Thesis

"How do new venture teams build cohesion in a virtual setting"

By

Albin Pellbäck

Dion van der Helden

Abstract

The covid-19 related health crisis has marked a revolution in the history of remote work. New venture teams (NVTs) are being forced or recommended to pursue their new venture remotely and digitally and are likely to encounter obstacles. Therefore, having to deal with remote and virtual teamwork is critical to understand the reasoning behind operating a new venture. This virtual teamwork partly depends on technological resources but mostly leans on effective team dynamics, where trust, acceptance, awareness and coherence play a crucial role. The focus is on researching cohesion as this factor appears to have a fundamental role in maintaining efficient teamwork. The benefits of cohesion on individuals and teams are ubiquitous and associated with successful performance and are therefore heavily researched. Nevertheless, how cohesion is being built in NVTs that have been forced to work in a virtual setting has not been researched yet. This study investigates how NVTs currently build cohesion in a virtual setting by following a qualitative research design. Furthermore, an iterative approach has been used that implements case studies to allow for an in-depth understanding of how processes unfold from the topic at hand. In line with the inductive approach, semi-structured interviews allowed for rich data that has been thematically analyzed via a hybrid approach and the use of NVivo. The results of this study display to what extent the researched NVTs exhibited cohesion or not, and the study provides key insights into how the NVTs build cohesion in a virtual setting. The NVTs use a wide variety of approaches that aid the task and social related cohesion performances, two subdimensions of cohesion. The study ends with accompanying research propositions are described that inform future research and the practice of building cohesion in virtual settings.

Keywords

Acknowledgements

The authors of this thesis would like to express their gratitude for the support of their supervisors Anna Brattström and Diamanto Politis through the various supervisions and seminars. Furthermore, a big thank you needs to go to the ten enthusiastic and knowledgeable interviewees who shared their insights, expertise, and feelings. The thesis presented here is based on unique and rich input from the research participants, guidance from our supervisors, and peer support from our fellow classmates.

Table of content

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

ATG-S	Attraction to Group – Social
ATG-T	Attraction to Group – Task
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
DE	Denmark
GE	Germany
GI-S	Group Integration – Social
GI-T	Group Integration – Task
I- #	Interviewee number
ICR	Intercoder Reliability (Test)
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
NVT	New Venture Team
SE	Sweden
TU	Turkey

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

New venture creation is an entrepreneurial process and a central aspect of entrepreneurship research, seen as a valuable source of innovation and increasingly crucial for economic and societal development around the world (Samuelsson & Jönköping International Business School, 2004; Ahlstrom, 2010; Acs, Desai & Hessels, 2008). A new venture is a firm in its early stages of development and growth, it is in the process of bringing a product or service to the market, thereby forming a customer base and starting to form organizational structures (Cooney, 2005; Klotz et al., 2014). A vital factor for a venture to succeed is the team. New venture teams (NVTs) distinguish themselves by their unique nature of the new venture context. NVTs must lead their start-ups through the first stages of the entrepreneurial process and thereby try to establish a positive social and professional working environment (Klotz et al., 2014). Also, because of the greater managerial discretion and broader latitude of action than most teams, the behavior of NVTs and their participants have pressing effects on how the organization develops and grows over time (Klotz et al., 2014).

Companies and organizations adapt to the digital culture, so do NVTs. Digitalization is changing the way we socialize, communicate and work (Blackburn et al., 2020; De', Pandey & Pal, 2020). The role and importance of offices and workspaces seem to have decreased in many industries as the gig workers and the gig economy is scaling up (Blackburn et al., 2020; De', Pandey & Pal, 2020). Modern technology enables individuals and groups to work more freely, forming virtual teams where people do no longer have to be physically together or even in the same time zone, to work together (Blackburn et al., 2020). As boundaries and other limitations that come with working in a physical office become irrelevant, the importance of other aspects increases (Abarca, Palos-Sanchez & Rus-Arias, 2020). Effective communication, trust, task characteristics, leadership, cohesion and empowerment, to mention a few, all affect team performance (Abarca, Palos-Sanchez & Rus-Arias, 2020). Team cohesion is essential for team effectiveness and performance (Salas et al., 2015). The benefits of cohesion on individuals and groups are so ubiquitous that successful performance has often been attributed to the cohesive bonds shared among individuals in a group (Severt & Estrada, 2015).

Collaboration in teams is complex and depends on four enabling conditions: a compelling direction, a strong structure, a supportive context and a shared mindset (Haas & Mortensen, 2016). The supportive context is often challenging for virtual teams that are geographically dispersed, as the resources available to members may vary a lot (Haas & Mortensen, 2016).

1.2 Problem statement

The covid-19 related health crisis has marked a revolution in the history of remote work (Popovici, 2020). In Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, the number of people forced to work from home by government regulations peaked at 80%. Even though it is expected to decrease slightly, estimations of full-time remote work over the next five years vary from up to 30-65%, forming a new working landscape (Bolander, Sumelius & Werr, 2020; Ozimek, 2020). The increasing remote work leads to companies, ventures and individuals relying on information and communications technologies (ICTs), such as video conferencing apps and programs, for a wide variety of work processes and social interaction under working-from-home circumstances (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Benefits associated with remote work are flexible scheduling of work, attenuated effects of cultural differences, reduced communication barriers, increased electronic trail documentation of decision-making processes and more effective meetings (Caligiuri et al., 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020). Additionally, reduced commuting time, better work-life balance, increased productivity due to a higher average of working minutes, and increased focus due to a more convenient and calm working environment (Popovici, 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020).

However, researchers state some dominant challenges associated with forced remote work, one being an aggravated ability to build an accepting and supportive culture, thereby lacking a positive impact on employee motivation and satisfaction (Popovici, 2020). Additionally, lacking supportive resources, unfavorable home environments, feelings of social and professional isolation, missed informal learning opportunities, and decreased support of the company and colleagues have far-reaching consequences for staff, are mentioned as negative aspects (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

NVTs operate under challenging conditions as they are aiming for venture growth. When teams are being forced or recommended to pursue their new venture remotely, and thus digitally, they are likely to encounter obstacles (Klotz et al., 2014). Therefore, it is critical to understand the reasoning behind operating a new venture, bringing it to the market and having to deal with remote, virtual teamwork (Reynolds, 2017). Virtual teamwork depends on technological resources, like computer mediated communication (CMC) and ICTs, but also on effective team dynamics, where trust, acceptance, awareness, and coherence play a crucial role (Mazzucchelli et al., 2019). Therefore, it is likely that building and maintaining cohesion in NVTs operating in a virtual setting comes with challenges and conditional changes. The benefits of cohesion on individuals and teams are ubiquitous and associated with successful performance and are therefore heavily researched (Severt & Estrada, 2015; Diakanastasi, Karagiannaki & Pramatari, 2018). However, NVTs that have been forced to work remotely in a virtual setting, that face new challenges in an already vulnerable environment, has not yet been researched.

1.3 Research question

The following research question has been derived from previous research and the findings stated in the literature review: *"How do new venture teams build cohesion in a virtual setting?"*

1.4 Research purpose and contribution of the thesis

There is evidence pointing in the direction that working from home is believed to become the new norm, not only for large organizations but also for entrepreneurs and NVTs. Far reaching consequences for current and future entrepreneurs are directly and indirectly affecting business success and especially new venture success. The main focus of this research is set on researching how cohesion in NVTs is being built, as this factor appeared to have a fundamental role in maintaining efficient teamwork. NVTs that have been forced to remote teamwork or virtual teamwork, by their own decision or by recommendation, form the scope of this research. Past research on building cohesion has focused on traditional co-located teams and NVTs in a physical working environment, which makes "building cohesion in virtual NVTs" an interesting field to study. The aim of the study is to identify how NVTs build cohesion in a virtual setting. It is important to note that the focus of this research is on how NVTs currently build cohesion, so after experiencing the change from working co-located to working, almost, fully virtual. Also,

the focus is purely on how NVTs build cohesion as they are unique in their nature, differing from teams in larger companies, and therefore this research should not be seen as a comparative research. NVTs have been chosen deliberately due to their relevance to the entrepreneurial environment the authors are part of. The results of this research are aimed to contribute towards entrepreneurship research and to improve virtual teamwork in NVTs for current and future participants of Lund University.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows: the above mentioned chapter 1 has been based upon the "Deficiencies Model" from Creswell (2013, p.131) and describes the introduction, problem statement, research purpose and contribution of the thesis. Chapter 2 provides a thematic overview of the existing literature and schools of thought on the topics new venture teams, teams in a virtual setting and cohesion. The literature review aims to expand the boundaries of the authors' knowledge and provides relevant information, that forms a foundation for further research that will be conducted (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Chapter 3 presents the research methodology and methods that have been employed in the research. It considers the research approach of the study, the research design and the strategy regarding data collection. The chapter also describes the process and choices that have been made regarding sampling methods, data collection, data analysis, research reliability and limitations of the research. Chapter 4 describes the empirical research findings and Chapter 5 proceeds with the analysis and discussion of the findings in relation to the existing literature. Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of the thesis and any practical and theoretical implications for further research.

2. Literature review

2.1 New venture teams

There is an idea of an entrepreneur to be some sort of hero and a lone genius (Zeewy, 2019). An individual that by him- or herself manages to start a successful venture and billion-dollar company (Dunkelberg, 1989). While this might be true in some cases, and even though there might be one person taking strategic decisions and coordinating scarce resources, the reality is that a vast majority of new ventures are founded and led by teams (Dunkelberg, 1989; Zeewy, 2019). New ventures are broadly described as a venture that is in its early stages of development and growth, and is in the process of bringing its products or services to market (Klotz et al., 2014). Klotz et al. (2014) defines it as a *"group of individuals that is chiefly responsible for the strategic decision making and ongoing operations of a new venture"* (Klotz et al., 2014). Within new ventures, the NVTs play an important role in the performance of a venture (Cooney, 2005).

Amason, Shrader and Tompson (2006) present criteria to decide upon what a new venture is and with that the authors mean that a "new venture" is decided by examining its age, size and performance. Differences between industries, for example knowledge intensive versus technological intensive, limits the boundaries of the definition (Amason, Shrader & Tompson, 2006). A new venture setting is unique in its nature as NVTs experience extraordinary changes as they transition from start-ups to established business. They have other things to take into consideration during the different stages of the entrepreneurial process than a team within a larger company (Klotz et al., 2014). As new ventures develop and mature leadership is likely to change due to positive (e.g. achieved goals and different future plans) and negative reasons (e.g. not able to fulfil responsibilities or a forced change in strategy) (Ensley, Hmieleski & Pearce, 2006; Klotz et al., 2014). Other effective leadership situations are those where people and teams have a uniform idea regarding behavior and have structures in place to support and learning those behaviors. Whereas, in weak situations there is a lack of uniform expectation about behavior and no structure to support this (Ensley, Hmieleski & Pearce, 2006). In addition, NVTs have more managerial discretion and wider latitude of action than most teams and therefore their behavior affects in a larger extent how the venture develops over time (Hambrick & Abrahamson, 1995; Klotz et al., 2014).

Many factors can impact the success of a new venture. However, there are certain determinants that affect a ventures success more than others (Schjoedt & Kraus, 2009). The external environment factors that have a direct or indirect impact on the venture, including how the entrepreneurial team responds to these external factors (Schjoedt & Kraus, 2009). Internally, the team performance is usually defined as in what extent a team manages to reach the predictable goal or completely reach the quality of a task (Wu & Chen, 2014). Wu and Chen (2014) researched internal factors and its effect on team performance and the study showed the following factors having the most effect: (1) role identity and commitment of each member, (2) team cohesiveness, (3) communication mechanism and information-sharing quality, (4) homogeneity of members to team goals and (5) consensus among members towards goal approaches. Also, a study by Mullen and Copper (1994) stated a positive relationship between cohesion and team performance, and showed that the correlation was stronger in smaller teams.

