was emphasized that the presence of others during office days is essential to fully benefit from such occasions. Respondents recommended that office days should include sufficient time for lunch and coffee breaks to foster socialization among coworkers. They also believed that without these shared office days, networking within the organization and, consequently, the organizational culture would likely deteriorate. All respondents valued the experience of going to the office and interacting with colleagues in person, expressing a desire to maintain this practice. Compared to periods of full-time

remote work, this hybrid model, where most employees meet in person weekly, was seen to have positively influenced the work community.

6.2.2 Development work and innovation

Another aspect of office work that several respondents touched upon was its effectiveness for development and innovation tasks. Many indicated that for activities requiring open dialogue and aimed at innovation or development, the preferred setting was the office. They attributed this preference to the more dynamic exchange of ideas and greater participation that the office environment facilitated compared to remote work. Additionally, many believed that presenting ideas or suggestions was more impactful face-to-face, making the office the ideal location for tasks that demand creativity or innovative thinking.

“Especially if we're doing some kind of development work or something where the team needs to collaboratively develop new processes, methods, or even prepare some material, I believe it's much more efficient to be face-to-face in the office” (R7).

"Yes, I do think that the office is a better place to handle development-related tasks. Or when you consider that we have these meetings where the idea is to develop some kind of operational model, I believe it goes smoother in the office than remotely. I also think it's more enjoyable to manage such meetings at the office." (R5)

On the other hand, some respondents pointed out that not all innovation-related tasks are best suited for the office. They noted that tasks where innovation was required on an individual level, or that involved only a few employees, could also be effectively managed remotely. Especially if the task required focus and concentration, working remotely, as discussed earlier, was seen as more suitable. However, development and innovation tasks that required the involvement of multiple participants were generally seen by most respondents as more appropriately handled in an office setting. For instance, brainstorming as a group was mentioned to be facilitated better at the office.

"Well, not everything related to development and innovation necessarily fits well with being done in the office, especially if the task requires its own peace and concentration in order to be creative." (R16)

"In my opinion, development-related tasks with a smaller group work really well remotely too, but if there are more participants and the goal is to, for example, brainstorm ideas or consider a new operational model or something similar, I think it's more convenient and better to do it in the office." (R1)

All in all, from the responses gathered, it appeared that tasks involving some form of development or innovation, particularly those with multiple participants, were considered most suitable for the office setting. The nature of the development work and the number of people involved were seen as crucial factors in determining whether such tasks were best carried out in the office or from home. These findings support the use of hybrid working models where both office and remote work options are available, allowing participants to choose the most appropriate location for their development and innovation activities at work based on the specific requirements of the task.

6.2.3 Orientation of new employees

The final recurring theme related to office work concerned the orientation of new employees. Many respondents indicated that remote work posed significant challenges in getting acquainted with new team members or employees who joined post-pandemic, hindering the formation of personal connections. According to the respondents, being physically present in the office was essential for properly introducing and integrating new employees into the team. They also emphasized that being at the office enabled them to connect with new employees on a more personal level, learning about their lives beyond work as well. This approach was perceived to strengthen relationships and help newcomers integrate more quickly into the team's social dynamics.

"It feels like if a new employee joins the team during these remote times, it's easy to not get acquainted with this new team member or, in the worst case, it might even go unnoticed that a new team member has joined at all. Sometimes it feels like I don't even know who all are working with us." (R3)

"In my opinion, it's really important for newcomers to spend time in the office occasionally to get to know each other better. Somehow, if we never spend time together in the office, we wouldn't really get to know anyone in the sense that we'd learn about things outside of work too. When we interact remotely, we seldom talk about non-work-related topics unless we already know each other." (R9)

Several respondents underscored the significance of being physically present in the office during the orientation process for a new job, citing the abundance of "silent" information—such as unofficial tips and tricks for handling specific tasks—that is typically picked up in an office setting but may be missed when working remotely. They pointed out that this kind of knowledge is crucial for supporting new employees' orientation, making it essential for newcomers to be in the office regularly to fully benefit from these insights. To accomplish this, it was highlighted that, naturally, others needed to be present in the office as well. Regarding new employees, respondents indicated that everyone should make an effort to come to the office occasionally, providing opportunities for new employees to meet and get to know the team. While this might seem straightforward, many respondents mentioned that it can sometimes be difficult to coordinate days when most of the team is in the office simultaneously. Nevertheless, respondents largely agreed that this issue could be addressed with careful planning and by agreeing on specific days for team meetings, ensuring that the entire team could be together in the office.

"A lot of silent knowledge gets missed when working remotely, especially in the case of new employees. For this reason, I feel it's important for newcomers to regularly be at the office. At the office, you often receive useful tips on how to handle, for example, certain customer situations or similar issues that you wouldn't hear about while working remotely. Gathering this type of silent knowledge and expertise during the orientation phase is certainly very important, as I believe it generally is. I've also noticed that being in the office often leads to learning new things just because of this." (R2)

"Yes, being in the office allows you to hear and see how others do their work, and that definitely facilitates learning as well. Especially during the orientation phase, I believe

being in the office is beneficial. Of course, it's also important that there are people in the office so that this benefit can be realized." (R8)

"I admit that sometimes I'm also lazy about coming to the office, but I recognize that it's important, especially for getting to know new team members better. I think we should all make an effort to occasionally be at the office as a whole team. We do aim for this, but it's surprisingly difficult at times to get everyone there at the same time." (R12)

In conclusion, respondents unanimously agreed that being in the office is especially important for newcomers. However, they emphasized that creating the best learning environment in the office requires effort from the entire team. Respondents highlighted the value of shared knowledge and implicit information available in the office, which is often lost in remote settings. While this was deemed most crucial for newcomers, even long-term employees noted the importance of regular office days to keep their knowledge up to date and to benefit from the “tips and tricks” shared by colleagues. Additionally, respondents felt that sufficient face-to-face interactions, such as lunches and coffee breaks, were necessary for the team to properly get acquainted with new employees. Overall, office work was seen as essential for achieving a thorough and seamless integration of new employees.

6.3 Experiences on hybrid work arrangements

The final themes emerging from the data pertain to the hybrid model employed by the research organization. Subsequent sections will discuss insights related to this specific model. While previous chapters addressed findings exclusively related to remote or office work, the upcoming chapters will explore employee experiences with the implemented hybrid model. It is important to note that the themes discussed previously are vital for grasping the broader context of how employees perceive hybrid work. However, it is equally crucial to address themes specifically associated with this model. These include achieving the best of both worlds, finding a balance between remote and office work, gaining a competitive advantage by attracting and retaining talent, and recognizing the significance of flexibility and autonomy in the post-pandemic era.

6.3.1 Best of both worlds: provides balance

All interviewees positively regarded hybrid work, appreciating its balance between remote and office settings. They unanimously favoured this over exclusive remote or office work, praising the hybrid model employed by their organizations as an optimal blend. The majority saw hybrid work as a "best of both worlds" approach, valuing its ability to merge the benefits of both work environments. Many also highlighted that the model allowed individuals to very freely choose how much time they spent at the office and at home based on what they found suited them best.

