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New Workworld

The Interrelation Of Workspace And Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Two years ago, when the global pandemic began, working from home seemed to be mandatory in a lot of organizations because of the health protection of employees and ensuring the functions of the business. Since the pandemic has gradually cooled down, employees are expected to return to the office, thus several opinions on such a matter have emerged. To balance opposing perceptions, a hybrid work model creates flexibility between working from home and working in the office. By offering this solution the thought about the optimized workspace is initiated. Therefore, employees' evaluation of workspaces is triggered. What makes an employee satisfied and what degrades their job satisfaction? Thus, this research aims to develop an understanding of how and to what extent the choice of a workspace influences job satisfaction. For finding answers to those questions, we want to understand how each workspace affects job satisfaction by evaluating relevant factors consisting of relationships at work, the balance between work and private life, and the urge for autonomy. Based on qualitative interviews conducted with employees of a global company, it was found that job satisfaction is differently influenced by varying workspaces and depends on the perceptions of the employee. It is not the work itself but the job features of the work environment that influence the job satisfaction depending on the workspaces, e.g. social interactions or efficiency. While questioning the potential of the hybrid working mode, it shows that it can fulfill job satisfaction more than single workspaces, but the conditions must be adapted to the new conditions that have arisen.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Working From Home, Hybrid Work Mode

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We wish the readers new insights while reading our qualitative study. Now, enjoy reading.

Thi Thao Anh Tran & Pia Scholtholt

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the beginning of the global pandemic in December 2019, workspaces have evolved and new forms of it have been established. Potentially, these alternatives can be used in addition to the “regular” in-office - in the present as well as post-pandemic (McKinsey, 2021).

The pandemic refers to the COVID crisis, which is a virus that has spread worldwide and has caused everything from mild colds to numerous deaths, limiting global happenings to the maximum. The course of the crisis changed and has softened to date due to vaccination and numerous contagions already. With severe restrictions, everyday life as well as the world of work was strongly affected (WHO, 2022). Traditionally, before the pandemic, employees worked in the office space. On account of the impact of the pandemic, the distance between colleagues had to be created. Many companies made it possible to work from home to protect the health of the employees and to ensure the steady operation of the company. Initially, strict home-office policies were applied by many companies for months at a time during the different surges of the pandemic. As economies and countries tackled the different waves and learned to live with the pandemic, a variety of working models developed, in particular a mix of working from home and being office-based: the hybrid work mode. It stands for the combination of an employee working from home as well as physically in the office (Vyas, 2022).

In pre-pandemic times, working from home was the exception. Mentioned arguments why sticking to in-office have been high costs of technical necessities to enable every employee to work from home at any time. Other reasons are data protection and the employees' acceptance that this is not given by the employer (Ifo, 2020). The pandemic forced the implementation of the measures and now it has become a permanent feature, as employees have been able to try this option for a longer period and experience the advantages and disadvantages for themselves (McKinsey, 2021). The same applies to the hybrid working model, which has also become established over the time of the pandemic. The hybrid working model combines both models, working from home and working in the office. In a study with managers from small to large companies, the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (2021) found that around 70% of these companies adopted the hybrid variant, also after the pandemic. What is particularly challenging is finding a solution for who can

come into the office at what time and maintain (or create) the social bond between the employees as well as the bond with the company (Bloom, 2022).

Experiencing these different workspaces enables the employee to reflect on preferences in the choice of the workspace (McKinsey, 2021). While there are employees who wanted to go back to the office, others show reluctance toward the traditional policy or do not enjoy the mandatory rapid workspace change (Forbes, 2021). These diverse perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of the possible workspaces indicate that each worker has a different sense of the conditions of work (McKinsey, 2021).

Problematization And Purpose Statement

While exploring the topic, the research findings show that there are already some existing studies that concentrate on the link between job satisfaction and the physical place of work. The research gap arises from the fact that workspaces have changed.

In previous studies and research (e.g. Baernholdt & Mark, 2009), job satisfaction refers to the physical place of work, but not working from home or hybrid working models. Existing studies on job satisfaction in the workspace predominantly focus on the physical in-office work environment. Therefore, the purpose of the thesis is to further determine how job satisfaction is influenced by the choice of workspace. Kompast and Wagner (1998) have found that the change of workspace affects other variables of the complex job world, for example, working methods, communication, and social relationships. Locke (1976) shares this view and emphasizes the individual evaluation of job characteristic traits and the ranking of the importance of these single traits.

Also, the timing of this case study is appropriate. Due to the global pandemic, there has been a major change in the world of work, which particularly affected the workplace because a lot of employees had to change to working from home fully (McKinsey, 2021). Brickman and Campbell (1971) found out that people tend to react strongly to particularly bad or good changes. Only after a while, humans have come to terms with the changes, which is also since one's expectations are constantly being adjusted. The global pandemic can be described as such a changing event. Now, two years after the beginning of the pandemic is a time when people may have come to terms with the situation and are reflecting on their experiences with the different workspaces.

At present, this time of reflection is used to connect two themes for the study that are suddenly also connected in the practical world: Job Satisfaction and workspaces.

This is because job satisfaction summarizes the satisfaction of an employee with various parameters of the job. Thus, job satisfaction can remain high if a low salary is compensated with flexible working hours, depending on what seems important to the employee. Therefore, an employer must gain knowledge about what influences the job satisfaction of an employee (Locke, 1976). Moreover, understanding and acting according to the job satisfaction of their employees is a competitive advantage for companies, as satisfied employees can perform better (Ellinger, Ellinger & Keller, 2003).

For this reason, it is interesting to find out how this satisfaction is affected by a change in the workspace and which of the new experienced workspaces affects one's job satisfaction to what extent. Therefore, in this thesis, we are primarily interested in understanding the impact of the workspace on job satisfaction. The following research questions can be derived:

Research Question: How does the choice of the workspace influence employees' job satisfaction?

In order to answer this question, the research contributes to the literature in the field of interrelations of job satisfaction and the workspace by using the influencing factors recommended by Locke (1976) such as colleagues, leadership or the work task itself.

To address this topic from a broad view to closer analysis, the qualitative study has been applied in addition with the interpretative tradition. A case company has been chosen and semi-structured interviews have been carried out. This contributes to research by discovering both explicit and implicit reasons behind the employees' feelings and challenges the idea of job satisfaction in reality.

The empirical data has shown that different interests in the work environment led to different preferences in the workspace. The findings present that factors that are influenced by the choice of the workspace have an impact on job satisfaction. Therefore, it can be said that the influencing factors are changing depending on the workspace. The discussion includes that in today's work world each workspace has strengths and weaknesses. Also, the hybrid working mode is evaluated

by discussing if it is truly the perfect combination to promote these strengths and minimize weaknesses.

Research Outline

In order to address the matter in a comprehensive picture, the introduction is followed by a literature review on job satisfaction with defining the meaning, illustrating a theoretical framework for the research cause and explaining single factors that influence job satisfaction. Also, a descriptive presentation of the main workspaces is given. Subsequently, the methodology part presents the research methods as well as the approach and analysis of the empirical data. In addition, an overview of the content of the semi-structured interviews that we have conducted to gain empirical data is given. The next step is to fulfill the research, with a deeper analysis: First, by displaying the findings and second, by discussing these through the theoretical framework and developing arguments for the theoretical contributions. Finally, the research is summarized and gives an outlook for future research by finishing with a conclusion. Also, the limitations of the research, practical implications and theoretical contributions are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Workspaces - Inside And Outside The Office

Popular literature (e.g. Streitfeld, 2021) has picked up on what employees have experienced over the past two years. The global pandemic has had an impact on all aspects of life, including the workplace, especially office-based jobs. Two years after the start of the pandemic, one perceives that there are a lot of changes in the working scenario. Indeed, new forms of the workspace have been created or consolidated in the habit of not only having to work in the office. Working from home was established and has gradually become a common basis (Streitfeld, 2021). As the pandemic subsides, another working mode, hybrid work has emerged. These types offer particularly flexible or somewhat fixed forms with specifications on when and how often an employee must be physically present in the office (Segal, 2021).

In the following, the three most common workspaces are described: in-office, working from home and hybrid working. Thus, a descriptive overview of all three possibilities is provided.

In-Office

The traditional office is part of the normal city landscape. It exists in different forms and types. The general characteristic is that it is a space where employees are coming to do their work. There are desks, chairs, and technological equipment to perform the task. Most of the time, it consists of interchangeable rooms or workplaces, so they can be used according to circumstances of team downsizing/upsizing or other changes within the company (Baldry, Bain, Taylor, 1997).

Working From Home

Working from home can be defined as an alternative possibility to perform the work in the office or a primary workplace. For this possibility, basic technical equipment is necessary to carry out the work smoothly as well as to interact with other employees inside and outside the company (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). This study is limited to working from home and not to remote working. The difference is that remote work can take place in different locations outside the office (Davis & Polonko, 2001).

On the one hand, working from home is often associated with positive effects, e.g., work-life balance, raising morale, and increasing productivity (Brownson, 2004). On the other hand, disadvantages of these work opportunities are increasingly pointed out, which can have psychological and physical effects as well as organizational ones. Examples of that are social isolation, career stagnation, and family conflict (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997).

Hybrid Working

A hybrid workspace can be described as a combination of both workspace possibilities mentioned above. This kind of workspace is broadly located and raises new questions about the impact on different organizational functions. The reason is that the hybrid workspace connects working from home and in-office working (Halford, 2005).

Employees who are using this possibility are required to work at home and engage in organizational spaces as well. In this new dimension of both, the virtual and the real world, employees perform their work in spheres and conduct relationships on both levels. This type of work strengthens that technology enables employees to work anytime, anywhere. Therefore, the flexibility of the workspace is growing but also the relevance of common space is decreasing. The boundaries are only coupled with technological possibilities (Halford, 2005).

2.2. Choice Of Workspace And Job Satisfaction

The new development and long-lasting establishment of these alternative workspaces raise the question of how the choice of a workspace influences different parts of work life. Especially, the job satisfaction of an employee due to today's importance of that matter. Indeed, its importance has been shown in different studies, among others also by Chi and Gursory (2009). They concluded their study by stating that a business will benefit economically from the job satisfaction of an employee. An employee that is satisfied with the job will perform at their own highest possible capacity which extends to group effort and thereby impacts organizational performance (Meyer & Peng, 2006). Ellinger et al. (2007) stated in their study that fulfilled job satisfaction is a competitive advantage for a business.

Most studies dealing with job satisfaction and the context of the workspace referred exclusively to in-office. Also, these studies are mostly limited to the impact of the office design or architecture

on job satisfaction (e.g. Daniellson & Bodin, 2008). Some studies refer to the work environment in relation to job satisfaction, but these too are limited to the office as a place of work (e.g. Wright & Davis, 2003).

Only a few selected studies upon digital workspaces and job satisfaction, one study by Zhang (2015) focus on how the virtual office influences job satisfaction by approaching the disadvantages of that type of workspace. In order to discover these, the author is focusing on four major topics: communication, social relations, achievement recognition, and work-life balance (Zhang, 2015). Back when virtual offices were not as common and established as they are now, a real common alternative to working in the office. This development accelerated and established itself due to the two years of the pandemic (Streitfeld, 2021). Also, the study is limited to virtual offices and does not include the hybrid version, where offline and online work is combined. Nevertheless, the study of Zhang and the topics which are approached in it, show that due to a change in the workspace other parameters of a job are affected according to the topics mentioned by Zhang (Zhang, 2015). This research is set apart from the existing studies because it includes other levels outside the office building, working from home and the combination of working from home and in the office, hybrid working.

An indirect effect is exerted by other studies (e.g. Latane, Liu, Nowak & Bonevent, 1995, Forsyth, 1998). Those look at the influence of the physical distance between colleagues, also between employees and their place of work. Addressing the topic of different workspaces, it reveals the physical distance that can lead to emotional distance between colleagues. Latane et al (1995) discovered that humans tend to better remember when something happens in person, than virtually. This can concern informal or formal conversations such as feedback sessions. Also, Forsyth (1998) discovered the phenomenon of “social facilitation”, and he touched upon the fact that distance between colleagues can change the motivation and work speed of employees.

According to studies about job satisfaction, this impact on interactions is a parameter that can change and affect job satisfaction (Judge et al, 2001).

Building on this connection between job satisfaction and the workspace, we are questioning how the workspace can influence job satisfaction while working at home or in a hybrid system. In order to discuss this matter, in the following parts the idea of job satisfaction is presented.

2.3. An Overview Of Job Satisfaction

2.3.1. What Is Job Satisfaction?

In 1997, Spector illustrated that the topic “Job Satisfaction” is of high interest for organizations due to the gained competitive advantage as well as for researchers to understand the phenomena. Therefore, it is one of the most studied variables in organizational behavior. Spector (1997) mentions three different reasons that strengthen the concern about the topic. First, it is mentioned that job satisfaction is a variable that implies an employee must be fairly treated as a human being. Second, from the utilitarian perspective, job satisfaction has an impact on the behavior of an employee which can influence the functions of an organization. Lastly, he states that job satisfaction can reflect the functioning of the organization (Spector, 1997).