2.2 Teams in a virtual setting

Virtual teams, remote teams and cross-site teams are all terms used to describe a team, where individuals are geographically dispersed, collaborating together to complete a certain task or achieve a common goal (Poehler & Schumacher, 2007). Working remote is when team members have no personal interaction with other co-workers but are able to communicate and interact with each other using modern technology (Vitola & Baltina, 2013). The use of technology does not make a team virtual as almost all teams use technology to a certain extent, but virtuality increases as teams become more dependent on electronic communication and technology (Berry, 2011). Cloud computing and CMC can be referred to as a range of technologies, internet and other modern technology included, that provide a number of advantages to both the customers and service provider. Organizations and teams can use the cloud to access all the tools used to store and process information as long as there is an internet connection. The technology enables team members to collaborate and work together on the same project even if they are not physically positioned together, providing rapid and effective collaboration and communication among team members (Poehler & Schumacher, 2007; Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2007). Information and communication technologies constitute both cloud sharing services, email, video calls and online classrooms/conferences (Poehler & Schumacher, 2007).

2.3 Cohesion

Team cohesion is the extent to which team members are attracted to one another and committed to performing the team's tasks (Beal et al., 2004). Cohesion is essential for team effectiveness and performance (Salas et al., 2015). The benefits of cohesion on individuals and groups are so ubiquitous that successful performance has often been attributed to the cohesive bonds shared among individuals in a group (Severt & Estrada, 2015). Even though cohesion is a multi-dimensional construct it does not mean that every dimension of cohesion is equally important or present across different types of groups (Carron & Brawley, 2012). Salas et al (2015) found that a multi-dimensional definition of cohesion was most often adopted among researchers when studying the topic. The authors also found social, task cohesion as well as group-pride as factors showing significant links with performance. However, Salas et al (2015) did not find a consistent relationship between group-pride and performance, suggesting advocating group-pride factors depending on each individual case. Another key distinction in group cohesiveness, addresses the individual and the group (Salas et al., 2015). The individual's attraction to the group, wanting to be accepted and remain in the group relates to the individual's aspect of cohesion and the group cohesiveness relates to the perception of the group as a whole (Salas et al., 2015). The second key distinction is taking social- and task-oriented concerns into consideration when studying the cohesiveness. Social cohesiveness refers to motivation to develop and maintain social relationships within the group and task cohesiveness in hand relates to the motivation towards achieving the organization's goals and objectives (Carless & De Paola, 2000; Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985). Measuring cohesion is complex, Salas et al. (2015) compiled a list of the five most common dimensions when measuring the level of cohesion, however group pride will not be considered as suggested by Salas et al. (2015):

ENTN19 THESIS | LUND UNIVERSITY | ACADEMIC YEAR 2020 – 2021

SCHOOL OF
ECONOMICS AND
MANAGEMENT
LUND
UNIVERSITY

Subdimension	Definition	Code for measuring
Task	An attraction or bonding between group members that is based on a shared commitment to achieving the group's goals and objectives	• Winning mentality and reaching milestones • Teamwork • Shared vision
Social	A closeness and attraction within the group that is based on social relationships within the group	• In-person social activities • Virtual social activities • Social activities that are not work related
Belongingness	The degree to which members of a group are attracted to each other	• Building online relationships • Level of trust
Morale	Individuals' high degree of loyalty to fellow group members and their willingness to endure frustration for the group	• Taking of responsibility • Conflicts or not • Receptive or not

Table 1 Definitions subdimensions of cohesion

The literature provides definitions and measures that conceptualize and operationalize at the individual level, the group level and both (Salas et al., 2015). It is argued that some approaches of analysis are more advantageous than another, but the individual level is the most widely used and the available methods used to measure group level constructs are limited. One measure to analyze group level cohesion is a method from Lindsley et al. (1995), that incorporates the use of individuals within a group as informants about the collective beliefs of the group. As group cohesion is a group construct and is not able to exist without a group, this method appears to be effective and appropriate for measuring group cohesion (Casey-Campbell & Martens, 2009).

Foo, Sin and Yiong (2006) state that social integration refers to the level of interpersonal interaction, pride and excitement among members which lead to a higher perception of the viability and satisfaction of the NVT. In addition, Ensley, Hmieleski and Pearce (2006) pinpoint

that cohesion negatively relates to conflicts within interpersonal relationships among team members and therefore should not be underestimated. Important to note is the role of IT support in virtual teams that positively relates to knowledge sharing which in turn plays a crucial role in the development of team innovation capabilities and cohesiveness (Mazzucchelli et al., 2019).

Widmeyer, Carron and Brawley (1985) developed a framework where the authors divide cohesion in four different categories, two relating to individual and group cohesion, the other two related to social and task cohesion. The four definitions to group cohesion (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985) are: 1) Group Integration-Tasks, 2) Group Integration-Social, 3) Individual attraction to Group-tasks and 4) Individual attraction to Group-social. In addition to this, Severt & Estrada's (2015) developed a framework of factors affecting group cohesion, the authors divide cohesion into two categories, vertical and horizontal cohesion, and functions of cohesion. Vertical and horizontal cover cohesion between members of different hierarchical levels and the latter covers social and task cohesion of a group (Severt & Estrada, 2015).
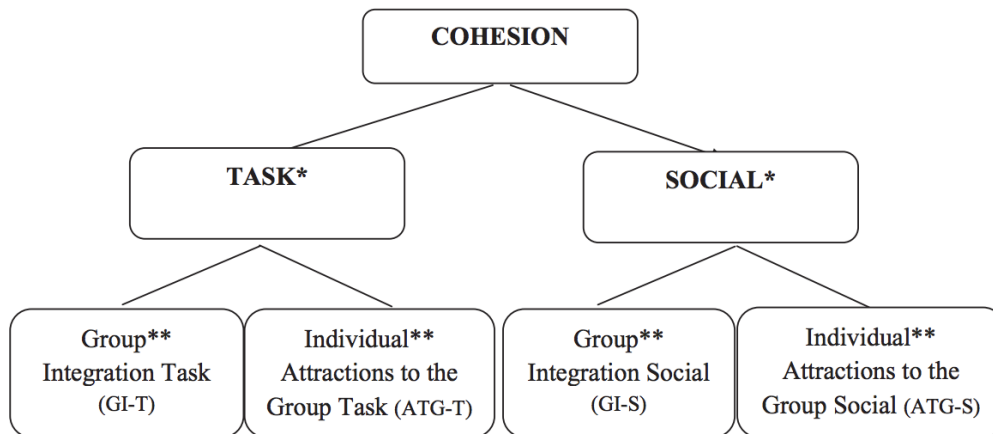
Figure 1.Conceptual model of cohesion (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985)

Affective functions of cohesion is according to Severt and Estrada (2015) referring to those aspects of cohesion that highlight the emotional impact on group members and as a result also on the group as a whole. In (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985) framework it relates to group integration task and where group integration social relates to individual team members perception about closeness and bonding regarding the team's social activities and an individual

member's perception about the similarity and closeness within the team about accomplishing tasks. Severt and Estrada (2015) mean that the emotional benefits derived from group cohesion is to satisfy one of the most basic needs of human beings, the need of belonging to a group, and the authors state that affective functions of cohesions consists of two facets, *Interpersonal* liking and *Group pride.*

2.3.1 Group Integration - Task

Group Integration – Task (GI-T), refers to how team members' perception is regarding the team's closeness and social activities (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985). Severt and Estrada (2015) explain that group members that interact more often are more likely to develop true friendship bonds and these bonds might lead to an increased willingness to engage in personal, informal communication which may strengthen social bonds further within the group. Something which in hand can lead to interaction among team members outside of the group context, thereby relating to Carron, Widmeyer and Brawley's (1985) concept of increased perception of social activities among team members. When working together on task-specific work the fundamental need of belonging evokes emotional and affective responses. (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985; Severt & Estrada, 2015). Interpersonal liking or attraction is the friendship bond that develops among group members that serve to satisfy the need to belong. Group members typically form friendship bonds relatively quickly, however individuals that are familiar and similar to one another are more likely to reciprocate positive feelings and develop bonds of friendship (Severt & Estrada, 2015).

2.3.2 Group Integration – Social

Group Integration - Social (GI-S) relates to the individuals of the teams about personal involvement in the social interaction of the group (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985). Severt and Estrada (2015) mean that there is a desire to define one's role with the social environment and to be identified with a successful group drives the emergence of group pride and cohesion. Group pride is an affective function of cohesion and focuses on the pride, social identification and prestige that a member feels when being part of a group. Severt and Estrada (2015) mean that people want to identify themselves in a greater extent to groups that are successful, are of

high-status or are well-established. When team members identify themselves with the environment of the group, they fulfill an affective need and identify with the greater social context. *Instrumental functions of cohesion* refer to, as the name suggest, the aspects of cohesion in a team that highlight goal- and task-oriented activities. Severt and Estrada (2015) mean that groups are formed to perform a certain task, to complete a mission or a specific purpose. The authors present a two facetted dimension of cohesion, consisting of *Social cohesion* and *Task cohesion.* Carron, Widmeyer and Brawley (1985) consider this to be Individual attraction to the Group tasks and social, referring to individual commitment to social and task activities that build cohesion.

2.3.3 Individual attraction to the Group

Individual attraction to the Group - Social (ATG-S) relates to the members' feelings about personal involvement in the social interaction of the group (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985). Severt and Estrada (2015) explain that the commitment of the team members, provides team members with flexible and constructive relationships with one another which often result in high levels of team member exchange. Team member exchange includes reciprocity between team members and their willingness to assist team members by sharing ideas and feedback. To develop high level of social cohesion is important for groups as it enhances team members' positive working-relationships, built by trust and liking of each other (Severt & Estrada, 2015). Social cohesion refers to social bonds between team members that are bound by working relationships according to Severt and Estrada (2015). Social bonds emerge between team members through emotional affect for other team members and this through liking and trust. When a high level of social cohesion exists within a group, team members value the relationships and friendships that the group provides.

2.3.4 Individual attraction to Group

Individual attraction to Group Tasks (ATG-T) means that team members are feeling personal involvement in the group's task (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985). When task cohesion is present in a group, the team members have a belief that the team will be able to perform the tasks and reach certain goals, both individually and as a team. This captures the importance of the

team's confidence in completing tasks and that there is a shared belief that this is possible. It is also therefore important that there is a common understanding and a shared vision of different steps that are needed to take to reach goals and perform certain tasks. Task cohesion serves an important instrumental role in groups, as it opens up for group members to individually work towards goals while trusting other team members to do the same competently and effectively (Severt & Estrada, 2015). Task cohesion refers to team members' shared commitment to a certain task and is characterized by a general orientation toward achieving a group's goals and objectives (Severt & Estrada, 2015).

2.4 Concluding notes

Distributed virtual teams are unable to directly observe each other's behavior, work and input, making it difficult to evaluate each other's efforts (Haines, 2021). Providing visibility for team members on each other's activities, availability and progress, together with creating an environment that operates as an integrated service are key requirements for establishing a successful environment for virtual teamwork (Morley, Cormican & Folan, 2015). Contributing to this is the IT and ICT support that allows teams' members to overcome communication obstacles and transform data into knowledge which both enhance social ties and team effectiveness (Mazzucchelli et al., 2019; Morley, Cormican & Folan, 2015). Besides the effect of awareness and visibility, cohesion in virtual teams seems to have received little attention of research so far. Whereas literature reviews on trust is heavily researched and pinpoints the complexity of trust in virtual teams, as it depends on technology capabilities, antecedents, processes and moderators that in turn lead to a wide variety of consequences of trust, among one is cohesion in both affective and instrumental form (Hacker et al., 2019; Severt & Estrada, 2015). To conclude, team founded ventures are more likely to succeed than individual, but not without a cohesive team (Hacker et al., 2019; Severt & Estrada, 2015; Wu & Chen, 2014). Cohesion, the shared bond and attraction that drives team members to be better on social and task orientated activities, enhances the overall performance of the venture (Salas et al., 2015; Severt & Estrada, 2015). There is little research available on how coherence is being built in NVTs in a virtual setting and will therefore form the base of this research. All of this will be supported by the frameworks of cohesion from (Severt & Estrada, 2015) and (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985).