"I really enjoy hybrid work because it offers the best of both worlds. You get the benefits of being in the office, but with the flexibility to work remotely when it suits you best. I definitely wouldn't want to work entirely remotely or exclusively in the office; I find this middle ground of hybrid work to be very effective". (R11)

"No, I would never want to go back to either full-time office work or full-time remote work, because I feel neither would serve me best. To be honest I feel that the middle ground we have now developed through this hybrid model, that allows significant flexibility and autonomy over where one conducts their work, is an ideal way of combining the two forms of work" (R12)

Most respondents also commented on the frequency of office work demanded from the employer as reasonable but simultaneously enough to support face to face interactions. Most were of the opinion that it allowed enough flexibility while at the same time ensured enough in person time with colleagues to be able to build and maintain social relationships. Respondents widely regarded hybrid work as the optimal way to structure work, as it offered them the advantages of both office and remote settings while minimizing the drawbacks of each extreme. Some mentioned that after experiencing the benefits of an office day, it was ideal to work remotely the following day to capitalize on those advantages as well. Hybrid work was viewed as a method that fosters and promotes balance.

"Hybrid work excellently enables the benefits of both forms of working without having to resort to extremes. You can enjoy a day at the office with colleagues and then spend

the next day working peacefully and focused at home. Hybrid work doesn't require giving up the advantages of either working mode." (R10)

"Yeah, I do see the current hybrid model as a good way of working, like going to the office once a week seems fair to me. Once a week is, when you think about it, quite little in the end. It leaves a lot of flexibility for the individual to decide what best suits their situation, but at the same time encourages social interactions." (R2)

"In my opinion, building a sense of community doesn't require seeing each other daily, so I think this current model is very effective. It essentially ensures that we meet regularly, and I believe once a week is regular enough, but it also doesn't overly restrict individuals' autonomy." (R7)

Some respondents emphasized that hybrid work arrangements practically supported their daily lives. For instance, they appreciated being able to spend the morning at the office and then return home in the afternoon to run errands more easily straight after work. Others pointed out that choosing which day to come to the office was practically beneficial for organizing their work week, as it allowed them the freedom to select the most suitable day to be in the office.

"Well, I think it's really practical to be able to spend, for example, the morning at the office and then return to work home after lunch. On days that I might have something planned right after work this really helps with the timetable" (R17)

"I think what's particularly good about this hybrid model is that you get to choose when to come to the office. This way, you can pick a day that suits you and fits well with the tasks you have for that day." (R3)

"This hybrid model is very practical also in the sense that, for example, if it were mandatory to be in the office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but these days were inconvenient for me either due to work tasks or other commitments, I think it would be foolish to come to the office on those days just because it's required. It makes much more sense to let the individual decide and assess which day is best for coming to the office, as the current model allows." (R6)

While respondents greatly appreciated the flexibility to select their office days, they also identified some challenges associated with this freedom. A primary issue was the lack of awareness about when colleagues would be in the office, leading to instances where someone might go to the office only to find others absent. Effective coordination of office days was highlighted as crucial to prevent situations where team members were not present simultaneously, as also discussed above in chapter 6.2.1. Many respondents mentioned that they used WhatsApp group chats or other group chat platforms to help coordinate when others would be at the office as well, to ensure they got the benefits they hoped for from the office day. Additionally, some noted that office days were often scheduled on the same days as team meetings, which led to most of the team being present simultaneously. This approach helped avoid situations where team members were in the office on different days.

"Of course, it's disappointing sometimes to come to the office and find that no one else is there. This hybrid model doesn't guarantee that we'll be in the office at the same time. However, this could certainly be managed just by making agreements within the team, which, to my knowledge, is already being done quite a bit these days." (R13)

"We have a WhatsApp group chat where we can post when we're planning to come to the office the following week, so everyone knows when there's likely to be more people around. We usually align our office days with our team meeting days, which naturally means that more team members are present, which is really nice." (R8)

Overall, respondents collectively agreed that even issues like uncoordinated office visits, common in the hybrid model, could be easily managed using simple tools such as group chats. They viewed the hybrid model as the best and most ideal way to organize work, offering the benefits of both remote and office settings. Additionally, it introduced a welcome variety into the workweek, which was seen as a highly positive feature. While there were differing opinions on how frequently it was necessary or enjoyable to be in the office each week, all respondents agreed that engaging in both forms of work on a weekly or almost weekly basis was beneficial and contributed to a well-balanced work arrangement.

6.3.2 Competitive advantage; attracting and retaining talent

During discussions on hybrid work and its implementation within the research organization, several participants emphasized the significance of the highly flexible model. They noted that this flexibility enabled employees who lived far from the office, including those in different cities, to remain with the organization. Many respondents believed that maintaining a very flexible hybrid model was essential for retaining a competitive edge in the post-pandemic era. They attributed this advantage to the model's capacity to employ individuals from across the country, thus helping to attract and retain top talent. There was a widespread concern among the respondents that reducing the flexibility of the hybrid model could lead to a loss of key personnel, potentially eroding the organization's competitive advantage.

"In my opinion, it would be really foolish to exclude a skilled professional just because they happen to live, say, 500 km away from the headquarters. I think the hybrid model allows us to recruit the best talents regardless of where they live. I believe that not letting location be a barrier to who can work with us is a really good thing and crucial in this day and age where human capital is vital." (R8)

"I think that having flexibility and the freedom to decide where to work is now a competitive advantage. If policies become too restrictive and autonomy is taken away from employees, there's a risk of losing top talent. For some, it may really be the case that they can't visit the office more than one day if they live in another city. For this reason alone, they might have to consider changing jobs." (R14)

Many respondents believed that flexible work arrangements were essential for attracting and retaining talent, especially post-pandemic—due to the shift from pre-pandemic perceptions. They highlighted that the importance of work location flexibility has become a decisive element in determining where and how one works, supporting the idea that flexible work arrangements have moved to the forefront in shaping and sustaining the psychological contract between employees and employers. Some respondents, who lived in cities far from the office, pointed out that if the work model became too restrictive, diminishing their freedom to choose when to come to the office, they would be compelled to seek new employment. This necessity arose not only from

personal preferences but also from practical concerns, such as managing children's after-school activities and other non-work-related responsibilities.

"Well, in my case, unfortunately, if there were any radical tightening of policies, I would probably have to look for a new job. Not just because of the loss of flexibility in itself but also because of the kids' activities and everything else, it would be difficult to manage everyday life if I were forced to spend more time at the office." (R2)

"Since I live so far from the office, if I had to go to the office more often, I would probably have to consider changing jobs. I think the current model works really well. It provides the needed flexibility to be able to live here and still work for this organization." (R1)

"Yes, it would make everyday life more challenging if there was a significant increase in the mandatory office days. I think the current model allows for flexibility so that individuals can decide when it suits them to come to the office based on their other commitments. I myself come to the office more than once a week quite willingly, as long as I can fit it into my schedule." (R5)

Most respondents appeared quite willing to come to the office, expressing that they did not need to be compelled as long as they could align it with their residential location and other work and family obligations. Some respondents also mentioned having numerous customer meetings, which made it challenging to come to the office during certain weeks and thus thought that practicality should also be taken into consideration.

"I often visit clients, so I don't see the need to force mandatory office visits into weeks that are already busy with travel and appointments. Of course, it's good and nice to go to the office, but practicality must also be considered." (R12)

Many respondents believed that if the employer became stricter about where work could be done or mandated office attendance on specific days, it could trigger significant pushback from employees and potentially lead many to consider leaving the organization. Responses like these indicate that changes to flexible work arrangements, such as hybrid work, could have serious repercussions on the psychological contract

between the employer and employee. This concern arises not just from employees' personal preferences but also due to practical reasons that might leave some with no choice but to seek employment elsewhere.