In 1976, Locke defined job satisfaction as a result of an interplay between cognition and affection. In other words: the thoughts and feelings of an employee about his/her job (Judge et al, 2001). He continued and described job satisfaction/dissatisfaction as a state of whether an employee likes or dislikes the job. In addition, for Locke, when an employee feels satisfied with one’s job or experience, it means he/she is in a positive emotional state towards the job. With this idea about job satisfaction, he was challenging a common understanding of the dilemma presented by Porter in 1962. As one of many researchers, Porter argued that being satisfied or not with the job is equal to the fulfillment of physical and psychological needs. To be more specific, if the job provides what the employee needs, e.g. suitable salary, it has met their fulfillment. According to the author, this is described as job satisfaction. However, Locke (1976) expressed that this need-approach had no longer been relevant anymore, because instead of the needs, other sides of job satisfaction consisting of the cognitive processes and attitude are given more weight.

Indeed, Spector (1997) summarized that job satisfaction has been illustrated from two different angles. On the one hand, researchers looked at overall job satisfaction. This was usually selected to explore whether the specific like or dislike feeling would cause effects on the employee's general attitude towards the job. On the other hand, individual aspects of a job have been inspected and the purpose is to see to what extent these individual job characteristic traits generate satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Looking at each component helps the company to acknowledge where they need it to implement concrete measures to increase satisfaction (Spector, 1997).

2.3.2. Theoretical Frameworks Of Job Satisfaction

According to Judge et al. (2001), the variety of concepts regarding job satisfaction can be divided into three areas: situational/dispositional/interactive approach.

Firstly, there are situational theories, which depict that job satisfaction comes from the nature of the job as well as other environmental influences. An example is the Two-Factor Theory of Herzberg (1997), which divided the influencing levels into hygiene and motivator factors. Secondly, the dispositional approach highlights the perception of individual differences. It can be illustrated with the model of core self-evaluations (Judge et. al, 1998), which states that people with positive self-perceptions tend to rate job satisfaction more positively and vice versa. Thirdly, there are interactive theories, which consider that job satisfaction may depend on the interaction of situation and personality. For example, the Range-Of-Affect-Theory of Locke (1976), which states that the closer the gap between wanting and having is, the higher the job satisfaction of an employee.

The facet approach considers how employees measure individual aspects of work. For example, in America, relationships at work are more positively evaluated than high salaries (Spector, 1997). The word “facet” relates to theories that are not focusing on overall job satisfaction. Instead, these models are concentrating on single facets, which are similar to single job characteristic traits or components of a job. Breaking the bigger picture down into single aspects makes it easy to understand why people like or dislike certain parts of the job (Locke, 1976). Although there are many different theories and frameworks on the approach, in this thesis, the focus is on two classical approaches that are perceived to be used in a variety of research.

On the one hand, a well-known theory by the American psychologist Fredrick Irving Herzberg (1959), the Two-Factor-Theory, covers the two sides of the phenomenon: the connection/disconnection of job dissatisfaction and job satisfaction. On the other hand, the main emphasis is on the Range-Of-Affect Theory by the American psychologist Edwin A. Locke (1976). One reason for choosing this model to lead the analysis of the case company is that Locke's idea of job satisfaction considers the different sides of a job that are influencing job satisfaction instead of treating it as a whole (Locke, 1976). This enables this research to get an idea to what extent which parameter of a job affects job satisfaction when changing the workspace. The model gives this

thesis space to address various aspects of a job. Another reason is that Locke's model shapes research on that topic the most over the last decades and is therefore well-established in research (Judge et al., 2001).

Due to these reasons, this thesis is mainly built on Locke's model but is filled up with Herzberg's idea of job satisfaction.

Two-Factor Theory By Herzberg

Deriving from interviews with workers, Herzberg (1959) argues in his theory that the factors leading to job satisfaction are different from those leading to job dissatisfaction. In the interviews, it was found that the questions about satisfying moments in the job were mainly mentioned in relation to intrinsic factors, such as taking responsibility. These factors are called hygiene factors. Other examples of hygiene factors are e.g., company policy, administration, supervision, working relationship, and status. On the other hand, when asked about reasons for dissatisfaction, mainly extrinsic factors were mentioned, such as salary or working conditions. These factors are called motivators. More examples of motivators are e.g., achievement, recognition, work itself, advancement, and growth. From his findings, Herzberg deduces that the reduction or exclusion of hygiene factors and the promotion of motivator factors leads to the extinction of dissatisfaction and an increase in job satisfaction. In return, the employer can design the job more challenging, affirming, and interesting (Herzberg, 1967).

Over the years, strong criticism accumulated towards this theory, especially methodologically. The criticism is that the findings are based exclusively on the worker interviews by Herzberg. Subsequent studies have tried to confirm what Herzberg argued, but with little success (Hulin and Smith, 1967). Instead, it was found that hygiene and motivator factors can influence both: job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction (Carroll, 1973). Vroom (1964) argues that people tend to attribute satisfaction more to their own performance and successes and to blame negative experiences more on external circumstances such as poor working conditions or management. Even though the theory has been challenged several times with evidence that both factors are influenced, the theory is still well known but more from historical significance instead of and not for universal transferability. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that there is empirical evidence that refutes the approach (Judge et. al, 2001). House and Wigdor (1967) re-evaluated the original

data and found that performance and recognition were more often associated with dissatisfaction than working conditions and the relationship with the supervisor (hygiene factors). For this reason, the ratings of the two factors can be described as arbitrary.

Thus, in the next part, another evaluation framework called Range-Of-Affect Theory is introduced as the main theory since it improves the subjectivity of the Two-Factor-Theory. Indeed, the Range-Of-Affect Theory takes into account the individual perception of the same situation, as well as the different weighting of individual aspects of the job.

Even if the separation of influencing factors is questioned, it is nevertheless interesting to use the Two-Factor-Theory as additional theoretical support, since it clarifies, which individual topics are relevant for employees when it comes to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the job.

Range-Of-Affect Theory By Edwin A. Locke

Locke understands job satisfaction as a positive emotional state which is created by the perception that the job can fulfill the aspects that are important to the employee (Locke, 1976). In 1976, he presented the Range-Of-Affect Theory model.

According to the model, job satisfaction is what arises as to the deviation between "wanting" and "having" in a job. It also takes into account the evaluation of an employee of how important a single facet is for him/her individually. When employees consider one facet in a job situation to be important, plus, they want it and are offered that facet, it can be concluded as fulfilled job satisfaction. In general, the smaller the gap between wanting and having, the more likely the employee is to be satisfied with the job (Locke, 1976).

Nevertheless, instead of assuming the opposite results from job satisfaction to be dissatisfaction, job dissatisfaction should also be addressed through individual job facets. In this case, Locke spoke of an emotional response to a value judgment. In terms of job satisfaction, the employee experiences a positive emotion in a satisfying moment. In an unsatisfying situation, the employee experiences a negative emotion called dissatisfaction. The intensity of the emotion felt depends on how important this facet is to the employee in the overall context of the job (Henne & Locke, 1985). This can lead to a subsequent action in every employee and this action can have an impact

on the function of the organization. In fact, possible behavior such as individual protest or even group protest can arise (Henne & Locke, 1985).

The model is useful for a lot of studies including Robert W. Rice and Dean B. McFarlin (1991). They conducted several models and studies on job satisfaction, using Locke's model to witness the relationship between general job satisfaction and the satisfaction of the individual facets. These authors concluded from Locke's statements that the importance of a facet is implicitly reflected in every satisfaction value of a facet. Thus, it is conceptually and statistically irrelevant to take the importance of a facet as an indicator of the connection between the satisfaction of an individual facet and the general job satisfaction (Rice & McFarlin, 1991).

Later, Yao and Wu (2005) dealt with the relationship between the importance and the satisfaction level of a facet in a broad study with over 300 participants. They confirm that in terms of the extent of a discrepancy, the range of satisfaction ratings for an item is determined by its importance. Accordingly, the satisfaction level for an item is oriented by the discrepancy between having and wanting and by the individual perception of the importance of that item. Therefore, without any of the two elements, it can be inaccurate and inefficient to evaluate satisfaction.

In addition to the Range-Of-Affect Theory, Locke also introduced a category of facets that affect job satisfaction. Even if the single facet is supposed to be evaluated individually, a correlation between them must also be considered. (Locke, 1976). Indeed, whereas the consideration of individual aspects of job satisfaction gives a better insight, as employees can perceive and rate the same work situation differently, evaluators have to also consider the connections of the accessing facets.

2.4. Influencing Factors On Job Satisfaction

In the following section, different factors will be presented that have the potential to influence job satisfaction.

Personal Factors

Most concepts are preceded by the fact that under the same conditions, job satisfaction can turn out differently due to personal circumstances such as age, nationality, and gender.

A meta-study by Brush et al (1987) of 19 studies underlines that job satisfaction increases with age. In 1990, Zeitz found that the feeling of satisfaction at work dips in the 20s, levels off in the middle years, and rises again in the mid-40s. Indeed, Wright and Hamilton (1978) addressed the phenomenon with two findings.

Firstly, their study has shown that senior employees are more accepted by authority and expected less from their jobs. Additionally, they are more skilled and at a higher work level than younger colleagues. Another explanation offered by Spector (1997) says that older employees are more satisfied with their job because their benefits and salaries are higher compared to the early years of their careers.

Secondly, Wright and Hamilton (1978) mentioned that expectations from a job and the surroundings change over time since a senior employee has a more realistic picture of what can be expected.

In short, White and Spector (1978) were able to confirm through the study a relation between age and job satisfaction.

Regarding the variety of job satisfaction in different countries, more research has been concentrating on national job satisfaction in particular and less on the individual facets. For instance, different studies have shown that Americans are more satisfied with their jobs than Japanese workers (e.g., Lincoln et al, 1981). Similarly, recent literature focused also on the effect of single facets of job satisfaction in different countries. It can be derived that various aspects are distinguished in what is important in terms of working conditions (Richter et al, 2015). For

example, job security and a good relationship between management and colleagues are particularly important to some European nationalities like Denmark, but this can differ in other countries.

As for gender, there has not been a clear majority saying that gender is a big matter when evaluating job satisfaction. Some of the literature addressing the term such as Redmond and McGuinness (2019), argued that there are different preferences in the criteria, e.g. average female workers are satisfied if the work-life balance has a high level and if they like the job itself.

These differences in the personal circumstances of employees can lead to the perception of job satisfaction being varied despite the given situation.

Influencing Facets By Locke

As mentioned earlier, in his study, Locke provided five different facets, consisting of salary, promotion, the work task itself, leadership, and colleagues (Locke, 1976). Years later Locke strengthens that towards the single facets of a job, employees have individual differences in job expectations and wishes. (Locke, 1985).

The first mentioned aspect is salary. Most employees consider fairness in comparison to colleagues as important as having enough money to cover expenses. In addition, security and additional company benefits are often mentioned in this context (Henne & Locke, 1985).

Furthermore, promotion is not relevant for most employees, but it is still an important issue if it matters to someone. In that case, fairness, clarity, and availability are also mentioned (Henne & Locke, 1985). Working conditions are a particularly important issue. Convenient workspaces and working hours are particularly preferred, as well as safe and attractive physical conditions at the workplace and work equipment and resources that make working easier (Henne & Locke, 1985). Also, preference is given to work with colleagues who share similar values and facilitate the work experience. When involving higher positions, employees are concerned that leading colleagues are honest and more competent. Likewise, the employee wants to be involved in the decision-making process (Henne & Locke, 1985). Moreover, regarding the actual work tasks, there is often a desire for a task that is perceived as personally interesting. Also, in this context is often mentioned the

opportunity for further development, autonomous action, role clarity, and feedback. (Henne & Locke, 1985).

Additional Relevant Job Features

In addition to the aspects already listed, there are other features in today's working world that can influence an employee's job satisfaction.

Besides adding more aspects, there are also further insights into the colleague and leadership facet, which was earlier mentioned by Locke (1976) but has not been well developed.

At first, external factors, social interaction, and interpersonal relationships between colleagues will be taken into consideration. According to Stewart (1985), after the family, the working team is the most important social unit a person is a part of. Pogrebin (1987) confirms this and adds that the place of work is an important place to build new connections and strengthen existing connections daily. In relation to colleagues, the level of communication is also particularly relevant. David Pincus (1986) explores in a study the relationships of communication, job performance, and job satisfaction. In fact, there is a strong link between job satisfaction and communication. Especially the communication climate, communication with the supervisor, and the feedback culture were identified as strong factors.

Campbell and Campbell (1988) also deal with communication and its influence on job life. They find that this influences job satisfaction. Direct interaction between colleagues can strengthen bonding and affiliation with the company.

Teven (2007) found that non-verbal response/interaction and prosocial exploitation of a supervisor's power status have a positive influence on perceptions of job satisfaction, liking of the leader, and enjoyment of work. Especially, how a subordinate perceives the behavior of a supervisor is crucial. Therefore, facial impression, eye contact, vocal expression, and body movement are important aspects of their communication. Also, impression formation, deception, attraction, and social influence have an impact on communication between subordinates as well as with the supervisor (Teven, 2007).

Clark (2001) added another job feature, that is a common concept in daily life now, the work-life-balance. It describes the ratio between working life and private life of an employee but especially the opportunity created by the company to balance these both parts. In addition to work-life balance, Judge and Watanabe (1993) argue that job satisfaction and life satisfaction are correlated because one influences the other due to the time a person spends with work in life. Clark also (2005) has shown that the pushing of extrinsic facets has extended over the years, in research and in practice. Nevertheless, intrinsic aspects such as autonomy have not been researched as much as satisfaction with extrinsic factors. However, Knudsen and Lind (2011) argue that autonomy in a job is highly important for the impact on the well-being and job satisfaction of workers.