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research approach and design

Since the worldwide pandemic has been around for just over one year now, there is limited theoretical foundation in the area of how cohesion is being built virtually in NVTs. Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand and discover this phenomena and contribute to- and expand existing theory regarding the building of team cohesion for NVTs in a virtual setting, and as such it is designed qualitatively and inductively (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The qualitative research design allows for a more flexible, evolving and emergent research instead of rigid and predetermined as the topic at hand is complex and rich in data (Grossoehme, 2014). Also, an iterative approach has been used that allowed the authors to iterate between data and theory reflection throughout the process of data collection and analysis (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Matching the qualitative and inductive research design of this research is the implementation of the case study. Case studies are suitable for in-depth understanding of how processes unfold in special circumstances, like the effect of the pandemic on the development of NVTs and their team cohesion in virtual settings. The unit of analysis in this thesis are NVTs where each NVT reflects one case and each individual team member represents one informant. With an interpretivist research philosophy, the study gains in-depth insights and learnings into how coherence is being built within NVTs in a virtual setting (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015). Within this research the authors have made use of semi-structured interviews as a research method to gain retrospective and current insights into the team individuals experiences and to understand processes and contexts (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Other qualitative research methods as focus groups and observations have been considered as alternative method, but these were not feasible due to the current Covid-19 regulations and the virtuality of the interviewees.

3.2 Case and sample selection

In this study, a multiple-case study design was chosen since it is not fully dependent on established theories and therefore provides research with increased flexibility (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The authors identified and compared potential approaches, opportunities and challenges for building team cohesion in NVT's. Within this research the NVT's form the

population. In order to only select the right cases, NVTs that are selected need to match Klotz et al. (2014) criteria of a NVT; it is a *"group of individuals that is chiefly responsible for the strategic decision making and ongoing operations of a new venture"* (Klotz et al., 2014). Predominantly, teams that are in their early stages of development and growth, and are in the process of bringing their products or services to market and building the business (Klotz et al., 2014). In line with the problem statement, the aim of the study and the supporting literature review, only NVTs that have been forced either by voluntary choice or by recommendation into working virtually, thus currently work in a fully virtual setting have been selected. *"A virtual team is typically conceived as an interdependent group of people working towards a common goal while separated by geographic distance, time and/or location"* (Dubé & Robey, 2009).

To obtain a most effective comparable result, the NVTs have been selected with the use of a non-probability sampling method, namely the purposive sampling method, and display a strong array of similar characteristics (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). But also NVTs that can showcase clearly that they have been forced, either by their own decision or by recommendation to change from working together co-located to virtual. Snowball sampling has been used as alternative sampling method, but this was found not necessary. The different industries may have different requirements and effects on the team cohesion and the difference between industries may cloud the researchers' judgement (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). In order to minimize the side effect caused by external factors, all samples have been selected based on the same industry and location. In this case, samples have been chosen out of the tech/service industry to enhance reliability. The authors want to study cohesion in NVTs within and among the team and therefore deliberately chose to study NVTs that consist of a minimum three and a maximum of six team members. The study researched NVTs that operate in Sweden and have a lifetime of max 2 years, whereby they have to be founded in the one year before Covid-19 pandemic was officially accepted worldwide, thus between April 2019 and April 2020. And have been forced into virtual cooperation between April 2020 and April 2021. The researchers have chosen to narrow down the study to Sweden, so potential cultural and other differences are minimalized (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

3.3 Description of selected samples

Within this research ten interviews with individual team members from three different NVTs have been conducted. Please find hereunder in table 2 and 3 the main characteristics and information from both the three NVTs and the ten interviewees. Please refer to appendix 1 for an elaboration of the NVT company descriptions.

	Company A (Kitchenswaps)	*Company B (Skördetid)*	*Company C (Nightli)*
Founded	2020	2020	2019
Nr of team members	4	4-6	3
Industry	FB / Tech / Service	Tech / Service	Tech / Service
Company type	Platform	App / Platform	App / Platform
Current operational setting	Virtual	Hybrid	Virtual
Interviewee	I-2, I-3, I-4	I-1, I-5, I-6, I-9	I-7, I-8, I-10

Table 2 Selected NVT characteristics and information

Company	*Age*	*Gender*	*Nationality*	*Function / Role*
A (Kitchenswaps)	24	F	NL	Co-founder
A (Kitchenswaps)	26	M	DE	Founder
A (Kitchenswaps)	29	M	SE	Strategy & Marketing
B (Skordetid)	24	F	US	Business Development & Marketing
B (Skordetid)	43	M	SE	Co-founder
B (Skordetid)	24	M	SE	Founder
B (Skordetid)	26	M	TU/GE	Founder
C (Nightli)	23	M	SE	Development
C (Nightli)	25	M	SE	Founder
C (Nightli)	25	M	SE	Co-Founder

Table 3 Details about interviewed NVT individuals

3.4 Data collection

In line with the inductive approach and Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019), semi-structured interviews allow for rich and detailed answers as the approach opens up for potential follow up questions on specific information and statements when necessary. Potential interviewees have been contacted through LinkedIn or email and originate from the authors' own professional network and Lund University School of Economics and Management network. Each interview took approximately 50-60 minutes and consisted of both authors of this thesis and the interviewee in an online video setting via Zoom, to create a safe and comfortable environment for all parties which is relevant for interview quality (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

The ten interviews have been conducted between 22-04-21 and 05-05-21 and where directed by the interview guide that can be found in Appendix 2. As can be seen in the interview guide, the authors start with a short introduction about themselves and the reason of research to set a comfortable and transparent tone. For ethical and privacy reasons all interviewees have been asked the question if they agree with recording of the interview for transcription reasons (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Additionally, the authors asked the interviewees if they would like to stay anonymous in the research or not, and that resulted into the decision to anonymize all interviewee names in the research results. The structure of the semi-structured interviews questions are based upon the four different dimensions of cohesion (GI-S, GI-T, ATG-S and ATG-T) that are extensively described in the literature review. This has allowed the authors to create effective questions that relate to either one of the four dimensions. Both open-ended questions and closed ended questions have been used because of their benefits. Open-ended questions allowed for more context rich and experience orientated answers, whereas closed ended questions allowed the authors to clarify if a follow up question was necessary or not and they also enhance the comparability of answers (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). All interviews were conducted in English to enhance adequacy in the respondent's answers and minimalize misinterpretations that might occur with transcribing and analyzing the interviews (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

3.5 Data analysis

The data collected: in this case all ten interviews have been recorded and transcribed via Otter, an AI powered assistant (Otter.ai, 2021). All transcriptions have been checked manually by the authors before importing the files into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software (QSR International, 2021). This program has been used by the authors to store, code, organize and visualize data. All transcribed interviewees have been thematically analyzed via a hybrid approach through coding, categorizing and commenting. Coding is a process whereby the data is broken down into component parts which are then given labels and it allowed the researchers to search for recurrences and links between different codes (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

In the discussion chapter, the data analysis is divided into two parts, whereby part one focusses on the assessment of group cohesion form the three different NVTs to establish whether the extent to which the NVTs that the authors investigated exhibited cohesion or not. To do this the authors made use of a method from Lindsley et al. (1995) that incorporates the use of individual team members of the NVTs as informants about the collective beliefs of the group (Casey-Campbell & Martens, 2009). A deductive approach has been used to predefine a set group of codes that are based upon the definitions of the subdimensions of cohesion as mentioned by Salas et al. (2015) in the literature review.

After analyzing to what extent the interviewed NVTs are cohesive or not, part two of the discussion chapter follows a more inductive analysis design, whereby the focus is set on identifying insights about how the NVTs built cohesion in the virtual context they are in (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). This inductive design is most suitable because prior research cannot provide sufficient information about the topic at hand due to the newness of the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors made use of the 1st and 2nd order coding from Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2012) that allowed to work without a predefined set of codes but identify codes and themes in an explorative way to understand how the NVTs built cohesion in this virtual setting. In order to ensure consistency in coding, the authors made use of the Intercoder Reliability (ICR) test from NVivo, whereby both authors coded the same interview.

3.6 Quality of research

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) touch upon the importance of research reliability and validity as key criteria in establishing and assessing the quality of a research. It is important to note that the forms and methods of evaluating research quality differs per research design, but for a qualitative research design paper like this the following approaches have been considered useful; credibility, transferability and the ICR Test (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

To ensure credibility of the research, the authors made use of investigator triangulation. Investigator triangulation involves employing several evaluators to engage in observations or analyzing processes of participant responses. Using multiple investigators, in this case two, allows for the auditing and coding of data consistency and reduces the potential bias build in employing only one investigator or analyst (Salkind, 2010). In addition, by interviewing at least the majority of the team members in all three NVTs, the information collected from each NVT has at least 3 sources allowed to enhance obtaining the most credible insights.

To guarantee as much transferability in the research as possible, the team made use of purposive sampling methods whereby only samples that fitted a strict set of criteria were selected for this research, please refer to chapter 3.2 for the selection criteria. In addition, providing a so-called 'thick description' that functions as a database also supports in making judgements and so, aids the transferability of findings to other milieux (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

Lastly, as mentioned above in the data analysis, to improve coding transparency and efficiency, the authors made use of the ICR test in NVivo. This test brings both external and internal advantages. For external reasons it brings quality-signaling, whereby readers are shown that the analysis was performed conscientiously and consistently. Whereas, for internal reasons, the test motivates the researchers to ensure consistency in coding decisions (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Please refer to appendix 3 for the test result.

3.7 Limitations

The study's qualitative research is limited by nature to a moderate representativeness and generalizability. Impressionism and subjectivity were mitigated in the greatest extent possible by striving towards being as neutral and objective as possible during all stages of the research (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The sample consisting of new ventures in Sweden, operating within or related to the tech/service-industry, company age 1-2 years, consisting of 3-6 team members, makes the transferability to other new ventures in other life cycles, operating in a different industry, or different countries with another culture, critical, as there might be variation present.

Some of the interviewees participating in the study have other occupations and commitments besides the venture and are not full time involved, potentially creating a variation between the teams and its members that might impact cohesion building. Not all team members have been interviewed which has potentially excluded important data that could have contributed to the research, but this has been minimized as stated in the Limations chapter. Furthermore, one contact person of one NVT has been hesitant in giving permission to the authors to conduct two other interviews with his/her team due to limited availability and time restraints.

All interviews have been conducted in a virtual setting on Zoom, which significantly reduces the extent of human interaction between the interviewees and the authors, which may have affected people's willingness to open up and show complete honesty. The authors have tried to minimize this by creating an open and comfortable online environment by starting with small talk and by asking a few "easy" questions to familiarize him/her with the subject of the interview (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019). Lastly, the authors have been working remotely during the entire thesis project which has led to obscured transparency, communication and effectiveness. To minimize these limitations, the authors made use of Dropbox (an online storage for files), daily WhatsApp contact and numerous Zoom sessions.

4 Findings

In this chapter, the empirical findings related to the research question 'how cohesion is being built by NVTs in virtual setting' are presented objectively. The findings are structured per aggregated dimension using the 1st and 2nd order analysis as described in the previous chapter. These aggregated dimensions are based upon concepts from the literature review stated in chapter 2. For each of 2nd order theme identified through the interviews, the main findings of 1st order categories are summarized. The findings are further strengthened by the use of quotes. An overview of the aggregated dimensions and the link to existing literature from the literature review can be found in the below mentioned table 4.