6.3.3 Freedom of choice: the importance of flexibility, autonomy & fairness

As discussed above it was evident from discussions with respondents that flexibility was a key factor in the success of the hybrid working model implemented in the research organization. In fact, every respondent touched on the theme of flexibility in relation to the hybrid model, underscoring its significance. Another closely related topic was the increased sense of autonomy over one's work, which respondents felt had significantly expanded due to the possibilities of remote work. Many pointed out that employees, having grown accustomed to a certain level of autonomy regarding their work location, would likely view any reduction of this autonomy unfavourably. In addition, autonomy was seen as a motivating factor when it came to work and that it supported high performance work outcomes.

"Well, in my opinion, the key factor in making this hybrid model work is its flexibility. A good hybrid model is flexible and takes into account people's individual circumstances." (R16)

"I definitely feel that I've become accustomed to this level of autonomy, and I think it's been proven to work well. Our team's results have been really good in recent years while working according to this hybrid model. I believe I can assess for myself how to best manage my work for the week." (R7)

"I believe this hybrid model effectively ensures the individual's freedom to decide where they work, while also encouraging sufficient office attendance. Now that we've had this freedom and autonomy for years, it would be strange or even foolish to start taking it away. This could potentially have very negative effects" (R6)

Most respondents agreed that under the hybrid model implemented in their organization, the employer has the right and should set clear rules that everyone must follow. This was noted to be important due to the perception of fairness and being treated equally

among fellow colleagues. Regarding this, respondents mentioned that after a sufficient transition period to hybrid work, and once the organization had adapted to the model, the employer would no longer need to "enforce" the hybrid model. The expectation was that coming to the office at least once a week would become a habit, reducing the need for strict control. Respondents indicated that if their employer were to enforce strict office attendance requirements, it would likely prompt them to look for employment opportunities elsewhere that offer more flexibility.

"Well, I believe in the approach of using a carrot rather than a stick, meaning I prefer to encourage rather than force. I think everyone here is quite happy to come to the office now and then. I also believe that many have recently been reminded of how nice it is to visit the office, so I don't know if there's a need to force anyone. However, if we were to start tightening policies, it might turn views on this more negative." (R5)

"Yeah, so if this flexibility were removed and let's say we had to return to the office full-time or could only work remotely very little, then I would definitely start looking for other jobs where a hybrid model is allowed and it's flexible. It would feel somewhat odd to have this flexibility taken away, especially since it has been proven to work" (R2).

Respondents stressed that if employers were to mandate more frequent or specific office days, these directives should be well justified and thoroughly explained. They hoped that employers would clearly articulate the objectives of being at the office on those occasions. Although most respondents acknowledged the employer's right to require office attendance, none wanted to lose the current freedom to choose their work location on any given day. Many expressed that any significant shift towards more mandated office or remote work would be draining and cause negative feelings towards the employer.

"However, I feel that once everyone gets used to coming to the office again and it becomes a "habit," and mechanical rules are no longer necessary. Nonetheless, during this transition phase, I believe the employer should exercise their directive authority to ensure the hybrid model is equitable and fair to everyone, and that it is followed by all. I believe that when it comes to flexible work arrangements such as remote work, they need to be organized in a fair manner" (R8).

"I think it's good to have some kind of recommendation on how often one should come to the office, but if the guidelines were to significantly tighten in one direction or another, I would likely start considering other options." (R1)

"I do understand that employers have the right to require us to be at the office, but this should be done for a well-justified reason. Coming to the office just for the sake of it makes no sense. Also, if someone is away for a week and then asked to compensate by coming to the office for two days the following week, I think that's unfair, especially since there are employees who live in another city and don't come to the office even weekly. In my view, if employees are asked to come to the office, there should be a good reason why. Additionally, the model should be fair and treat everyone with the same flexibility." (R13)

Answers like these support the notion that flexible work arrangements such as remote and hybrid work models can significantly affect the psychological contract, for example, through the perceived experience of fairness and trust. These findings suggest that when it comes to hybrid work arrangements organizations should strive to be as fair as possible because otherwise the allowance of differing flexible work options among employees may cause feelings of unjustness and lack of trust hence damaging the psychological contract and thus the employment relationship. Furthermore, these findings reinforce the idea that any requirements from the employer should be well rationalized. However, the responses also indicated that if the employer were to impose stricter work location policies compared to the current model, it could significantly damage the psychological contract, potentially leading some employees to consider new job opportunities. Many respondents also mentioned that the current model was effective and that work results had been positive, leaving them confused as to why any changes would be necessary. They noted that obviously if there were issues that arose, it would be understandable that the employer took action, but to their experience such issues had not arisen in relation to the hybrid model being implemented. It was evident that respondents greatly valued the autonomy to determine their office attendance days themselves and to be able to largely control how often they came to the office within the recommendations. All the factors discussed above were identified as key reasons why the

current hybrid model was perceived to work so well and maintain and support a positive psychological contract.

7 Discussion

The findings from this study show that there are advantages and disadvantages to each method of organizing work (remote, office and hybrid). The results shed light on various aspects that should be discussed regarding hybrid work arrangements both now and in the future. The first key finding is that the data generally supports hybrid work arrangements, as they offer a balanced approach between remote and office work. The findings indicate that employees find hybrid work to be the most suitable arrangement and generally perceive their experiences with the hybrid model implemented in their organization as positive. Additionally, the results suggest that employee experiences with hybrid work are generally very similar, despite significant variations in job tasks. This was evident from the highly consistent responses of participants with diverse job tasks and responsibilities, suggesting that hybrid work arrangements may be suitable for a wide range of jobs. The findings demonstrate how hybrid working models allow employees to reap the benefits of both remote and office work while reducing the potential negative impacts of relying too heavily on either mode. Therefore, this study generally endorses the adoption of hybrid work arrangements. The second key finding is that each form of work has distinct benefits such as, for example, remote work enhancing work-life balance and productivity, while office workdays are more conducive to community building and certain types of development and innovation work, thus providing insight into how it may be most suitable to combine the two forms of work. Furthermore, the study offers understanding on employees' feelings about returning to the office after the disruption caused by the pandemic. It found that when given the option to return to the office flexibly, employees had a very positive outlook on going back. The third key finding is that the collected data suggests that a hybrid work model offering considerable freedom and autonomy to employees on where they perform their tasks is favoured, as this is seen as a vital factor in maintaining the psychological contract between the employer and employee. The findings underscore the pandemic's impact on the psychological contract between employees and employers, indicating the importance of maintaining flexible work arrangements to uphold this contract. The results reveal a shift towards valuing flexibility post-pandemic, suggesting that rigid work arrangements may lead to job dissatisfaction and potentially end the employment relationship. The implemented model in the research organization proved

effective due to the extensive flexibility it offered employees, suggesting that flexibility plays a key role in the success of hybrid work arrangements.

7.1 Theoretical contribution

As has been noted in previous studies (Krajčák et al. 2023; Asgari et al. 2023; Bloom et al. 2022; Babapour et al. 2021) this study supports the conclusion that the pandemic has disrupted the traditional 9 AM–5 PM office work model, leading to heightened employee expectations for more flexible work arrangements. What seems clear based on both this study and previous ones is that employees in roles suitable for remote work now have increased expectations for greater flexibility regarding when and where they work ((Krajčák et al. 2023; Bloom et al. 2022; Babapour et al. 2021).

The first findings that contribute to existing literature on the topic of hybrid work are the findings related to the subjective experiences of employees on hybrid work arrangements. Though there are some rather recent studies conducted on hybrid work (Bloom et al. 2022; Gratton 2021) this study adds to existing literature by providing key insights into factors to consider when discussing hybrid working models, such as work-life balance, productivity, isolation, community building and the retention of talent. Given the scarcity of research on hybrid working models in the post-pandemic era, this study aims to bridge the gap in the existing literature by exploring both the benefits and challenges of hybrid work that have not been thoroughly examined previously. Many themes emerging from the data are also present in prior research, enabling a comparison of these findings with earlier studies to identify similarities and differences and hence add to the existing pool of knowledge.

