



SCHOOL OF
ECONOMICS AND
MANAGEMENT

The New Labour Landscape in a Post COVID-19 Society

Comparing Service-Versus Product-Oriented Organisations

By

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Abstract

The impact of COVID-19 had unprecedented effects on the international labour market. Businesses went bankrupt, employees were fired, and organisations and employees had to adapt to swiftly working remotely from the office. Extensive studies have been conducted concerning the transition from in-person to remote work, but less so on how the transition from remote work to in-person work in a post-COVID-19 society will be facilitated - and if the labour landscape will be the same as prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

This quantitative and qualitative research project explores 1) how employees in product and service-oriented organisations perceive the potential transition from remote to in-person work and 2) how such organisations adhere to that perception. Through a tailor-made questionnaire, quantitative data on employee preference was collected. The data derived from four semi-structured interviews with managers in both service and product-oriented organisations were analysed and discussed.

The findings indicated that there is no significant difference between the service and product-oriented organisations in terms of the employee perceptions of transitioning from remote to in-person work. The questionnaire, on the other hand, showed that there is an employee preference for working in a hybrid-like setup. In relation to this, the semi-structured interviews showed that there is a divide between the organisations in terms of willingness and capability to adhere to such preferences. Lastly, organisations can use this study to understand the factors affecting employee perceptions of the transition from remote to in-person work while navigating through the change process towards the new labour landscape.

Keywords: COVID - 19, Employee perception, Working remotely, Service-oriented organisations, Product-oriented organisations, New labour landscape.

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1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic by giving a background on the impact of COVID-19 on the Swedish labour market and by addressing the existing gap in the research regarding the employee perception of the new labour landscape in service and product-oriented organisations.

The chapter also includes the purpose of the research project, research questions, and analytic model. Lastly, demarcations of the study and the thesis outline are presented.

1.1 Background

The scope of the study is the employees and managers in product and service-oriented companies in Sweden; therefore, Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences is elaborated as background information. Sweden has one of the highest per-capita mortality rates due to the COVID - 19 pandemic. Therefore, there are contradictory discussions about the Swedish approach to the pandemic and the effectiveness and timing of government policies both in the media and academia. Mishra et al. (2021) underline that the Swedish approach is famous for less mandatory, controlling measures, providing the population with recommendations, and relying on voluntarism to follow those recommendations.

The first coronavirus case was detected in January 2020, after which the Swedish government imposed some restrictions that, among other objectives, aimed at limiting the spread of the virus, and its impact on essential services, reducing the impact on people and organisations. Later on, a five-stage government plan to gradually lift the restrictions was introduced. The final stage of lifting the restrictions took place in April 2022, considering the high vaccination rate in Sweden. However, similar in other states, COVID - 19 affected the Swedish industries and labour market. Notably, in 2020 the unemployment rate peaked at 9.2% (Campa, Roine, & Strömberg, 2021). That was primarily because of the negative impact of the pandemic on service and other sectors.

Specifically, most employees in service-oriented companies such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation, as well as employees in product-oriented industries and the contract workers in general, had the heaviest impact due to the imposed restrictions and recommendations (Campa, Roine, & Strömberg, 2021).

1.2 Problematisation

The COVID-19 pandemic affected most industries to different extents. However, the literature shows that globally, the service and manufacturing sectors suffered the most (Sarfraz et al., 2022; De Vet et al., 2021). Looking specifically at Sweden, the two industries have a significant share of GDP in the Swedish economy, which due to the pandemic, faced a record rate of unemployment in 2020 (World Bank, 2022). Therefore, comparing the employee and organisational perceptions of the new labour landscape in these two industries can generate interesting insights into how organisations adhere to the post-COVID-19 labour landscape. Additionally, previous literature shows contradicting arguments regarding the distinction between the two industries. From one perspective, one group of researchers outline the distinctive characteristics of service and product-oriented industries (see e.g. Macdonald, 1994; De Backer et al., 2015), while the others claim that these two sectors have become intermingled (see, e.g. Bryson, 2007; Timmer et al., 2014; Aner & Rentzhog, 2012).

With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations were faced with quickly adapting to circumstances which contemporary society has never experienced. How well organisations adapt to these new circumstances can be argued to be tied to an organisation's level of resilience to adapt to external changes taking place (Holling, 1996). With the pandemic in mind, such adaptation was arguably the ability to create a safe workplace through social distance, which in many cases took shape through employees working remotely from the office. That said, organisations with operations capable of relocating employees to remote work had stronger resilience to adapt to the lasting changes that were COVID-19 (De Vos, 2020).

Two years have now passed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and society is, arguably, step by step working to adapt to a post-pandemic labour landscape. Therefore, it becomes interesting to explore if organisations will return to a “normal” work setting or if a new diverse labour landscape has emerged. More particularly, it is observed that working remotely can be beneficial for employees in terms of increased flexibility, better work-life balance and comfortability (Mustajab et al., 2020). On the other hand, employees may desire a clear boundary between family space and workspace (Van Der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). Taking this into account, a new working landscape where a divide of working preferences may have arisen amongst the employees of organisations. This new diverse working landscape can be identified as a problem of organisations’ adaptation to employees’ preferences regarding the working style. More particularly, having reviewed the literature, it is assumed that some employees may wish to return full time to the office, some employees may wish to work remotely, or establish a hybrid solution where a combination of working both remotely and at the office may become relevant.

As the managers decide on if the employees are to either work in the office, remote, or a combination of the two, the risk of some employees opposing is arguably likely. Therefore, it is vital to address the potential risk of employees resisting change imposed by the organisation. Extensive research about resistance to change during and before COVID -19 restrictions and regulations has been conducted (see e.g. Malik et al., 2021; Puyod & Charoensukmongkol, 2021), and the literature indicates a direction amongst scholars on the topic that employees resisting change need to be reassessed (Ford & Ford, 2009). Hopefully, this research project will be valuable for management teams in organisations to gain insights on how to facilitate possible difficulties when considering employees’ preference of work location.

1.3 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to understand the employee perception of the new labour landscape developed due to the impact of COVID - 19. Specifically, the research looks at the

service and product-oriented organisations to compare and contrast the differences between employee perceptions regarding the hybrids in person or remote working settings.

The second purpose of this research project is to explore and compare how managers of service and product-oriented organisations will be able to adapt to employee perceptions. The potential divided work preference amongst the employees. In attempting to accomplish the purposes of this study, two research questions were formulated:

Research Question 1: *How do employees in service-oriented organisations perceive the transition from remote to in-person working compared to employees in product-oriented organisations?*

- What are the main factors affecting the employee's perception of remote working?
- How are the factors different in service versus product-oriented organisations?

Research Question 2: *How are the organisations in the two industries adapting to the employee perception of the transition?*

1.4 Demarcations

The focus of the study is to identify the difference in employee perceptions of the new working landscape in two particular types of organisations operating in Sweden: service-oriented and product-oriented. The research project does not explore nor compare nuanced industries. What is meant with nuanced industries is specifically labelled organisations providing either a service or a product, for instance, law firms and clothes producers. The rationale for comparing two comprehensive sets of industries, in contrast to more nuanced and specified industries, is based on the time limit and size of this research project.

The research project does not explore the product or service-oriented organisations internationally but was narrowed down to Sweden to make it easier to reach out to organisations willing to

participate in the study. With respect to applying a Swedish scope, it was important to clarify Sweden's approach to handling the pandemic. This is because Sweden had a different approach where the government policy was to provide recommendations on how organisations were to adapt to the situations rather than imposing strict lockdowns (Mishra et al., 2021). In this sense, Swedish organisations are not equally compared to organisations in other countries where there was a total lockdown. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the employee perception of the new labour landscape is unique solely to Sweden.

The study will not explore the employee satisfaction with the working conditions during the pandemic as an explicit parameter of the study, as well as organisational trust towards the employees' performance.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

In the previous subchapters, the topic, the purpose, research questions, analytic model and the demarcations of the study are introduced. In chapter two, we have reviewed the best available knowledge in change management, the COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on the new diverse labour landscape. This was carried out by applying an employee and organisational perspective on the benefits and challenges of remote work. Chapter two ends with our theoretical framework, which provides the necessary background for introducing the methodological approaches in chapter three. In chapter three, we have constructed and rationalised our research design and the necessary strategies to collect and analyse data to answer the research questions. In chapter four, the quantitative and qualitative data collection results are analysed and presented. Furthermore, chapter five is designated for a detailed discussion of the findings in chapter four. Lastly, chapter six concludes the results of the study.

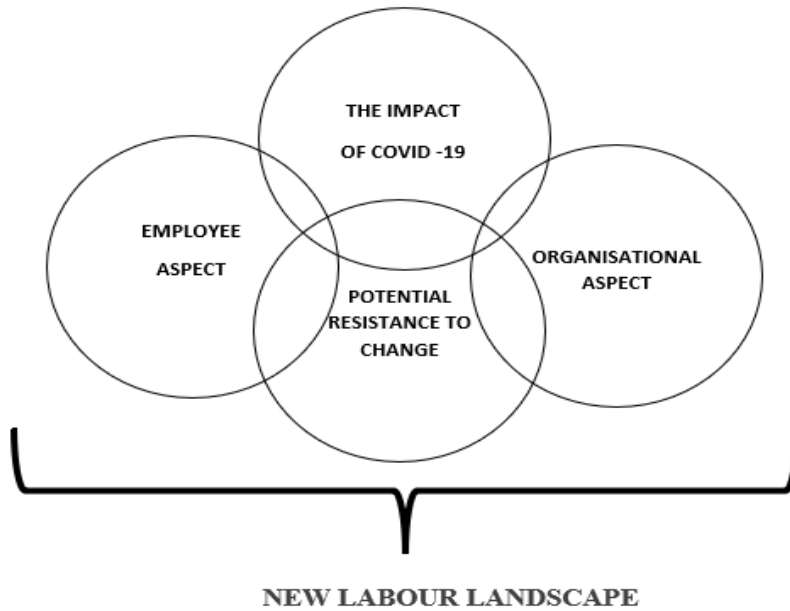
2. Literature Review

This chapter begins by presenting the theoretical framework of the study. Furthermore, Chapter 2 elaborates on the literature on the difference and definitions of service and product-oriented organisations and how the impact of COVID-19 affected these two sectors. Furthermore, the organisational and employee perspective of working remotely and how the remote working during the pandemic has introduced a new diverse labour landscape where employees and organisations can potentially work in a hybrid-like setup. Lastly, the chapter is summarised, discussing the potential resistance to change and two change management theories covering both bottom-up and top-down perspectives on change.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The framework is based on the review of the literature and shows the components of the new labour landscape, which is discussed in detail in the other subchapters of Chapter 2. Particularly, reviewing the literature identified four main categories that shape the new labour landscape. Based on those categories, the theoretical framework of this study was created (see Figure 2). As shown in Figure 2, the categories are the *impact of COVID-19*, *employees*, *organisational aspects*, and *potential resistance to change*. In the theoretical framework, these factors are interconnected. For instance, the initial trigger of the change is considered to be the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the whole labour market that consists of employee and organisational aspects. Additionally, the potential resistance to change is another category, as the literature shows that employees' preferences and perceptions regarding change processes can be different, resulting in resistance.

Figure 1: The Theoretical Framework



2.1.1 The Impact of COVID-19

The initial trigger of the change in the labour market was the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a natural disaster that, due to the caused limitations and restrictions, created a need for changing the old working style and systems and making them more suitable for the new reality. The literature suggests that remote and hybrid working styles have been used widely. This triggered new observations in the field of the labour market and its effect on organisations and employees. As a result, there are contradictory discussions regarding the positive and negative aspects of the remote working method for both employees and the organisation in the literature.

2.1.2 Employee and Organisational Aspects

The literature review considers the perspectives of the two main actors of the new diverse working landscape: employees and employers in the shape of organisations and managers. Specifically, the literature exploring the impact of the new diverse labour landscape on employees indicated an increase in employee flexibility, comfortability, work-life balance, productivity, and such negative factors as isolation and lack of communication. On the other hand, the literature concerning the organisational perspective indicated fewer office and utility payments and great talent-hiring opportunities from a geographical perspective. On the contrary, organisational risks in terms of security and culture are considered the primary concerns.

2.1.3 Potential Resistance to Change

It was indicated in the literature that the employee and organisational aspects of the new diverse labour landscape could potentially be affected by the employees' resistance to change. As the literature shows, the resistance to change results from employees' interest and comfort. Employees working in service and product-oriented companies can potentially have different preferences and perceptions of the change process, which can trigger resistance and difficulties in change implementation if not considered by organisations. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the employee perspective and identify the factors affecting their resistance to change.