Also, Judge et al. (2001) summarize the results of different global studies that the most used facets need to be extended to a few more job characteristics. On the intrinsic level, job features such as interdependence, self-decision, and expression as well as workload are considered. They are also mentioning that the importance of the single facet has the potential to change over time because work-life is constantly changing.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In the following section, the research methods that build the groundwork for the empirical research are presented. It includes the main research approach, qualitative research method, as well as the abduction approach and the interpretative tradition. This is followed by a presentation of the case company. Furthermore, it is described how the data was collected and how it was analyzed. Finally, reflexivity as well as the limitations of the conducted research are presented.

3.1. Research Approach

This research is based on various subjective perspectives on how an employee perceives different workspaces and how these matters for his/her own job satisfaction. In order to follow this approach reasonably and to pursue the subject reference, a qualitative method is used. To test the theses derived from the conducted interviews with the theoretical framework and to gain profitable knowledge, we also utilized the abduction approach. In addition, the interpretative tradition is used to identify different perspectives on the research question. By using these methods, the dilemma from a broad view to a more detailed analysis is addressed.

A qualitative research method follows the approach of studying social interactions, processes, and meanings of a phenomenon in the natural environment (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). This study aims to use qualitative methods to contribute to the collection of data with a social and interpretive level on different workspaces and how it matters to an employee's job satisfaction. This means, that a phenomenon is analyzed through documents, interviews, or observations which is undoubtedly opposite to quantitative research, where the empirical data is made from numbers and figures. Thus, the purpose of conducting this type of study is to perceive the processes, meanings, and qualities of the identical objective, instead of measuring quantities (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.12).

Indeed, since this work analyzes *'The interrelation of workspace and job satisfaction'*, the qualitative method is considered the best fit.

Nevertheless, job satisfaction is commonly understood through questionnaires or surveys because of the conveniently mass data collecting and is, therefore, more known in quantitative research (Spector, 1997). However, some limitations of the quantitative methods have been identified. The

limitations are mostly created due to the missing content gained through flowing conversations in interviews or observations.

One limitation arises from the often use of questionnaires in the quantitative studies to collect the data. This consisted of predefined answers to be checked off and it limits the respondent's answer and therefore also the resulting data.

Another limitation is that by only tracing back to numbers and figures for the empirical data, the research would miss an important phenomenon which is interpretation. A deeper level of evaluation can be achieved through the influence of emotions which are used in interpretations. This creates another perspective on the topic, which has not been created by the mainly quantitative studies on job satisfaction.

To summarize the arguments for the choice of the research method, the qualitative method is used to contribute to the research by bringing in a new perspective due to the content which is generated based on subject-related perspectives as well as verbal and not measurable data.

For conducting qualitative research, the process consists of three steps, followed by the abduction rule. In Alvesson & Kärreman (2007, p.1268), the three steps are: (1) the application of a former theory, (2) the concept development from empirical data, and (3) the initiation of a new angle of the previous theory or a distinguishable new theory.

Concerning the first step of the former theory, we have decided that *job satisfaction* developed by Locke (1976), is the applied theoretical framework. In addition, this will be underlined by different *factors* affecting job satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Also, three concepts of *the workspace* are described and presented as a guide in collecting the empirical data.

After that, the second step consists of observing and processing data based on the identified concepts, and various findings have been explored. Therefore, the findings are categorized after the interviews through sorting, reducing, and arguing. This process is suggested by (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Finally, in the last step of the abduction approach, there are discussions based on both findings and applied theories, as well as the derivation of theoretical contributions.

The abductive approach is built out of the inductive and deductive approaches. Whereby, on one hand, the research is based on knowledge, which is generated by informal logic (induction) and on the other hand, on statements deriving a conclusion based on established knowledge (deduction). Therefore, the synergy forms an abductive approach that gives this research the benefits of both forms and generates the most complete overview of the topic (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018).

Regarding interpretivism, this tradition was developed in Prasad (2017, p.13), which defined human interpretation as a tool for researchers to acknowledge the social world or more precisely to find answers to research questions.

Additionally, the purpose of interpretivism is to help understand the process of constructing a social dilemma, through both explicit and implicit factors (Prasad, 2017, p.14). Moreover, according to his work, though the research's object or the human factor may seem subjective, there are other perceptions that can be conducted. Thus, since this research's empirical data is supported by employees' perspectives, the interpretive tradition is useful in discovering different angles on various workspaces. Indeed, when accessing human interpretation, there is the consideration of the explicit content such as solid answers and emotions and the underlying meanings or other symbolic phenomena (Prasad, 2017, p.14).

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the purpose of semi-structured interviews is to gain an understanding of the approaching matter, through the lens of interviewees while concerning the legit interpretation (Kvale, 1996, p.5). To collect sufficient data, the interviews were conducted in a global company in the technology industry. In total, there were eleven employees from different departments participating in the interview and each lasted 30 to 45 minutes. Regarding the questions, followed by Kvale's guide, the interview questions are based on thematic and dynamic aspects. Thematic aspects approach the issues upon the interviewee's explicit answers, whereas dynamic aspects concern the "interpersonal relationship in the interview" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.157).

Moreover, in the question list, the general or grounded questions did not differ, but they were adjusted depending on the flow of the conversation. Also, the questions would be distinguished by each interviewee's organizational level: manager or subordinate. As a result, it supports avoiding the lack of information and emotions from interviewees.

By evaluating the empirical data from both explicit information and underlying meanings, the observation of job satisfaction can be performed in both ways, theoretically and practically. In addition, apart from other factors such as culture, business or market, this research is focused only on individual employees' perceptions of the impact of different workspaces.

3.2. Empirical Data

3.2.1. Case Context

Before accessing the empirical data further, the case context, including the company, participants, and the research time frame will be introduced in the following. By introducing the case company our fundamental insights, as well as our motivation, are presented. In order to protect the identity of the participating company and interviewees, the company is represented anonymous as "Company X". Also, the names of the interviewees are changed.

In advance, selection criteria had been set to be able to decide on a company that fits the study.

First, one of the criteria was that the company offered its employees different workspace models and tried them out for a longer period. A second criterion represents the importance of speaking English. For reasonable communication during the interview, there was a need for the employees to be able to communicate in English. Thirdly, another criterion consists of the diversity of departments. Thus, we were able to conduct the interviews not exclusively with employees from the HR department, but with employees from the others. Lastly, derived from this, a further criterion has been decided on to protect the content of the interviews. In consultation with those responsible, it was important that the spoken word of the interviews was processed in strict confidence and not made available to the company on an individualized basis.

In fact, several suitable companies had been contacted after establishing these criteria. Two companies responded with interest. After an exchange with both, we found out that Company X is very open in the exchange and already imagined employees who are interested in talking about the topic. In addition, the company has already taken a closer look at the topic by conducting its own job satisfaction survey a few months earlier.

To be more specific, company X is a subsidiary of a global corporation, whose business is mainly about producing information technology products and entertainment digital devices for both customers and specific markets. The total headcounts of the corporation are more than 100.000 which are based in various offices across the globe including Asia, Europe, and the US. Therefore, it can be seen that there are some differences in the workspace choices or environment in each country. However, due to the thesis limitations, the focus is on one of the corporate offices, which is company X. The company is based in Europe, particularly in Sweden, thus, the workspace choices follow the company's regulations as well as the Swedish government's regulations.

As stated in the requirements for this study, the company is divided into different departments. Regarding the participants, there are eleven employees from several departments consisting of Technical, Information Technology Security, Human Resources, Legal, Research & Development Products, Design and Innovation. In addition, three of them are members of the company's union and one has a managerial function. However, they are not limited to either union members or managers, the interviewees were allowed to hold both positions at the same time. Thus, since there are mixed identities of participants, we can ensure their distinguishing perspectives as well as avoid making objective arguments.

This research's context is in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic circumstances when company X had to make decisions on the workspace for their employees.

Before the pandemic started in 2020, company X had offered the employees a type of hybrid working mode already. Although it was not written as principles, there were agreements between managers and the subordinates of the workspace, as long as it did not cause a bad impact on the working quality. However, working at the office was still a priority and the home-office situations were only possible a few times each month or year.

As when the pandemic strikes in 2020, in order to follow the health safety instructions of the Swedish government, all employees had to work from home and were only allowed to show up in the office if they needed to get support or under some special circumstances. Thus, the employees did not have any choices of workspaces at that time.

Nevertheless, because of the development of the vaccination against the Covid-19 virus, the pandemic has gradually been controlled. Thus, company X has wanted the employees to come back to the office and initiate instructions for this new situation. Specifically, each department has the responsibility to arrange to work in the office for three days and they can work at home the rest of the week. Company X does not want to use the employer-power to command all employees to be at the office on any specific days, but it all depends on the agreement of each team. As a result, employees at company X are offered the hybrid working mode again, somehow with more flexibility and understanding.

Consequently, while questioning participants according to the different workspace in such updated contexts within the semi-structured interviews, they were encouraged to express their perspectives. However, the interview serving the research's purpose is not similar to a regular conversation, it follows the research topic and is controlled by the researchers (Kvale, 1996, p.6). Still, by continuously asking 'How' questions, the interviewees had space to generate their ideas, since the 'How-questions' would encourage people to think of how the phenomenon happens (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.55) Thus, the collection of the empirical data is equipped with the richness of both content and implication of emotions.

3.2.2. Data Collection

First Touch With The Company

Harper was the first person in the company who had been contacted. S/he is working in the Innovation Department and later became one of the participants, to connect us with Company X. After providing the fundamental information about our topic, a meeting was scheduled between two employees and the leading head from the Human Resources Department and us. The goal was for them to understand the thesis's work, our interests, and ideal participants. In return, their requirements in processing the data, their expectations from the findings, and their previous surveys about the employees' perspectives on working from home were acknowledged. In short, a list of interviewees was given, regarding their different positions, gender, and feelings toward home-office as well as a traditional office. Therefore, the contact has been established separately,

and suitable interviews were arranged. Additionally, by not purposely choosing participants, significant assumptions such as their workspace preferences were avoided.

Processing The Empirical Data

In order to take great advantage of the collecting interviews, the process of performing empirical data suggested by Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018) is followed, including three steps: sorting, reducing and arguing.

Sorting

According to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), categorizing the data based on the content seems to be the most ordinary way in the qualitative approach. In that sense, the findings have been divided following the collected information during the interviews. They were generated through questions such as the following. Beginning with a broad asked question as “What has the situation been like for you for the last two years?” and continuing with asking how the experience has been with working at home as well as going back to the office, how the feeling of being in the office has changed.

In addition, after each interview, the transcription was conducted, to ensure adequate data. However, Gubrium and Holstein (1997) also recommended that the “How” aspect has to be brought into consideration. Indeed, it was helpful to witness the meaning of interviewees’ preferences and decisions in the workspace. The questions were: “How do you feel, how do other opinions affect your opinion, how did your manager react”, etc. As a result, the data was sorted out on both the constitutive factors (feelings) and the substantive materials (content) (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.72). Therefore, all elements from the interviews regardless of content and social interaction were not missed. Indeed, the empirical data was edited and after that it generated different layers, which contribute to further writing.

Reducing

Although the sorting stage generated several reasonable categories, a reduction has to be conducted but still follows the main set for a more solid and interesting materials representation (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.107). The first step of this research began with the categorical reduction.

As mentioned earlier, the semi-structured interviews encouraged the participants to share considerable information and their opinion about the workspace changing. Nevertheless, it touched up on some irrelevant themes as well when they talked further, such as future working plans, personal habits, etc. Thus, to make the analysis less time-consuming, Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018, p.109) recommended prioritizing some categories from the others, as well as creating a range of labels that supports the research both theoretically and pragmatically but still follows the research topic. Furthermore, the illustrative reduction was proceeded to ensure the clearness of the chosen categories (Rennstam & Wästerfors. 2018, p.116). In other words, subcategories were made, which were conducted from either the reduced or selecting categories. Since we acknowledge the limitations in the number of interviews as well as the time frame, it was ideal to take full advantage of all existing data.

Arguing

After sorting and reducing the empirical data, it seems that the thesis would not be sufficient without any arguments. The arguments are presented in the discussion section in chapter six. Indeed, “Creating order and deciding what to use and not to use is not enough.” (Rennstam & Wästerfors. 2018, p.143). Moreover, being encouraged by both thesis structure and the authors’ spirit, theoretical contributions or theorizing was carried out, as well as creating critical perspectives. Accordingly, theorizing is the construction of argumentation and relies on empirical data (Rennstam & Wästerfors. 2018, p.144). Although the data exists in different forms, ranging from literal materials (documents, news, reports, etc.) to verbal (interviews, meetings, phone calls, etc.), its mandatory for any research is undeniable (Rennstam & Wästerfors. 2018, p.145).

Indeed, the research depends on empirical data since it enables us to witness the applied theories from a practical angle, and vice versa. In another case, the discussion would not only confirm the accuracy or inaccuracy of the former frameworks. Apart from that, the proposition of new perspectives which either have not been discussed or needed further explanation and consideration is possible (Rennstam & Wästerfors. 2018, p.145).

3.3. Plan For Analysis

Since the aim of processing empirical data is to open the undiscovered theoretical angle, we have chosen to follow the guidelines developed by Alvesson and his colleague, which is called research with a strong “point”. It means keep making arguments from the main perceptions and empirical data in any steps of conducting research (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.39).