Data analysis		**Literature concepts**	
Aggregated dimension	*Covered in chapter*	*Literature concept*	*Covered in chapter*
Current operational coherence	4.1	ATG-T and GI-T	2.3.4 and 2.3.1
Current social coherence	4.2	ATG-S and GI-S	2.3.3 and 2.3.2

Table 4. Chapter structure and link with concepts from Chapter 2

4.1 Current Operational coherence

1st-Order Category	2nd-Order Theme	Aggregated Dimension
• Taking responsibility • Flexibility	Flexibility and responsibility	Current operational coherence
• Working environment • Meeting style	Way of working and meeting	
• Achieved goals or milestones • Winning mentality • Reaching goals	Winning mentality	
• Daily communications tools • Weekly communication • Open communication	Ways of communicating	
• Shared vision • Alignment • Teamwork • Level of trust • Level of efficiancy	Teams efficiancy and alignment	
• Improvement • Missing structure	Improvement	
• Compliments and encouragement • Receptive, accepting, listening • Feedback and criticism • Concflicts or not	Supporting environment	

Table 5 1st and 2nd order coding 1

4.1.1 Flexibility and responsibility

Most teams are flexible in terms of working hours and setting up meetings on a short notice, and if some things are urgent the teams are most often directly available to meet through virtual communication tools. *"Everyone's super flexible, we get stuff done, everyone can just turn their laptop on wherever they are, and we are connected so that's been working really, really well, especially in the pandemic, you know"I-6.* Some teams are more flexible than others, both mentioning 'not being in the office' as one reason as well as, 'depending on what role they have in the venture'. I-7, *"I wouldn't say everyone is flexible, but I feel like that's mostly because of how you know when you work when you don't have like set times to be in an office, you can sort of work in your on your own schedule a bit (…)so I feel like that impacts the flexibility, because everyone sort of makes their own schedule…"*. And I-3 says that you cannot really have the same responsibility to be flexible if you are an intern; *"I mean, for the other two interns, not as easily when they're not full time employed"*. Results show that to what extent the team collectively or individual is responsible differs slightly, in Kitchenswaps there is a collective responsibility when it comes to performing tasks compared to Nightli, where tendencies for more individual responsibility taking can be seen. And in Skördetid there is a more fragmented view on responsibility among the team members. *"I think our whole team is responsible. I know there are certain tasks that we all take on that maybe. I mean, if you were to fail at a specific task, maybe it does fall a little bit more on you" I-1.*

4.1.2 Way of working and meeting

The way of working and meeting is different in all teams. What they all have in common is the digital or virtual aspect as a way of meeting and communicating as well as conducting work. All teams were founded in a physical setting. Two of the teams are now working in either a fully virtual or hybrid setting, with some team members working in a fully virtual setting. Two of the teams have weekly reoccurring meetings together with their teams that are structured, short and task specific. There are also casual and non-work-related elements in the structured meetings, at the beginning and end of the meetings.

A common main purpose for a big part of the meetings with the entire teams is both to go through next steps and task to do, but also to give a short summary or update to the team, *"(…) we have those Monday meetings we bring everyone into the loop, saying we go through business development that's when we go through IT so everyone since we're a small team, so everyone knows what we are doing"* I-6.

4.1.3 Winning mentality and performance

All the interviewees give a picture of their teams and themselves being motivated and in some extent also competitive, some mentioning that they have a high desire to win and others mentioning more that it is not about competition against others but rather about reaching milestones and customer satisfaction. I-2 mentioned, *"What motivates me though is like winning, winning itself motivates me, not because it's like, because I'm winning. It's just because of the positive outcome."*. There is an overall impression that milestones and goals are being reached to a relatively large extent, most interviewees mentioned that they had reached a big milestone during the last weeks, some did however mention that the last time they reached a bigger milestone was about five months ago, I-7 for example, *"Back in October, November, and we had a release coming up and I was doing some front end, visual coding so to say."* To reach the milestones, I-8, I-9, I-5 and I-4 see information sharing tools and other ways of keeping everyone in the team updated on the progression as important aspects when it comes to reaching milestones. I-9 *"(…) visualize goals and milestones basically so we're going to be using now OKRs, like objectives and key results to, to make sure we have got goals and like key tasks for the business development side."*

4.1.4 Ways of communicating

Teams are communicating daily or weekly through tools such as WhatsApp and slack. WhatsApp is used more for casual conversations and scheduling meetings, and slack is mainly used for more formal work-related communication between members. Meetings are held through either Skype or Zoom.

All the interviewees mentioned that they have an open communication and discussion and that their voice can be heard in a large extent when participating in discussions, I-1 says, *"(…)and I feel like I can say whatever I need to. And of course, like they were really receptive to like me needing more direction in that sense."* A large majority also mentioned that they are actively thinking about being good listeners as well and take in what other team members says*, "(...) for me it's, it's very much about listening a lot, and then saying a few important things, rather than just talking all the time" I-3.*

4.1.5 Team's efficiency and alignment

There is a high level of commitment to visions and goals among the teams and its members. The interviewees mention that they perceive the other team members to be aligned with the team and its mission and that there is not a single person in the team that has conflicting aspirations for the team's vision. I-3, *"...think the fact that we're very aligned with where we want to go, I think, you know, having that vision and everybody sharing that vision, makes it a lot easier…"*. This goes in hand with the team members mentioning that they are aligned in terms of in what direction they want to go. Transparency in the team, so that each team member can see the output created by team members, is important since it is making it clear that every team member contributes with certain skill or knowledge. I-1 stated, *"think it's all good because we bring something different to the table. But yeah, we all have the same vision"*. There is a high trust among each other in all the teams, and especially when it comes to performing tasks and completing them in time. *"I do fully trust, all the team members, 100%, Me, I-6 and I-5, as the, you know, kind of CO founding team since day one."* – I-9. Some interviewees trust varies depending on the team member and its role and some also mention that working in a physical space or virtual space affects their trust, while some mention that it does not affect it at all. *"I would say that I trust her, maybe 60% more now being with her together physically"* – I-3.

4.1.6 Improvement

Every interviewee mentioned at least one or two aspects that they would like to see be improved. Completing tasks faster and more efficient were two aspects that many of the interviewees mentioned. I-3 from Kitchenswaps: "I *think a lot of things we felt we could do in a much shorter*

period of time then what we managed to do". And having more structure is something that was also mentioned by interviewees, *"I would probably like to be better to structure and plan my own work. But the world isn't structured so you, you always thrown a bunch of a bunch of random things that needs to be done"*- I-5. For socials aspects, there was a desire among some of the interviewees to engage more in social activities, activities that could also be a bit task related. I-8 from Nightli wanted to meet up more often with the team. *"What we do as a team is we actually visit these bars together and then later as a team post it on Nightli"* – I-8.

4.1.7 Supporting environment

Encouragement of team members and giving compliments, contributing to a positive working environment is something that a vast majority of the interviewees perceive their teams doing. They are actively working with giving positive and constructive feedback and also give praise to each other's work during meetings, to maintain this positive working climate. I.1: *"They're really good with compliments, and making sure you know, when you've done a task"*. And I-6 from the same team: *"… in the Monday meetings we bring up like a screenshot or something of what IT have done. Look, now they have just completed this forum that we've been working on. Looks great."* A vast majority believed that their team has an accepting environment in which everyone is being seen and heard. And in turn, team members believe that the positive climate can have a positive impact on how they are performing in general. I-7 stated, *"if everyone's positive, you feel more comfortable and you can you know ask for help a lot easier than you could if you didn't feel comfortable"*. At the same time, many interviewees highlight that they have a culture where they are also giving each other feedback and critique. I.1 mentioned, *"So it's like a really open environment in terms of feedback and criticism."*. This for the company's best and there are signs of a helpful environment. I-2: *"…but we always are open to helping each other to fix it together and not leaving one person hanging basically"*. Conflicts are rarely happening in any of the teams, there have been conflicts in Skördetid, but with a former team member and there have been some discussions about certain "sensible" topics in Kitchenswaps connected to covid-19 and restrictions. Apart from that conflicts are rare. I-6 from stated, *"…but we never, we don't have really a conflict in that sense"*.

4.2 Current social coherence

1st-Order Category	2nd-Order Theme	Aggregated Dimension
• Building online relationships • Virtual social activities, interaction	Building online relationships and interaction	Current social coherence
• In-person social activities • Social activities that are not work related	In-person social activities	
• Missing celebrations • Missing social interaction	Social interaction	
• Welcoming of new members	Onboarding of new members	
• Extent of involvement • Belonging to a group • Chance to improve individual performance	Pesonal involvement and performance	
• Back to normal face-to-face work	Current sentiment	

Table 6 1st and 2nd order coding 2

4.2.1 Building online relationships and interaction

I-1 has a positive view on building relationships online and states that they themselves are proof of that. *"I have these feelings of missing them, even though I have never met them, so I think it is possible to create a working environment online and build relationships as well"*. I-1, I-4, I-5 and I-3 all mentioned that most of the team members were strangers to them at first but quickly *"(...) became friends during the venture"*. Founder I-3 even tries to emphasize on the fact that he wants more of the team to be part of the family and in order to do that *"(...) of course we have to organize certain social events to get there"*.

But also, by focusing on the individual team members' needs as I-3 states *"(...) by understanding who they are as a person, how they work, we can really start to customize their position, which helps feel them comfortable".* Another way of building an online relationship according to I-5 is to *"(...) keep up our casual conversations about different topics than that we usually do in office".*

A key factor in building online relationship is the presence and implementation of virtual social activities to interact. I-1, I-9 and I-6 all stated that, when important goals are achieved or new customers are obtained, one way of celebrating this among the team is *"(...) through Zoom, where online quiz games were played to try to include everybody and make it feel, like we were celebrating the way we would normally."* These were perceived by the other team members as *"super interactive".* Important to note is that this is still happening seldomly, and especially I-9 and I-6 as Founders want to see this happening on a more regular base. As I-6 said, *"Since we're in different countries, it is a bit of a challenge, but we have hosted a few digital events to celebrate".* And I-9, *"(...) the only two events that we had digitally".* However, one of the interviewees, I-5, has a different point of view on the essence of virtual social activities and claims he would like to use such events and interaction on a more professional way *"like our supplier did last month, a social online event, quarterly for example with all their suppliers to create a networking like event".*

4.2.2 In-person social activities

As I-1 and I-6 are currently both in the same city, they are able to meet in-person and do in-person social activities, which they definitely value. *"But now that I am back in Sweden, one of the cofounders and I also get to celebrate and interact in person".* But the majority of the interviewees is living geographically dispersed, most of them are not able to conduct in-person activities. I-3 mentions that this is not a fundamental problem and states *"It is important to not do everything together, you got to have a healthy mix of both".* I-5 seems to agree with I-3 and adds that *"we are only a handful of people in the business and from very different generations, with very different schedules which just leaves little room for social in-person events".*

It seems to be clear that when team members are together, temporarily or permanently, they try to meet for social activities that are not work related as often as possible. Two examples are I-2 and I-3 who both live in Stockholm, and I-1 and I-6 who both live in Lund. Their opinions are all in line with I-3 who states, "*The key to make something work is when you have a good relationship with your team and of course that only happens if you bond over social activities*". A different point of view comes from I-5 who explains the potential reason for the little social activities, being that *"We consider work, our social events, because that is what we love to do, it doesn't feel like work, it feels like talking about projects and doing fun things together".* All in all, the majority of the interviewees state that there are few social activities which are not work related happening in a virtual setting, but that this needs to improve. Just like I-8 says *"We were engaging in social activities more before we were forced to work completely online"* and *"Now it feels more like an obligation to engage in social activities which is something that needs to change as virtual work will remain"*. One relatively easy way to still engage in social life situations is the small talk and chitchat at the beginning and end of meetings *"We talk first about private things, and then move on to work related topics"*.

4.2.3 Social interaction

In line with the in-person activities subchapter mentioned above, there is an overall agreement on the extent of how much social interaction is missed due to the current virtual working environment. I-1, I-3, I-6, I-7, I-8 and I-9 all see the importance and benefits of social interaction within the teams *"it is a super important way to get the team to bond together and to build a nice company culture"* and *"sometimes you just need to drop the work aspect of things"*. But they all agree on the difficulties that working remote brings with regards to social interaction *"it is hard to establish personal connections with everyone, since you are not physically together"*-I-2 and especially relevant to NVTs and startups is the fact that the majority of the team members also *"have a lot of other stuff going on with jobs, friends and family"*-I-7. Although some of the interviewees seem to be fine with how things go currently, especially with *"the tricky Corona regulations*"- I-10, the majority looks forward to conducting more social orientated events, virtually, not only because the spontaneous interaction is being missed, but because the interviewees acknowledge the benefits associated with social interaction.

As a result of the missing social interaction, there is missing of celebration of small and big achievements, birthdays and anniversaries. I-1, I-3, I-6 and I-7 mentioned some situations which they were a bit disappointed by. I-1 said, "*I think we are all tired in the sense that we just kept going and going without like celebrating the smaller accomplishments*". Also, I-6 stated that "*we should be better at celebrating things, celebrating milestones*". Even though they are mainly organized through online tools, they are seen as a great way to "*give people praise*".