Many of the findings related to remote work specifically, align well with existing literature. For instance, consistent with previous studies, this research confirms that most employees believe remote work promotes a better work-life balance. Current literature indicates that the demands of work life are increasingly straining individuals' ability to manage both work and personal responsibilities. As work life grows more demanding, enabling remote work has been shown to facilitate a healthier work-life balance. (Babapour et al. 2021; Bloom et al. 2022; Bloom et al. 2015). In comparison to

some prior studies related to work-life balance (e.g. Golden 2012), respondents in this study did not mention that remote work would cause issues with work-life intruding on home life. It was somewhat unexpected that respondents did not report any negative effects of remote work on work-life balance, especially considering that previous research has suggested this could be an issue, particularly when remote work is conducted more than 2,5 days a week. (Xue and McMunn 2021, Ipsen et al. 2021; Golden 2012; Callier 2012; Gajendran & Harrison 2007). In relation to this, other studies on remote work arrangements also highlight that because remote work involves employees carrying out their tasks from home, a setting they often share with family members, it can make it challenging for employees to effectively ensure work peace and boundaries between work and home (Wang et al. 2023). According to the respondents in this study, remote work was overwhelmingly viewed as supporting a better work-life balance. This suggests that hybrid work, due to remote work not being a full-time endeavour, may offer the ideal balance, preventing issues related to the separation between work and home life. Moreover, correspondingly to earlier research, participants in this study reported increased feelings of productivity and efficiency when working remotely. This observation is in line with the findings made by Babapour et al. (2021) and Bloom et al. (2022), where remote work was associated with enhanced individual productivity due to minimized distractions and interruptions. Such findings support the notion that allowing remote work does support employee's productivity and thus agrees with most of the prior literature on the topic (Vega et al., 2015). Another noteworthy detail that emerged from the data related to perceived productivity in remote work was the increased pressure associated with it. Prior literature on remote work does suggest that a fundamental presumption regarding remote work is that it heightens the focus on output controls, which managers employ to evaluate work productivity and task accomplishment (Groen et al. 2018). Previous studies do suggest that a crucial element for the success of remote work programs is the implementation of output controls. It has been observed that when managers shift their management approach to concentrate on output controls instead of managing through visual or locational oversight of employees, both organizational and individual performance improve. (Kim et al. 2021). However, it's important to note that focusing on output controls is not effective for every kind of job, indicating that the suitability of this remote work management style can depend on the job's nature (Bloom et al. 2015). Based on the results of this study it would be recommendable for organizations to aim to alleviate unnecessary pressure and

clarify reasonable targets to prevent employees from taking on pressure that is not intended to exist. Lastly, in line with prior studies that mention remote work meetings, respondents in this study also identified drawbacks associated with remote meetings. For example, in the study by Babapour et al. (2021) participants struggled with conveying emotions, choosing the appropriate tone in video meetings or written messages, and interpreting the nuanced cues in video conversations, especially when cameras were off during larger meetings. This led to a heightened sense of disconnection, as many found it challenging to grasp the overall atmosphere and understand colleagues' emotions. Respondents in this study similarly highlighted the lack of camera use as a significant issue, adding to the understanding of possible challenges associated with remote communication and meeting practices.

Similarly to previous research (Krajčik et al. 2023; Asgari et al 2023; Shifrin & Michel 2022; Babapour et al. 2021) the findings of this study reinforce the idea that hybrid work is the most favourable method for organizing work post-pandemic. For instance, Krajčik et al. (2023) discovered a significant preference for hybrid work, which blends office and remote work, among culturally diverse groups. Their research highlighted the importance of time and location flexibility, with hybrid models aligning well with these preferences by accommodating employees' needs for flexible work times and places, which is essential for fostering resilient and competitive workplaces. This study similarly emphasizes a strong preference for hybrid arrangements over solely remote or office-based work. It argues that hybrid work allows employees to enjoy the advantages of both remote and office settings in a balanced way. The findings indicate that for hybrid work to succeed, it must offer considerable flexibility and cater to individual needs and preferences, allowing employees to choose their workdays at home and at the office, which aligns with the findings made in other studies (Krajčik et al. 2023; Asgari et al 2023; Shifrin & Michel 2022; Babapour et al. 2021). Additionally, this study points out the importance of fairness in hybrid work arrangements. Fair treatment is deemed crucial for maintaining a positive psychological contract between the employer and employee. Perceptions of unfairness or bias within the hybrid model were experienced as demotivating and angering by respondents. These results highlight that employees greatly value fairness, flexibility and sufficient autonomy in hybrid work setups, contributing further to the literature on the characteristics that should define hybrid working models.

The second significant finding that advances our understanding of hybrid work is its impact on the psychological contract between employers and employees. A unique contribution of this study is its examination of the shift in the psychological contract and the increasing importance of flexibility. This study suggests that if flexible work arrangements such as hybrid working models are altered in a manner that reduces flexibility, autonomy, or fairness, this may lead to significantly negative consequences on the psychological contract between the employee and employer. As discussed in chapter 2.3 Kim et al. (2021), Jaakson & Kallaste (2010) and de Menezes & Kelliher (2017) found that remote work arrangements improved the psychological contract between employees and employers, as employees experienced greater autonomy, which they perceived as beneficial. This positive effect on psychological contracts arose from employees' desire to reciprocate the freedom granted to them. The findings from this study suggest a noticeable shift in employees' attitudes compared to the pre-pandemic era. Respondents firmly believed that the ability to work both remotely and at the office should be considered a fundamental right, and many indicated they would consider leaving the organization if this flexibility were not allowed. Similarly, Bloom et al. (2022) found in their study on hybrid work arrangements that providing flexibility in the workplace location significantly reduced attrition rates. This supports the findings of this study, which suggest that if the flexibility of work location is overly restricted, employees may be inclined to seek employment elsewhere. Furthermore, respondents praised the hybrid model's effectiveness and warned that any changes to it could lead to adverse effects. Thus, this study suggests that employees now view flexible work arrangements like hybrid work as the standard practice rather than a special privilege. Indeed, many respondents remarked that working in a hybrid model has, in their view, become the new norm. This reflects a substantial shift from the earlier literature on remote work before the pandemic, where the flexibility and increased autonomy provided by this form of work were primarily seen as enhancing the psychological contract, rather than comprehensively supporting, and sustaining it.

The third significant contribution of this study is its examination of employees' return to office work post-pandemic. Given the relatively recent end of the pandemic, there is limited research on how employees feel about returning to the office after predominantly working remotely for several years. The findings of this study indicate

that employees are very willing and happy to return to the office, provided it aligns with their work tasks and other non-work responsibilities. Therefore, allowing employees flexibility in choosing when to come to the office was deemed essential for maintaining their positive attitude towards being there. The study reveals that employees greatly value being at the office and interacting with their colleagues face-to-face, as long as they have the freedom to choose when to do so. The findings emphasize the continued importance of face-to-face interactions, while simultaneously acknowledging that while the necessity for office work remains crucial, the amount of office work perceived necessary by employees has lessened significantly. The study also suggests that certain tasks are better suited for the office. For example, based on the gathered data, development and innovation work involving multiple participants is more beneficial to conduct from the office due to the possibility for face-to-face collaboration and discussion. Therefore, since office work remains a vital component of hybrid work, the findings suggest that part-time office work offers significant value to both employees and organizations. This is due to its positive impacts on community building, organizational culture, and specific work tasks.