According to Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018), though the interpretation based on reality is important, it is also vital to keep a skeptical and critical approach. Indeed, making assumptions about both the interviewees and the context, which is the global pandemic, has been limited by us. Plus, while processing data, no exaggeration was added, only the transparent and critical lens. Therefore, by accessing empirical data with a rigorous and systematic attitude, comprehensive findings and arguments have been concluded (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.38).

Moreover, because the abductive research method is applied, this strong “point” concept is thus considered to contribute to the second and third steps in the abduction process, which were mentioned in the section of the Research Approach, referring to the data analysis. Indeed, *‘the contribution of social science does not lie in invalidated knowledge, but rather in the suggestion of relationships and connections that had not previously been suspected, relationships that change actions and perspectives’* (Weick, 1989, p.524). This mindset is also supported by Alvesson & Kärreman (2012, cited in Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.39). They stated that when empirical data has been collected, research for the gap between theoretical assumptions and data illustration must be made, instead of only rephrasing. To be more specific, besides focusing on sorting data according to the research topic and making arguments based on the applied theories, a critical view on the topic is used. Also, new perspectives are generated as the topic only has been looked at from the in-office in former research. Thus, the attempt is to connect the gap between the theories and empirical data.

In addition, by following that concept, it gives the opportunity to actively take advantage of the interpretive approach, in the construction of new findings and theoretical contributions to job satisfaction.

As mentioned in the previous part, individual perspectives will be examined to provide clear-cut labels on the influence of different workspaces on organizational job satisfaction. This ability of humans to interpret words and language is a meaningful social construct. Interpretivism assumes that this is subjective and starts from a constant reality (Prasad, 2017, p.14). Also, in Prasad (2017, p.14), it was insisted that ‘it is the goal of all interpretive traditions to understand these processes of subjective reality construction in all walks of social life.

Furthermore, regarding the data accessing process, it is more valuable to look at the data while collecting it, after being sorted. Therefore, individual perceptions can be seen as multidimensional, changing the perspectives can result in different interpretative outcomes. In fact, that is why the analysis does not only occur after such conversations. Analytical work is also performed during the actual interview, both by the interviewer and the interviewee (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.30). During the process of collecting data, both the substantive (the notion of naturalism) and constitutive (the notion of ethnomethodology and constructionism), are equally concentrated (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.55). In this sense, the “what” and “how” developed by Gubrium & Holstein (1997, cited in Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.55), suggest neither physical nor mental matters be neglected, it is perceived as the first assessment of the analysis.

The presented approaches give the basis for the following presentation and analysis of the data in the findings chapter. Indeed, by setting such a fundamental analysis plan and ideas, it is important for us to be able to perform and discuss the empirical data in a reasonable way.

3.4. Reflexivity And Limitations

Since the beginning of the work, the cultural aspect has been acknowledged in this thesis. Whereas qualitative methodology requires investment in a specific context (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.11), it seems that when conducting research on either workspace or job satisfaction, researchers widen the environment as well as collect mass data. However, in this research, the context is narrowed down to Company X based in Sweden, before and during the global pandemic period. Thus, the Swedish culture would be assumed throughout the work. Indeed, during the first meeting with the people from the Human Resources Department, besides mentioning Company X had an open and flexible culture, they also stated the trust-based and low-hierarchical characteristics of the Swedish. It resulted in the situation before the pandemic when the employees were given

flexibility by managers to work from home several days per month, which can differ from the organizations in other countries or be influenced by other cultures. Although there are differences in the interviewees' backgrounds regarding departments, positions, genders, and nationalities, the study is based on the assumption that all of them share the Swedish working culture.

Nevertheless, to some extent, one of the features of interpretivism, which is subjectivity, is considered a limitation of the research. Although human interaction is beneficial to collecting emotionally related data, it can be displayed in a limited way due to trustworthiness. Kvale demonstrated in Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018, p.29) that the interviews aim to visualize and interpret individual behavior. However, critically, he did not mention the situation when the interviewees hide their true stories. It can be a sense that the interviewees did not wish to tell the truth if it affects the organization's image and their own situation. In addition, the relationships among interviewees were not revealed by Company X and the interviewees have not known who else joined the activity. Otherwise, it does not seem that there is an agreement about what is allowed to be said.

Since we acknowledged our external role as interviewers, it seems impossible to conduct further investigation into each participant's life and work. Thus, the conversations have been developed following a trust-based approach while keeping a skeptical mind when later reflecting on the empirical data in the literature.

Apart from that, during the interviews, besides following our questions list, the interviewees' feelings and their willingness to share have been noticed. For instance, to some extent, since some of them showed hesitation to provide responses about their managers or co-workers, the interview continued with another theme. The reason is that the execution of the interviews has been inspired by Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018, p.29) idea about the qualitative interviews.

Accordingly, the interviews following the qualitative approach are conducted to serve the research problematizing as well as based on conversational interaction. Especially, in a context where both interviewers and interviewees are not acquaintances, if the interview's vibe is either unopened or negative, it can create boundaries, which causes inadequate input for the empirical data. At that point, we maintained an open and relaxing atmosphere to reduce the formality of the interview. However, regarding all the biases, the emotional factor is not seen as a drawback. In fact, it helped

raise the awareness for better further interviews and contribute to the findings later, especially in the part requiring the human interactions element.

CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

After accessing the empirical material, categories have been created, and thereby the given content has been sorted and reduced. These categories consisted of main themes that were repeatedly mentioned by several interviewees. In addition, these themes are contrasted with individual opinions on the topic that differ from the average opinion. The resulting categories give an overview of what is important in terms of content for the participants when they think about different job features and their satisfaction with them. The categories are subdivided into the following: Freeze-frame of the case company, Social Interactions, Work Efficiency, Feeling of Belonging and Individuality.

Sub-categories also resulted from this. The freeze-frame of the case company allows an overview of the conditions given at the company referring to the special situation with the pandemic as well as the conditions regarding the different workspaces. Speaking about social interactions, this part is subdivided into relationships and communication. The feeling of belonging is divided into general thoughts about belonging and individual factors that influence this feeling for the single employee. The other parts are not subdivided and each of them stands for a united topic.

4.1. Freeze-Frame Of The Case Company – What Is Happening Here?

As mentioned earlier, company X is an international organization, therefore its employees have experienced digital working conditions even before the pandemic started. Indeed, in their team, not every member was based in the same country so they would need to conduct some online meetings and digital channels to keep the work tasks as well as communication updated. Therefore, it has shown that the participants have been used to working from home, which is the demand for the technical tools for social interactions. However, it has to be reminded that no matter how familiar they are with digital communication, during the first year of the pandemic, it was the first time that they worked from home totally.

For instance, Sacha, a senior employee who has spent a great amount of time with the company, mentioned though being based in Sweden, her/his job consisted of working with colleagues in

other countries such as Bangkok, China, and Tokyo. Instead of traveling to those destinations, s/he would have online meetings on a regular basis.

“Because we have done more or less everything remotely. So, all my contacts have been done remotely via Team meetings, phones, mails, etc.” - Sacha

But when speaking about the situation of working from home, for Sacha, it was new. In the past, s/he was allowed to experience that on one or two days per month in case s/he had some personal matters. In fact, not only Sacha but also other participants shared the same situation, because company X is quite flexible with the employees as long as the work performance is not badly impacted. The conversations let it appear that all of them were happy with that flexibility.

Indeed, Frankie – an employee from the Legal department who has been with Company X since 2016, expressed that:

“I've always had a very flexible working environment, so my first ever manager, she was very good at leading by example and so we've always had a: I don't care where you work, what I care about is what you deliver. So, in principle, I could work wherever I want, before the pandemic, during the pandemic, after the pandemic.” - Frankie

Yet, when the pandemic hit, company X had to instruct all employees to work from home, due to the recommendation of the Swedish government. The exceptions for showing up at the office were only because of the need for technical support or some specific situations, for example, assisting a new employee onboarding. Since then, there have been different opinions on that matter because they were not given the flexibility anymore and had to work from home until the next instructions.

At first, they all seemed to enjoy the home office because of mainly less time commuting and more flexible working hours. Additionally, company X was trying their best to assist the employees. The participants mentioned that they received great support from the company, including both working equipment and online technical assistance. Besides all other personal issues, when being asked of their feelings about the company, they seemed satisfied with such support.

In the interview with Frankie, s/he also stated that s/he was able to feel the effort from the company to stay on the employees' side.

“I remember that Company X was very early with working from home during the pandemic. You know, they drove these desks that you can raise and lower out to anyone who wanted it within a certain geographic area. You know, they offered free chairs. They offered screens. They offered mice, keyboards. I genuinely do think they did a great job of taking advantage of what we had as well. You know, we had a lot of leftover screens, desks, and keyboards in the building. And it just made my life way, way easier, as a result, to have one here at home.” - Frankie

However, as time went by, they gradually developed their own perspectives on this workspace. Some of the participants expressed that they disliked this “office” while the others kept their joyful feelings, whose further discussion about their reasons will be revealed later.

Alex, a member of the IT department who has been working at Company X for 19 years, felt happy while experiencing working from home. Indeed, s/he mentioned seven advantages of working from home, which are no commute, work efficiency increase, more time with the surroundings, flexible personal work, better meeting schedules, better work-life balance, and less time-consuming at the office. Although s/he also made the other five disadvantages of this workspace, in the end, the home office was still the preference.

On the other hand, Taylor, a participant from the Design department and has more than ten years of experience, expressed the opposite feelings.

“I hated it. I really don't like working from home. It's not my thing at all and it fits me for some things. As part of my job, I work within the design research and if it's reading or writing then it's actually not so bad to be at home, but usually being at home makes me restless. I miss my colleagues. I missed the action. I want background noise. I want the life in the office actually, so I was very happy when we could get back to the office. I was very angry a lot when I was back at home. I did not react very well to this.” - Taylor

Nevertheless, Sweden witnessed the improvement of the pandemic, thus, some restrictions were lifted. Company X then decided to maintain that only 20% of employees are allowed to show up at the office. Instead of working an entire week at home, they were allowed to choose to work at the office but must be approved by their managers.

Eventually, since the pandemic situation has been better, company X has been trying to bring flexibility in the choice of workspace back to their employees. Indeed, they even sent out a survey to the employees to observe their workspace preferences and then decided on the best regulations for them. Since there were different interests, that was when company X initiated the hybrid working mode. According to both interviewees and the HR department, instead of fully working either in the office or at home, they now need to work at the office two or three days per week. To be more specific, each department or team can come to an agreement between team members on their own in-office days. Thus, they can communicate more and get more spontaneous support from their colleagues, as well as help the company maintain its culture and normal social interactions.

At this point, the participants seem to be happier with their working conditions again. Even Delta, a manager, s/he quite enjoyed the hybrid working mode although s/he felt there is a lack of on-site communications, yet the flexibility is her/his preference.

“I like a hybrid. So just to be super clear, I don't want everyone to be in your office every day. That is not what I wanted. But I think it's working, working remotely all the time. I don't think it's good” - Delta (Manager)

4.2. Social Interactions

4.2.1. Relationships – Experienced Vs. New

“That is one of the negative things, you don't really get the social interaction that you have in the office. And but, on the other hand, there's more time for a private social interaction. So, I think that for these two years, it has not been harmful. But I think in the long run, you really need to have good social contact with your co-workers.” – Grey

As Grey's statement already indicates, social interaction is something that adapts, depending on the workspace. Grey's opinion is an average reflection of the participating interviewees. Also, one division that became apparent in the evaluation of the individual participants is that there is a difference between newly hired employees and long-established employees.

Long-Established Teams

“For me, who has been working with my colleagues for quite some time, many years actually, I know them, and they know me, and we have a good relationship. When we meet, we just hook up and continue where we were.” – Alex

Alex's statement indicates that existing, long-lasting relationships with direct teammates are less affected because they have already been able to develop a feeling for each other in their work together.

Taylor mentioned another advantage of already long-standing relationships with colleagues. Working together for years creates some kind of security because each team member knows who is capable of what and how, and who you can rely on and how.

“We have known there are no newcomers in our group forever, and we worked together for 10 to 15 years, so we know each other so well and we really talk a lot, share a lot, which is nice. It's a nice group, it feels very safe in that sense.” – Taylor

Speaking about the situation while working at home, Delta also confirmed the stability of a long-existing team from a manager's point of view. Through years of working at the managerial level, the employee has an existing, consolidated network. From her/his point of view, this is an advantage when work is shifted to virtual life.

“I missed having contact with people that were not directly reporting but our team was stable because we worked for so long together.” – Delta (Manager)

Max also saw the advantage of long-standing teams. They know each other and already have an existing connection that they can use. In relation to this pandemic situation that led to working from home, Max felt no difficulty in finding each other again afterward, when going partly back to the office.

“But then there were a couple of older team members that I haven't seen for a while. And I still don't see them that often because they don't come to the office the same day I come to the office.”

But as we were already a team previously, and we have been working together for several years, we still feel like a team.” – Max

Kim, who is one employee in the interviews, showed a very neutral opinion on all the interrelation between social interaction and work in general. Through the whole interview s/he strengthened that getting the work properly done is the most important aspect as an employee as well as achieving organizational goals. Kim also added:

“For me personally, social relations are not that important at work, so the effect was not that huge for me, but I can understand that it was missed by other people.” - Kim

Addressing in the interview the topic of the connection to the team, Alex witnessed another level, the relationships with other departments and teams, independent of her/his own team. Thus, the interviewee described the advantage that is created when one can generate spontaneous topics of conversation and even create or pass on work-related solutions.