4.2.4 Onboarding of new members

All three of the NVTs take the virtual onboarding and welcoming of new members to the team serious and very personal, due to the small size of the team. A personal touch, an open and transparent approach, an extensive company introduction and virtual tour are a few of the factors that are focused upon with the onboarding of new members. I-6 and I-1 agree upon the importance of immediate involvement "*One of the important things is to make them feel part of the team, it is about involving them into different aspects of the company*" and "*we invite them to take part in our discussions*". The transparency can be translated to all business processes "*We add and introduce them to our social media channels, but also to all our communication channels such as WhatsApp and Slack*". Another more surprising approach comes from I-2 and I-3 who mention co-creation, because they are a startup and roles can be overlapping "*We value their opinion and enthusiasm, so we co-create their task and responsibility list and talk about how they view the current and future situation in this new venture team*".

4.2.5 Personal involvement and performance

For most of the interviewees, involvement in team discussions and operations is seen as normal due to the small team size of the venture. All interviewees state their voice is being heard to some extent, it differs slightly between cofounders and regular employees. However, some interviewees like I-1, who is not a cofounder, emphasize positively on the extent to which they are being encouraged to speak up "*We are all encouraged to be able to speak up when necessary, and I never feel discouraged to do so even when it's not my expertise*". I-3 who is a cofounder agrees and adds to this that "*It is very welcoming, when you are talking and asking questions and coming out with everything you want to say*" and

"(...) we listen to each other and its okay to go against each other in that sense". But, there are also two interviewees, both I-9 and I-6, who see room for improvement with regards to the extent of involvement of team members *"What we could improve is that everyone speaks up a bit more during meetings"* and *"I think that everyone is doing a great job, but I think that it is hard in a digital setting to speak up a bit more and that is hard especially if you are a bit shy, but is it so essential for new inputs and ideas"*.

All interviewees acknowledged the importance of the new venture team to them personally, they all felt they belonged to a group of friends. But there is a difference in the extent, as the founders of the new ventures were friends already before the venture started and therefore feel a stronger belonging to the group than the other employees, so stated I-8 *"(...) they were my friends before the venture, and have grown on me throughout the venture"* and I-6 *"I-9 has been my friend for a long time, already before the venture"*. I-2 states *"This venture is an important group, but I have other social groups "* and I-1 , who like I-2 joined the new venture on a later stage, says *"This is definitely an important group besides my group of friends and family"*. I-5 adds to this *"I consider them my friends, but because I'm 10-15 years older than them and because I have a different home situations and other ventures, I don't spend too much time on the venture"*. I-8 ends with a remark that emphasized on the fact that it is smart to make them feel like friends and family "*bonding is very important, but for some instances you need to try to keep it professional to a certain degree"* otherwise you lose efficiency and quality of work.
One of the many benefits of working in a new venture team, that has been mentioned by all interviewees, is the regular opportunity to improve their individual performance on a wide variety of skills and competences. I-1 mentions that networking and collaboration with outside parties has helped her grow *"I am not a cofounder, but they treat me as part of the original team, and this really allows me to be hands on and have these opportunities"*. I-2 also experiences these opportunities *"If I want to dive into something, like an extra finance course, I definitely get the space and time for that, so the team encourages self-improvement"*. I-4 and I-7, who are both relatively new in the company, experience the freedom to make mistakes and improve via feedback sessions. I-7, *"I am still new in some areas, but the team has been understanding with good acceptance*" and I-4 *"The team gives me feedback on a daily base and said it was okay to*

make corrections". As cofounders of the companies, I-6 and I-3 were likeminded in the approach towards improving their individual performance as well as their employee's individual performance. I-6 stated, *"(...) we are very open, so not only just by hierarchy, but also what we want to do that also counts for myself"* and I-3 states *"I am trying to be open towards them, asking them if there are certain things that they feel like I need to do better or improve on, and vice versa".* I-8 seems to be a bit more straightforward and states *"If you are working in development, every single topic we approach is mostly new to us, so it is kind of included in your task that you learn about this new topic, like you are consistently required to learn about new topics".* I-5 is clear in its opinion and states that it is the only thing that you do when working in a startup or new venture *"Every day I improve, I learn, that is all I do basically".*

4.2.6 Current sentiment

There seems to be an agreement of all the interviewees that there is a need of physical interaction while starting a new venture. I-2, I-3 and I-4 are all appreciating the physical aspect when working together. I-3 states, *"...the virtual aspect is completely fine but there comes a time where you, you just need to, you just need to be together. I don't think you can ever replace the physical aspect of running a business, you can definitely increase or decrease the number of days that you need to be physically in the same room…".* All the interviewees mention the positive aspects of being able to work virtual, and most would prefer a hybrid setting in the future. "*If a hybrid version of this could be like, you know, like 70/30, a little bit more in person, and maybe only online when you need it to be" I-1.* However, team members from Nightli want to go back working in an office, stating that the level of effectiveness and excitement and motivation are the main reasons. I-7 stated, *"I would definitely prefer going back to working face to face, personally. Although I do understand that there are a lot of positives, working, you know, digitally."* And I-8 from the same team: *"Yes, I think you are, more, more productive, it's more exciting and it's easier to stay motivated with a team when you see what they are working on and you can pump each other up.".* There are also social aspects that some team members miss and see as important, I-9 stated, "*You know all the conversations that you might have in between a coffee, that can help you all so much because people know someone you could talk to etc. And just socially, like on the motivational side…"*

5 Discussion and Analysis

The following chapter will discuss and analyze the empirical findings and connect it to previous research, as well as the research question. The analysis in this chapter is organized in two parts, the first part focusses on the extent to whether the interviewed NVTs exhibited cohesiveness or not by relating the findings to the four dimensions in the framework presented by Salas et al. (2015) in chapter 2. The second part discusses and analyses how cohesion is being built by the NVTs in a virtual setting by combining insights from the findings with literature.

5.1

Kitchenswaps

Task	The team members have a slightly different winning mentality and view on reaching milestones. But even though one is more motivated by winning, and another by having an impact, since they all want to achieve successful outputs, it is clear that they have a shared commitment to accomplish the group's goals and objective, in line with Salas et al. (2015). The supportive environment, shared vision and a usage of operational tools such as task-lists, suggests a strong desire to reach desired outputs. Kitchenswaps is also the smallest NVT from all three and therefore likely to show the most cohesiveness, following the results from a study by Mullen and Copper (1994) showing that smaller teams are more cohesive.
Social	A high engagement in face-to-face social activities and virtual social activities to a slight extent contributes to a higher level of cohesion. Social activities and "hang-outs" that are not work related are rarely scheduled, suggesting a more flexible social environment. The positive vibe when speaking about the social activities and how they get along well, are signs of closeness and attraction to other group members (Salas et al., 2015).
Belongingness	The friendly environment and frequent activities are signs that team members are bonding and building close relationships. The level of trust to other team members is varying, mostly depending on who the other team member is, which indicates a lower degree of belongingness (Salas et al., 2015). The team is being considered

	moderate cohesive in terms of belongingness as there are factors that seem to hamper the attraction to other team members.
Morale	The high level of responsibility to perform tasks and serve the team's purpose indicate that they have high loyalty (Salas et al., 2015) towards the team members. The teams ability to solve conflicts and have discussions regarding key topics are signs of the team's ability to endure frustration for the group (Salas et al., 2015). The transparency of which the team members speak confirms this.
Conclusion	Based on the four dimensions of cohesion, the authors make the assessment that there is cohesion in the Kitchenswaps team.

Nightli

Task	The strong desire to perform well in the team and the fact that milestones are often reached, are signs of attraction between group members to complete tasks and reach objectives (Salas et al., 2015). The flat organization, high level of teamwork and a shared vision enables the team to perform well and enhance task cohesion.
Social	The social aspect within the team Nightli has deteriorated from how it was before. The team is not engaging in as many social activities as they used to, indicating that the closeness of relationships in the group (Salas et al., 2015) is lacking, which has led to a decreased cohesion in the social context.
Belongingness	The team members have a high trust towards the other team members professionally, but personal trust is lacking to a certain extent. They are building online relationships, but it is purely work-related among most of the team members. Work is what essentially keeps the team together, suggesting that the degree of attraction to the group (Salas et al., 2015) is lacking.
Morale	The high degree of responsibility taking in Nightli is more individually orientated and, to some extent structured, conflicting with what the team members are mentioning about the helpful culture. As they are goal-orientated there is still a high degree of loyalty to other team members and completing tasks (Salas et al., 2015). Conflicts in the team are rare. They manage to endure restructuration for the

	group rather when it comes to task related aspects than for the team and the venture.
Conclusion	There is cohesion in team Nightli, however there are critical aspects within certain dimensions where the team is lacking in building and maintaining cohesion.

Skördetid

Task	In Skördetid, the desire to make change and have an impact contributes to a strong winning mentality. The level of teamwork to reach desired outputs is high, indicating that there is a shared vision among the team members to help the team's mission. This indicates that there is an attraction between the team members to reach Skördetid's goals and objectives (Salas et al., 2015), which they often do.
Social	The high degree of social interaction in the team, sometimes three to four meetings a month which is very frequent in relation to the other teams, shows that there is closeness and attraction to the other team members (Salas et al., 2015). Moreover, they are prioritizing the social connections in the team and they are enjoying each other's company, by having had several social activities in a virtual setting as well.
Belongingness	The strong degree of belongingness in the team Skördetid, seems real since they are good friends with one other and the team members miss each other after since starting to work in a virtual setting. This, in combination with the high level of trust towards other team members, indicates that there is a high degree of attraction towards other team members (Salas et al., 2015).
Morale	Views on responsibility and the team's ability to solve conflicts is in some extent scattered. However, the high degree of transparency and an open climate, where everyone's voice is being heard, suggests that they manage to maintain a quite high degree of loyalty to group members and that they manage to endure frustration for the group (Salas et al., 2015).
Conclusion	Based on the assessment of the four dimensions of cohesion in the Skördetid team, the authors conclude that there is cohesion in the team, even though they are lacking in building and maintaining cohesion in certain dimensions.

5.2

The two aggregated dimensions have been identified out of the 2nd -order selection of themes and they are in line with the two subdimensions of cohesion as stated in the literature review chapter by (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985; Severt & Estrada, 2015). The two subdimensions form the base of this discussion chapter. However, in line with the inductive data analysis design, the outlier results will be emphasized on. These outlier results showcase the unique approaches that the interviewed NVTs take to build cohesion in a virtual setting and therefore the focus is set on these findings to eventually add upon existing research.

<div align="center">

Task

</div>

To improve the task related cohesion in the teams, the NVTs and their individual team members focus on implementing flexibility in terms of working hours, way of working and setting up business meetings on a short notice because everybody is working remote and with different schedules. Caligiuri et al., (2020) and Waizenegger et al. (2020) research showed that these are some of the beneficial factors often associated with remote work. According to I-1, everyone in the team is very flexible, as they can turn on the laptop whenever and wherever they want and they are connected, which is convenient, especially during this pandemic. Severt and Estrada (2015) explain that team members with a flexible and constructive relationship with one another, often result in high levels of team member exchange and task performance. However, the findings made clear that not all three NVTs are as flexible, this seems to be due to the difference in part-time or full-time involvement and the role in the new venture. For some of the NVT team members, the new venture is just one of many jobs. With this flexibility comes responsibility and the results show slight differences into what extent the team is collectively, or individually, responsible when it comes to performing tasks. The smaller teams show the most collective responsibility where the largest NVT show the most individual responsibility. But they are aligned in their opinion about the importance of taking responsibility as a team. This shared commitment is vital to achieving a group's goals and objectives (Severt & Estrada, 2015). Additionally, a study by Mullen and Copper (1994), exhibited a positive relationship between cohesion and team performance and pinpointed that the correlation was stronger in smaller teams. This potentially relates to why Kitchenswaps, the smallest team seems to show the strongest level of cohesion.

Logically connected with the achievement of the team's goals and objectives, is the winning mentality and winning performance of the NVTs and the team members. All 10 interviewees displayed some extent of competitiveness and the motivation to win, mostly orientated to reaching important objective or to customer satisfaction. The interviewees stated information sharing tools and setting key objectives (such as OKRs and KPIs) as important factors when it comes to reaching milestones. According to Wu and Chen (2014), this homogeneity of members to team goals and consensus among members towards goals and approaches are key internal factors for building task related cohesion.