2.2 The Dichotomy between Service and Product-Oriented Organisation

According to the System of National Accounts (2008), an internationally recognised standard for measuring various economic activities, firms are categorised into services and manufacturing based on their activities. Manufacturing organisations produce and sell products, while service organisations sell services. Therefore, a clear definition of goods and services is needed to differentiate between the two types of organisations. The System of National Accounts (2008)

defines goods as "physically produced objects" (p.1), while services are defined as "produced outputs that cannot be traded separately from their production" (p.1).

Looking at what characteristics differentiate between organisations offering services and products, product-oriented organisations produce tangible goods, whilst service-oriented companies provide intangible goods and services (De Backer et al., 2015). Moreover, according to Macdonald (1994), products and services have different characteristics. Products, besides being tangible, can be obtained by the customers, can be stored and transported, while services are consumed instantly, cannot be stored, and are primarily non-transportable. Moreover, product-oriented companies have less interaction with customers than service-oriented companies. Therefore, it is essential to breakdown more in detail, what service-oriented organisations consist of. Kox and Rubalca (2007) divide different types of services that organisations can offer into six categories. Those six categories are "Producer services, Business related services, Business services, Network type services, Operational business services, and Knowledge-intensive business services" (Kox and Rubalcaba, 2007, p.5). Here it is observed that the definitional difference between the product and service-oriented organisations is more complex. In fact, by observing the industry trends in Europe, it is demonstrated that the distinct features of the product and service-oriented organisations sometimes can merge, making it difficult to differentiate between the two types of organisations (Bryson, 2007; Timmer et al., 2014).

Therefore, the term 'servicification of manufacturing' was developed to indicate the manufacturing companies that except producing also include services in their business activity (Aner & Rentzhog, 2012). Manufacturing companies obtained and adopted characteristics similar to service-oriented organisations, where services, in addition to the manufacturing, such as marketing, warranties and after-sale services are offered (Hallward-Driemeier & Nayyar, 2017). The same goes for service-oriented organisations, which have started to provide service-produced goods such as data centres and search engines which are based on tangible assets (e.g. server farms) (Hallward-Driemeier & Nayyar, 2017; Fontagné et al., 2014). Another factor showing the complexity of interaction between service and product-oriented companies is that the job market in these industries is not purely related to one specific type. That is, production companies, besides having employees dealing with manufacturing, have employees who belong to the service sector, such as the

managers, financial and legal staffers, and R&D department workers (De Backer, Desnoyers-James and Moussiegt, 2015; Hallward-Driemeier & Nayyar, 2017). Nonetheless, the improvements and innovations in one of the aforementioned sectors highly impact the other. This is because goods and services are primarily being innovated together. Additionally, services are also impacting the competitiveness of products (De Backer, Desnoyers-James and Moussiegt, 2015; Lodefalk, 2013; Timmer et al., 2014). On the other hand, Nägele et al., 2020 mentioned that service-oriented organisations often provide tangible goods to increase the tangibility of their services to the clients. Particularly, pens, clothing and badges can be seen as complementary and interlinked parts of services, making those physically connected to the clients (Nägele et al., 2020).

2.3 The Impact of COVID-19 on Service and Product-Oriented Organisations

Even though there is a rather complex and interlinked relationship between the two sectors, it is shown that the COVID-19 pandemic affected both service and product-oriented organisations differently. Those sectors that were able to suggest remote work opportunities showed more resilience towards the challenges resulting from the pandemic (see, e.g. Holling, 1996). Nevertheless, some sectors were impacted more than others. In the service industry, in particular, food, gym and other types of businesses working towards recreation activities were impacted severely. This impact results from different factors, such as social distancing policies, the possibility of remote work in that business area and the problems with the supply chain (De Vet et al., 2021). Specifically, the policies adopted to fight the spread of COVID - 19, such as social distancing and change in working culture, negatively affected the unemployment rate and world economy (De Vos, 2020; Das, 2021; Sharma & Das, 2021).

Moreover, service-oriented businesses such as hair salons, healthcare providers, restaurants, and banks have struggled the most due to the decreased demand resulting from the pandemic (Christine et al., 2020). Additionally, aviation companies were also impacted, resulting in bankruptcy for those with less resilience. In the EU market, airlines had a total €56.2 billion net loss in 2020 (De Vet et al., 2021). In contrast to service-oriented organisations, product-manufacturing-oriented

organisations suffered the most from the pandemic due to the partial or complete shutdowns of factories, closed borders, and supply chain disruptions. Some countries implemented restrictions and limitations for exports of specific products due to which they were lacking vital production parts (Yin et al., 2021). In addition, employees in different countries could not work at all or were working in limited capacities under restrictive policies (De Vet et al., 2021).

By means of contextualisation and exemplification, one can take a closer look at production-oriented organisations - specifically, the automotive and textile industries. Firstly, the automotive industry suffered significantly from the pandemic. This sector is highly dependent on the supply of parts. The pandemic was a significant issue due to the shutdowns of factories worldwide and in China in particular (De Vet et al., 2021). The impact of the first wave of the pandemic resulted in a 22.3 % decrease in the European automotive production market (De Vet et al., 2021; Christine et al., 2020). Secondly, the restrictions implemented during the first wave of the pandemic disrupted the supply chain in the textile industry, causing a 10% decline in the European production market (Euratex, 2020)

2.4 The Organisational Aspect of Remote Working

Any significant event suddenly taking place in society will impact the organisation's strategic actions. The unprecedented events of COVID-19 fall under the category where sudden and unpredictable external change impacts how organisations design and choose how to continue their daily operations (Tursunbayeva et al., 2022). The impact of COVID-19 touched mainly on employee interactions and relationships in the physical workplace (Reina et al., 2022), where arguably, many organisations managed to adapt quickly to the new labour landscape. This adaptation process can be described as an organisational level of resilience, i.e. how well organisations adapt to a rapidly changing environment (Holling, 1996). Adapting quickly to the new labour environments, remote working from home was one of the biggest changes. Remote work opportunities existed before the pandemic as well. However, the scale of those opportunities was not as big and widespread as now (Tursunbayeva et al., 2022). Both organisations and

employees faced negative and positive impacts due to the pandemic (Tursunbayeva et al., 2022). From an organisational perspective, positive factors such as paying less for real estate and utility costs were apparent, as most employees had to work remotely from home (Tursunbayeva et al., 2022).

However, alongside the workforce operating remotely and digitally, increased cyber security risks subsequently increased. In effect, this requires investments in HR analytics and digital surveillance, which has the added negative factor of potentially intervening in employees' private life and property, which can create both ethical and reputational problems for organisations (Laas, 2020). From this perspective, technological proficiency within organisations arguably became an essential element in order to facilitate the change from physically working in the office to a remote working landscape. Complex devices such as laptops, smartphones and functioning internet were necessary for organisations to facilitate this transition (Errichiello & Pianese, 2016). Furthermore, technology has become an essential factor in human resource management in terms of employee hiring and employee career development (Dua et al., 2021). Considering this, it can be assumed that organisations possessing greater digital skills and proficiencies prior to the pandemic had an added benefit on the market.

2.5 The Employee Aspect of Remote Working

From the employees' perspective, a positive aspect of remote work is claimed to be greater flexibility (Cooper et al., 2020). Employees have the freedom to arrange their lives and work the way they prefer, rather than being physically required to be in the office. In addition, by working remotely, employees have the opportunity to spend more time with their families, which according to Tursunbayeva et al. (2022), reduces employee stress and increases motivation. Furthermore, Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen (2010) claim that remote work can affect employees' concentration and foster collaboration between them, positively affecting their productivity and performance. This can be due to several factors, such as the change in the working environment, the absence of stress

caused by commuting to the workplace, and more independence from supervisors (Gigantesco, 2003).

Additionally, a discussion regarding the greater inclusion created by remote work is another positive aspect (Couch et al., 2021). In contrast, scholars have addressed and discussed the digital divide issue (Alvarez, 2020; Gallacher and Hossain, 2020). That is while creating inclusivity and more chances for those people who could not work in offices, remote work also excludes those workers who do not have the necessary skills or necessary conditions such as good internet connection and other required attributes for remote working.

That disadvantaged group consists of poor employees, those without a college degree, contractual and part-time workers, working women and mothers (Couch et al., 2020). This stresses the importance of an invested HR management division, which can assist the more disadvantaged employees with different options on how to proceed working remotely. An additional negative aspect of remote working is the problem with knowledge sharing and coordination. More specifically, employees do not have the opportunity for their usual meetings and conversations. Also, new employees face problems with limited connection to the other employees and integration into the company (Molino et al., 2020).

2.6 The New Labour Landscape

As remote work potentially offers a more flexible labour model for employees it is assumable that the pandemic has resulted in a new dynamic of work, where employees may prefer working exclusively remotely rather than physically in the office (Reina et al., 2022). This assumption, however, may not be the case for all employees. For instance, in an extensive survey covering nine European countries conducted by Van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020), it was found that team performance decreases when team members are separated into working remotely. Furthermore, some employees might prefer having a clear boundary between workspace and family space, to which working remotely will have a negative impact. In addition to this, a negative aspect of

remote work for employees is being isolated from the professional community. That is, remote work and technologies affect people's connectivity and interaction (Cooper et al., 2002; Tursunbayeva et al., 2022). In effect, it is crucial for human resources management to handle the potential stress of employees who do not prefer working remotely (Giurge & Bohns, 2020) but also to handle the employees working remotely.

Furthermore, the possibility of working remotely away from the office lies within the nature of the conducted work. It is more plausible for those teleworking to work remotely from the office than a car mechanic. In fact, in an article addressing the implications of working remotely from the workplace in Canada, close to 40% of Canadian workers are in specific jobs, which naturally makes it more plausible to work from home (Deng et al., 2020). In a case study conducted by Reina et al. (2022), it is concluded, as touched upon earlier, that digitisation is a fundamental tenet in terms of change in all sectors of the economy. It was found that the Chamber of Commerce of Catanzaro in Italy has put much effort into facilitating the digitisation process of Italian companies during the pandemic. Additionally, this investment in digitising the new labour landscape of Italian companies leads to the question of whether companies, in general, will return to the labour landscape prior to the pandemic or if a new landscape is emerging?

2.7 The Potential Resistance to Change

Resistance can be treated as the opponent to a suggested change process and will, nondependent on how beneficial the suggestion may be, most likely be treated negatively and with resistance (Bradutanu, 2012; Spiker & Lesser, 1995). As various employees have different preferences and perceptions of change, this can lead to resistance that can be passive or active (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Therefore, understanding the employee perspective is vital for identifying the factors affecting the resistance to change. The ADKAR change management model provides a bottom-up approach to change management (Hiatt, 2006). Thus, this model investigates the change from the employee perspective. The categories considered necessary for change management are:

awareness of the need to change; the desire to change or be in the change; knowledge on how to do the change; ability to change; reinforcement of the change.

To investigate the organisational perspective on change management, McKinsey 7-S Change Management Model is used. Specifically, this model includes structure, strategy, systems, style, shared values, staff (employee capabilities), and skills as variables that affect the organisational perspective on change (Peters & Waterman, 2011). The McKinsey 7-S model defines *structure* as affecting the division and distribution of tasks and providing integration within organisations. While *strategy* is one of the elements of organisational change. It is a set of initiatives planned and implemented by organisations when dealing with competitors or working with customers. Furthermore, the *system* is claimed to be the process that affects daily organisational activities. The *style* mirrors those activities, while *skills* are the organisational capability. Lastly, Peters & Waterman (2011) elaborate on *shared values* as the core goals of an organisation that become the values, while in the case of staff, the authors consider a broad range of factors, including capacity enhancement activities for employees, their capabilities, incentivisation, as well as aspects that affect their motivation the general atmosphere in the organisation (Peters & Waterman, 2011).

Considering the possibility of resistance in the light of employees working completely remotely due to COVID-19, it is unknown whether employees are to fully work remotely or in the office in a post-COVID-19 society. A plausible outcome is that employees may now seek to work in a more hybrid-like environment based on the notion that remote working benefits employees in terms of flexibility, comfortability, and work-life balance (Mustajab et al., 2020). More particularly, such an environment can be constructed in a manner where employees work part-time in the office and part-time remotely from the office. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the likelihood of not all employees appreciating such a work landscape but instead being opposed to it and prefer working remotely or in the office. A potential resistance to change has to do with personal interest and comfort for the individual employee. For instance, in a case study conducted at a credit institution, Bradutanu (2012) claims that the rationale for employees resisting any change is based on their personal interests (p.1265). Therefore, employees' personal interest becomes a rather important factor for the particular organisation to consider - as it may help facilitate a potential change

process. In relation to this, an interesting aspect to address is the potential positive outcomes of employees resisting change and how organisations can view this as something beneficial.