“So sometimes when we meet, we get to know people because you are connected through your work, and you have this small chat by the coffee machine or having a fika at the same time. And then you talk about stuff and then. Yeah, you get to know stuff from their perspective, and they just know from our perspective. And sometimes problems are solved by just chit-chatting about random topics. They mention something that they have a problem with and then maybe we say ‘ah yeah, we have seen that’ and yeah then you solve it by knowledge and sharing.” – Alex

Delta's thoughts were similar to Alex's and added another aspect.

“And also, I want to meet not only my team and the people in my team, I want to meet other people from different divisions or, you know, bump into, or, you know, when you buy a coffee, and then you start talking about something, we all have common denominators in something. We can help each other.” – Delta (Manager)

In terms of lack of physical social interaction in the office, Delta demonstrated that contact with other departments and colleagues from other teams is impaired, due to a lack of spontaneous contact points.

Frankie's opinion illustrated that social relationships are not only built and maintained for fun but can also be important for getting the job done. As a lawyer, a functioning network is profitable. Professionally, not everything can be covered by one person, but it is the task to know who to ask about which topics in order to get the job done satisfactorily. For the lawyer, working in a network means working smarter.

“Yeah, like I said, I think the social part of working is important, especially in my job, because the network that you have is almost the one of the most important facets of being a lawyer.” –

Frankie

Therefore, Frankie decided that working in the office is more valuable and hopes to have more colleagues on site again soon.

The New Colleagues

“...and I see that there won't be the chance to build a relationship with a new team member that joined the team during the pandemic but for me, as long as the person understands the task, it does not matter.” – Kim

This opinion was held by Kim, who generally has a neutral opinion on social relations in the workplace. Coming from such a neutral and less social orientated statement, seeing Andy's opinion about it is interesting because the interviewee had to overcome the challenging situation of beginning a new job while fully working from home.

Andy was particularly affected by the first day of work, which only involved handing over the technical equipment and then hours of telephone exchanges with IT in order to be able to operate the technology. Neither colleagues nor superiors took the time to explain something. The first working day was nothing special, but simply one of many. Andy describes it as less welcoming as experienced at other companies.

Also, Andy has not felt for months that there was a connection to the team, that s/he was not part of it. After two years, the feeling of belonging slowly developed, but this only began when the first personal encounters took place and not just the virtual exchange.

“And then I think everyone really, I think people thought the other person was, you know, maybe the other person is showing Andy something. And then the other one, there was no clear. And I didn't even know all the names.” – Andy

Thus, Andy underlined that through virtual interaction it was not clearly visible who was making an effort to train with her/him as a person and to what extent.

Sascha reported about a new colleague who started working at the company while all employees worked at home. On the new colleague's first day, Sascha went to the office to welcome him because the interviewee imagined it would be difficult and challenging to start a new job without getting to know the colleagues.

“I was actually at the office that day. So that was one of the two times I have been at the office this year. ... But I think it was good to meet him face to face personally. It was the first day for him. I guess it's not that easy to start a new company where everyone is working from home. It's not fun for the new employee.” – Sascha

From the management level, Delta expressed that the difficulty for new colleagues is also to build up a network with the whole own team.

“So, you don't really know, it's very hard for the new employees to become part of the team. And not your mentor, or your closest coworker, but the whole team. It's hard, I think, if you don't meet. Yeah, so I think that's the tricky one.” – Delta (Manager)

4.2.2. Communication - Internet Chat Vs. Face-To-Face

“Good that they know the team already before the pandemic, no team-building exercises necessary, one-to-one with the manager was digital possible, some older team members I have not seen for a while but they still feel like a team, loss of the opportunity to knock on someone's shoulder because you had to book a meeting for discussing basic stuff, we have tried to stay in contact but after a while, it feels like an internet chat.” – Max

The feeling Max illustrates that togetherness feels unreal and more like an internet relationship is mentioned in several interviews. As others also described, one mainly perceived the spoken or

written word through video calls or emails, but not what belonged to it in terms of gestures and facial expressions.

These can be captured by the video transmission in a limited way, but several reported that the camera was allowed to be switched off in meetings or conversations. Among others, Kim said the following.

“Have more interaction with people but that was gone. So even if it does work remotely, firstly people have the camera on, and later everyone turns off the camera. You have the free cover.

You don't see everywhere, even everyone in the same meeting.” – Kim

Also, the management function found it convenient because it was easier when you are not properly dressed for work at home. Especially with a managerial position, this is not something to show to others. That's why the camera stayed off according to Delta who used the words *“being lazy with the camera turning on”*.

Alex pointed out that even in the office, personal contact mainly takes place during breaks and not while working. The common breaks are omitted when working from home. The interviewee also strengthened the weaknesses or boundaries of virtual work platforms like Teams in terms of social interaction.

“And if you don't have a relationship that could be hard to get one if you don't or if you never meet. That could be, Teams is not great in that sense. It can be used for many things, but I don't think you can use it for that purpose.” – Alex

Alex also mentioned the original meeting points that are used in the office to exchange ideas privately and to get to know each other personally.

“But I can see there's a difference if you haven't been in the office at any point and you don't really know your colleagues, you never get to know them by teams. Because you get to know them during lunchtime and FIKA breaks. So, I guess that part is lost.”- Alex

Morgan, who has worked for the company for more than twenty years emphasized that natural conversations are more likely to occur in the physical workplace at the office, not online. It is

further argued that often virtual appointments do not allow for the same opportunities as physical ones.

“So, I think from that perspective it's really important that you see each other face to face also because there will be different kinds of discussions: private discussion, discussion at the coffee machine about different thoughts and so on. That doesn't come naturally when you are at home, so I think that even though I like to work from home, I feel that I need to go into the office for that reason.” – Morgan

The only lawyer among the participants comments on the advantages of communication in the physical office due to the limitation of virtual possibilities and mentions a spontaneous opportunity for exchange.

“I think, actually, I like the office. I like being able to socialize. I'm not in the office today, but I will be this afternoon. I like the natural breaks in meetings. Once you're done with the meeting, there's kind of a chance to chat to people in the meeting room in a way that I just don't want to do it on Teams.” – Frankie

Taylor has also worked in the company for years in the creative field and feels that working completely from home is a sense of exclusion from one's own workplace. Compared to other participants, Taylor seems particularly reflective and very clear about one's own perspective. With the following statement, the interviewee underlined another limitation of virtual exchange in terms of communication. Decentralized working requires strict planning and reasons for exchange. Thus, Taylor misses the moments that arise without a previously clarified reason.

“They have adapted to have more meetings and gatherings and they were still specific. But I think it's needed to have more, not specific things, not specific purposes, just the hangout. But it's difficult, because when you try to be curious to hang out after work and social thing. It doesn't work, because if there are 15 people pulling in, only one person can talk. And it ends up with one person talking and the rest listening. That's perfect for meetings and presentations, but for a social thing... Because if you would have been in the restaurants or bars, you chat with the person next to you and then you leave the conversation and you chat with someone else. This doesn't work in the setup we have now for digital, like introductions.” – Taylor

For this reason, Taylor's team has adapted its own communication channels to meet the needs of social exchange, as mentioned in the two next statements.

“It’s different, I have a big need to talk to other people. And I think that was also like, after a while, we kind of learned to call each other and chat, just not work-related but just chat because it was nice to do that. So, I think over time, we kind of did this.” – Taylor

“I have a couple of colleagues that are not so far from where I live, in Malmo, so we actually meet and take a walk or to coffee or somewhere of the same ages. Met up and walked together physically.” – Taylor

Another participant, Harper, also commented on the media that has been used. Harper personally appeared to be a very forced and straightforward person. Also, an employee of the company for many years and has only a few years left until retirement. Harper described working from home more as an opportunity to work in a more focused way and felt less burdened by the lack of social aspects. Nevertheless, Harper's team has also found its own communication measures that have helped to strengthen the unbound exchange.

“We have a contact like, outside of work, we have a WhatsApp group. So, you know, some people met up. And sometimes we, you know, we're sending pictures to each other.” – Harper

With the argument presented in the following, Taylor summarized the main statement of most participants, relating to the difference in the communication between the two places of work: The lack of spontaneity.

“But I really realize the importance of spontaneous encounters in an office environment. The thing that you said is that you can always reach people, but we have to think of that “I have to call this person to ask a specific question.” If I don't think of it, I don't do it. But when you meet someone in the corridor or if you see someone, you get a reminder that this person can help me with this. And it's something that I think we don't value enough normally but, in this situation, now it becomes much clear. That’s for me. I really value those things now. “ – Taylor

Feedback

In the managerial role, Delta is often in the position of chairing the meetings. Also, about the social aspect, the interviewee recognized another component of virtual communication that is different from the physical exchange. Feedback from colleagues is largely absent, and the number of questions is also reduced.

“I think communication is super, super important. I think that's and also to be clear, as sort of doing care in your communication. Because it is easy to misunderstand. And because when you have meetings, someone will come up to you afterward and say what did you mean or, but you don't get those questions. I've had meetings with 100 people digitally, and I get no questions, no feedback. So, I think that the most important thing is communication” – Delta (Manager)

Empathy

As Taylor felt very uncomfortable working from home, a question about her/his perception of the managers has been asked, whether the managers understood the extent of the discomfort, and what they did to improve it.

“It's hard for them to read it because you don't meet so you don't see how people actually are. It's hard to guess from it when you never see people differently when you run into them in the office, then you can see how people are.” – Taylor

From the manager's point of view, Delta described that there were attempts to make the emotional world and the workplace at home more transparent by the employees.

“What I started doing, was asking just randomly I picked one person, and I said, well, on Monday, can you please just tell me or write us a letter about how it is for you to work from home and take pictures or whatever. So, we started with that. Every week, one person told the rest of the organization what it was like for them to work from home and what they were doing, and people started taking pictures” – Delta (Manager)

In addition, Delta mentioned the consequences of one's own laziness in turning on the camera and to what extent this limits a supervisor's ability to assess the employees.

“... you can't really see the expression, either if someone is making faces or, oh my goodness, what is she talking about? Or she's talking too much, or already got it. So, you can see what they're really feeling. If you sit in a meeting room, you can read the body signals in another way.

And I think that's what you're missing out as well.” – Delta (Manager)

4.3. Work Efficiency - Meetings, Meetings, Meetings

Another issue that was raised in all interviews is work efficiency. There were different opinions indicating that there is a shift in work efficiency due to the increased need for planning, but mostly the extent depends on the individual circumstances of the employee.

Kim's comment on the subject was that in the office and at home, all the necessary tasks were done to achieve the goal. Nevertheless, the participant mentioned an important factor that can influence work efficiency, and flexibility.

“Everyone gets more flexibility, which means if we can deliver what we should. For example, we have the freedom to come early and leave late or so coming later, deliver and leave it. But it's this kind of flexibility which you have.” – Kim

As a follow-up question, the efficiency of the hybrid work mode was specifically addressed. Kim pointed out that it may be simplified because there is no obligation to be in one place.

“Because people don't feel forced, so they work in their comfortable way. So, they will deliver more.” – Kim

An example by Alex strengthens the chances that are given due to flexibility.

“I do that every day. I see ok now I had the last meetings in the morning and then we have lunch walking maybe and then ok nothing in the afternoon. Then I have one hour, but I can do something else and then I can work later and so I might work. They start earlier and end earlier, but I have some interruptions in between. That's nice actually.” - Alex

Also, Alex saw various advantages and disadvantages of workspaces that can influence work efficiency. The participant referred to the workplace conditions at home by explaining that s/he has the opportunity to work in a separate lockable room at home and feels less disturbed and

therefore more efficient. Also, Alex addressed the plannability and spontaneity of knowledge creation.

“I mentioned before that you own your own time in that sense, and you can plan your day in a very different way. When you have your meetings, you know what you have, the plans, you have private or training-wise or something and then you can make a schedule each day.” – Alex

Alex also pointed out that often fewer solutions are generated in planned meetings than in spontaneous situations.

“When you sit next to each other and work together, you sometimes solve problems, or you avoid solving yourself because someone else did it just five minutes ago or the day before he mentioned something that you experience. It’s like: ‘I saw that yesterday it was this and that.’ Then you can save time, sometimes a lot of time. That is not happening in Teams. You have to book a meeting and then you have to find the right person.”- Alex

Morgan, with a separate room for working at home, also addressed the fact that working at home is characterized by less disruption, allowing work to happen in a more concentrated and in-depth way.

“When you're at home. You have more time. I mean more time to read different things, more time to go in-depth, perhaps in different matters because you're not disturbed another way.” – Morgan

Morgan also mentioned the potential of emerging new knowledge in this close exchange in the office than in the planned exchanges in the virtual office.

“At the office, there are more tasks when you need to discuss and align and agree on things with different people. I think that's very suitable when you're in the office. You can come to conclusion about different things and new things pop up quite often when you're at the office because you talk about something. But at home, you're more focused. It is a big difference.” – Morgan

Taylor also found that there is more creativity in the office because you get to see more. In addition, s/he felt more insecure when presenting the results of her/his work, because hearing other ideas generated an assessment of her/his own idea.

“Working in the office means you get ideas about the projects of other people, being isolated means you do not have an idea about what the other people are working on.” - Taylor

Harper saw the advantage of gaining new knowledge, and creative ideas by being in the office less.

“So, there's no point going to an office and then having to sit in a room anyway on your own because you can't concentrate. People say you're much more innovative and communicative if you're in Open Office. That is so untrue.” – Harper

In a further statement in response to the demand, Harper elaborated on this and put forward a hypothesis for the true reasons for being asked to work in the office.