With regards to information sharing tools, all NVTs stated that they communicate through tools such as WhatsApp and Slack and meetings are held via Skype or Zoom. Especially distributed virtual teams are unable to directly observe each other's behaviour, work and input, which makes it difficult to evaluate each other's efforts (Haines, 2021). But by using these online communication tools, the NVTs are able to work together on the same project, even when being geographically dispersed, thereby showing transparency in work output and progress (Poehler & Schumacher, 2007; Vitola & Baltina, 2013). What stands out from the findings, is the emphasis that the NVTs put on the open communication, whereby they state that their voice is being heard in a large extent when participating in discussions, thereby enhancing the overall information sharing. I-1 for example, states that 'she can say whatever she wants, and they are very receptive when I need more direction'.

Remarkably, the NVTs showcase a high level of commitment to visions and goals among the team and its members. The team members perceive the others to be aligned with the team and the team mission and there are zero to none conflicting aspirations. These emotional and affective responses are a fundamental need in order to get task-specific work done and they aid the building of task cohesion (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985; Severt & Estrada, 2015). Furthermore, the teams mention that there is a high trust among all team members, especially when it comes to performing tasks and completing them in time. Some interviewees' trust varies, depending on the team member and its role. Some also mention that working in a physical space or virtual space affects their trust, while others mention that it has no affect at all. Nevertheless, to develop a high level of social and task cohesion, it is important for groups to build positive working-relationships, this is done by trust and liking (Severt & Estrada, 2015).

The latter is hard to reach when there is no supportive environment. According to the findings most of the members perceive that there is encouragement of team members and compliments are given, all of which is contributing to a positive working environment. Conflicts are rarely happening. The team members are actively using positive and constructive feedback and give praise to each other's work during meetings to maintain this positive working climate and so, enhance the task related cohesion. When task cohesion is present in a group, the team members have belief that the team will be able to perform the tasks and reach certain goals. Thereby common understanding is important (Severt & Estrada, 2015). A vast majority believed that their team has an accepting environment in which everyone is being seen and heard. And in turn, team members believe that the positive climate can have a positive impact on how they are performing in general. The teams clearly showcase trust towards other team members to do the task competently and effectively. There is a shared commitment to achieving a group's goal and objective (Severt & Estrada, 2015).

Not surprisingly, the interviewees acknowledge that some aspects are in need for improvement. First, the completion of tasks could be done faster and more efficient. Secondly, there is a need for more structure with regards to the division of tasks. Role division could be improved. Providing visibility for team members on each other's responsibilities, activities and progress are key requirements for establishing a successful environment for virtual teamwork (Morley, Cormican & Folan, 2015). Lastly, for socials aspects, there was a desire among some of the interviewees to engage more in social activities that could also be a bit task related. Severt and Estrada (2015), explain that group members that socially interact more often are more likely to develop true friendship and engage in personal, informal communication which may strengthen social bonds further within the group.

Social

For NVTs to create social cohesiveness, a strong motivation of the individual team members is necessary to develop and maintain social relationships within the group (Carless & De Paola, 2000; Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985). From the findings can be concluded that interviewed NVTs are doing well with regards to building online relationships and social interaction. More than half of the interviewees stated that they were strangers in the beginning but quickly became friends during the venture. I-3 and I-6, two cofounders stated that they do

this by focusing on the individual team member's needs, by understanding who they are as a person and how they work, so that their position can be customized as well as to make them feel as comfortable as possible.

I-1, I-9, and I-6 were aligned with their opinion that a key factor in building online relationships is the presence and regular implementation of virtual social activities to interact. Especially when there is a reason to celebrate, like an achieved business goal or an anniversary. Severt and Estrada (2015) agree and explain that group members who interact more often are more likely to develop true friendship bonds and that these bonds might lead to an increased willingness to engage in personal, informal communication, which may strengthen social bonds further within the group. It is important to note that some of the cofounders of teams, I-9 and I-6, would like to organise these online social interactions and celebrations more regularly as they still is happen seldomly. An additional suggestion came from I-5, who has a different point of view on the reason and claims he wants to use such events and interactions in a more professional way. The general opinion from the interviewees is clearly that these virtual social events are highly wanted and beneficial for all parties involved.

Group members typically form friendship bonds relatively quickly, however individuals that are familiar and similar to one another are more likely to reciprocate positive feelings and develop bonds of friendship (Severt & Estrada, 2015). Implementing this statement from Severt and Estrada (2015) is a hard one for the NVTs, as the vast majority of the interviewees is living geographically dispersed, meaning that most of them are not able to conduct in-person activities. But this is not seen as a fundamental problem by I-3 and I-5, two cofounders of two different NVTs. They agree that this is the new way to follow under the current circumstances and that, because of the relatively small sizes of their NVTs and the different generations involved with different schedules, there is little room for in-person events. This does not mean the teams are not trying to improve this. They aim to organise less work-related events more often, trying to not see them as an obligation, but as a regular to-do activity for on their agendas. In line with the absence of in-person activities, there is an overall agreement on the extent of how much social interaction is missing due to the current virtual working environment. Waizenegger et al. (2020)

recognizes this in his research, stating that feelings of social and professional isolation, missed informal learning opportunities and decreased support of the company, and so colleagues have far reaching consequences for staff. 7/10 interviewees were likeminded that it is a super important way to bond together and build a cohesive company culture and agreed upon the fact that they should do better at celebrating things (e.g., anniversaries and milestones). This relates to the research from Popovici (2020), who states some dominant challenges associated with forced remote work, one being an aggravated ability to build a culture that is accepting and supportive and thereby lacking a positive impact on employee motivation and satisfaction. Another challenge that hinders the opportunities for social interaction activities, is the nature of the NVT in general, as there often are differences in involvement and commitment (part-time or full-time) of the team individuals and so, different schedules and priorities. Which relates to one of Wu and Chen (2014)'s internal factors affecting team performance and cohesion, being role identify and commitment of each team member.

For most of the interviewees involvement in team discussions and operations is seen as normal, due to the small team size of the venture. All interviewees state their voice is being heard to some extent, it differs slightly between cofounders and regular employees. Despite the fact that it might be hard sometimes to do so in a digital setting, the cofounders of the NVTs try to encourage their team members to speak up. Besides the level of involvement, all interviewees acknowledged the importance of the NVT to them personally, they all felt they belonged to a group of friends. This can be seen as a positive thing as it relates to what Severt and Estrada (2015) state in their research that when team members strongly identify themselves with the environment of the group, they fulfil an affective need and identity with the greater social context. There is, however, a stronger link between friendship and belonging that can be identified among team members that have known each other before the venture started. Moreover, I-5 and I-8, two cofounders of two different NVTs provide a sidenote to this topic, saying that it is important to bond, but sometimes it is essential to keep it professional to a certain degree. Carron, Widmeyer and Brawley (1985), relate to this as they refer to the essence of having a balanced perception regarding team's closeness, social activities and the tasks at hand.

As new ventures develop and mature leadership is likely to change as well and the continuous room for (self) improvement among the team is crucial (Klotz et al., 2014). This is something that the cofounders of the NVTs seem to understand very well. As both the cofounders and the other team members are provided with the room to improve their individual performance, via either additional courses or regular feedback sessions. The interviewees state that it is okay to make mistakes as long as this can be discussed in an open and transparent way. I-5 provides a strong quote saying it all *"Every day, I improve, I learn, that is all I do basically".*
Last, the onboarding of new members is something all the NVTs take very serious and personal. A personal touch, an open and transparent approach, an extensive company introduction and virtual tour are few of the factors that are focussed upon when onboarding new members. I-3 and I-2 showcase a more surprising approach, whereby they co-create the tasks and responsibility lists of the new person in a very transparent and direct way. Via this way they think that the opinion, expertise and enthusiasm of the new person is used immediately instead of neglected. Thereby aiming to improve the social coherence at once. This matches the more managerial discretion and wider latitude that NVTs have, providing the opportunity and flexibility in business processes, like the onboarding of new members (Hambrick & Abrahamson, 1995; Klotz et al., 2014).

Taking into consideration everything that has been said in this chapter, lots of positive insights are coming from the 10 interviewed NVT team members, and some aspects that need improvement. That seems to make the current sentiment divided, whereby half of the interviewees indicate that they are looking forward to go back to in-person, face-to-face work in the office, whereas the other half states to be satisfied with the way the virtual remote work is going now. This is what Ipsen et al. (2021) acknowledges in their research, stating that working from home is believed to continue post covid-19 in either pure- or hybrid. A solution that has been suggested by four interviewees, is to create a hybrid working setting, whereby the team members get the flexibility to divide their working time into working remote and working in the office. However, the co-founders acknowledge that this shift would bring new challenges, as employees' needs always vary and having your team working partly remote and partly co-located is a completely new test (Hinds, 2014; Knight, 2020).

6 Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Conclusion

Past research on building cohesion focused on traditional co-located teams and NVTs in a physical working environment, which makes the building of cohesion in virtual NVTs an interesting field to study. Therefore, in this study, the authors aimed to answer the posed research question: *"How do new venture teams build cohesion in a virtual setting?"*. To facilitate this study, the authors conducted ten semi-structured interviews with individual team members from three different NVTs that operate in Sweden. The NVTs were purposively selected based on industry relevance, team size and the criteria that they were forced, either voluntary or by recommendation, to continue their work virtually. The authors analysed the data with a hybrid approach whereby both inductive as deductive coding approaches have been used with the support from NVivo. The study examined in what extent the NVTs exhibited cohesion or not and continued with the research to obtain insights in how the teams build cohesion in a virtual setting. With the completion of this study the authors were able to answer the research question as follows using the two main subdimensions of cohesion 'task' and 'social' as structure.

Task

To improve the task related cohesion in the teams, the NVTs and their individual team members focus on implementing flexibility in terms of working hours and the way of working and by setting up business meetings on a short notice since team members are working remotely and with different schedules. However, the three NVTs differ in flexibility, this seems to be due to the difference in part-time or full-time involvement of the team members as well as their role in the venture. The NVTs are aware that high levels of flexibility require responsibility and that shared commitment is seen as essential aspect to achieve the group's goals and objectives. Some factors that are supporting this shared commitment among the team members are the winning mentality and desire to add value for their customers. To do so, the NVTs see the use of information sharing tools (e.g. Slack) and setting key objectives (e.g. OKRs and KPIs) as enablers to reaching milestones and to ensure transparency in work output among the team members. The consensus among members towards goals and approaches is a key internal factor to build task related cohesion and is therefore often sought for by NVTs.

The NVTs put big emphasis on the open communication, involving everyone in the team. Thereby ensuring overall alignment and minimizing conflicting aspirations that in turn support the growth in trust that all team members perform their tasks correctly and consistently. Some interviewees' trust varies depending on the team member and its role, but they also mention that working in a physical space or virtual space affects their trust. Nevertheless, the NVTs try to focus on building positive working relationships by trust and liking which helps to develop a high level of social and task relation cohesion in the team.

It is acknowledged by the NVTs that the latter is hard to reach, but they strive to create a supportive environment by encouragement and awarding compliments when possible. The team members are actively working with giving constructive feedback and giving praise to each other's work during online meetings, to maintain this positive working climate and so, enhance the task related cohesion. The NVTs acknowledged that there are also aspects in need for some improvement. First, the completion of tasks could be done faster and more efficient. Secondly, there is a need for some structure, a better division of tasks and better role division. Lastly, for social aspects, there is a general desire to engage more in social activities, even task related, to aid social and task cohesion.

Social

For NVTs to create social cohesiveness, a strong motivation of the individual team members is necessary to develop and maintain social relationships within the group. The NVTs do this by focusing on the individual team member's needs, by understanding who they are as a person and how they work, so that their position can be customized as well as to make them feel comfortable. They apply the same method when onboarding new members, using a rather surprising approach, whereby they co-create the task and responsibility list of the new person in a transparent, open and direct way to really incorporate their opinion, expertise and enthusiasm instead of neglecting it. Furthermore, a majority of the NVTs were likeminded in their opinion that a key factor in building online relationships is the presence and regular implementation of virtual social activities to interact, especially when there is reason to celebrate, but that these were still only happening seldomly.