More particularly, Bringselius (2010) explains that historically, resistance within an organisational context has been understood as something negative and dysfunctional. Instead of viewing resistance to change as something negative, a new aspect should be applied where resistance to change, for instance, could be a helpful process of employee feedback to managerial inputs (Ford & Ford, 2009). An assumption of employees resisting change is that it is explicitly an adverse reaction and can halt or hinder a potential change process initiated by the organisation. This assumption, however, is not aligned with what change management scholars argue. Reviewing the literature shows that there seems to be a general consensus that the conceptual understanding of resistance to change needs to be reassessed from being treated as something negative to something more optimistic that the organisation in question can use to its advantage (see, e.g. Bringselius, 2010; Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Ford, Ford & D'Amelio, 2008).

In terms of reassessing the conceptual meaning of employees' resistance to change, a starting point could be for organisations to reassess their view of human labour in general. More specifically, the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 shed light on the importance of working humans and that human employees are more than organisational resources, therefore deserve more say and power in decisions related to their workplace (Ferrerias et al., 2020). Furthermore, as discussed by Amis and Janz (2020), the pandemic has emphasised that it is more important than ever to prioritise the employees and human elements of an organisation in times of change. Considering this, it arguably becomes vital to apply a human-focused scope when it comes to implementing change in a post-COVID-19 society. This insinuates the relevance of addressing employees' preferences of work location and how they have perceived the transition from working remotely to what now can be described as a new diverse work landscape.

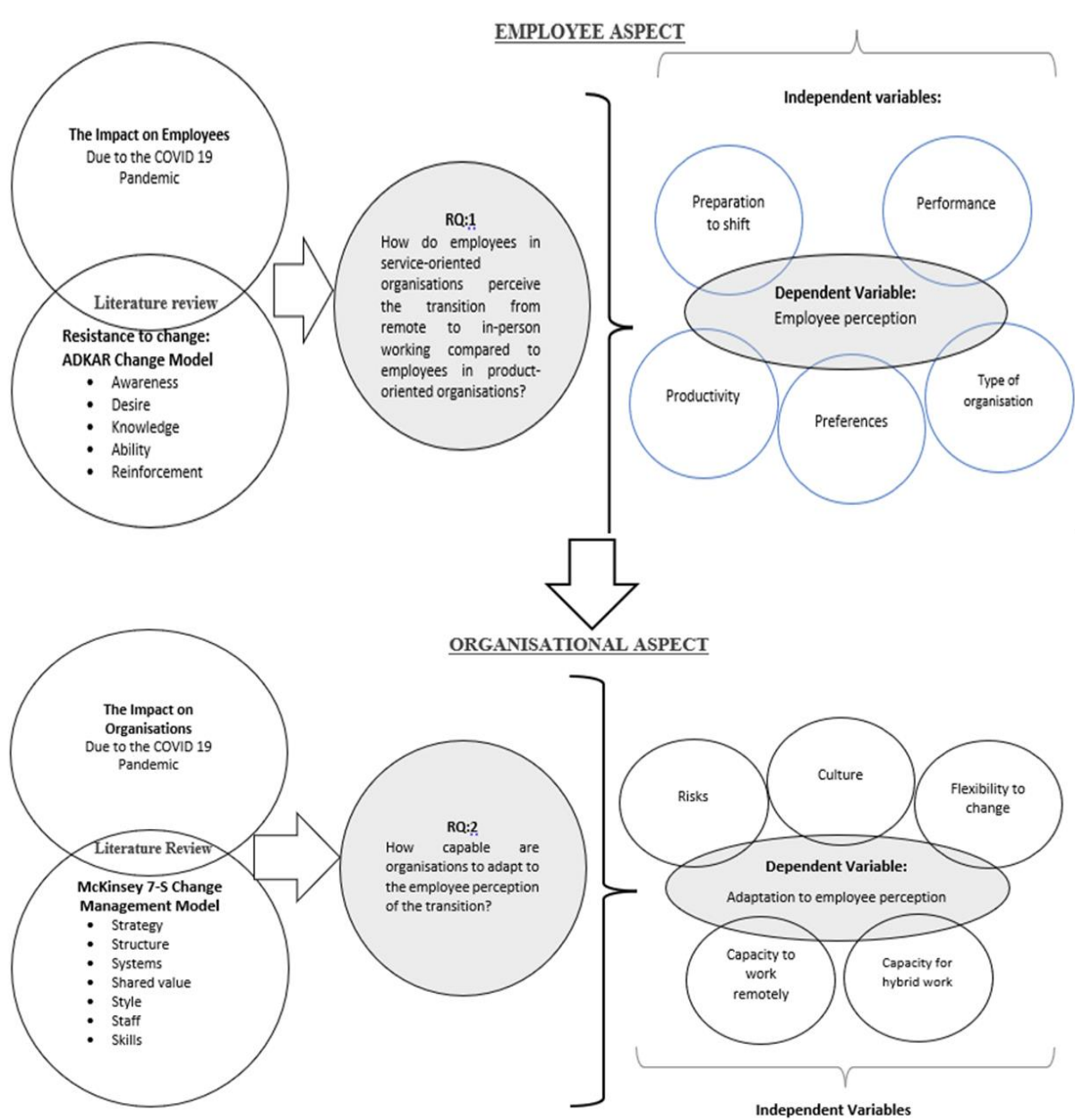
2.8 Analytic Model

The analytic model is built on the insights provided by literature and theories connected to the scope of the two research questions of this research project. Firstly, the main categories identified employee aspect, organisational aspect, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure: 1) - were linked with two change management theories to identify the variables required to manage the change in the labour landscape. Secondly, the ADKAR change management model (developed by Jeff Hiatt, 2006) and the McKinsey 7-S Change Management Model (Peters & Waterman Jr., 2011) are used.

The purpose and the rationale for choosing these models are that these models investigate change management from two aspects: bottom-up and top-down. Hence, both employee and organisational perspectives are considered to create a comprehensive understanding of the new labour landscape. Secondly, in our analytic model, variables from the literature review, such as the impact of the new working landscape on both organisations and employees and the above-mentioned change management models, are connected to RQ:1 and RQ:2 to fulfil the purpose of the study. Finally, as a result of this synthesis, specific dependent and independent variables are derived and categorised into key variables.

Specifically, for RQ:1, the dependent variable is the employee perception of the transition of work from remote to in-person or hybrid. The independent variables are categorised into two groups: Individual-level and organisational level variables. Individual-level variables are performance, productivity, and preferences, while organisational level variables are the types of organisations, preparation to shift, and expectations for the future working environment (from organisations). For RQ:2, the dependent variable is the organisational adaptation to employee perception. The independent variables affecting that adaptation are: the organisational capacity to work remotely, capacity to work both remote and in-person, culture, risks, and flexibility to change.

Figure 2: Analytic Model



3. Methodology

This chapter represents the framework of the chosen methodology used in this study.

First, the data collection methods and the research design are presented to elaborate the methods and instruments through which primary data was collected. Next, quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods are introduced to elaborate on data analysis. Additionally, the validity, reliability and reflexivity of the research are presented. Lastly, ethical considerations are discussed.

3.1 Selection of Method

For this research project, a mixed-method approach was chosen. The rationale for choosing a mixed-method approach was based on the limitations of choosing either a qualitative or quantitative method. As explained by Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a mixed-method approach is often applied to gain a deeper understanding of a potential problem.

Furthermore, a fundamental purpose of adopting a qualitative method is to fill the gap that usually exists in quantitative research (Ragin, 2004). In this research project, the quantitative data was used as contextual information for the interviewees to discuss and elaborate on. Specifically, the data collected through the questionnaires provided insight into how employees preferred and perceived the new diverse labour landscape. These insights were then used as a foundation to construct the interview questions for the managers as a means to gain insight into how the organisational side of the new diverse labour landscape may or may not adapt to the employee perceptions. Thus, a mixed-methods approach was relevant to apply.

It is also important to acknowledge that a mixed-methods approach can be rather complex. According to Sekeran and Bougie (2016), a mixed-methods approach increases the risk of the research design being more complicated, which thus requires the presentation to be clear and easily read to the reader. For this research project, a mixed-method approach was chosen. The rationale for choosing a mixed-method approach was based on the limitations of choosing either a

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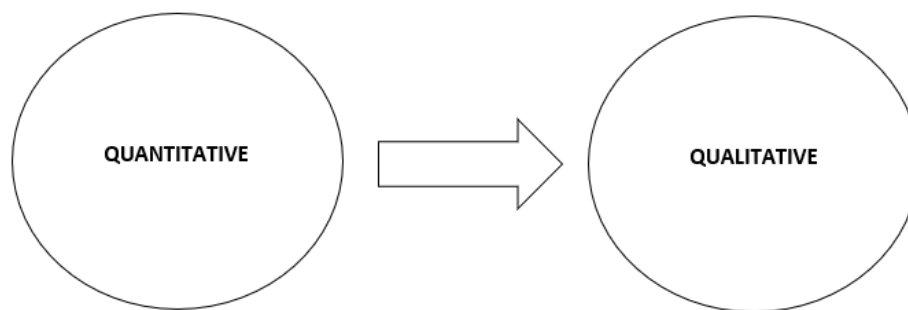
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3.2 Research Design

As the intention of this research project was first to collect quantitative data through a questionnaire and later on qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, it was natural to adopt an explanatory research design. This is because it allowed for the course of the research project to follow sequential order (see Figure: 3), where the quantitative data was collected from the questionnaires, and then qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were collected (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Cameron, 2009). First, to answer the RQ.1, a comparative analysis between product and service-oriented organisations was conducted to investigate how the identified variables affect employee perception differently. Therefore, a quantitative method through a questionnaire was conducted concerning this. Secondly, to answer RQ.2, a qualitative method was used to explore organisational adherence to employee perceptions. For this purpose, in-depth semi-structured interviews with managers were carried out. The rationale for choosing to

conduct semi-structured interviews is based on the notion of being able to apply a narrative approach and not solely ask questions to which an explicit answer is given. More particularly, by conducting semi-structured interviews with a narrative scope, an opportunity for the interviewee to understand the meaning and intention of the research project arose. That can potentially enable the interviewee to share more detailed and appropriate information (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

Figure 3: Sequential Model (adapted from Creswell, 1999; Morse, 1991)



3.3 Quantitative Data Collection

For the quantitative data collection, a tailor-made questionnaire was created. The questionnaire was anonymous and included a total of 14 questions. An introduction of the purpose of the questionnaire, together with a brief explanation of the scope of the research project, was presented to the respondent before starting the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire asked questions about the respondent's demographics, more particularly age and gender. Furthermore, the respondent was asked how much they worked remotely from the workplace, where the options were 0-19%, 20-39%, 40-59%, 60-79%, or 80-100%. This question was necessary given that Sweden was not locked down during the pandemic. Different organisations had different policies on how much the employees were to work remotely from the workplace. The rest of the questionnaire included questions surrounding the, e.g. the respondent's perception of how their organisation facilitated the transition to working remotely from the office during the pandemic, how much they preferred working remotely or physically in the office, and if they perceived their

organisation as encouraging the respondent to either work remotely or physically in the office. The respondents then indicated their perceptions on a Likert scale of 1-7, 1 being, e.g. very poorly and 7 being very well.

The setting of the research project was non-contrived, and the unit for analysing the quantitative data collection was individuals and the data from each individual as an individual data source (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Given the time limitations of the research project, a cross-sectional design for the quantitative data collection was used. The quantitative data was collected at one point in time, and the questionnaire was based on a non-probability purpose sampling design (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The rationale for using online questionnaires was based on the broad scope and reachability of potential respondents. Additionally, it is a fast method of collecting data in big numbers to get a deeper understanding of employee preferences of working styles (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). With respect to this, the questionnaire was posted on the social media platforms LinkedIn and Facebook. The target population of the questionnaire was employees working in either a product or service-oriented organisation.

3.3.1 Quantitative Data Analysis Method

For quantitative data analysis, electronic survey methods, which have inbuilt data entry methods, were used to facilitate the process of data entry. In addition, Microsoft Excel was used to provide demographic information covering respondents' age, gender, and organisation type. Finally, the collected data was processed through the Stata statistical program for data analysis. Specifically, Pearson's correlation and regression analysis models are used to understand and present the relationship between various independent variables and the dependent variable.