“It doesn't make you more innovative when seeing people face to face. So, if anyone throws that argument at me, then I have researched to say, it's not actually the case. Because we've run innovation and stuff. And people have been very, very innovative, even over zoom teams or whatever. So, I don't think they've got any arguments on why it should be so much better, apart from managers wanting to have more control. And I think, in our team, we don't need any manager having control because we just get on with it.” – Harper

Furthermore, Max discussed different effects on work efficiency due to the workspace as well and evaluates virtuality not as a constraint.

“We never considered it an issue that if we were talking to one another across the screen, we would still get the job done. And I don't think that doing it over a screen hindered the activities in any way. Actually, it wasn't any different because you basically need to book a meeting. Even if the person used to sit opposite your desktop, and you just wave at them like that. Now you need to book a 15-minute video call with them to only talk about something pretty basic. It makes work a little bit more inefficient and at the same time, it makes the meetings a bit more conscious of time. You only talk about the things that you really need to do in order to get the job done.” –

Max

Frankie felt that working as a lawyer is limited because it lacks natural communication, so s/he comments:

“But there also comes a point where I just made my own decision. I don't think the quality of work that you produce is as good.” - Frankie

Delta brought in from the manager's view that not the efficiency and productivity of the daily work are hampered when working at a distance but moving the organization forward and creating ideas for it was hardly possible. Also, Delta narrated from their personal situation while working from home that:

“So, my daughter just moved away from home. She's also a student. So, I have her room as my office now, which means I'm always connected. So, it doesn't mean I work long hours, but it is that I always see on my phone if I get something important. And then, I will just run upstairs, and just answer this.” – Delta (Manager)

Even though Grey basically saw positives in working from home, as the work involves a lot of sensitive data and that is easier to process in a closed office, the participant speaks out:

“I would say actually, that's the negative thing. We're working from home. You don't take many breaks, and long breaks either. So, I sit a lot more than if I had been in the office. And then there's also a tendency to start later in the morning.” – Grey

Similarly, Harper adapted working hours flexibly to her/his own needs but illustrated more from a positive perspective. In addition, the participant mentioned about timewasters in the office.

“I have tried to start work early and then would have done because I didn't have to get into work. Sometimes I might have finished a bit later probably. But then I worked quite long hours anyway. So, I don't think that's changed really. But I felt more effective because of not having to sit at work and be distracted all the time. We're in a totally open office and it was very distracting. Sometimes I call myself an efficiency freak. I'm not a control freak but I hate inefficiency. For me, just walking to rooms for meetings was inefficient. So, I'm glad to have gotten rid of that. Trying to find rooms just drove me mad, that is a waste of time” – Harper

4.4. Feeling Of Belonging - The Longer The Employment, The Stronger The Attachment

4.4.1. Generally, How Do They Say?

There is an equal understanding between employees and company X

During the interviews, when being asked about how the relationships were between them and the company, specifically their team members as well as their managers, the interviewees showed that there is trust between them as well as acknowledged their importance to the company.

Especially during the time while working from home, as mentioned earlier, company X was considerably quick to provide support as well as clear instructions to the employees. Plus, flexibility has always been given even before the pandemic. Thus, the participants, along with the Swedish working culture, seem to develop the trust in their company that they would do good for them and vice versa.

It was demonstrated in the interview with Harper as well, s/he is working in the start-up acceleration program. From the conversations, besides other personal or emotional factors related to workspaces, the participant also expressed an understanding for Company X's decisions. As a result, Harper believed that the company was doing its best for the employees, and the employee appreciated that.

“I think I might feel even more sense of belonging, actually, because they handled it so well. You know, we were trusted. ... There was no questioning about how much work you are doing. And in the end, it was our own well-being that was being thought about. So, I probably feel more belonging to the learned site, especially when you can see even on other sites in Europe, how things were going, you know, and how they were forced back.” - Harper

Moreover, this feeling of belonging is also seen in other interviewees who did not mention it directly. Take Kim as an example:

“I said to my manager that if you force people to come to the office, they will lower their performance because they don't like the situation and driving into the office. So, like in this

situation, since we had proved and from a work perspective, the delay is not any kind of bad thing or we should respect the people's working style. If they really want to work from home, pick one day or two days. My colleagues can meet each other, but it's not a mandatory thing.

That's how Company X is doing it right now" - Kim

The reason why these thoughts can be considered as a good feeling of belonging is that Kim is a work-oriented employee. For Kim, work efficiency is the most important part of job satisfaction. Thus, as long as company X gives the workspace flexibility to perform the work tasks at its most, Kim feels more attached to the company.

From another perspective, the feeling of belonging is illustrated in the way in which employees acknowledge their importance to the company. Indeed, when understanding their values as well as being confident with their positions, they want to stay with the company, or the job satisfaction is embraced. Thus, as time goes by, since the bonding line is strong, the feeling of belonging would not easily be impacted.

This perception was interpreted by Frankie.

"My job wouldn't exist if I wasn't here. Somebody else would do it. And if there was someone in my shoes, I work with one other person doing what I do, and she sits in London. I'm pretty certain if I left, they would hire somebody in London" - Frankie

In this case, though previously Frankie said s/he felt attached to company X because of its effort to support employees during a hard time. With her/his job, the participant seems not to have much feeling of belonging to it. Therefore, there has been skepticism developed that besides the organizational values, whether the job itself influences that feeling or job satisfaction.

Relationship With Colleagues And Company

After processing all empirical data, another topic has been found, which is their relationship with colleagues and the company. It was mentioned by all participants while speaking about their feeling of belonging in the changing workspace context.

It seems that in order to acquire the belonging feelings to some extent, there have been agreements among team members on the workspace arrangement. As mentioned earlier about the latest flexible policy of company X, each team or department is allowed to choose their own office-working dates. However, it was another requirement to be present in the office on certain days. The employees' own decision was thus restricted. Therefore, the situation is similar to the requirement of working from home. While some were able to adapt to the new situation, others were struggling to manage it. The struggling can be interpreted as the potential for decreasing their attached feeling to the company.

For instance, Alex showed the opinion as:

“I wouldn't like that. I think the general view now is that there's a good balance or having a split in this way. So, I think the general view is that it is actually a good approach, the way we have not two plus three. I think I wouldn't like to go back in time actually at the office because I see no benefits with that.” - Alex

Another thought by Morgan:

“Yeah, I would say that it has changed over time here. In the beginning, I thought it would be more complicated since I couldn't meet my colleagues every day at the office. I thought that would make things a little bit harder to achieve different tasks and so on. But as long as time went along there, it worked quite smoothly and quite easily. Actually to work from home and with the different tools that we can use for collaborating anyway, so gradually it went from being a bit complicated to be quite easy.” - Morgan

Nevertheless, in the new situation approach, when the participants can choose and make agreements internally, it seems that their relationship remains unchanged. The given reasons were that since they have been working with each other for such a long time, even without social interactions, their relationships would be hardly damaged. Still, it was different for new employees and others who prefer more communication.

For instance, Andy said s/he was not only struggling with getting used to the work, but also with the team members.

“But it was a very strange first day. I think you should meet some sort of manager on the first day or someone. I think my colleague met me and handed me the computer. She was put into a situation where she didn't really know what was expected from her.” - Andy

And another view by Andy:

“There wasn't a very united team. When I started, it was quite split. It wasn't clear leadership either. I think, after two months when I started, then we had our manager started. And she was then going to manage the team remotely. So that was challenging for her as well. But I mean, a lot of ours were trying to pull us together, you know, in this remote situation.” - Andy

Plus, Alex, who enjoyed working at home because of the flexible time frame, also demonstrated that

“But I can see there's a difference if you haven't been in the office at any point and you don't really know your colleagues, you never get to know them by Teams. Because you get to know them during lunchtime and Fika breaks...And if you don't have a relationship that could be hard to get one if you don't or if you never meet” - Alex

4.4.2. Factors Influencing Their Feelings Of Belonging

Adaptability

One of the most influencing factors on the participants' feeling of belonging is their ability to adapt to the workspace switching.

Although the employees at company X are familiar with both in-office and distanced offices, when the working from home policy was initiated, it seems not everyone gets used to it easily. As a result, it would somewhat affect their job satisfaction. Indeed, the participants who have spent years with the company mentioned that they acknowledge the struggles to start working at home as newcomers.

“And I also know that, especially for people that are newly employed, it was really difficult to get into the team, when they were supposed to be working from home and not allowed to go to the office... You don't learn to know your coworkers and your managers and such things.” - Grey

In fact, Andy, who joined company X when the working from home period started, found it hard to adapt to that new situation. Since an employee started while being at home, the employee did not experience the smooth onboarding process, plus hardly any spontaneous support, it can be considered that the adaptability was limited. However, fortunately, Andy has gradually felt attached again and still is with company X until now, thus, it can be a sign that the employee has been satisfied with the job.

“I think it was affected by the start, you know, to still build it. But I definitely feel a sense of belonging. I feel like I'm starting to talk about how WE do it...But I think, it would have been a quicker connection, if that start hadn't been so dragged out.” - Andy

In addition, one of the reasons why adaptability is considered as a topic is that even though our participants have their own interests in workspaces, when there is a switch, each of them has experienced a different amount of time to get used to the new period. Indeed, the situation did not occur only from in-office to home office, but also in the opposite direction.

For instance, Frankie mentioned that:

“What happened in the beginning was I thought it was liberating. I thought it was going to be a good opportunity to do more with my life and, you know, optimize and it has been great and it still is. ... But there also comes a point where I just made my own decision. I don't think the quality of work that you produce is as good. I don't think that your working conditions are psychologically or good. So, I just decided that's how it is.” - Frankie

Yet, Grey prioritized the work efficiency, when changing workspace into the home office, it was quite fast and easy to get familiar with. Although the employee did miss the social interactions at the office, Grey adapted to working at home better.

“And for my own personal benefit, it certainly has been very helpful as I have a job with many phone calls. I often have quite sensitive and secret material. And that's not something you really

should work on within an open landscape where people are moving. So, doing it from home has been very much more convenient.” - Grey

Flexibility And Self-Decision

The other factors affecting the feeling of belonging that have been seen in the empirical data are the given flexibility from the organization and the self-decision opportunity.

According to most interviewees who enjoy the workspace at home, the ability to adapt their working time to private life is what they perceive as an advantage of the home office. If the traditional office has the boundaries of time or activities, when working from home, they have no limits on their personal life. Instead of staying in one place for a specific amount of time, they can have the flexibility of when to have breaks, to start working, or to finish a working day. Thus, this raises the level of job satisfaction and develops a close feeling with the employer.

This view has been presented in most of the interviews but takes Alex’s conversation as an example.

“The life puzzle is quite easier now. You have the work and private stuff and if you have to go to the dentist or something. Yeah, it's quite complex if you will work one hour from home and now you can plan it and it's a big difference in a different way. ...

So, it's also something that you can plan if you have meetings and work stuff that allows it. So, it's also a big benefit for me at least.” - Alex

This statement was made when s/he demonstrated one of the advantages of the remote work mode. Although Alex mentioned the drawbacks, s/he eventually admitted that her/his preference is the home office because of not only the flexible time frame but also increasing her/his work efficiency. Thus, recently, the company has initiated the new instructions for the workspace, since Alex can keep the favorable option in a certain way, it gives space for the interpretation that Alex’s feeling of belonging to company X has not been decreased. Indeed, not only this interviewee but the team members have experienced this positive feeling toward the new policy.

“I think most people in my team are actually very positive about having this split. We have only two days at the office then you can plan to do things related to the physical meetings and then

you still have the deliverables that you can manage from any location in the sense...I think no one has challenged the setup we have now with two days at the office.” - Alex

At this point, self-decision is an added factor to the participants’ feeling of belonging. At the beginning of the pandemic, when they were made to work at home fully, each interviewee expressed a different opinion. Some want to continue this workspace because of work efficiency or personal time, whereas others prefer working at the office because of better communication or social vibe. Thus, it can be seen that not all of them were satisfied with their job. However, when they organize workspaces themselves, there is not any dissatisfaction. In other words, all participants showed that they even felt appreciated since company X does not force them on a specific workspace.

4.5. Individuality - Personality Matters

Another aspect that was increasingly commented on in the interviews was the individual conditions that each employee brings with them. Due to the diversity of these conditions, the same situation can be perceived completely differently.

For example, Harper mentioned in the interview:

“And I think, we're all different. So, I can fully understand that it's been very difficult for those people not to have that connection with people. Whereas for me, my personality is such that I don't need that face-to-face connection. You know, we're all different.” – Harper

Max also touched on the fact that employees have different character traits and therefore have different ways of dealing with the situation. Apart from character traits, these are the circumstances due to the housing situation, as are commented by Max.

“Well, in the team. I mean, there are a couple of people, who could be introverts and prefer online. I know some of them that do live a distance from the office, we're talking about 60 kilometers or some of them with quite a lengthy car drive for them.” – Max

Taylor also commented on these housing conditions and gave examples from colleagues.