7.2 Managerial implications

Numerous studies indicate that organizations are exploring optimal work arrangements following pandemic-induced shifts in working life (Asgari et al. 2023; Krajčik et al. 2023; Babapour et al. 2021; Barrero et al. 2021). The pandemic led to substantial changes in work practices, making a return to pre-pandemic norms unlikely. Therefore, organizations are navigating the challenge of identifying the most effective ways to structure work in today's context. This research equips organizations with practical implications for structuring work post-pandemic, highlighting important considerations for hybrid work arrangements. While these findings should not be universally applied, they emphasize crucial aspects to consider during implementation. The study sheds light on potential drawbacks and benefits of remote and hybrid models, stressing the importance of understanding their impacts on both employees and the organization. Such awareness enables more informed decision-making regarding work organization. For hybrid work to deliver on its potential benefits for both individuals and organizations, it's essential that employers offer support and flexibility. The results of this study suggest that flexibility and considerable autonomy for employees to choose

their remote and office workdays are key components of an effective hybrid model. The findings indicate that employees are very willing to come to the office occasionally and recognize its advantages, provided they have significant leeway to decide when to do so. Employers must also reconfigure both physical and digital workspaces to meet the evolving and varied needs of their employees, ensuring a seamless integration of different work modes. The findings of this study suggest that it might be beneficial to have office spaces that promote socialization, such as open offices, since they play a vital role in fostering community at the workplace in hybrid working models.

Conversely, employers are encouraged to take greater responsibility for employees' home office setups and provide the necessary equipment to ensure a healthy work environment at home. Moreover, it is considered crucial to establish practices that coordinate employees' office attendance on the same days. This could be achieved, for example, by permitting teams to decide on hybrid work schedules at the team level, where team members collectively determine which days would be practical and advantageous for them to be in the office together. Additionally, establishing structured practices, such as requiring the use of cameras during remote communications, could help alleviate some of the challenges associated with remote work.

7.3 Limitations of the study and future research suggestions

This research was carried out as a qualitative study, utilizing semi-structured interviews for data collection. Evaluating the methodological choices in the context of the research outcomes, the approach is deemed effective in addressing the research questions.

Furthermore, the thematic analysis of the material yielded interesting and informative insights on the subject, affirming the success of the chosen methodology.

This study offers theoretical and managerial insights but is not without its limitations. Primarily, the findings are obtained from employee interviews within a single organization, specifically reflecting the experiences of employees there. While the findings can serve as guidelines for implementing hybrid work arrangements in other organizations, it is crucial to acknowledge that this study's results are based specifically on one organization and should not be universally applied. Rather these findings should inform discussions on hybrid work arrangements and be considered to aid in their successful implementation. For insights tailored to the specific impacts of hybrid work arrangements on employees and their consequences within a particular industry or

organization, conducting a focused study in such contexts is highly recommended. As organizations increasingly adopt hybrid work models to meet employee expectations, a rich pool of data will become available to refine these models. With hybrid work becoming more common and recognized as a viable long-term arrangement, research opportunities into how employees navigate these settings will expand, offering deeper insights into the critical nuances that should be addressed. This data will be key in identifying the most effective practices for diverse employee groups and various working conditions, with the goal of establishing efficient and satisfying work environments. (Babapour et al. 2021).

Moreover though 17 interviews were considered sufficient for this study's aims, they may not fully represent an organization with over 450 employees and thus this should also be paid attention to. Additionally, the study's focus excluded managers and executives, thereby lacking perspectives on how hybrid work arrangements impact these roles. Also, all participants were Finnish, suggesting that a more culturally diverse sample might have yielded different insights. In relation to this, all interviews were held in Finnish to align with the native language of all participants, aiming to ensure more natural conversations and facilitate easier responses. While this approach was chosen to improve communication, it is important to recognize that the translations presented in this study might not always be exact, due to translation challenges. Additionally, translation carries the risk of misinterpreting quotes and comments by respondents. However, the researcher took great care to consider this risk, asking follow-up questions during interviews to ensure accurate understanding of the respondents' points. This study highlights the complexity of implementing hybrid work arrangements, underscoring the need for further research. For example, leadership dynamics within hybrid environments could offer an interesting research direction to gain deeper understanding of possible challenges and advantages from this perspective. Given the research conducted before and during the COVID-19 pandemic already explored this area to some extent (Avolio & Kahai 2003; Golden & Veiga 2008; Contreas et al. 2020), it remains relevant to continue studying it post-pandemic, as leading in a hybrid work environment will undoubtedly necessitate adaptations and the development of new leadership competencies among managers and executives. Furthermore, examining how employees' individual traits influence their hybrid work experiences offers a promising research path. The results of this study indicate that an individual's personal preferences and personality traits can significantly influence how they perceive and benefit from

flexible work arrangements. Therefore, it highlights the importance of further investigation into these aspects in relation to flexible work arrangements such as hybrid work. Exploring the impact of demographic factors like gender, marital status, age, and educational level on hybrid work experiences could be a fruitful research direction. Such studies might reveal which demographics are best suited for remote and hybrid work arrangements, or even if it's possible to establish such guidelines. While this study did not consider demographic factors in relation to hybrid work, it acknowledges the significant potential of this area for future research.

This study highlights that flexible work arrangements post-pandemic can significantly impact the psychological contract between employees and employers, suggesting that continued research into these effects could provide essential insights into the employment relationship and the influence of various work organization methods. It is advisable to further explore how employees perceive the impact of flexible work arrangements like remote and hybrid work on their psychological contracts with employers, and whether these arrangements are considered vital in discussions about the psychological contract. While this research initially indicates that a shift in the psychological contract has occurred regarding remote and hybrid work compared to pre-pandemic times, a substantial body of research is necessary to thoroughly ascertain the effects of these changes in attitudes towards remote and hybrid work from the perspective of the psychological contract between employees and employers.

7.4 Conclusions

The primary goal of this study was to provide readers with a detailed understanding of how employees perceive hybrid work arrangements. By examining these experiences, the research seeks to outline the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of work within hybrid setups. Understanding the benefits of both remote and office work helps us make better-informed choices about effective hybrid work configurations. Additionally, this study examines the impact of such flexible work arrangements on the psychological contract between employees and employers. This focus stems from

previous research which suggested that flexible work arrangements, like hybrid work, could enhance and strengthen the psychological contract through the reciprocal feelings they evoke in employees (Kim et al 2021; Jaakson & Kallaste 2010). However, the findings of this study indicate a shift from pre-pandemic perceptions; flexible work arrangements are now seen as standard practice rather than a special perk, which reduces the reciprocal impact they once had on employee behavior. Instead, the findings of this study suggest that flexible work arrangements, such as hybrid work, have become essential in forming a psychological contract between the employee and employer altogether. The absence of flexibility is likely to result in severe negative outcomes, such as employees seeking jobs elsewhere that offer greater flexibility and autonomy. Particularly in an era where human capital is considered a vital competitive asset, losing talent and knowledge because of inflexible work arrangements could be highly detrimental to organizations. Therefore, understanding the evolving dynamics of flexibility and the psychological contract is critical. Grasping the needs of employees in terms of their work schedule and location is crucial, as the future sustainability and competitive edge of workplaces hinge on their capacity to adapt and demonstrate resilience. Work environments that prioritize employee preferences and demonstrate flexibility are better positioned to sustain high levels of productivity, performance, and employee satisfaction (Asgari et al. 2023). Hence, this study provides understanding and insight into what these preferences are and helps organizations better comprehend different aspects related to hybrid work arrangements.