3.4 Qualitative Data Collection

After quantitative data collection, four in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted, two with service-oriented organisations, one with a product-oriented organisation, and one with an organisation offering both services and manufactured products. The interviewees were either managers or human resources- managers of respective organisations. All four of the organisations were based in Sweden. Due to time management, all interviews were conducted digitally via Zoom. The interviews ranged from 25-45 minutes and were conducted with the help of a constructed interview questionnaire, which assisted in keeping the interview within the scope of the research project.

The interviews were conducted in a three-step approach inspired by Galletta (2013). More particularly, these steps included an Opening Segment, Middle Segment, and a Concluding Segment. In the opening segment, the interviewees were asked to explain their position in the company and talk about what type of service or product their organisation offered. In the middle segment, the interviewees were asked how their organisation first responded to the pandemic, the hardships, and their policies concerning employees working remotely from the office. From here, the interviewees were asked questions about how their organisation acted when the governmental recommendations were no longer in place, if their policies during the pandemic had changed, and if there had been a change in demand for current employees and applying candidates to work more remotely from the office. In the concluding segment, the interviewees were asked to summarise their perception, as representatives of their organisations, of how they intended to adhere to employees potentially wanting to be able to work in a hybrid-like setup.

The organisations were at first hand contacted through personal contacts, with the ambition of a potential snowball effect being initiated. However, the snowballing did not take effect, and the other three interviewees were approached through the contact information provided at the Ideon Science Park at Lund University (Ideon, 2022). One of the interviewees represented a corporate finance firm, one produced security alarm systems together with the service of providing single-use electronic keys, one was the founder and manager of an investment fund, and the final one was a human resource manager at a prominent spice and food manufacturing company. An observation

made when recruiting potential participants was that the significant product-oriented organisations in Sweden were the keenest on declining to participate in interviews compared to service-oriented organisations. The service-oriented organisations that did not have time to participate offered to either give short answers via email or redirect to information on their websites.

3.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis Method

In order to gain a clear insight into how the different managers adhered to the new diverse working landscape, the video recordings of the interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were carried out manually. As anonymity was promised to the participants, the transcriptions were pseudonymised by labelling the participants by only their title and the type of organisation they worked in. For instance, as all four interviews were conducted with representatives from different organisations, the pseudonyms in the transcripts were labelled as shown in Table:1. In order to gain a clear insight into how the different managers adhered to the new diverse working landscape, the video recordings of the interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were carried out manually. As anonymity was promised to the participants, the transcriptions were pseudonymised by labelling the participants by only their title and the type of organisation they worked in. For instance, as all four interviews were conducted with representatives from different types of organisations, the pseudonyms in the transcripts were labelled as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Pseudonyms

Respondent	Company	Category
Manager 1	Security Alarm System Manufacturing	Product and Service - Oriented
Manager 2	Investment Fund	Service-Oriented
Manager 3	Corporate Finance	Service-Oriented
Manager 4	Spice and Food Manufacturer	Product-Oriented

By having these broad descriptions, instead of, for instance, the initials and age of the participants together with a more specific description of the organisations, the risk of identification arguably decreases.

When the transcriptions were finalised, the data was analysed through a five-step approach inspired by Robson and McCartan (2016). The first step was to get familiarised by reading the transcript and getting a clear overview of the data. The second step was to identify different meanings or phrases that the participants had said during the interviews. The third step was to categorise these specific meanings and look for differences and/or similarities between the phrases. The fourth step was to thematise the categories, which was done by dividing the categories into three different themes: “promoting to work remotely”, “promoting to work at the office”, or “promoting to work in a hybrid setup”. Lastly, the final step was to interpret the themes by applying them in the light of the research questions.

3.5 Validity

There are two often-used categories of validity when collecting primary data: internal validity and external validity (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, Internal validity ensures that research findings are derived from empirical data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For the qualitative part of this study, the internal validity was secured based on Miles & Huberman's (1994) approach to finding contradictions in themes when analysing the empirical data and the reviewed theories. Hence, the themes were enhanced by including the contradicting opinions and perspectives. Additionally, a standardised interview guide was used for interviews to ensure that all respondents answered a similar line of questions. The interviews were conducted with the participation of both researchers, as this decreases the possibility of interviewer bias and ensures the qualitative data validity. While for the quantitative data, the questionnaire was made of non-leading and simple questions that reflect the essence of the study purpose.

External validity refers to the degree of generalisability of the study results (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, this was not possible for this particular study due to the small number of interviews as well as survey respondents. This was compensated by providing transferability of the data. According to Willig (2013), transferability shows how the study results can be applied outside of the study context. The transferability of both types of data was secured by providing a description of managers for qualitative data and a description of survey participants for the quantitative data. The provided descriptions consider the anonymity of respondents.

As the study looks at the new labour landscape in Sweden, where COVID - 19 pandemic was experienced to some extent differently (Mishra et al., 2021), the empirical data regarding employee perceptions and managerial perspectives may differ in other countries. Additionally, given the time constraints, the number of survey and interview respondents is not generalisable. However, the study puts emphasis on explaining the perceptions regarding the new labour landscape in service and product-oriented organisations in Sweden. Hence, the study explains the employee perceptions and preferences which organisations can use for better adaptation to the new labour landscape. Therefore, even though the study is not generalisable, it can provide external value.

3.6 Reliability

Reliability refers to the accuracy and consistency of the measurement. It can be internal and external (Bryman and Bell 2015). The reliability of the study was ensured based on the choice of having semi-structured interviews with a standardised interview guide for the researchers to follow when conducting the interviews. In addition, interviewees were chosen from different organisations to ensure a diversity of opinions. Another aspect contributing to the diversity of opinions is that, despite the small number of interviewees, we have ensured to have respondents from both service-oriented and product-oriented organisations, making it possible to look at the existing differences between the two types of organisations. An additional factor contributing to the reliability is that all the interviews were done online, meaning that the study conditions were equally the same for everyone. Also, before running the survey, the supervisor and peers tested the questionnaire to get feedback and ensure that the questions were straightforward and arranged logically.

3.7 Reflexivity

Given that this research project includes a qualitative element, it is vital to establish the researchers' position and perception within the field that they are studying. This is because a fundamental principle within qualitative research explains that the empirical reality can be perceived and understood differently depending on the person in question (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p.3). Therefore, it is important to examine the researchers' reflexivity in the field. In terms of understanding and interpreting reality, an ontological and epistemological exploration of the researchers' perspectives is necessary. As this research project intends to compare product and service-oriented organisations adhering to the new labour landscape in a post-COVID-19 society, the interpretations from the conducted interviews may differ among different researchers. As the interviews mainly concerned the interplay between the organisations and employees, i.e. how the organisations would adapt to employee preferences of work, the ontological position allows for a constructivist notion to be applied. This is because the constructivist notion entails that reality is a

product of the interaction between people and social processes (Neuman, 2007). The process of getting to know and familiarising this interplay between the organisation and employees is the epistemological aspect of the researchers' (Wilig, 2016). Although the shared information from the conducted interviews can be interpreted differently, it does not suggest that the interpretation is made and based on a different ontological setting (Wilig, 2016). Therefore, the epistemological standpoint, in this case, includes subjectivity as an unavoidable part of the research and aims to gain an understanding of reality rather than aiming to explain what the reality is (Meriham, 2015; Charmaz, 2017).

3.8 Ethical Aspects

For this study, research ethics was ensured by attempting to exclude a judgemental approach to interviews, sustaining respondents' privacy, and being transparent regarding the study setup and aims (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Furthermore, emails were sent out to the interviewees explaining the nature and the scope of the research and ensuring that their privacy and anonymity would be sustained. Hence, the study is not revealing the identity of respondents and the names of the organisations they work for. Additionally, during the interviews, interviewees were asked for an allowance to record the responses for transcribing the collected data at a later stage. At the end of the interviews, all respondents were provided with the opportunity to check and revise their answers to avoid mistakes in reporting.

The potential consequences that can arise by conducting a study based on the aforementioned sequential model are the risk of the interviews including relatively leading questions, which in itself can generate biased results. In order to mitigate such risks, the interviewees were informed prior to the interviews that there were no right or wrong answers and that the purpose of the interview was to listen to their unique stories. Additionally, the aspiration was to avoid constructing so-called "loaded" questions which might have influenced the interviewee, which was done by keeping the questions open for interpretation and not being able to give an explicit answer (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Even though some of the interview questions were based on

data gathered from the quantitative questionnaires, no revealing information about the respondents of the questionnaire was given when conducting the interviews. Therefore, it was considered not to be an ethical risk in the research project.

4. Results and Analysis

The chapter presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The results were analysed through the data analysis methods described in the previous chapter.

4.1 The Quantitative Data

The subchapter represents the result of quantitative data analysis. The number of people who took the survey is 42 (the system showed an additional 35 responses; however, due to data collection software error, the responses were empty). Out of 42 respondents, 37 completed the survey, while 5 respondents have not answered questions eight and nine: regarding the employee perception of remote work being encouraged and in-person work being encouraged, respectively.

The first section represents descriptive statistics, including age and gender variables, to provide the demographics of the survey respondents. Furthermore, based on the comparative nature of the study, a division of the respondent between service-oriented and product-oriented organisations is presented in the second section. For the descriptive statistics, Microsoft Excel was used. The third section comprises multiple regression analyses and a correlation analysis, which makes it possible to explore the relationship between the independent variables and employee perception, the dependent variable identified for the RQ:1. For the analysis of the quantitative data, Stata statistical software was used.

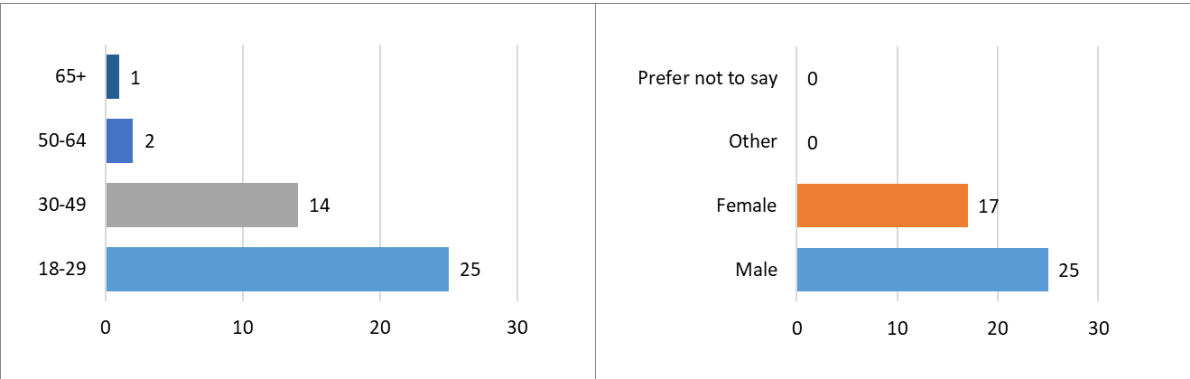
The chapter includes a fourth section where the results of the data analysis are summarised.

4.1.1 Demographics

The section provides demographic information about the respondents. Figure 1 below shows the survey respondents' age, which was labelled into four categories.

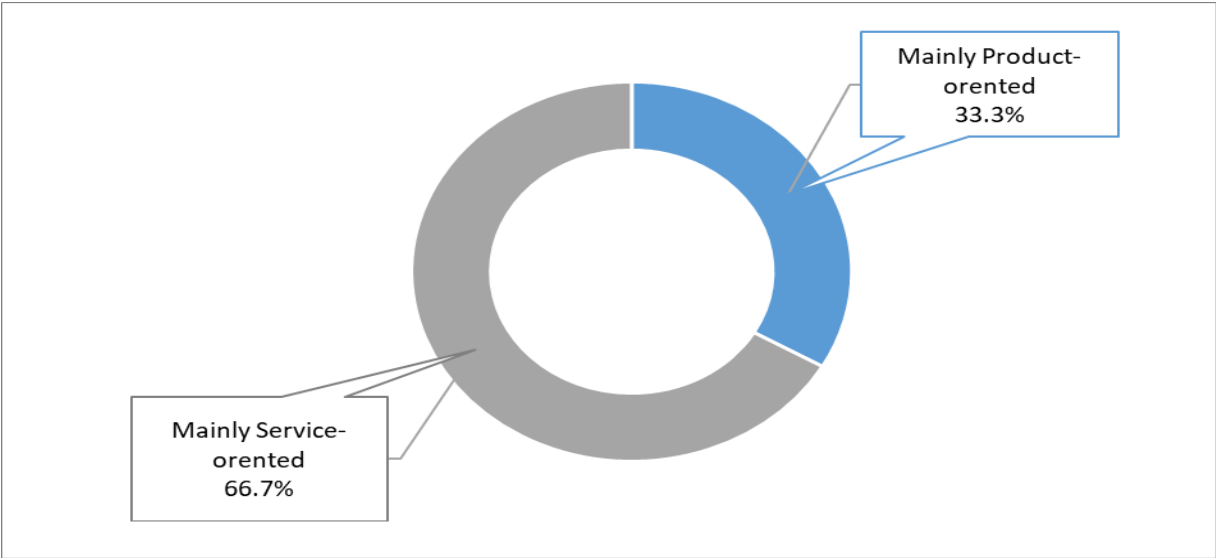
The age of respondents was labelled into four groups: 18-29, 30-49, 50-64, 65 and above. The total number of respondents for this question is 42. Figure 4 shows that 59% of the respondents are from 18 to 29 years old. The second-largest label age group is 30 to 49, corresponding to 33% of the respondents. As for respondents' gender, the figure shows that 59% of the total amount of respondents, 59% are male, and 41% are women.