“I have colleagues who have four kids, so it’s not easy to have peace and quiet. And I think some who have bigger kids who are in high school, who had lessons at home and maybe needed more support actually, because their parents are instead of their teachers, the teachers were not there. It took more time for them than normal. I know some colleagues had to work a lot in the evenings because they had to do other things during the daytime.” - Taylor

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Job Satisfaction defined by Locke is an interplay of thoughts and feelings about the job of an employee. This is what the participants of the interviews have shared during the conversations. Also, they talked about single facets of their current and past job situation that they like or dislike. This is how Locke described job satisfaction and dissatisfaction; the state of dislike or like something. In addition, the interviews have created an idea about the gap between what an employee wants as an optimized workspace and what they actually have. With the information about that gap, it was an opportunity to get an idea of how satisfied they are with the job. The content presented in the findings is the basis for discussing to what extent the choice of workspaces influences job satisfaction. As Locke (1976) described, job satisfaction depends on the given situation and the personality. Therefore, the different situations are looked at: being in the office and working at home. Also, it is critically discussed if the hybrid working mode is the solution to create the most job satisfaction for employees.

5.1. Job Satisfaction In-Office

According to Henne and Locke (1985), working conditions are an important factor to fulfill job satisfaction. Among other parts, e.g. working hours, this includes the workspace. The participants of the case study confirm that they experienced different degrees of satisfaction when working at home or in the office. Compared to working from home, three aspects in particular in relation to the office have been noted: the organizational benefits of physical togetherness, proximity, and the office as a social meeting place with downsides. We look at these three aspects in detail because, according to the empirical data, these single facets influence job satisfaction and stand out in terms of the physical office.

5.1.1. Listening And Learning

In contrast to Henne and Locke's (1985) idea about the workplace in the office, the interviews made less reference to the equipment of the office building. Instead, the office was increasingly associated with the social aspect.

The case company has an open office system, with workstations close together, team independent. This construct allows for a lively exchange through the daily work routine. One aspect that the

participants pointed out are these opportunities for intensive interaction that can be benefited from. Due to the lack of walls in the open office system, one can hear what others are talking about. The participants report advantages that arise from this. On the one hand, it can help to get approaches to solutions for one's own tasks. On the other hand, one has an idea of who oversees which topics and can thus identify colleagues to contact. The participants expressed this as a strong advantage in terms of work efficiency.

Nevertheless, it has to be considered how important this efficiency is when evaluating individual components of job satisfaction. According to Locke (1976), this assessment is very important because the more weighted the feature is to the employee's job satisfaction, the more satisfied the employee can be. In this case, the job feature is efficiency.

One of the participants discusses this topic very strongly because it is particularly important for this person to be efficient at work. Instead of seeing the advantage that colleagues mention, the participant names disruptions and delays caused by working in the office. For example, the ways to the meeting rooms or the constant private conversations that colleagues have while the employee wants to do her/his work. Accordingly, there is also a critical side to the constant exposure to other conversations when one wants to concentrate on work tasks. Depending on how severe this is for the individual employee, it has an impact on job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is also described by what someone likes, and the participants spoke about different aspects they like that influences work efficiency. Therefore, work efficiency is a component that can influence job satisfaction because it touches employees on a personal level. Furthermore, it can also be a component that promotes job dissatisfaction if this circumstance influencing work efficiency is perceived as negative (Locke, 1976).

5.1.2. Proximity With Downsides

Furthermore, the emotional closeness to colleagues is something that influences the employee's satisfaction with the job because it can provide advantages and disadvantages for the job situation, such as solidarity but also excessive pressure on the team. Mostly the participants referred to closeness to colleagues when being in the office instead of at home. So, according to the empirical

data, the closer one was physical to the other, the more the interviewees felt an emotional closeness to the colleague.

The phenomenon of "social facilitation" was introduced by Forsyth in 1998 and refers to the fact that proximity can create a group dynamic that can lead to various effects. On the one hand, it can change the motivation and speed of the workers (Zajonc, 1965), which in turn can influence work efficiency. Another criteria that can be changed by the proximity to each other is giving feedback. If one is facing each other and discussing feedback, the exchange is often more intense than if the screen is in between. Feedback is also stronger in lectures when people are communicating live, as this proximity has fewer barriers and works as a call to comment. In addition, one cannot hide, and direct eye contact can reinforce the request to speak up (Latane et al., 1995). This was also seen at the leadership level in the case study, because virtually the feedback was almost completely absent. Also addressed by the management level in the case company is the more difficult assessment of employees when only exchanging information outside the office. As Teven (2007) expresses, the additional perception of non-verbal signs such as body language and gestures are particularly important in communication between managers and employees.

Latane et al. (1995) also speak of being able to remember more about what takes place in person with each other than virtually. This was stated by the participants as well. For one participant, who was new to the company, only noticed herself/himself and felt part of the team when they got to know each other on site.

One participant repeatedly emphasized in the interview how unimportant this social aspect of the office is, as there would only be interruptions and distractions there. This would discourage them from doing their actual work. Interestingly, this comment was made by an interviewee who is close to retirement. As White and Spector (1987) found, there is a correlation between perceptions of job satisfaction and age. They limit this to realistic expectations of the job and a resulting smaller gap between what one wants and what one has. The interview participant also mentions that in contrast to younger colleagues, she/he already has a complete social network and does not need to build it up and therefore wants to concentrate exclusively on the work task.

As Locke (1976) has already noted, it is also important here to take account of individuality and one's own perception of the situation. Employees can perceive the same situation differently and therefore also have a differentiated assessment of the criteria of proximity.

5.1.3. Spontaneous Get Together

Another aspect that can influence the job satisfaction of employees due to the office relates indirectly to the social level among colleagues as well.

Employees say that communication in the office can be described as more spontaneous compared to other possibilities such as working from home. Therefore, it takes less planning to address certain topics at short notice. Something that is also found in the theory of communication.

Campbell and Campbell (1988) describe this kind of talking in the office as an informal exchange, which has positive effects on the affiliation of the employee. In addition, the researchers state that this face-to-face exchange can be very important for job satisfaction and productivity as well because it strengthens the connection between colleagues.

This is also confirmed by the statements of the participants of the interviews. They report about moments in between, a small exchange in the corridor, and it can give new motivation or impulses for further action in one's own task.

5.2. Job Satisfaction In Home Office

According to Locke (1976), five facets affecting job satisfaction are salary, promotion, work task, leadership, and colleagues. From the collected empirical data, it was perceived that the last three facets were mentioned dominantly by the participants. Apart from one new employee, who struggled with joining the company at the beginning of the working from home period due to the incomprehensive organizational preparation, the remaining participants seemed satisfied with the situation. Though the importance of those facets is undeniable for job satisfaction, the “life” aspects need to be considered to fulfill the satisfaction (Mortimer et al, 1986, cited Clark, 2001). Especially in the home office context, there is an insistence on the balance between work and life (Brownson, 2004). Thus, this discussion part would reflect both work and life on the employees’ job satisfaction.

5.2.1. Work-Life Balance And Organizational Assistance

While discussing working from home and the job satisfaction-related topics such as relationships with colleagues, personal activities, or flexibility, one of the most mentioned terms was work-life balance. According to them, work and personal life are equally important, even if they are managers or subordinates. There were different approaches from the interviewees toward this matter. Some of them perceive the home office as ideal to balance their work and personal life, whereas the others said that it was such a tough experience.

Although each participant experiences them in different ways due to their personalities, lifestyles, and priorities, they all seem to put effort into balancing working and families or daily life. Indeed, it was shown in the interviews, that when the question about work-life balance was given, the interviewees realize its importance, especially after working from home for a considerable amount of time. Thus, it has been identified that this factor contributes to their job satisfaction. Yet, from the empirical data, in order to obtain job satisfaction in the work-life balance context, the individual attempt is the most to rely on.

However, from the theoretical perspective, the organizational endeavor has also been added as an inseparable dilemma. Clark (2001) demonstrated that the employees' satisfaction is achieved with a favorable functioning between work and home with minimum role conflicts. Indeed, progressive companies have gradually developed their culture into "family-friendly" so that they provide the employees with a good working environment but also more flexibility so that the employees can take care of their families (Galinsky & Stein, 1990, cited in Clark, 2001). Therefore, by giving the employees chances to balance work and life, organizations raise job satisfaction among them.

In that sense, it can be said that company X has been doing great in order to bring the work-life balance to its employees. Although they were made to work at home, they still received support and understanding from both company and managers. Since the beginning of working from home, they were assisted by both technical problems and physical matters such as desks, chairs, and screens. Moreover, it was mentioned by all participants that their managers were considerably flexible with the subordinates' daily life. As long as there are no bad impacts on the work

performance, the employees can take advantage of the working time for either their families or personal activities.

Yet, this research has the limitation in deeper research on “family-friendly” culture since the topic shows potential to reflect more on the organizational policies and benefits, for example, childcare and eldercare support, and telecommuting (Caudron, 1997; Flynn, 1997, cited in Clark, 2001). Due to the identity protection, it is not deepened in this research focus, but it is considered when mentioned the participants’ perceptions of their work-life balance.

5.2.2. Autonomy

In addition, autonomy is also considered to contribute to job satisfaction rising. This is confirmed by Bauer (2004, cited in Clark, 2005) that there is an optimistic relationship between autonomy, job satisfaction, and communication. This states that the more autonomous the working environment, the more satisfied the employees feel about their jobs. Knudsen and Lind (2011) also mentioned the importance of this factor. In their research, although direct management helps shape the employees’ behavior and working performance, autonomy is an added element with the purpose of influencing productivity as well as modernizing organizational culture (Knudsen & Lind, 2011).

Eventually, the participants from company X showed that flexibility was one of the reasons why they enjoyed the home office workspace. Acknowledging that factor implies the non-specific working time, result orientation, and open management, flexibility in this sense can be known as autonomy. Besides more time for personal life, they were able to design their own working hours schedule as well as have a non-distracting workspace, plus not being directly supervised by the managers.

However, on the managerial side, autonomy shows some challenges as well. In the interview with Delta, the only manager with subordinates mentioned that managing people while they were all working from home, did not go smoothly the whole period. Although it is undeniable that company X is influenced by the Swedish culture which is trust-based, management or leadership is hard to conduct when the managers or leaders do not perform supervision physically. For example, in the online meeting, because turning on cameras was not mandatory, s/he hardly recognizes if there

were problems with the team members unless they were open to sharing or noticing any warning signals. As a result, autonomy has caused a bad impact on the relationships between them in the long term because of either misunderstanding or misleading. Thus, when initiating job autonomy, both managers and employees need to put both autonomous functions and effective communication methods into consideration (Thompson & McHugh, 1995, cited in Knudsen and Lind, 2011).

5.3. Job Satisfaction In Hybrid Working - Is It The Optimal Workspace?

5.3.1. Job Satisfaction In Hybrid Work Mode

When initiating the hybrid working model, the participants in the empirical data collecting process seemed to be happy with this workspace. Indeed, it is combined by working from home and in the office, thus, it contains the advantages of both workspaces (Halford, 2005).

However, in the situation of company X, since this combination has just been initiated, there need to be some changes to adapt to this new working world. Apart from the theoretical insights, the interviewed employees made some suggestions during the talks.

Firstly, in the hybrid version, there need to be adaptations to the office because the purpose of the in-office has changed. Currently, the office is perceived as a place of social interaction instead of working space. Therefore, increasing the open space can be a good adaptation.

Secondly, because people still need to attend meetings, but in order to get the most convenience, some teams still choose to operate them digitally occasionally. Thus, there is a need for private areas for participating in the meetings when the employees are at the office, for example, a booth. Moreover, this recommendation from the participants can also be reflected as one of the job satisfaction influencing factors suggested by Henne and Locke (1985), which is physical working conditions. It includes convenient work locations and working hours, plus, a safe and attractive workspace such as decoration as well as sufficient and advanced equipment (Henne & Locke, 1985). Thus, by assisting employees with these elements, maybe they would be more satisfied with the current hybrid policy.

Furthermore, another facet that was mentioned by the interviewees regarding this workspace is the ability to be involved in the decision-making process. Since there were different thoughts about working at home or working at the office which were collected by organizational surveys, company X has initiated a hybrid working mode as the solution to enhance the employees' satisfaction. Thus, they can make decisions in a team or department to arrange the office day and home-office day. Though the choice was not individually, at least, it was made based on the employees' preferences. Thus, it can be seen that due to this updated policy, company X has been able to raise job satisfaction by giving people choices of the desired workspace.

5.3.2. Does Job Satisfaction Increase With The Hybrid Workspace?

The hybrid working version sounds the most appealing or the best solution for the possible workspace after the toughest time of the global pandemic, because it is a combination of traditional and home office (Halford, 2005). Indeed, when evaluating job satisfaction based on the different workspaces, the hybrid model seems to solve the challenges of the two other workspace possibilities. If working at the office has disadvantages on time and space boundaries and working at home is hard to manage good social relations and creativity, then the hybrid work mode is a solution to those problems.

However, the participants illustrated their concerns about the future of the hybrid workspace. It was undeniable that there would be opposite opinions on whether to come back to the office or continue working from home. Though the interviewees expressed that the hybrid work mode has been their ideal model because they can enjoy both, the office, and home by an agreed schedule within their teams. There are still other factors that has the risk to lead them to be dissatisfied with their job in the long term. Thus, at this point, the Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1959) contributes to the solution for such a situation. To reduce job dissatisfaction, Herzberg (1959) suggested that there is an increase in motivators and a decrease in hygiene factors. In this case, organizational operators consider promoting employees' recognition or challenging and interesting work tasks, while paying less attention to the manager's leadership skills or social relationships. However, this recommendation sounds appealing to those who set high priority in work performance, not the others who prefer more social connections.