Concluding remarks

I wish to conclude this study with a quote by Gratton (2021) related to the adoption of any hybrid working model which goes as follows *“Finally ask yourself, whether your hybrid work arrangements, whatever they are, accentuate your company’s values and support its culture. Carefully and thoughtfully take stock: In the changes you have made, have you created a foundation for the future that everybody in the company will find engaging, fair, inspiring, and meaningful?”* Following this research, I am convinced that this quote encapsulates the core objective of the study: to deepen our comprehension of how hybrid work can serve as an effective work arrangement, improving employees' capacity to perform their tasks—a critical element underpinning organizational success. Like all work arrangements, the primary focus should be on cultivating work practices that are advantageous for both individuals and the organization collectively.

References

- Adams-Prassl, A., Boneva, T., Golin, M., & Rauh, C. (2022). Work that can be done from home: Evidence on variation within and across occupations and industries. *Labour Economics*, 74, 102083.
- Adisa, T. A., Ogbonnaya, C., & Adekoya, O. D. (2021). Remote working and employee engagement: a qualitative study of British workers during the pandemic. *Information Technology & People*.
- Albrecht, G. H. (2003). How friendly are family friendly policies? *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 13(2), 177-192.
- Allen, T. D. (2001). Family-supportive work environments: The role of organizational perceptions. *Journal of vocational behaviour*, 58(3), 414-435.
- Anderson, A. J., Kaplan, S. A., & Vega, R. P. (2015). The impact of telework on emotional experience: When, and for whom, does telework improve daily affective well-being? *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 24(6), 882-897.
- Ayache, J., Heym, N., Sumich, A., Rhodes, D., Connor, A. M., & Marks, S. (2021). Feeling closer despite the distance: How to cultivate togetherness within digital spaces. *Handbook of Research on Remote Work and Worker Well-Being in the Post-COVID-19 Era*, 243-263.
- Bakarich, K. M., Marcy, A. S., & O'Brien, P. E. (2022). Has the fever left a burn? A study of the impact of COVID-19 remote working arrangements on public accountants' burnout. *Accounting Research Journal*, 35(6), 792-814.
- Baruch, Y. (2000). Teleworking: Benefits and pitfalls as perceived by professionals and managers. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 15, 34 – 49.
- Bentley, K., & Yoong, P. (2000). Knowledge work and telework: an exploratory study. *Internet Research*, 10 (4), 346-356.
- Bentley, T. A., Teo, S. T., McLeod, L., Tan, F., Bosua, R., & Gloet, M. (2016). The role of organisational support in teleworker wellbeing: A socio-technical systems approach. *Applied ergonomics*, 52, 207-215.
- Bloom, N., Han, R., & Liang, J. (2022). How Hybrid Working From Home Works Out. NBER Working Paper Series.
- Bloom, N., Liang, J., Roberts, J., & Ying, Z. J. (2015). Does working from home work? Evidence from a Chinese experiment. *The Quarterly journal of economics*, 130(1), 165-218.
- Boell, S. K., Campbell, J., Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., & Cheng, J. E. (2013). Advantages, challenges and contradictions of the transformative nature of telework: A review of the literature. *Proceedings of the 19th Americas conference on information systems*, Chicago, IL, USA.

- Bolisani, E., Scarso, E., Ipsen, C., Kirchner, K., & Hansen, J. P. (2020). Working from home during COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons learned and issues. *Management & Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society*, 15(s1), 458-476.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bright, L. (2021). Does perceptions of organizational prestige mediate the relationship between public service motivation, job satisfaction, and the turnover intentions of federal employees? *Public Personnel Management*, 50(3), 408-429.
- Brunelle, E., & Fortin, J.-A. (2021). Distance Makes the Heart Grow Fonder: An Examination of Teleworkers' and Office Workers' Job Satisfaction Through the Lens of Self-Determination Theory. *SAGE Open*, 11(1), 215824402098551-.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), "Job flexibilities and work schedules summary"
<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/flex2.nr0.htm> retrieved 17.3.2024
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2013). News release: American time use survey – 2012 results.
https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/atus_06202013.pdf Retrieved 21.10.2022
- Charalampous, M., Grant, C. A., Tramontano, C., & Michailidis, E. (2019). Systematically reviewing remote e-workers' well-being at work: a multidimensional approach. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 28 (1), 51–73.
- Choudhury, P. (Raj), Foroughi, C., & Larson, B. (2021). Work-from-anywhere: The productivity effects of geographic flexibility. *Strategic Management Journal*, 42(4), 655–683.
- Cook, J., Mor, Y., & Santos, P. (2020). Three cases of hybridity in learning spaces: Towards a design for a Zone of Possibility. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 51(4), 1155-1167.
- D. Smite, E. L. Christensen, P. Tell and D. Russo, "The Future Workplace: Characterizing the Spectrum of Hybrid Work Arrangements for Software Teams," in *IEEE Software*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 34-41, March-April 2023
- De Menezes, L. M., & Kelliher, C. (2017). Flexible working, individual performance, and employee attitudes: Comparing formal and informal arrangements. *Human Resource Management*, 56(6), 1051-1070.
- Dent, A., Taylor, C., Aslam, D., McManus, E., & Yates, S. (2021). *A Practical Guide to Managing Hybrid Teams*. Oxford Group, Eynsham. England.
- Diekema, D. A. (1992). Aloneness and social form. *Symbolic interaction*, 15(4), 481-500.
- DOCKERY, A. M., & BAWA, S. (2018). When two worlds collude: Working from home and family functioning in Australia. *International Labour Review*, 157(4), 609–630.
- Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017 Retrieved 21.10.2022
<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/2017/working-anytime-anywhere-effects-world-work>

- Felstead, A., & Henseke, G. (2017). Assessing the growth of remote working and its consequences for effort, well-being and work-life balance. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 32(3), 195-212.
- Forman, J., & Damschroder, L. (2007). Qualitative Content Analysis. In *Advances in Bioethics* (Vol. 11, pp. 39–62). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Gajendran, R. S., & Harrison, D. A. (2007). The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown About Telecommuting: Meta-Analysis of Psychological Mediators and Individual Consequences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(6), 1524–1541.
- Galanti, T., Ferrara, B., Benevene, P., & Buonomo, I. (2023). Rethinking the Unthinkable: A Delphi Study on Remote Work during COVID-19 Pandemic. *Social Sciences*, 12(9), 497.
- Gerstner, C. R., & Day, D. V. (1997). Meta-Analytic review of leader–member exchange theory: Correlates and construct issues. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(6), 827.
- Golden, T. D. (2012). Altering the effects of work and family conflict on exhaustion: Telework during traditional and nontraditional work hours. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 27, 255-269.
- Golden, T. D., & Fromen, A. (2011). Does it matter where your manager works? Comparing managerial work mode (traditional, telework, virtual) across subordinate work experiences and outcomes. *Human relations*, 64(11), 1451- 1475.
- Golden, T. D., & Veiga, J. F. (2008). The impact of superior–subordinate relationships on the commitment, job satisfaction, and performance of virtual workers. *The leadership quarterly*, 19(1), 77-88.
- Golden, T. D., Veiga, J. F., & Dino, R. N. (2008). The impact of professional isolation on teleworker job performance and turnover intentions: does time spent teleworking, interacting face-to-face, or having access to communication-enhancing technology matter? *Journal of applied psychology*, 93(6), 1412.
- Gratton, L. (2021). Four principles to ensure hybrid work is productive work. *MIT Sloan management review*, 62(2), 11A-16A.
- Gratton, L. (2021). How to do hybrid right. *Harvard Business Review*, 99(3), 65-74.
- Greer, T. W., & Payne, S. C. (2014). Overcoming telework challenges: Outcomes of successful telework strategies. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, 17(2), 87.
- Groen, B. A., Van Triest, S. P., Coers, M., & Wtenweerde, N. (2018). Managing flexible work arrangements: Teleworking and output controls. *European Management Journal*, 36(6), 727-735.
- Guest, D. E. (2004). The psychology of the employment relationship: An analysis based on the psychological contract. *Applied psychology*, 53(4), 541-555.
- Halford, S. (2005). Hybrid workspace: Re-specializations of work, organization and management. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 20(1), 19-33.