Figure: 4 Respondents' Age and Gender



Furthermore, Figure 5 shows that 66.7% of the respondents work in service-oriented organisations, while 33.3% work in production-oriented.

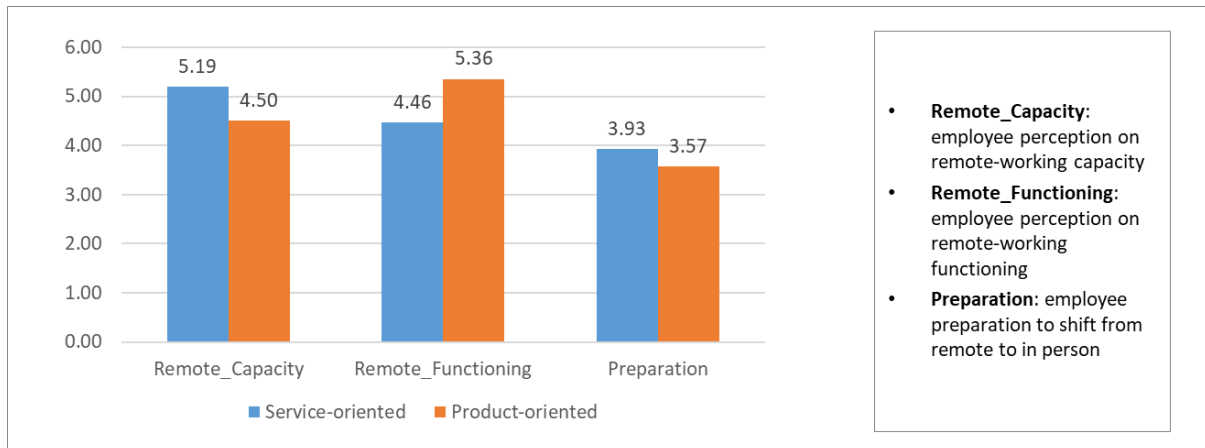
Figure: 5. Composition of Respondents' Working Sector



4.1.2 The Difference in Labour Landscape Between Service-Oriented and Product-Oriented Organisations

The section shows the results of the comparison between service and product-oriented organisations. The statistical interpretation of four independent variables is presented in Figure 6. Specifically, the type of organisations was divided into two categories: service-oriented and product-oriented. The bars named remote capacity, remote functioning and preparation represent the answers to questions about the effect of remote work on employees' capacity to work, employees functioning during the remote work and the extent of employee preparation to shift from remote to in-person, respectively. The questions represented in Figure 6 were based on the Likert 7-point attitude scale (Likert, 1932), where 1 is very negative and 7 is very positive, having 4 as a neutral point. The numerical values show the means for each variable and type of organisation generated from 42 answers.

Figure: 6 The Mean of Variables

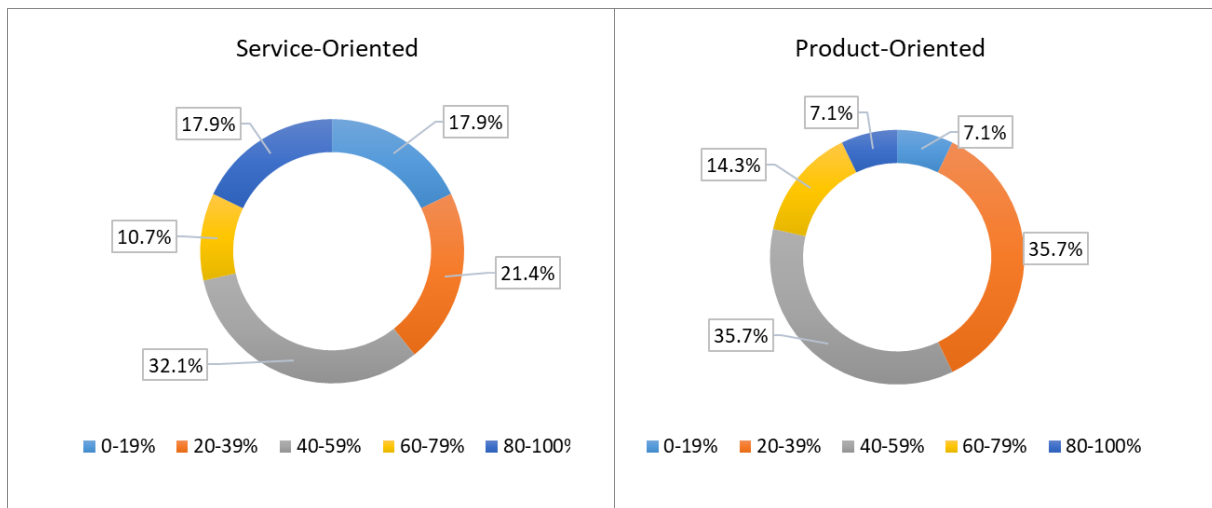


Accordingly, the mean for the effect on the capacity of employees shows that it was affected differently in service and product-oriented organisations. The capacity due to remote work was affected more positively for production-oriented organisations. The next bar represents functioning during remote work and is labelled from very poor to very well. It shows that the functioning of remote working is rated above the neutral point for both types, while the mean for

employees in product-oriented organisations is significantly higher, meaning that they had answered more positively. The third bar shows the difference between the extent of preparation of employees to shift from remote to in-person work between the two sectors. Both sectors are slightly below the neutral point, whereas service sector employees provided fewer negative responses.

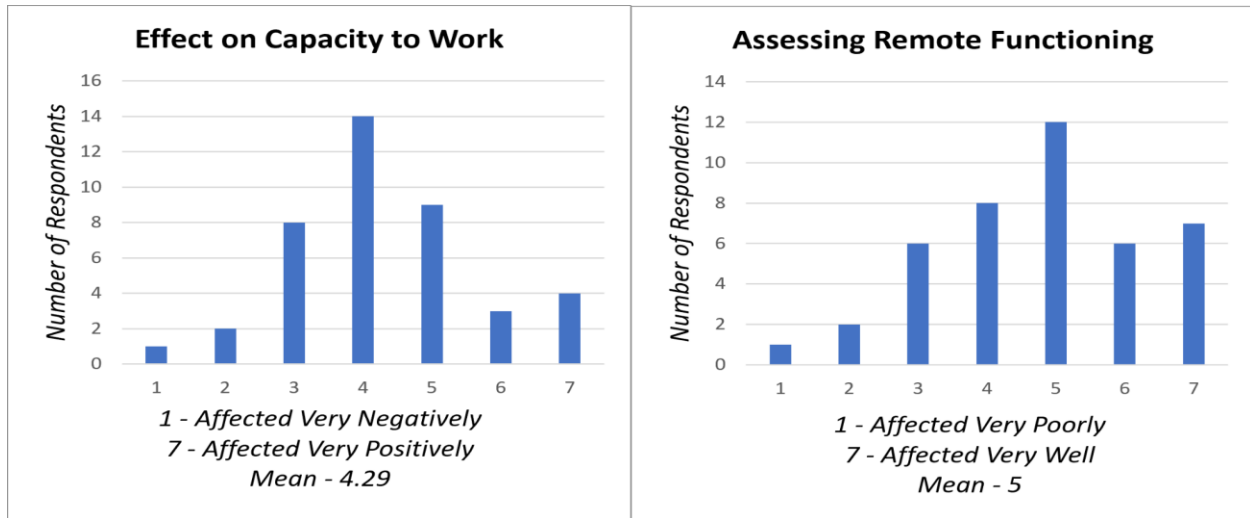
Furthermore, Figure 7 shows the percentage of employees' preferences to work remotely in the two sectors. Notably, we can see that in the service sector, employees' first preference is to work remote at 40 to 59%. The second highest preference is shown for the 20 to 39 percent option, which is followed by 17.9% identified for both 0-19% and 80-100%. While for the product-oriented sector, both 20 to 39% and 40-59% options have an equal preference among the respondents. That is followed by the third preference, 60-79%. While 7.1% of employees from product-oriented organisations preferred 80-100% remote-working, employees in the service sector preference account for 17%, which is more than twice. Another implication is that the employees' preference for working remotely for the service-oriented sector is distributed more diversely than that of product-oriented, where employees' preferences were concentrated between 20-59%.

Figure: 7 Preference to Work Remote: Service vs Product-oriented



The effect of remote work on the capacity to work, as well as survey respondents' perception of how well they have functioned while working remotely, is presented in Figure 8.

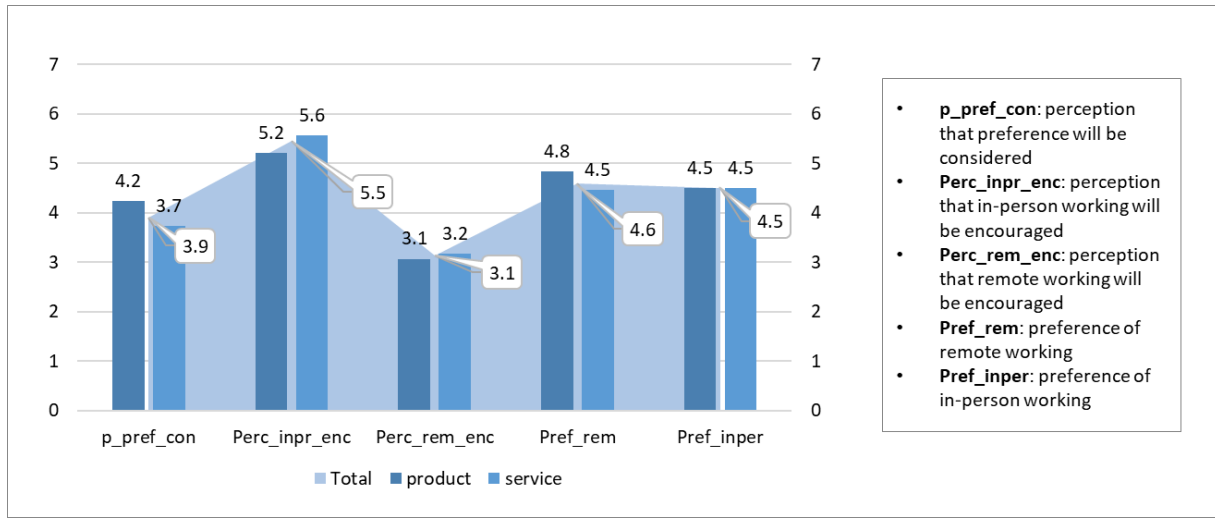
Figure 8. Effect on Capacity to Work and Remote Functioning



Particularly, the first chart in the figure shows on a scale of 1-7 (1 - affected very negatively and 7 affected very positively), most of the employees think that remote working affected their capacity to work slightly positively, while 26% of employees have indicated the negative influence of remote working. In the second chart, the mean shows that employees rated their functioning while working remotely as mostly good, and 21% of employees thought that they had performed poorly.

Furthermore, Figure 9 indicates the differences in employee perception and preferences between the two sectors. Firstly, for the employees' preference to work remotely, the mean for the product-oriented industry is higher, which means that employees working in that sector prefer working remotely more than those in the service sector. Secondly, the mean for in-person work preference is the same for both industries.

Figure: 9 Difference in Employee Perception and Preference in Service vs Product Sectors



In contrast, the employees' perception that their preferences will be considered by their organisations shows that product-oriented sector employees think their preferences will be considered more than employees in service sectors. Regarding the employee perception that working in-person will be encouraged by their organisations, the figure shows that the mean is high for both sectors. That perception is higher in the service-oriented sector. At the same time, the mean for the perception of remote work being encouraged is low for both sectors. Accordingly, in both industries, employees think that they will be encouraged to work in-person to more extent.