In addition, NVTs are often confronted with differences in involvement and commitment (part-time or full-time) of team members and then there is the fact that most team members are geographically dispersed and zero to none in-person activities are conducted. This is however not seen as a fundamental problem by the cofounders due to the current Covid-19 regulations and the 'new normal' which remote working appears to be. However, the NVTs do acknowledge the importance of social interaction and activities and are aiming to improve by not seeing these activities as an obligation, but as a regular to-do activity for on the agendas. In another way to enhance social cohesion, the NVTs focus on involving all team members by encouraging them to speak up during meetings, despite the potential hinders the online setting can bring.

Nevertheless, all members acknowledged the importance of the NVT to them personally, as they all felt they belonged to a group of friends, thereby identifying themselves with the environment and fulfil an affective need with the greater social context. The NVTs also agreed that it is important to bond but that it is essential to keep it professional to a certain degree, to maintain a balanced perception regarding team's closeness, social activities and the tasks at hand. On another note, as new ventures develop and mature, leaderships changes, and allowing continuous room for (self) improvement among the team is seen as crucial. This is something that the NVTs are doing well, by providing room to improve their individual performance via either additional courses or regular feedback sessions among each other.

Besides all of opinions and insights, the team members of the NVTs currently display a divided sentiment, whereby half of the interviewees indicated that they are looking forward to go back to in-person work in the office, whereas the other half states to be satisfied with the current virtual setting. A solution that has been suggested by a couple of team members, is to create a hybrid working setting, whereby the team members get the flexibility to divide their working time into working remote or working in the office. However, the co-founders of the NVTs acknowledge that this shift would bring new challenges, thus needs additional research. But the option for a hybrid setting appears to be still on the table.

On a concluding note, the study provided data rich insights in how a small group of NVTs currently build cohesion in a virtual setting. It can be said that their approaches and opinions about how to do so differ slightly among each other, due to differences in for example goals, team size and individual mindsets from (co)founders. But that overall, the abovementioned approaches are seen to be effective as all three NVTs are currently showing cohesion. Nevertheless, both the authors and the NVTs acknowledge points of improvements that could be considered in future research.

6.2 Implications for future research

The findings of this research can be used as groundwork for future research that explores the dynamic aspect of cohesion in NVTs that are operating in a virtual setting, measuring cohesion at multiple points during the life of a team. It can also be used in studies regarding teams that have a different change of setting, for example a team that was founded remotely and that proceeded working in an office or vice versa. Another entry point can be to study cohesion building in NVTs that are in an earlier or later phase of the venture creation process, as well as NVTs in other cultures, industries or ventures that have a different number of team members or that are operating in a hybrid or virtual setting. The findings can also be used as a base to explore whether diversity can impact how cohesion is being built in NVTs that are working virtually. Further on, cohesion is one aspect contributing to a team's and new venture team's performance, there remains room to explore whether other aspects are crucial to a team's performance which is operating in a virtual or hybrid setting, think of trust, leadership and role definition. The results and findings can be used as a practical guideline for NVTs in how to build and maintain cohesion when working in a virtual or hybrid setting. However, due to the limitations of the study, generalizability and transferability, it is questionable whether it can be used in other fields, industries or teams that are not sharing the same characteristics as the objectives in the study. Lastly, as the NVTs are unique in their nature, experiencing extraordinary changes as they transition from start-ups to established business. They have other things to take into consideration during the different stages of the entrepreneurial process than a team within a larger company and so, the results should not be compared with 'regular' teams.

7 List of references

Abarca, V. M. G., Palos-Sanchez, P. R. & Rus-Arias, E. (2020). Working in Virtual Teams: A Systematic Literature Review and a Bibliometric Analysis, *IEEE Access*, vol. 8, pp.168923–168940.

Amason, A. C., Shrader, R. C. & Tompson, G. H. (2006). Newness and Novelty: Relating Top Management Team Composition to New Venture Performance, *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp.125–148.

Beal, D. J., Cohen, R. R., Burke, M. J. & McLendon, C. L. (2004). Cohesion and Performance in Groups: A Meta-Analytic Clarification of Construct Relations, p.18.

Bell, P. of O. S. E., Bryman, P. of O. and S. R. A. & Harley, P. of M. B. (2019). Business Research Methods 5e, Place of publication not identified.

Berry, G. R. (2011). Enhancing Effectiveness on Virtual Teams: Understanding Why Traditional Team Skills Are Insufficient, *Journal of Business Communication*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp.186–206.

Blackburn, S., Laberge, L., O'Toole, C. & Schneider, J. (2020). Digital Strategy in a Time of Crisis, Available Online: http://ceros.mckinsey.com/coronavirus-promo-video-desktop [Accessed 10 March 2021].

Bolander, P., Sumelius, J. & Werr, A. (2020). A Remote Possibility, Available Online: https://www.hhs.se/en/research/sweden-through-the-crisis/a-remote-possibility/ [Accessed 2 February 2021].

Caligiuri, P., De Cieri, H., Minbaeva, D., Verbeke, A. & Zimmermann, A. (2020). International HRM Insights for Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Future Research and Practice, *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 51, no. 5, pp.697–713.

Carless, S. A. & De Paola, C. (2000). The Measurement of Cohesion in Work Teams, *Small Group Research*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp.71–88.

Carron, A. V. & Brawley, L. R. (2012). COHESION Conceptual and Measurement Issues, p.18.

Carron, A. V., Widmeyer, W. N. & Brawley, L. R. (1985). The Development of an Instrument to Assess Cohesion in Sport Teams: The Group Environment Questionnaire, *Journal of Sport Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp.244–266.

Casey-Campbell, M. & Martens, M. L. (2009). Sticking It All Together: A Critical Assessment of the Group Cohesion–Performance Literature, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp.223–246.

Cooney, T. M. (2005). Editorial: What Is an Entrepreneurial Team?, *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp.226–235.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches, 3rd ed., Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

De', R., Pandey, N. & Pal, A. (2020). Impact of Digital Surge during Covid-19 Pandemic: A Viewpoint on Research and Practice, *International Journal of Information Management*, vol. 55, p.102171.

Dubé, L. & Robey, D. (2009). Surviving the Paradoxes of Virtual Teamwork, *Information Systems Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp.3–30.

Dunkelberg, W. C. (1989). ARNOLD C. COOPER and CAROLYN Y. WOO, p.16.

Eisenhardt, K. M. & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory Building From Cases: Opportunities And Challenges, *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1, pp.25–32.

Ensley, M. D., Hmieleski, K. M. & Pearce, C. L. (2006). The Importance of Vertical and Shared Leadership within New Venture Top Management Teams: Implications for the Performance of Startups, *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp.217–231.

Foo, M.-D., Sin, H.-P. & Yiong, L.-P. (2006). Effects of Team Inputs and Intrateam Processes on Perceptions of Team Viability and Member Satisfaction in Nascent Ventures, p.12.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G. & Hamilton, A. L. (2012). Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology, *Organizational Research Methods*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp.15–31.

Grossoehme, D. H. (2014). Overview of Qualitative Research, *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp.109–122.

Haas & Mortensen. (2016). The Secrets of Great Teamwork, *Harvard Business Review*, Available Online: https://hbr.org/2016/06/the-secrets-of-great-teamwork [Accessed 17 January 2021].

Hacker, J., Johnson, M., Saunders, C. & Thayer, A. (2019). Trust in Virtual Teams: A Multidisciplinary Review and Integration, *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*, vol. 23.

Haines, R. (2021). Activity Awareness, Social Presence, and Motivation in Distributed Virtual Teams, *Information & Management*, vol. 58, no. 2, p.103425.

Hambrick, D. C. & Abrahamson, E. (1995). ASSESSING MANAGERIAL DISCRETION ACROSS INDUSTRIES: A MULTIMETHOD APPROACH, *Academy of Management Journal*, p.16.

Hinds, P. (2014). 4 Ways to Decrease Conflict Within Global Teams, *Harvard Business Review*, Available Online: https://hbr.org/2014/06/4-ways-to-decrease-conflict-within-global-teams [Accessed 18 May 2021].

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*, vol. 18, no. 4, p.1826.

Kanawattanachai & Yoo. (2007). The Impact of Knowledge Coordination on Virtual Team Performance over Time, *MIS Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 4, p.783.

Klotz, A. C., Hmieleski, K. M., Bradley, B. H. & Busenitz, L. W. (2014). New Venture Teams: A Review of the Literature and Roadmap for Future Research, *Journal of Management*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp.226–255.

Knight, R. (2020). How to Manage a Hybrid Team, *Harvard Business Review*, Available Online: https://hbr.org/2020/10/how-to-manage-a-hybrid-team [Accessed 22 March 2021].

Mazzucchelli, A., Chierici, R., Tortora, D. & Fontana, S. (2019). Innovation Capability in Geographically Dispersed R&D Teams: The Role of Social Capital and IT Support, *Journal of Business Research*, [e-journal], Available Online: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296319303479 [Accessed 1 February 2021].

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J. & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve Tips for Conducting Qualitative Research Interviews, *Medical Teacher*, vol. 41, no. 9, pp.1002–1006.

Morley, S., Cormican, K. & Folan, P. (2015). An Analysis of Virtual Team Characteristics: A Model for Virtual Project Managers, *Journal of technology management & innovation*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp.188–203.

Mullen, B. & Copper, C. (1994). The Relation Between Group Cohesiveness and Performance: An Integration, p.18.

Nguyen, M. H., Gruber, J., Fuchs, J., Marler, W., Hunsaker, A. & Hargittai, E. (2020). Changes in Digital Communication During the COVID-19 Global Pandemic: Implications for Digital Inequality and Future Research, *Social Media + Society*, vol. 6, no. 3, p.2056305120948255.

O'Connor, C. & Joffe, H. (2020). Intercoder Reliability in Qualitative Research: Debates and Practical Guidelines, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 19, p.1609406919899220.

Otter.ai. (2021). Otter Voice Meeting Notes, Available Online: https://otter.ai [Accessed 4 May 2021].

Poehler, L. & Schumacher, T. (2007). The Virtual Team Challenge: Is It Time for Training?, p.7.

Popovici, V. (2020). Remote Work Revolution: Current Opportunities and Challenges for Organizations, no. 1, p.5.

QSR International. (2021). Qualitative Data Analysis Software | NVivo, Available Online: https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home [Accessed 1 April 2021].

Reynolds, W. (2017). How to Launch a Remote Company, *Remote.Co*, Available Online: https://remote.co/how-to-launch-a-remote-company/ [Accessed 31 January 2021].

Salas, E., Grossman, R., Hughes, A. M. & Coultas, C. W. (2015). Measuring Team Cohesion: Observations from the Science, *Human Factors*, vol. 57, no. 3, pp.365–374.

Salkind, N. (2010). Triangulation, in *Encyclopedia of Research Design*, [e-book] 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc., Available Online: http://methods.sagepub.com/reference/encyc-of-research-design/n469.xml [Accessed 18 May 2021].

Samuelsson, M. & Jönköping International Business School. (2004). Creating New Ventures: A Longitudinal Investigation of the Nascent Venturing Process.

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2015). Research Methods for Business Students, Seventh edition., New York: Pearson Education.

Schjoedt, L. & Kraus, S. (2009). Entrepreneurial Teams: Definition and Performance Factors, *Management Research News*, vol. 32, no. 6, pp.513–524.

Severt, J. B. & Estrada, A. X. (2015). On the Function and Structure of Group Cohesion, in E. Salas, W. B. Vessey, & A. X. Estrada (eds), *Research on Managing Groups and Teams*, Vol. 17, [e-book] Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.3–24, Available Online: https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/S1534-085620150000017002/full/html [Accessed 15 March 2021].

Vitola, A. & Baltina, I. (2013). An Evaluation of the Demand for Telework and Smart Work Centres in Rural Areas: A Case Study from Latvia, *European Countryside*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp.251–264.

Waizenegger, L., McKenna, B., Cai, W. & Bendz, T. (2020). An Affordance Perspective of Team Collaboration and Enforced Working from Home during COVID-19, *European Journal of Information Systems*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp.429–442.

Wu, M. & Chen, Y.-H. (2014). A Factor Analysis on Teamwork Performance -an Empirical Study of Inter-Instituted Collaboration, *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, no. 55, pp.37–54.