Looking at company X and their workspace context as an example, there are employees who prefer having their own working space, more time for personal activities, and work-task orientation. Coming back to the office several days per week became stressful for them, since they did not sense the purpose of working at the office traditionally anymore. On the other hand, for people who consider social relations and communication the most vital when working, even though they can now make the physical as well as spontaneous connections at the office two days a week, their demand for socializing with different teams remains. Plus, the lack of grouping people in the same space can result into a problem when company X wants to develop the culture. In fact, this point of view is not only made by assumption but also in the first introductory meeting with company X. Thus, that is the reason why the hybrid mode seems attractive now, but in the long run, challenges can arise.

In order to be more specific, the Range-of-Affect theory by Locke (1976) is used to take a further look at job satisfaction influenced by workspace. As mentioned in the previous part, if the gap between wanting and having is smaller, the employees are likely to be satisfied with the job (Locke, 1976). Although it is hard to evaluate the level of wanting and having for either each facet or each employee, it would be still ideal to break down the job satisfaction for a more comprehensive assessment. In this sense, different facets recommended by Locke (1976) consisting of promotion, salary, work tasks, colleagues, and leadership, can be brought into the argument.

Assuming that promotion and salary would not be affected when the employees experience different workspaces. The importance of the three other facets differs ranging from the individual perception. Indeed, if they are equally distributed but the ‘wanting’ perspectives are not similar between participants, the result of job satisfaction varies. For instance, there are employees who consider work efficiency and task orientation to be the priorities, and their daily work tasks are motivated as well as they have the comfort zone to deliver the best results. Their satisfaction on the job increases if these employees were given the proper workspace such as home office. So that employees with these preferences have more time to focus on the task challenges (Herzberg, 1967). Nevertheless, from the organizational side, fully satisfying the different ideas of each employee is not possible. It is somewhat true that raising job satisfaction helps to elevate and reflect the functioning of companies (Spector, 1997), thus, employers develop an understanding of the employees’ “wants” as well as initiate appropriate and spontaneous actions.

However, for a smoothly operating organization, besides employees' satisfaction, other long-term factors need to be taken into consideration such as strategy, business, or finance. That is the reason why the hybrid working mode, or the adaptation of the workspace, contributes to job satisfaction, but is supposed to be added with other organizational elements, in order to address job satisfaction comprehensively.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The main goal of the thesis was to get an idea about how the new possibility of choosing a workspace and the chosen workspace itself influences various features of job satisfaction. So far, the research was limited to job satisfaction in relation to the physical office. Therefore, our thesis added new perspectives on job satisfaction while working at home or while having the chance to decide where to work. To conclude the research on that topic, in the following, the practical implications as well as limitations of this research are presented, then the opportunities for future research are addressed to complete the thesis.

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

Since much of the data on working from home is outdated and data on hybrid working is also less considered in the current literature, there is potential to fill these gaps. With the data gained by this research, input on two topics is provided.

Firstly, to what extent does the evaluation and importance rating of individual facets of job satisfaction change when one works from home instead of in the office.

Secondly, to what extent does the evaluation and importance rating of individual facets of job satisfaction change when one has the choice of working in the office or from home. Again, we look at the individual levels of job satisfaction rather than job satisfaction as a whole. Therefore, under the different places of work, it is referred to the individual features of a job that emerged as particularly influential in the case study.

Lastly, we also add to the theory whether the hybrid work model has the capacity to maximize job satisfaction for all employees or what limitations there are.

i.) Working from home

The research has emphasized what Henne and Locke (1985) already suggested, that working conditions, e.g. the workspaces have an impact on job satisfaction. According to Henne and Locke (1985), working conditions are an important factor to fulfill job satisfaction. This tends to be limited to the office and its circumstances. This thesis goes beyond that and includes working outside the

office. It turns out that working outside the office shifts various parameters of the job. On the one hand, working in a team and the social interaction of a work team. Teven (2007) and Campbell and Campbell (1988) already emphasize the importance of this level. The shift to working outside the office meant that this physical togetherness fell away. On the one hand, employees sought their own ways to compensate for this with new communication tools. On the other hand, some also accepted it and were desperate. Job satisfaction can be influenced by the social possibilities of a workplace if the employee sees the social togetherness as a necessary condition "to have":

- If this is then only possible to a limited extent or not at all, it can reduce job satisfaction.
- If it is fully possible, it can maximize job satisfaction. Another aspect is the influence on work efficiency.

When working from home, this can be influenced by the increased need for planning and less spontaneous contacts. It can also become more efficient, because the disruptions at home can be less, depending on the work possibilities at home. In comparison, previous studies on job satisfaction have focused on the physical office and parameters such as promotion, salary, colleagues, manager, and the tasks themselves (Locke, 1976).

This thesis has shown that the change of the workspace has led to the fact that it is the environment rather than the work itself that is important and influences job satisfaction. Overall, we can say that the affected parameters have become less rational and more emotional compared to previous studies.

ii.) Choice of workplace

Due to the newly gained possibility of being able to decide where one would like to work, it seems that expectations are also changing, and employees are developing the feeling of being able to formulate requirements directly. Requirements of the coworkers, which were more a desired thought before, are expressed opposite the employer, accordingly, the open office system was

criticized. It is expressed that this idea promotes less work performance and more social contacts in the team or beyond. As a result, the concept of closeness and distance in the workplace is a very important one and is influential in that it can change feelings about colleagues and the company (Campbell & Campbell, 1988).

iii.) Hybrid working model as optimum

Since hybrid work mode is the combination of working from home and working at the office (Halford, 2005), it is thus considered to be the ideal solution to upgrade job satisfaction regarding workspace. However, while accessing the empirical data, the flexibility of the workspace needs to be added with different elements to fulfill job satisfaction. Apart from the five facets recommended by Locke (1976), organization assistance and spontaneous support needs to be considered as. Thus, it can be seen that the hybrid working model, though be advantageous, is not a mandatory factor contributing to job satisfaction for now. By adopting some of the job parameters according to the hybrid working model, e.g. the office design, the hybrid model has the potential to increase job satisfaction.

6.2. Practical Implications

By researching single facets that influence job satisfaction, a clearer and more detailed overview for the case company is generated to create measurements to optimize the given situation instead of looking at overall job satisfaction. Due to the topicality of the issue, we mainly refer to popular literature and the measures discussed in the following.

“Hybrid work-from-home, it’s become completely a standard.” - This is a quote stated by Nicholas Bloom in “The Guardian” (Aratani, 2022). Experts agree that the hybrid working model will be part of the future world of work. The question is, does this cover everything to raise the job satisfaction of all employees to an optimum, as everyone can pick and choose what they want? (Aratani, 2022). According to experts, concepts that allow maximum flexibility and freedom in practical implementation for the employee are those that will be successful. As the expert on

mobile working, Dr. Heejung Chung, is quoted in "The Guardian" (Aratani, 2022), guidelines and control are no longer in keeping with the times.

Nevertheless, compared to working from home and working in the office, the hybrid working model needs more thought about implementation. The head of LinkedIn, Brett Hautop, stated in the New York Times (Goldberg, 2021) that hybrid working is much more complex and needs more planning.

One part of the complexity is the connection between both worlds - employees who work in the office and employees who work at home but need to work together. One way to counteract this is to agree to rules that meetings take place either fully in-person or fully online to give everyone the same opportunity to attend the meeting. To fully implement this, adjustments are necessary for the office. If employees want to work in the office even though only online meetings take place, space must be created for this, like retreats that also exist at home. One option for this is telephone booths in the office, which provide quiet and confidentiality.

Another complex difficulty is that several companies say that employees with caregiving roles in particular prefer working from home because it is easier to schedule (Goldberg, 2021). Most caregivers at home are still women (Taub, 2021). In terms of hybrid working, this means that the concept of hybrid working in the office reduces the proportion of women and these colleagues may be excluded from breaks or heard less in meetings that are held in a hybrid way. A problem that faces few solutions. At this point, the fixed day in the office is particularly helpful to get the employees into the office together. This, in turn, brings about discussions with those who do not want to be dictated to. Therefore, it makes sense not to prescribe too many days, but to do so in a targeted way. Some companies limit themselves to one or two days a month (Goldberg, 2021).

Another practical implication must be that, working at home and working in the office have the same insurance. The interviews also revealed that in addition to the design of the office and the adaptation to the new circumstances, it is also necessary to clarify which insurances must be adapted in order to be insured at home in the same way as in the office. What was commented positively in the interviews was the provision of office desks, chairs, and screens to equip the office at home in a way that is suitable for work. Critically, not every employee has the space to set this up.

Another aspect that needs to be spoken about is that the interviews made it clear that employees increasingly use the office to have social exchanges. Nevertheless, the work must be still in focus, so it makes sense to create other opportunities for socializing. A place that connects colleagues from home and in the office. We derive measures for this from the already creative implementations of the interview partners. Among other things, the common corporate platform can be used to create connections for "walk and talk", where people can arrange to go for a walk in their town across teams. One possibility would be to randomly assign colleagues when they sign up.

A further connection can be created when the platform is used to arrange colleagues for a digital or personal lunch, again with arbitrary or direct allocation. Moreover, another offer is building sports groups that can meet at different locations throughout the city, also across teams.

The implementation possibilities are shown here have the potential for closing the gap between having and wanting individual job parameters and can therefore achieve job satisfaction in the optimum.

6.3. Limitations Of The Study

Before addressing the possibilities for future research approaches, perhaps, there should have a mention about the limitations of the research.

Firstly, the timing of the research is such that the global pandemic is only beginning to fade out and, consequently, new corporate measures have only been implemented or are only in the process of being implemented for a short time. For this reason, the evaluation and assessment of the employees may be different at a later point in time. Overall, this whole state of change and uncertainty can affect the employees' perceptions.

Secondly, another aspect that emerged in the interviews is how strongly job satisfaction is linked to the opportunities for social interaction at work. This strong focus may be somewhat shifted by the fact that the two-year pandemic also led to contact restrictions in private life.

Thirdly, with exclusive reference to the case company, the case study refers only to Sweden and no other nations.

Furthermore, the case study is limited by the fact that the company is already very flexible and leaves room for its own decisions. In a company where employees are more tightly constrained with their choice of workplace, this constraint can also lead to a different perception of the workplace.

Lastly, another limitation is that we have restricted ourselves exclusively to the factors that influence job satisfaction in detail. Overall job satisfaction has been omitted because it seemed more relevant to understand which parameters of job satisfaction are shifting due to job changes. Despite the listed limitations of the study, findings have been elaborated that reveal to what extent differences in workspaces affect job satisfaction.

6.4. Opportunities For Further Research

The final part of the work relates to possibilities for research in the future. Possible topics to be explored, deriving from what came to light in the study. It is distinguished between three areas. To begin with, the research opportunities that arise in relation to the future work model of hybrid working. Further, identifying potential themes related to job satisfaction today. Another theme relates to the workplace opportunities of office workers today.

First, the possibilities for future research regarding hybrid work are addressed. This topic seems relevant as it has the potential to combine what is missing for complete job satisfaction in one or the other type of workspace. The implementation of how hybrid working is successfully implemented to take advantage of the other two places of work while reducing the disadvantages. In addition, the connection of the two worlds - how is it possible for the employee from home to be as socially integrated as the employee in the office? Also interesting is communication in hybrid working, how do you integrate feedback and how can empathy be built in?

The second aspect relates to job satisfaction. The theory indicated that there are rough theoretical frameworks that help to classify job satisfaction. Studies that are already conducted helped to get an idea of how job satisfaction can be addressed empirically in a supported way. Nevertheless, there is more potential to conduct further qualitative studies in order to develop an understanding of what job satisfaction means for today's employees.

Third, the study developed potential in the context of the different workplaces that have been established with the global pandemic. First, further research can address whether the office has a role to play in the future and how it needs to be designed. The research on practical measures was largely limited to popular literature, as there was little empirical research related to the current world of work. Second, about working from home, it can be researched to what extent it influences the well-being of the employee.

In this thesis a first contact with the combined topic, workplace, and job satisfaction has been illustrated. Due to the last two years, new workplace options have been established for a large part of office workers. It is exciting to see to what extent the possibility to choose where to work influences individual parameters of job satisfaction and how it overlaps with the private life of an employee. There is a lot of potential in future research to build on this to better understand the world of work today.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions:

Working from home	Can you share the differences or difficulties while you were working at home? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workload - Work performance - Relationship with colleagues/managers - The balance between work and personal life - The feeling of belongings to the company/department/team
	How did you overcome that situation?
	Can you choose your working place at the beginning of the pandemic? Why did you choose that?
	Did you start working at home during the pandemic?
	How many days did you spend at home and the office?
	How have you felt about this workspace so far?
Going back to the office	Is it mandatory that you have to go to the office? Do you have any flexibility in choosing your workplace?
	What are your regulations right now?
	Is it applied to all employees or does it depend on your manager/head of department?
	Compare the office before and after the pandemic, have you experienced any difference? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workload - Work performance - Relationship with colleagues/managers - The balance between work and personal life - The feeling of belongings to the company/department/team

	How have you felt about working at the office now? Do you enjoy it?
Comparison	Which is your preference? Why?
	What is the general opinion of going back to the office in your team?
	What about your manager's view on this?
	When discussing it with colleagues, do you know what the criticism is about working from home/working in the office?
	How does the workspace affect your mind on choosing a job position?
The interviewee is a manager	What is your view on the discussion about working from home or in the office for your employees?
	How have you adjusted your leadership style?
	What feedback have you received from your employees due to changes?
	What are the arguments that you observed in your team toward the changes?