4.1.3 Factors Affecting the Employees' Perception and Difference Between the Two Types of Organisations

The section represents the analysis of the survey results. Specifically, Figure 10 shows the relationship of the significant variables. While Figures 11 and 13 represent multiple regressions through which the employee perception of the change in the working environment is tested, correlations between the dependent and independent variables were tested. Figure 12 shows the relationship of the significant variables presented in the regression model.

Figure: 10 Correlation Matrix for All Variables

	Perc_Remot	Perc_inper	Remote_Cap	Pref_Remote	Remote_Fun	Preparation	Perc_org_F	dum_type_or1
Perc_Remot	1.0000							
Perc_inper	0.0832	1.0000						
Remote_Cap	-0.1057	-0.2936	1.0000					
Pref_Remote	-0.0692	-0.3937	0.6606*	1.0000				
Remote_Fun	-0.2204	-0.1938	0.7152*	0.5758*	1.0000			
Preparation	-0.2332	0.2955	-0.0422	-0.2449	-0.0478	1.0000		
Perc_org_F	-0.4499	-0.0325	0.2304	0.2186	0.4123	-0.0421	1.0000	
dum_type_or1	-0.1360	0.0000	0.1079	0.1124	0.2761	-0.0981	0.1324	1.0000

(Note: The correlations are significant at 0.05 level)

In Figure 10, the correlation matrix of all the variables discussed is presented. The figure shows that there were significant correlations between remote working capacity and preference for remote working, preference of remote working and remote working function, which means remote working capacity has a positive relationship with the preference for remote working and functionality. Also, preference for remote working and remote functionality mutually affect.

Figure: 11 Regression Analysis: Employee Perception of Remote Work Encouragement

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	37
Model	43.6220308	6	7.27033846	F(6, 30)	=	3.18
Residual	68.6482395	30	2.28827465	Prob > F	=	0.0156
				R-squared	=	0.3885
				Adj R-squared	=	0.2663
Total	112.27027	36	3.11861862	Root MSE	=	1.5127

Perc_rem_enc	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]
Remote_Capacity	.0963024	.2875731	0.33	0.740	-.4910002 .683605
Remote_Functioning	.1279684	.296257	0.43	0.669	-.4770691 .7330059
Preparation	.3502177	.1619627	2.16	0.039	.0194456 .6809897
Pref_rem	.1925636	.2315443	0.83	0.412	-.2803129 .6654401
P_org_Flex	.4442663	.1849547	2.40	0.023	.0665384 .8219942
dum_Type_of_Organisation1	-.2819089	.5828275	-0.48	0.632	-1.472201 .9083836
_cons	-1.721303	1.306736	-1.32	0.198	-4.390013 .9474073

In Figure 11, the regression model regarding workers' perception of whether the organisation would encourage remote working environments was statistically significant with $P\text{-value} < 0.05$. Overall this regression model explains 38.85% of the variance in the perception of more remote-working encouragement. With regard to the variables, employees' perception of organisational flexibility and organisational preparation were significant, positively affecting the employees' perception of more remote-working encouragement at 0.05 confidence. Among them, the perception of organisational flexibility was the most significant factor affecting the perception of more remote working encouragement by their organisations as of $t=2.40$. According to the p-values test, while organisational preparation for the remote-working and their flexibility were statistically significant, remote-capacity, remote-functioning, preference for remote working, and types of organisation were not statistically significant in this model.

Figure: 12 The Relationship of the Significant Variables in The Regression Model

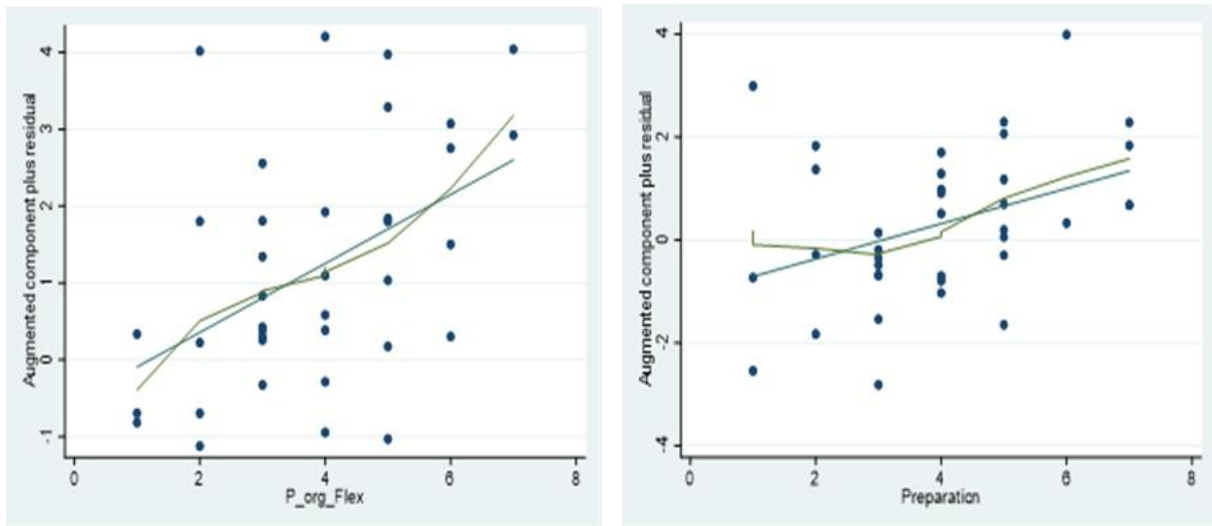


Figure 12 explains the relationship between employees' perception of remote work being encouraged by organisations with two significant variables respectively: Perception of organisational flexibility and preparation to work in person.

Figure: 13 Regression Analysis: Employee Perception of In-Person Work Encouragement

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	-	37
Model	18.2004607	6	3.03341012	F(6, 30)	-	2.93
Residual	31.0427825	30	1.03475942	Prob > F	-	0.0226
Total	49.2432432	36	1.36786787	R-squared	-	0.3696
				Adj R-squared	-	0.2435
				Root MSE	-	1.0172

Perc_inpr_enc	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
Remote_Capacity	.1462131	.1741236	0.84	0.408	-.2093948	.501821
Remote_Functioning	-.1695312	.1852276	-0.92	0.367	-.5478164	.208754
Preparation	-.2475054	.1052315	-2.35	0.025	-.4624168	-.0325939
Pref_inper	.1624185	.1292604	1.26	0.219	-.1015665	.4264035
P_org_Flex	-.2739114	.1184226	-2.31	0.028	-.5157625	-.0320603
dum_Type_of_Organisation1	-.355666	.3749585	-0.95	0.350	-1.121433	.4101015
_cons	7.113967	1.003751	7.09	0.000	5.064035	9.1639

With regard to the workers' perception of the encouragement of an in-person working environment shown in Figure 13, While the regression model explains 36.96% of the variance in employees' perception of in-person working encouragement by organisations, organisational preparation and perception of organisational flexibility were significant, negatively affecting the employees' perception of the in-person working encouragement. Perception of organisational flexibility was the most significant, while remote-capacity, remote-functioning, preference for the in-person working environment, and types of organisation were not statistically significant in the model. For both cases, interestingly, types of organisations did not bring statistically meaningful relations. However, the organisational aspect seems to affect the employees' perception of the change in the working environment.

4.2 The Qualitative Data

This subchapter specifically explores the results in terms of the organisational aspects of how organisations are to adapt to the new employee preferences of work. That is, as the quantitative data indicated that employees do prefer a hybrid-like work setup, it is important to look closer into how organisations have the capacity to adapt to such preference if they intend to do it at all and their reasoning behind either encouraging a hybrid-like setup or not.

4.2.1 The impact of COVID-19

In order to gain insight into how product and service-oriented organisations have handled the shift from working remotely during the pandemic to the new diverse labour landscape, it was important to explore how the representatives of the companies acted when the pandemic initially struck. All four of the participants indicated that a major shift in daily operations had to be made; however, there were some differences in how the organisations acted in particular.

The first thing my team had to do was to stop travelling because, generally speaking, we do travel a lot due to the fact that we interact a lot with international partners. Specifically, to meet with our partners in the US and Scandinavia (Manager 1, Service and Product-Oriented).

Being in charge of an investment fund, I occasionally had to travel to meet with consultants and other actors involved in the fund that were located in different geographical parts of Sweden (Manager 2, Service-Oriented).

The above-mentioned participants represent a service-oriented organisation and one organisation offering both services and products. As is demonstrated, a rather drastic change in terms of travelling and limiting social interaction took place in both organisations. Looking at the two other organisations, one product-oriented and one service-oriented organisation, different changes were implemented.

We decided that the employees of the company had to start working remotely from home; however, we did this on a weekly basis as we did not know how long the recommendations from the government to work from home were to last. Given that we are a relatively small firm, we still gave the employees the opportunity to use the office facilities in case personal factors of working from home would interfere with their capacity to work (Manager 3, Service-Oriented).

The change that we had to make when COVID hit had to be dealt with rather delicately. This is because the size of our organisation includes concrete production sites around the country but also a rather extensive organisational structure including research and development, finance, sales teams and so on. We decided that the production sites had to continue as usual, and the managers in charge of the sights had to work there physically. The decision made for the more internal employees was to send home those who had the opportunity to do so in terms of not being disturbed by the surroundings that may take place when working from home (Manager 4, Product-Oriented).

Taking this into consideration, it is rather apparent that the four different organisations did have to change their operations to the best of their ability with respect to the impact of COVID-19. The reason for the organisations changing in different manners may be due to the fact of the unique approach that the Swedish government opted for when the pandemic struck (Mishra et al., 2021). More particularly, Swedish organisations arguably had more freedom in deciding where and how their employees should work compared to other European countries where total lockdowns took place.

4.2.2 The New Diverse Labour Landscape in Action

When it comes to the aftermath of COVID-19, the conducted questionnaire indicates that employees have been able to work remotely and prefer to some extent to combine working remotely and in the office. The organisational perception, however, shows that transitioning fully to a new labour landscape consisting of a combination of remote and in-person work at the office is received differently.

Towards the end, if we can call it the end of the pandemic, we created a new organisational hybrid policy for the entire company. This new policy outlined that working in the office should be the norm for all employees, but if you have legitimate

reasons to instead work remotely, this can be arranged. But the reasons cannot be loose reasons such as it makes it more convenient for you to attend to your pet, it must be justifiable in the sense that no other option can be chosen (Manager 4, Product-Oriented).

When the government announced that the recommendation for people to work from home was not in place anymore, almost all of our employees returned to the office. From the management perspective, we did not have any ambitions to create a new hybrid working style as the new normal. What we did change was the setting for meetings with external actors; those are almost completely carried out digitally instead of meeting up physically (Manager 3, Service-Oriented).

Here it can be observed that the implications of the pandemic had a rather limited effect. The limited effect is that even though the pandemic got the above-mentioned organisations to realise that digital remote working offers some flexibility in carrying out everyday operations, the attitude and rule is still to be physically present at the office. The organisation offering both products and services had different reasoning and has made rather profound changes since the pandemic was no longer considered a societally dangerous disease.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, we have significantly increased manpower from being 22 employed to now 70 employed. Instead of leasing office space for all 70 employees, the management team and I decided that 40% of the employees need to be present at the office (Manager 1, Service and Product-Oriented).

The manager of the investment fund had similar reasoning, promoting the advantages of not being forced to sign in at the office every day.

I do not care how much time is spent on work, in the sense of coming to the office at eight and leaving at 5 in the afternoon. What matters is the particular task at hand and as long as it gets done within the time frame that we have set. For example, after a colleague of mine suddenly had bought a new horse and needed to spend a

significant amount of time in the stables, this was not an issue as long as the task got done. The only negative aspect of this is the lack of social interaction and the potential positive aspects that come along with such an interaction (Manager 2, Service-Oriented).

We have always had a British management style where there has been an implied understanding that you do not deliver results as long as you are not at the office. But we realised during and after the pandemic that people actually managed to deliver even more in a remote manner away from the office. Being able to eliminate time demands such as commuting to work and travelling has led to a huge increase in efficiency and productivity, but it has also led to a decrease in the ability to discuss between the meetings between the digital meetings (Manager 1, Service and Product-Oriented).

Being able to increase productivity and efficiency simultaneously by decreasing costs in the shape of office space seems logically favourable amongst some organisations. The complexity with this is how to handle the more social components in terms of inclusivity at the workplace and creating a good company culture.

4.2.3 Efficiency vs Social Inclusivity

Looking at the benefits and disadvantages of organisations operating in the new diverse labour landscape, the participants had different experiences throughout the pandemic, which in effect could have been a determinable factor for how they have chosen to operate in the new diverse labour landscape. For instance, it can be difficult to maintain and guarantee that the employees feel included in the company and get to be a part of the company culture, especially for their particular organisation. Some of the participants explained that they attempted with different means to implement social gatherings with other colleagues

virtually during the pandemic, which may be tools to use to allow the operations in the new diverse labour landscape.