Zeewy, O. (2019). "The Future of Work Is Entrepreneurial" – Orly Zeewy, Available Online: https://www.marketingjournal.org/the-future-of-work-is-entrepreneurial-orly-zeewy/ [Accessed 16 March 2021].

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 - NVT company descriptions

Kitchenswaps is a new venture originating from Lund University founded 2020. It currently has its base in Stockholm with people working in a hybrid virtual setting, working in their office part of an incubator as well as remote. Kitchenswaps is an online marketplace for commercial kitchen space where food businesses are being matched with kitchen owners. There are two co-founders and two interns, forming the new venture team.

Skördetid is a tech-oriented new venture founded in Lund by the co-founders Atakan and Marcus, who both were part of the entrepreneurship and innovation program at Lund University. It was founded in 2020 and since then a couple interns and an additional cofounder have joined the team. Skördetid is a platform that connects workers with agriculture in Sweden. It is an online platform as well as an application for smartphones with a marketplace where machine services can be bought and sold.

Nightli is a tech-oriented new venture founded in 2019 by two co-founders, since its start it has had another co-founder that dropped off the venture. Beside its original two co-founders Henrik and Eric, they have and have had several interns since. Nightli offers a platform in which people can find nightclubs, bars and other social events, and on the platform they can connect and interact with each other. Nightli has been part of the KTH pre-incubator program where they worked in an office, but due to pandemic restrictions they have been forced to work remotely.

Appendix 2 - The interview guide

Introduction from our side:
Before we start, we would like to check with you if we can record this interview, this is only so we can interpret the interview results as accurately as possible. Do you give permission for this?

So yeah. The worldwide pandemic is affecting the way we are working and as we all are experiencing and have been experiencing there is evidence pointing in the direction that working from home is believed to become the new norm, not only for large organizations but you and I as current and future entrepreneurs and new venture teams. The pandemic has far reaching consequences and is directly and indirectly affecting business success and especially new venture success. The main focus of our research is set on researching group cohesion in new venture teams as this factor appeared to have a fundamental role in maintaining efficient teamwork. The aim of the study is to identify how NVTs built cohesion in a digitalized setting. The results of this research are aimed to contribute towards improving virtual teamwork in new venture teams for any current and future participants of Lund University.
The results of this interview will be used for school purposes primarily. I expect that the interview will last approximately 50-60 minutes. Is this alright with you or do you a time limit? Lastly, I would like to ask you if you prefer to remain anonymous in my research or if I am allowed to mention your name and the company name in my results? Any remaining questions?

Questions:
Introduction
1. How are you doing?
2. Could you tell us a bit more about yourself, your background, expertise and the venture you are working, incl tasks and responsibilities?
3. How would describe your current working environment? Please elaborate? How do you work together in that environment?
4. How do you communicate in that environment? (e.g. which programs/tools?)
5. Describe a general meeting, how does it go about? How long does it take? What kind of meetings do you have?
6. Please describe what happens if you encounter any problems and you want to set up a meeting with the team on a short notice?

Cohesion:
Attraction to group - task (ATG-T)
7. Could you try to describe your perception in what extent your voice is being heard when participating in discussions?
8. Could you describe if your team is desired to win? Could you describe in what extent you and your team reach milestones?

9. Can you describe the last time your team gave you the opportunity to improve your performance?
10. What do you like and don't like about the way your team is performing tasks? How would you like to see that improved?
11. How would you describe the level of team effectiveness now vs earlier (face-to-face)?

Attraction to group – social (ATG-S)

12. Could you describe in what extent you and your team engage in social activities together? And how do you feel about them? How would you like that see improved?
13. When was the last time you missed the other team members? Describe your feelings
14. How close are you to the other team members? Would you consider them your friends? Did they become your friend during the venture or were you friends before it started?
15. Which are the most important groups that you belong to? Is the NVT one of them?

Group integration – task (GI-T)

16. Describe the last time your team as unity managed to reach certain goals or milestones.
17. Is anyone taking more responsibility than others when it comes to any mistakes or poor performance by the team, please elaborate? Or is this something that the whole team is responsible for?
18. Could you please elaborate in what extent you perceive you or your team having conflicting aspirations for the team's goals?
19. When problems arise in the team, can you describe how you manage to solve these problems? Do you think everyone helps out each other effectively so you can get back together again, if so, please explain?
20. Describe in what extent and how you communicate open and freely about other team members responsibilities and performance?
21. Could you describe in what extent you trust your team members?
22. How would you describe your level of trust to the team members that you meet or have met more often in person, please elaborate?

Group integration – social (GI-S)

23. Please describe in what extent you participate in social activities at work that are not work related? How do you ensure that there is social interaction in the team?
24. For social activities, when was the last time you spent time with any team member and the team as a whole? Describe what you did and if you had fun. Could you describe an event that is not work related that you did with the team?
25. Could you describe in what extent you get along during social activities that are not work related? When was the last time you had a conflict during one of these activities and how often do they arise?

26. Could you please describe how you onboard / welcome new members? How do you make them feel part of the team? How do you make them feel comfortable? How do you improve and motivate them?
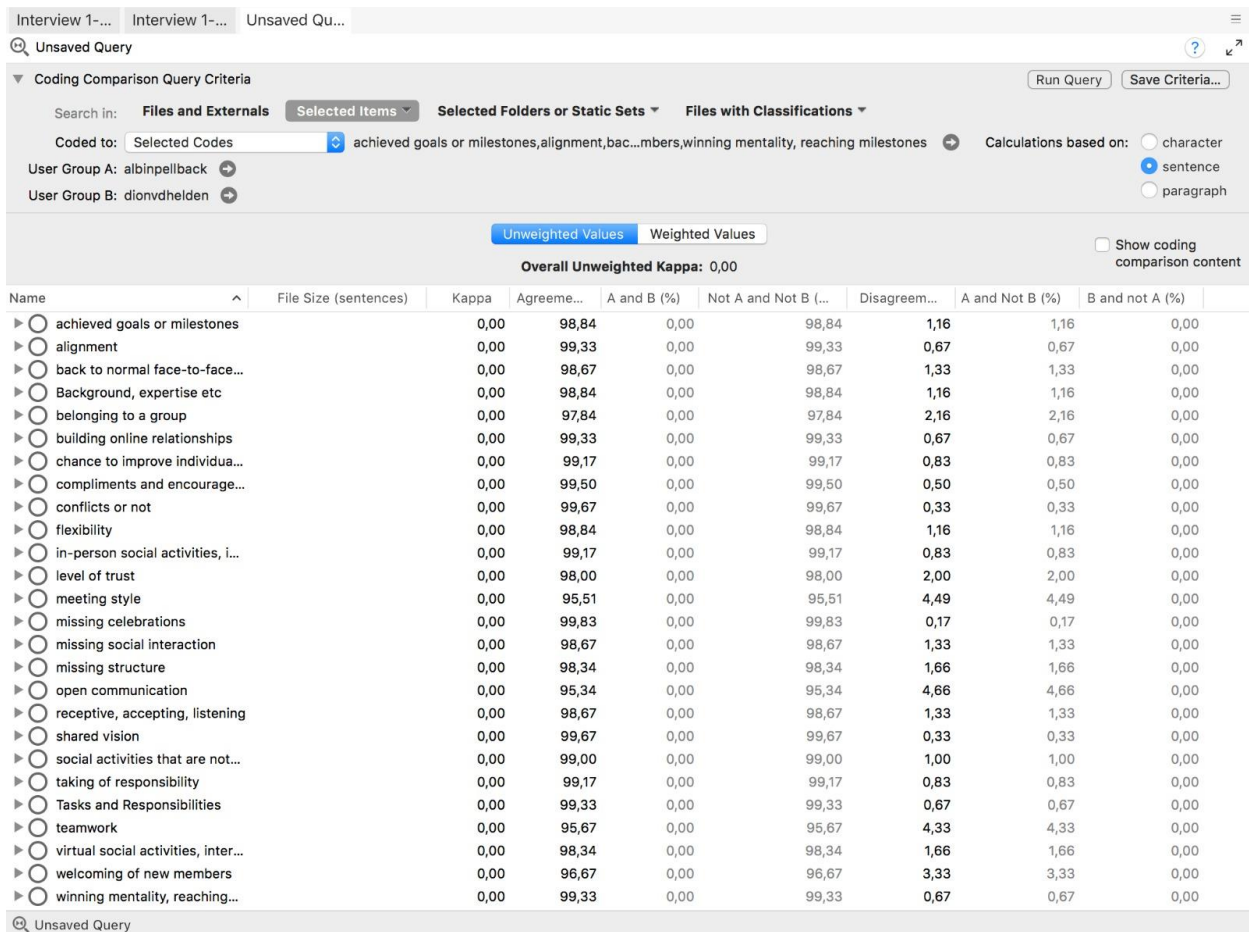
Remaining / optional

27. What would you like to see improved on both social and task context in your team? How are you planning to do that?
28. Would you like to go back to normal face-to-face work? If so, why?

Thanking notes.

Appendix 3 - Intercoder Reliability (ICR) test

Interview 1-... | Interview 1-... | Unsaved Qu...

Unsaved Query

Coding Comparison Query Criteria   Run Query   Save Criteria...

Search in: **Files and Externals**   Selected Items ▾   Selected Folders or Static Sets ▾   Files with Classifications ▾

Coded to: Selected Codes   achieved goals or milestones,alignment,bac...mbers,winning mentality, reaching milestones ➡   Calculations based on: ○ character ● sentence ○ paragraph

User Group A: albinpellback ➡
User Group B: dionvdhelden ➡

Unweighted Values   Weighted Values

Overall Unweighted Kappa: 0,00

☐ Show coding comparison content

Name	File Size (sentences)	Kappa	Agreeme...	A and B (%)	Not A and Not B (...	Disagreem...	A and Not B (%)	B and not A (%)
achieved goals or milestones		0,00	98,84	0,00	98,84	1,16	1,16	0,00
alignment		0,00	99,33	0,00	99,33	0,67	0,67	0,00
back to normal face-to-face...		0,00	98,67	0,00	98,67	1,33	1,33	0,00
Background, expertise etc		0,00	98,84	0,00	98,84	1,16	1,16	0,00
belonging to a group		0,00	97,84	0,00	97,84	2,16	2,16	0,00
building online relationships		0,00	99,33	0,00	99,33	0,67	0,67	0,00
chance to improve individua...		0,00	99,17	0,00	99,17	0,83	0,83	0,00
compliments and encourage...		0,00	99,50	0,00	99,50	0,50	0,50	0,00
conflicts or not		0,00	99,67	0,00	99,67	0,33	0,33	0,00
flexibility		0,00	98,84	0,00	98,84	1,16	1,16	0,00
in-person social activities, i...		0,00	99,17	0,00	99,17	0,83	0,83	0,00
level of trust		0,00	98,00	0,00	98,00	2,00	2,00	0,00
meeting style		0,00	95,51	0,00	95,51	4,49	4,49	0,00
missing celebrations		0,00	99,83	0,00	99,83	0,17	0,17	0,00
missing social interaction		0,00	98,67	0,00	98,67	1,33	1,33	0,00
missing structure		0,00	98,34	0,00	98,34	1,66	1,66	0,00
open communication		0,00	95,34	0,00	95,34	4,66	4,66	0,00
receptive, accepting, listening		0,00	98,67	0,00	98,67	1,33	1,33	0,00
shared vision		0,00	99,67	0,00	99,67	0,33	0,33	0,00
social activities that are not...		0,00	99,00	0,00	99,00	1,00	1,00	0,00
taking of responsibility		0,00	99,17	0,00	99,17	0,83	0,83	0,00
Tasks and Responsibilities		0,00	99,33	0,00	99,33	0,67	0,67	0,00
teamwork		0,00	95,67	0,00	95,67	4,33	4,33	0,00
virtual social activities, inter...		0,00	98,34	0,00	98,34	1,66	1,66	0,00
welcoming of new members		0,00	96,67	0,00	96,67	3,33	3,33	0,00
winning mentality, reaching...		0,00	99,33	0,00	99,33	0,67	0,67	0,00

Unsaved Query