- Hickman, A. (2019). Workplace isolation occurring in remote workers (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).
- Hirsjärvi, S., Remes, P., & Sajavaara, P. (2004). Tutki ja kirjoita. 10. Uudistettu painos.
- Ipsen, C., van Veldhoven, M., Kirchner, K., & Hansen, J. P. (2021). Six key advantages and disadvantages of working from home in Europe during COVID-19. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(4), 1826.
- Jamal, M. T., Anwar, I., Khan, N. A., & Ahmad, G. (2024). How do teleworkers escape burnout? A moderated-mediation model of the job demands and turnover intention. *International Journal of Manpower*, 45(1), 169–199.
- Jostell, D., & Hemlin, S. (2018). After hours teleworking and boundary management: Effects on work-family conflict. *Work*, 60(3), 475-483.
- Kalleberg, A. L., & Rognes, J. (2000). Employment relations in Norway: Some dimensions and correlates. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21(3), 315-335.
- Karnowski, S., & White, B. J. (2002). The role of facility managers in the diffusion of organizational telecommuting. *Environment and Behavior*, 34(3), 322-334.
- Kim, J., & Dirks, A. (2023). Is Your Organization's Remote Work Strategy "Working"? Exploring the Impact of Employees' Attitudes Toward Flexible Work Arrangements on Inclusion and Turnover Intention. *Therapeutic Innovation & Regulatory Science*, 57(6), 1209-1216.
- Kim, T., Mullins, L. B., & Yoon, T. (2021). Supervision of Telework: A Key to Organizational Performance. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 51(4), 263-277.
- Kopelman, R. E., Prottas, D. J., Thompson, C. A., & Jahn, E. W. (2006). A Multilevel Examination of Work-Life Practices: Is More Always Better? *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 18(2), 232–253.
- Kossek, E. E., Lautsch, B. A., & Eaton, S. C. (2006). Telecommuting, control, and boundary management: Correlates of policy use and practice, job control, and work-family effectiveness. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 68(2), 347–367.
- Lal, B., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2009). Homeworkers' usage of mobile phones; social isolation in the home-workplace. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, 22(3), 257-274.
- Larson, B. Z., Vroman, S. R., & Makarius, E. E. (2020). A guide to managing your (newly) remote workers. *Harvard Business Review*, 18(2), 27-35.
- Laschinger, H. K. S. (2012). Job and career satisfaction and turnover intentions of newly graduated nurses. *Journal of nursing management*, 20(4), 472-484.
- Lincoln, Y. S., Guba, E. G., & Pilotta, J. J. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 9(4), 438–439.
- Locke, E. A. (1969). What is job satisfaction?. *Organizational behaviour and human performance*, 4(4), 309-336.

- Lorentzon, J. I., Fotoh, L. E., & Mugwira, T. (2024). Remote auditing and its impacts on auditors' work and work-life balance: auditors' perceptions and implications. *Accounting Research Journal*, 37(1), 1–18.
- Madsen, S. R. (2011). The Benefits, Challenges, and Implications of Teleworking: A Literature Review. *Culture & Religion Review Journal*, 2011(1).
- Marshall, G. W., Michaels, C. E., & Mulki, J. P. (2007). Workplace isolation: Exploring the construct and its measurement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 24(3), 195-223.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook* (2. ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Miller, J. (1975). Isolation in Organizations: Alienation from Authority, Control, and Expressive Relations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 20(2), 260–271.
- Montreuil, S., & Lippel, K. (2003). Telework and occupational health: a Quebec empirical study and regulatory implications. *Safety Science*, 41(4), 339-358.
- Morganson, V. J., Major, D. A., Oborn, K. L., Verive, J. M., & Heelan, M. P. (2010). Comparing telework locations and traditional work arrangements: Differences in work-life balance support, job satisfaction, and inclusion. *Journal of Managerial psychology*, 25(6), 578-595.
- Myers, M. D., & Newman, M. (2007). The qualitative interview in IS research: Examining the craft. *Information and organization*, 17(1), 2-26.
- Nayani, R. J., Nielsen, K., Daniels, K., Donaldson-Feilder, E. J., & Lewis, R. C. (2018). Out of sight and out of mind? A literature review of occupational safety and health leadership and management of distributed workers. *Work & Stress*, 32(2), 124-146.
- Nemţeanu, M. S., & Dabija, D. C. (2023). Negative impact of telework, job insecurity, and work–life conflict on employee behaviour. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(5), 4182.
- Nurmi, N., & Hinds, P. J. (2020). Work design for global professionals: Connectivity demands, connectivity behaviours, and their effects on psychological and behavioural outcomes. *Organization Studies*, 41(12), 1697-1724.
- O'Donnell, R. W., O'Malley, J. J., Huis, R. J., & Halt, G. B. (2008). *Intellectual property in the food technology industry: Protecting your innovation*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- O'Rourke, G. A. (2021). Workplace strategy: A new workplace model. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 59(4), 554-566.
- Oettinger, G. S. (2011). The incidence and wage consequences of home-based work in the United States, 1980–2000. *Journal of Human Resources*, 46(2), 237-260.
- Parasuraman, S., & Greenhaus, J. H. (2002). Toward reducing some critical gaps in work–family research. *Human resource management review*, 12(3), 299-312.

- Pulido-Martos, M., Cortés-Denia, D., & Lopez-Zafra, E. (2021). Teleworking in times of COVID-19: Effects on the acquisition of personal resources. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 685275.
- Pyöriä, P. (2005). The concept of knowledge work revisited. *Journal of knowledge management*, 9(3), 116-127.
- Richardson, J., & Mckenna, S. (2014). Reordering spatial and social relations: A case study of professional and managerial flex workers. *British Journal of Management*, 25(4), 724–736.
- Ronnie E de Souza Santos, & Paul, R. (2022). Practices to Improve Teamwork in Software Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Ethnographic Study.
- Rousseau, D. M., & Tijoriwala, S. A. (1998). Assessing psychological contracts: Issues, alternatives and measures. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 19(S1), 679-695.
- Ruch, W. A. (1994). Measuring and managing individual productivity. *Organizational linkages: Understanding the productivity paradox*, 105-130.
- Sarajärvi, A., & Tuomi, J. (2018). Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällön analyysi: Uudistettu laitos. Tammi.
- Sardeshmukh, S. R., Sharma, D., & Golden, T. D. (2012). Impact of telework on exhaustion and job engagement: a job demands and job resources model. *New Technology, Work, and Employment*, 27(3), 193–207.
- Schein, E. H. (1965). *Organizational psychology* (p. 59). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Schein, E. H. (2015). Organizational psychology then and now: Some observations. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav.*, 2(1), 1-19.
- Sewell, G., & Taskin, L. (2015). Out of sight, out of mind in a new world of work? Autonomy, control, and spatiotemporal scaling in telework. *Organization studies*, 36(11), 1507-1529.
- Shifrin, N. V., & Michel, J. S. (2022). Flexible work arrangements and employee health: A meta-analytic review. *Work & Stress*, 36(1), 60-85.
- Shockley, K. M., & Allen, T. D. (2007). When flexibility helps: Another look at the availability of flexible work arrangements and work–family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 71(3), 479–493.
- Singh, S., & Sant, S. (2023). The Moderating Role of Workplace (Hybrid/Remote) on Employee Engagement and Employee Turnover Intention. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 1-16.
- Smite, D., Moe, N. B., Hildrum, J., Gonzalez-Huerta, J., & Mendez, D. (2023). Work-from-home is here to stay: Call for flexibility in post-pandemic work policies. *Journal of Systems and Software*, 195, 111552.