By working remotely, you indirectly lose personal contact with meeting people in real life. That is why we, during the pandemic, allowed people to come into the office if they felt the urge to do so. In addition to this, we also had 15 minutes check-ins with the entire team where we simply talked and had a virtual coffee with each other. But this is still not the same as meeting in real life (Manager 3, Service-Oriented).

Even though there might be different ways of mitigating the potential lack of social exclusion when working remotely, two of the respondents had two rather distinct opinions on the effects of remote versus in-person working.

We were quite used to working with digital tools for meeting co-workers online, but not to the extent that we were forced to adapt to during the pandemic. And given that we are relatively large as a company, almost 200 people got affected by working remotely. The overall impression was that the majority of these employees considered working remotely rather challenging, which is probably also a central reason why we have chosen to have the office as the main location of work (Manager 4, Product-Oriented).

I would say that having a hybrid-like setup, where employees can be both in the office and at home, is good and that the effects on productivity actually trump the effects of potentially missing out on some social components. For instance, today, I have quite many meetings and decided to do them digitally from home, and tomorrow when I do not have as much to do, I can be at the office and check-in with the rest of the team (Manager 1, Service and Product-Oriented).

Taking this into consideration, it can be observed that the product-oriented organisation has the aspiration of not making hybrid working a norm. In stark contrast, the service and the product-oriented organisation believe that hybrid work is a good setup.

5. Discussion of the Results

In this chapter, the findings from the data results are discussed in relation to the theories presented in Chapter 2.

Research Question 1: How do employees in service-oriented organisations perceive the transition from remote to in-person working compared to employees in product-oriented organisations?

To answer RQ: 1, the findings from the results are firstly presented and discussed in a four-pronged approach. Each of the prongs represents the variables of this research project. The variables are: *Employee Preference*, *Employee Performance*, *Employee Productivity*, and *Preparation to Change from Remote to In-Person Work*. These variables were identified in the literature and are treated as the main factors to affect the employee's perception of the transition from remote working to in-person working. In order to answer RQ:2, these variables are discussed from an organisational aspect of the conducted interviews. Lastly, relating back to RQ:1, the differences and similarities in the employees' perception of the transition from remote to in-person working between the service and product-oriented organisations are discussed.

5.1 The Main Factors Affecting the Employee's Perception of Transition from Remote to In-Person Working

The multiple regression analysis and correlation matrix of the variables show a significant relationship between employees' perception of remote-working encouragement and preparation and organisational flexibility. The findings do not provide a necessary ground to claim that the relationship between the mentioned variables is causal. However, the indication of significance means that the extent of preparation to shift from remote to in-person is related to employees' perception of remote working. Also, employees' perception of remote working encouragement is related to their assessment of the extent of organisational flexibility. This finding can be explained based on the reasoning that if organisations are perceived to be flexible enough to offer their employees to work remotely, it will affect employees' perception that remote work

will be encouraged further. However, neither preference for employees' working types, functionality, or capacity did show a statistically significant relationship with the perception of remote working. This means that even though these variables were claimed in the literature to be factors affecting remote working (Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen, 2010), respondents did not see those as significantly related factors to their perceptions.

5.1.1 Employee Preferences - Hybrid or Not?

The findings from the quantitative data results show that, in general, employees prefer to have a mixture of remote and in-person work. More particularly, for both types of organisations, employees prefer to work remotely at low frequency (0 - 19%) and high frequency - to fully remote (80 - 100%) had the lowest number of respondents. Therefore, it may be possible to assume that employees do not prefer to work completely in-person or entirely remotely. Moreover, the results show that the majority of respondents chose 20-39% and 40 - 59% frequencies of remote working, which indicates their preference for a hybrid-like working environment.

This finding can be elaborated based on the discussion of the positive aspects of remote working. Particularly, Cooper et al. (2020) claim that remote work is increasing employee flexibility. Thus employees have the opportunity to arrange their work and personal lives due to their preferences. Additionally, Tursunbayeva et al. (2022) claim that remote work reduces the work stress of employees by giving them the possibility to spend more time with their families. Hence, it can be assumed that employees' preference for a more hybrid-like work setup is being affected by the abovementioned positive factors.

5.1.2 Employee Performance - The Quality and Functioning of Remote Work

When it comes to the quality and functioning of remote work, the results from the questionnaire indicate that most respondents perceived positive impacts on their performed work when working remotely. For instance, the findings indicate that employees' perception of their functioning while working remotely is mostly positive. Specifically, the employees in both types of organisations mentioned that it functioned mostly well when working remotely, meaning that remote work did not reduce the performance of employees. This implication goes in line with Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen's (2010) claim that remote work positively affects employee performance and contradicts, to some extent, Lippe and Lippényi (2020) argument regarding the negative effect of remote work on employee performance as team members are separated, and work and family spaces are imbalanced. Moreover, the results from the quantitative data analysis showed that employee preference for remote work is related to remote functioning. This can assumably mean that employees who function well while working remotely prefer a remote working style.

The abovementioned arguments can be elaborated further based on the findings from the qualitative data, where the organisational perspective on employee performance is discussed. Particularly, the importance of having a clear border between work and private life was mentioned as a factor affecting the performance of remote working negatively in one of the interviews.

As many of our employees have partners and families that might also have worked at home, this was problematic for some to stay concentrated on work. That is why we let our employees use the workplace facilities anyways during the pandemic (Manager 3, Service-Oriented).

The implications of having a clear line between work and private life, as argued by Lippe and Lippényi's (2020), may therefore be an important factor for organisations when deciding on whether it is beneficial or not to implement a hybrid-like setup after COVID-19. According to one of the interviewees, however, it should be decided on an individual level whether the person in question prefers to work remotely, in the office, or in a hybrid manner.

If a person prefers to work from home, that person should, with today's technology, be able to do that. The most important thing is that the work gets done and that the other people involved in the work do not suffer from the decision to work remotely. If so, how and where it gets done is not very important (Manager 2, Service-Oriented).

Taking this into consideration, it can be observed that employees do prefer a hybrid-like manner of working. The organisations, however, indicate a divided attitude in terms of prioritising employee interaction or employee performance.

5.1.3 Employee Productivity - The Effect on the Capacity to Work

In line with the argument by Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen (2010) about productivity being one of the aspects being positively affected by remote work, employee productivity has been measured through the capacity to work. Specifically, by looking at the impact of remote work on the employee's capacity to work, the study does not consider other specific factors such as increased flexibility, motivation, reduced stress and greater freedom which may have an impact on productivity (Cooper et al., 2020; Turshunbayeva et al., 2022). Vice versa, measuring the impact on capacity provided a general understanding of employees' perception of their productivity. Accordingly, the findings from the questionnaire show that most of the employees think that their capacity was affected in a slightly positive manner, and only 26% of employees indicated the negative influence of remote work on their capacity. This implies that employees' productivity can be considered a positively impacted factor by working remotely, as indicated in theory. These findings are in line with the organisational perspective, which views employee productivity as being positively impacted and valuable for the organisation.

I would say that having a hybrid-like setup, where employees can be both in the office and at home, is good and that the effects on productivity actually trump the effects of potentially missing out on some social components (Manager 1, Service and Product-Oriented).

Even though productivity plays an important role for the organisation, the aforementioned importance of employee interaction at the workplace needs to be taken into account.

Even though remote work can be very efficient, the lack of interaction with employees between meetings and during breaks is not good, as we believe this contributes to the bigger picture when working with different cases (Manager 3, Service-Oriented).

Therefore, the findings indicate that, in general, employees perceive remote work as positively affecting their productivity. To some extent, this goes in line with the thoughts of some interviewees, which prioritise productivity over employee interaction and some interviewees prioritise the opposite.

5.1.4 Preparation to Change - Are Organisations Adapting to the Employee Preferences?

Preparation to change was one of the variables indicated in the literature review. Specifically, in the ADKAR change management model, Hiatt, 2006 mentions it is important to consider such factors as employees' desire to change; knowledge on how to do the change; ability to change; reinforcement of the change. Therefore, in this study, employees' preparation to change was measured by asking the respondents in the questionnaire to what extent they are being prepared to shift from remote to in-person work as a result of post-COVID-19 developments. The findings indicate that the shift from remote to in-person work was one of the significant factors while measuring the employee perception of the new labour landscape. Even though the significance does not provide a solid ground to claim that preparation to shift to in-person is affecting employees' perception of the remote work, it can be observed that those are related. Additionally, the findings show that employees think that they are being prepared to shift to a little extent. Interestingly, this corresponds relatively well with the findings from the interviews.

RQ:2: How are the organisations in the two industries adapting to the employee perception of the transition?

With the ADKAR-model of change focusing on change from a bottom-up perspective, i.e. the employees' perspective (Hiatt, 2006), the McKinsey 7-S model is taken into consideration when looking at the top-down perspective of change, i.e. the organisational perspective. In doing so, an emphasis on the conducted interviews exploring the organisational aspect of how organisations may adhere to employees' preferences of working style is applied in order to answer RQ:2. In respect to the McKinsey 7-S model, variables such as shared values, structure and skills are important to ensure when considering a change within the organisation (Peters & Waterman, 2011). The findings from the interviews showed different indications in relation to this. Interestingly, the service-oriented organisations had a divided opinion on whether it is preferable for the organisation to allow the employees to have the opportunity to work both remotely and in the office.

Even though remote work can be very efficient, the lack of interaction with employees between meetings and during breaks is not good, as we believe this contributes to the bigger picture when working with different cases (Manager 3, Service-Oriented).

The people involved in our work are located in different places in Sweden, and before we used to fly to Stockholm to meet every now and then. Now, however, this has stopped as we have realised that everything can be done just as good through digital means (Manager 2, Service-Oriented).

Taking this into consideration, the fact that the questionnaire response indicated an employee preference for a hybrid-like setup, the interviews show that some service-oriented organisations may adhere to a hybrid-like setup, while others prefer an in-person working setup as this increases the interaction between the employees, which can be argued being a vital ingredient fostering shared values at the workplace. Shifting attention to the interview with the product-oriented organisation, the organisational policy of working at the office as a norm may clash with what the employees actually prefer.

Prior to the pandemic, we used to have approximately 200 persons working in the different offices, and even though we have clarified after the pandemic that working in

the office should be the norm, only 80-90 have returned fully (Manager 4, Product-Oriented)

Given the fact that more than half of the employee force still works remotely from the office can be interpreted as a clash between the organisational policy and the employees. In effect, this arguably shows an employee preference for being able to work in a hybrid manner as a more permanent option. This clash, together with some service-oriented organisations being more willing to offer a hybrid-like work setup than others, is one trait of the new labour landscape that has emerged. It becomes assumable that after experiencing the remote working practice, employees developed preferences towards keeping that practice to some extent. Nonetheless, even though there is a divide between the interviewed managers in terms of implementing remote work, no concrete examples of how to prepare for such a change were indicated. That is, the managers did not provide any specific insights into how their organisations offered concrete efforts that were done to prepare the employees for change, only the organisational changes that were made. As mentioned in the result section, one organisation created a new organisational policy to move forward.

Towards the end, if we can call it the end of the pandemic, we created a new organisational hybrid policy for the entire company. This new policy outlined that working in the office should be the norm for all employees, but if you have legitimate reasons to instead work remotely, this can be arranged. (Manager 4, Product-Oriented).

Another organisation did create a new structure in terms of carrying out meetings with external actors but did not prepare the employees, particularly for this change.

From the management perspective, we did not have any ambitions to create a new hybrid working style as the new normal. What we did change was the setting for meetings with external actors, those are almost completely carried out digitally instead of meeting up physically (Manager 3, Service-Oriented).

Even though, based on the quantitative findings that the shift from remote to in person was a significant factor, the employee perspective retrieved from the questionnaire indicated that they were not well prepared for that change. Interestingly, the interviewed managers did not mention any concrete examples of how they prepared their employees for the shift. With this in mind, it can arguably be assumed that the employees were not prepared by the organisations because the organisations may have believed that the labour landscape would look the same as prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.

5.2 The Difference Between the Factors in Service Versus Product-Oriented Organisations

The results from the quantitative data analysis identified the differences and similarities in employee perceptions and preferences regarding the new working landscape in service and product-oriented organisations. Specifically, while comparing employee perception in the two types of organisations, it has been observed that employees perceive factors such as working capacity, functioning and preparation to shift to in-person working differently. That difference is also found in employee preference to work remotely, whereas, for employees in service-oriented organisations, there was a more diverse preference for online working frequency.

An additional difference is shown in employees' perception, where they have indicated that their respective organisations will consider their preferences. Surprisingly, the findings from the questionnaire show that the employees working in product-oriented organisations think their perceptions of remote working will be considered more. Additionally, the comparison of the variables such as performance and productivity shows that the responses are different between the employees of the two types of organisations. However, the data analysis showed that the difference between the various variables discussed above is insignificant. For example, in the case of employees' preference for working remotely, the difference is statistically small (see, e.g. Figure 9, 4.5 for product-oriented and 4.8 for service-oriented organisations). Furthermore, while comparing employees' preferences for in-person working, a similarity was identified in employee preferences between both types of organisations.

Moreover, the regression analysis shows that there is no statistically significant variance between the two types of organisations and the employees' perception of remote-working and in-person working. This finding aligns with previous findings, e.g. by Bryson (2007) and Timmer et al. (2014), indicating that from an employee perspective, there is no clear distinction in the employee landscape between the two types of organisations. This finding can be potentially affected by the fact that the focus was on product-oriented and service-oriented organisations while doing the survey. These definitions of the organisations do not provide a clear indication of the boundaries between the two types of organisations. Instead, by defining organisations as oriented towards services or products, this study did not exclude employees working in manufacturing organisations but performing different roles such as finances, customer support, logistics, etc. The logic behind defining the organisations as "oriented" was based on the dichotomy between service and product organisations.

Particularly, Aner & Rentzhog (2012) argue that manufacturing companies, apart from manufacturing hard products, also provide services in their business activities. Hallward-Driemeier & Nayyar (2017) claim that manufacturing organisations have obtained similar characteristics to service organisations. While based on findings of insignificant differences between employee preferences and perceptions, it can potentially be assumed that there is no clear distinction between the two types of organisations. This can be elaborated from two perspectives provided in the literature. First is the argumentation that service-oriented organisations also provide products to increase the tangibility and physical connection with the client (Nägele et al., 2020). Second, from the perspective of "servicification" of the manufacturing concept (Aner & Rentzhog, 2012), which indicates that manufacturing and service organisations have obtained similar characteristics. Thus, the study shows that there are differences in employee perception between those working in product-oriented and service-oriented organisations. However, these differences are not significant and to some extent, there are similarities for some of the variables discussed.

6. Conclusion

This study explored how the employee perception from working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic to potentially returning back to working in the office has created new employee preferences for working in a hybrid-like setup. The preferences of such a setup represent the new labour landscape that organisations today operate in. In doing so, the study was based on comparing these explorations between service and product-oriented organisations. Also, this study explored how organisations may adhere to these new employee preferences. The purpose of this study was to answer two research questions: How do employees in service-oriented organisations perceive the transition from remote to in-person working compared to employees in product-oriented organisations, and how are the organisations in the two industries adapting to the employee perception of the transition? The study reached the answers by conducting a comprehensive literature review to identify the relevant factors and theories affecting employee perception of the new labour landscape. In order to retrieve the first-hand data, a mix-method approach was adopted, where primary data through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews was collected and analysed.

When it comes to the first research question, the main variables that affect the employee perception of the transition from remote to in-person work, namely, employee preference, employee performance, employee productivity, and preparation to change from remote to in-person work, were identified. The literature showed that employees view remote working as something positive as it generates greater flexibility and the opportunity to spend more time with the family, which is claimed to reduce stress and increase motivation (Cooper et al., 2020; Tursunbayeva et al., 2022). As for employee performance the study indicates that remote work has not reduced the productivity of employees both in service and product-oriented organisations. Moreover, the results showed that employees perceive their remote functioning to more extent positively. Interestingly, this finding does to some extent contradict the claim made by Lippe and Lippényi (2020), that remote work has a negative effect on employee performance based on factors such as separated teamwork and work-life imbalance.

On the other hand, the finding regarding employee performance goes in line with the argument made by Vartiainen and Hyrkänen (2010), that remote work can affect employee performance positively.

In relation to this, the comparison of the abovementioned variables indicated that there are some differences in employee perception between the product and service-oriented organisations. However, the identified differences are not significant, meaning that the employees who work in service-oriented organisations perceive the shift from remote work to in-person rather similarly to employees working in product-oriented organisations. That finding goes in line with the literature indicating the intermingling between the service and product-oriented organisations. For instance, the argument by Aner & Rentzhog (2012) regarding the “servicification” of manufacturing, where organisations that provide tangible, manufactured goods supplement those with services, such as delivery and maintenance. While, from the perspective of service-oriented organisations, the findings can be related to the claim made by Nägele et al. (2020) that service-oriented organisations provide tangible goods as a supplementing and comprehensive part of their services to create tangibility and physical connectivity to the services they provide.

In respect to the second research question, the interviewed managers indicated a divided attitude towards adhering fully to the employee preferences demonstrated in the questionnaire. The service-oriented organisations were more inclined to offer their employees the ability to freely work in a hybrid-like setup. An issue brought up with a potential hybrid setup is the loss of human interaction at the workplace, which according to some of the interviewed managers, is too valuable to lose. This corresponds relatively well with the notion of the digital divide that may take place i.e. that remote work results in employees who do not possess the necessary skills and tools to carry out remote work will be excluded (Alvarez, 2020; Gallacher & Hossain, 2020). This is an important aspect, specifically for new employees that may find it problematic to connect to the other employees and integrate well into the company (Molino et al., 2020). The manager from the product-oriented organisation stated that they had implemented a new company policy where hybrid work is possible, but the norm should still be to work in the office. Interestingly, the employees in this organisation seem to prefer to work in a hybrid-like setup, as the manager explained that more than half of the employees have yet not returned fully to the office - which is

the aspiration. This can be interpreted as a resistance to change from the employee perspective. Even though Bradutanu (2012) argues that the reason for employees resisting change is because of their personal interests, employees can still have different preferences and inputs on that change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). This goes in line with the information provided by the manager from the product-oriented organisation, that more than half of the employees still work remotely.

6.1 Limitations

One limitation is the sample size and the low number of respondents and interviewees in this study. This had the effect of the data not being generalisable, which is a limitation. Another limitation is that the two comprehensive sets of organisations, service and product-oriented organisations, can be considered to be too general.

By narrowing down the scope of the study to specific industries and organisations, a more significant result may have been reached. Also, the variables specifically identified in this study are a limitation. There are most likely other variables in the literature that can affect the employee perception of the shift from remote to in-person work.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

With respect to the possibility of future research exploring this topic, an interesting perspective would be to look at the difference between service and product-oriented organisations on an international level. This is because it can add an interesting comparison to the case of Sweden. Also, the findings indicate that employees in general perceive the hybrid-like working setup more favourable than going back to fully in-person work. Hence, another recommendation is to explore further the employee resistance to change from remote to in-person work.

Additionally, the findings regarding the impact of remote work on employee productivity and performance are generated from the employee perspective, based on their perception. Therefore, it would be interesting for future researchers addressing a similar topic to change the scope. More particularly, one recommendation would be to study that impact from an organisational perspective, considering managerial perception as well as objective performance and productivity metrics.

As the scope of this study was two comprehensive sets of organisations, service and product-oriented, it would be interesting to narrow down the scope to more nuanced and specific sets of organisations, such as clothing producing organisations and business consultancy organisations. By doing so, even more specific and detailed sample size can be generated, which can give more insights regarding both the employee and organisational aspects in the particular two sets of organisations studied.

6.3 Practical Implications

The findings in this study can be used by organisations for the purpose of gaining insights into how the organisation in question can adapt to the new labour landscape in a post-COVID-19 society. More particularly, the findings from the questionnaire indicate a general preference amongst employees that a hybrid-like work setup, where the employee has the possibility to choose either to work remotely or in the office, is favourable. Even though the organisation in question has yet to observe such preference, the findings from the semi-structured interviews showed that there is an increased demand from candidates in hiring processes requesting if a remote-work option is available. Thus, knowing that the labour landscape is changing, it might be useful for organisations to prepare for a potential hybrid-like setup as both employees and future employees, most likely will require it as an option.

Organisations can find the findings from this study helpful in terms of gaining insight into the benefits and set-backs of either working fully in the office, or creating a hybrid-like work setup. Furthermore, the insights generated from this study can provide an understanding of the factors

affecting the employee perceptions of the transition from remote to in-person work - employee performance, employee productivity, employee preferences and preparation to change. This will presumably be useful for organisations while navigating through the change process towards the new labour landscape.

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Appendices

A. Survey Questionnaire

Introduction

The survey questionnaire is a part of a thesis in the Master's in Management program at Lund University School of Economics and Management. The purpose of the study is to examine the employees' perception of the new labour landscape developed due to the COVID- 19 pandemic. The scope of our study is the employees in service and product-oriented organisations. By service-oriented organisations, we perceive the organisations that provide mostly services, while product-oriented organisations stand for organisations involved mostly in manufacturing. Through this survey, we aim to gain insight into employee preferences and perceptions of work (whether it is in-person, remote or hybrid) in the types of organisations. The questionnaire consists of 14 questions concerning various factors potentially affecting employee perceptions. It will take approximately 5 minutes to complete the survey. Your answers will be fully anonymous.

Section 1: Demographics

1. Please indicate your age
 - 18-29
 - 30-49
 - 50-64
 - 65+

2. Please indicate your gender
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other

- Prefer not to answer

Section 2: Type of organisation and the time worked remotely

- Does your organisation offer mainly manufactured products or services?
 - My organisation offers mainly services
 - My organisation offers mainly products
 - Other (please specify)
- How much did you work remotely during the pandemic?
 - 0 - 19%
 - 20 - 39%
 - 40 - 59%
 - 60 - 79%
 - 80 - 100%

Section 3. Capacity, Functioning, Preparation, Preferences and Perception

5. How did your remote working affect your capacity to work?	Very negatively	Negatively	Somewhat negatively	Neutral	Somewhat positively	Positively	Very positively
6. In your opinion, how well did it function to work remotely?	Very poorly	Poorly	Somewhat poorly	Neutral	Somewhat well	Well	Very well
7. To what extent did your organisation prepare you to eventually shift from working remotely to in-person?	Very little	Little	Some extent	Neutral	Occasionally	Much	Very much

8. To what extent do you think your organisation will encourage you to work remotely?	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very Likely
9. To what extent do you think your organisation will encourage you to work in-person?	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very Likely
10. How much do you prefer working in the office?	Very little	Little	Some extent	Neutral	Occasionally	Much	Very much
11. How much do you prefer working remotely?	Very little	Little	Some extent	Neutral	Occasionally	Much	Very much
13. To what extent do you think your work preferences are considered by your organisation?	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very Likely
14. To what extent do you think your organisation will be flexible to adapt to your work preference?	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very Likely

12. How much remote work do you prefer as a part of your total work?

- 0 - 19%
- 20 - 39%
- 40 - 59%

- 60 - 79%
- 80 - 100%

B. Interview Guideline

Introduction

Dear managers, my thesis partner Simon Kotton and I are currently writing our Master's thesis at Lund University School of Economics and Management. We aim to explore the new labour landscape of Swedish product and/or service-oriented companies. We have conducted a survey where employees have indicated their preferences and perceptions of how to work. Now, we are interested in interviewing managers to look further into the organisational aspect.

The interview will take approximately 40-60 minutes. We realise that your time is valuable and doing the interview online can be the most efficient way. Your responses will be anonymous, and the collected data will be processed confidentially.

Guideline

- Please talk a little bit about your organisation, what you do? How long have you worked there?
- Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, how did your organisation react? In terms of social distancing, permitting, and organisational restructuring in general?

MAIN BODY

1. Has there been a change in terms of working remotely or in the office in your organisation now that the pandemic is not classified as a societal threat? If so, could you explain that change?
2. Does the new working landscape affect your organisational performance? If yes, how?
 - If not understood: Well, has there been a decrease in, for instance, work task participation, quality of work, and perhaps even changes in revenue and income?
3. What would you say are the benefits and drawbacks of working remotely and in the office?
4. What do you think, are there any organisational risks triggered by the new working landscape? For instance, security, isolation of employees, company culture etc.
If yes, how does your organisation intend to mitigate those risks?
5. Does the change from in-person to remote or hybrid working affect the culture inside your organisation?

If yes, how?

6. According to our survey, employees tend to favour working in a hybrid-like setup (meaning both in the office and remotely). How would your organisation adhere to such a preference?
7. Is your organisation encouraging employees to work remotely or in the office? If so, how is your organisation preparing them for that shift?
8. To what extent do you think your organisation is capable of having a hybrid-like setup where employees work both in the office and remotely?