- Sostero, M.; Milasi, S.; Hurley, J.; Fernandez-Macias, E.; Bisello, M. Teleworkability and the COVID-19 Crisis: A New Digital Divide? No. 2020/05, Seville, 2020. Available online: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/www.econstor.eu> (accessed on 12 December 2023).
- Sparrow, P. R. (2000). New employee behaviours, work designs and forms of work organization: what is in store for the future of work? *Journal of managerial psychology*, 15(3), 202-218.
- Stiles, J., & Smart, M. J. (2021). Working at home and elsewhere: daily work location, telework, and travel among United States knowledge workers. *Transportation*, 48(5), 2461-2491.
- Suh, A., & Lee, J. (2017). Understanding teleworkers' technostress and its influence on job satisfaction. *Internet research*, 27(1), 140-159.
- Tavares, A. I. (2017). Telework and health effects review. *International Journal of Healthcare*, 3(2), 30-36.
- ten Brummelhuis, L. L., Bakker, A. B., Hetland, J., & Keulemans, L. (2012). Do new ways of working foster work engagement? *Psicothema*, 24(1), 113-120.
- Ter Hoeven, C. L., & Van Zoonen, W. (2015). Flexible work designs and employee well-being: Examining the effects of resources and demands. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 30(3), 237-255.
- Ter Hoeven, C. L., van Zoonen, W., & Fonner, K. L. (2016). The practical paradox of technology: The influence of communication technology use on employee burnout and engagement. *Communication Monographs*, 83(2), 239-263.
- Tschopp, C., Grote, G., & Gerber, M. (2014). How career orientation shapes the job satisfaction-turnover intention link. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 35(2), 151-171.
- Tsui, A., Pearce, J., Porter, L., & Hite, J. (1995). Choice of employee-organization relationship: Influence of internal and external organizational factors. In G. Ferris (Ed.), *Research in personnel and human resource management* (Vol. 13, pp. 117-151). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Tsui, A., Pearce, J., Porter, L., & Tripoli, A. (1997). Alternative approaches to the employee-organization relationship: Does investment in employees pay off? *Academy of Management Journal*, 40, 1089-1121.
- Van Zoonen, W., & Sivunen, A. E. (2022). The impact of remote work and mediated communication frequency on isolation and psychological distress. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 31(4), 610-621.
- Vesala, H. (2023). Lived rhythms as a ground for togetherness and learning in hybrid workspace. *Management Learning*, 135050762311701
- Viererbl, B., Denner, N., & Koch, T. (2022). "You don't meet anybody when walking from the living room to the kitchen": informal communication during remote work. *Journal of Communication Management*, 26(3), 331-348.

Wang, H., Xiao, Y., Zhang, H., & Chen, X. (2023). “Who Knows Me Understands My Needs”: The Effect of Home-Based Telework on Work Engagement. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 16, 619–635.

Workman, M. (2005). Virtual team culture and the amplification of team boundary permeability on performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 16(4), 435-458.

Yang, L., Holtz, D., Jaffe, S., Suri, S., Sinha, S., Weston, J., ... Teevan, J. (2022). The effects of remote work on collaboration among information workers. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6(1), 43–54.

Yoon, Sojung; Chan, Jason; Lin, Jinan; and Nian, Tingting, 2023. The Value of Remote Work in the Post-Covid Era: An Empirical Assessment of Employee Turnover and Wage. *ICIS 2023 Proceedings*, 9.

Appendices

Interview questions

Background questions:

Could you briefly introduce yourself? Could you also mention your current position?

How long have you been working in roles like the one you have now? And in this field?

How long have you been working at the organization where you are currently employed (Elo)?

How long have you been in your current role with your current employer?

What are your main responsibilities at work? Could you describe what a typical day looks like for you at the moment?

Factors affecting the smoothness and meaningfulness of work (informal reflection, not focusing directly on remote or office work):

When you think about a normal workday, what first comes to mind regarding what supports smooth working and makes work meaningful?

Can you think of specific factors that you believe clearly contribute to what you consider "really successful/good workdays"?

Are there any factors that play a central role when talking about the smoothness of work? What about when discussing the meaningfulness of work?

Factors complicating work and presenting challenges (informal reflection, not focusing directly on remote or office work):

When thinking about a normal workday, what first comes to mind about things that might complicate or hinder your work?

Can you think of specific factors that might lead to a "bad workday"?

Are there any factors that play a central role when discussing difficulties in working? What about factors that prevent smooth work?

Attitudes towards remote work/ impact on one's own work:

What are your general thoughts on remote work?

On average, how many days a week do you work remotely?

Have there been significant changes in how you work due to remote work? Have you had to develop new ways of working while working remotely?

Do you feel that remote work affects your work in any way?

Have there been situations where you've found remote work particularly good? If so, could you give an example?

Have there been situations where you've found remote working to be particularly challenging? If so, could you give an example?

Do you think remote work has affected how your team works in any way?

Does remote work affect how you generally can work with your colleagues?

Do you think seeing colleagues less often in person affects work?

Have you noticed differences in interacting with colleagues virtually versus face-to-face?

Do you think remote work has more benefits or drawbacks when you consider its impact on your work and job satisfaction?

Are there factors that particularly support/make remote work smoother and more enjoyable? Are there factors that weaken the functionality of remote work as a working mode?

Attitudes towards being in the office/ impact on one's own work:

How do you feel about going to the office nowadays?

How many times a week do you typically go to the office? If it were up to you, how often would you go? Why?

Could you give an example of a situation where you feel it's particularly important to be in the office?

Do you find visiting the office beneficial? Does it support your work in some tangible way? Could you give an example?

Do you think the benefits of going to the office outweigh the possible drawbacks (e.g., commute, practicality, scheduling, etc.)?

Does being in the office affect your team's work? If so, how?

Does office work affect how you can generally work with your colleagues?

Attitudes towards combining remote work and office presence (hybrid model):

What has been your experience with the hybrid work model applied in your organization? (What challenges? What opportunities?)

How did you feel about hybrid work a year ago? And now? Has there been a change in your attitude?

Do you find it necessary to work both remotely and in the office weekly? Could you give an example?

Does the hybrid work model support your work in some tangible way compared to full-time remote work or full-time office work? Could you give an example?

Do you think hybrid work is the best way to combine remote work and office presence? (Is it the so-called golden mean for combining remote and presence work?)

Are there factors that could make hybrid work smoother? (E.g., certain support from the employer, etc.)?

Do you think the hybrid model has affected how your team works in any way? What about working with colleagues in general?

What do you think about the employer's recommendation/requirement to come to the office once a week? Is such a policy necessary? If so, why? If not, why not?