Challenges in establishing flexible work arrangements: an exploratory study on managers' and employees' perspectives

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Preface

We would like to thank our supervisor, Ola Mattisson, for giving us the opportunity to work on this subject and for his valuable input. Every meeting with him further improved our work. We also want to express gratitude to all interviewees for freeing up their time to contribute to this work and giving very elaborate and sincere answers. In particular, we greatly thank our pilot and validating interviewees, thanks to whom our work became stronger. Our sincere gratitude also goes to our families and friends for supporting us during this thesis. Lastly, we want to thank our classmates for their constructive feedback and useful contributions.

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Abstract

The increased adoption of flexible work arrangements and changes in the habits and behaviors of employees since the COVID-19 pandemic have prompted companies to adapt their policies to accommodate these developments in the conditions of work. Despite being pioneers in flexible work arrangements, companies in Sweden still need to continuously refine their policies to meet the changing needs of their managers and employees. This thesis aims to identify the currently perceived challenges by both managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements after the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden to help companies improve their policies. Additional knowledge on how the challenges are interrelated also complements the findings. The thesis fulfills this goal by conducting a qualitative study that resulted in a framework of the perceived challenges and a network of their interrelations.

Developing the framework involves an extensive literature study and empirical data collection and analysis. The literature study identifies and analyzes perceived challenges in establishing flexible work arrangements in existing literature and develops a preliminary theoretical framework for describing and analyzing them. This preliminary framework, consisting of six categories, categorizes the challenges based on the theoretical concepts previously used to describe them. Furthermore, the empirical study collects qualitative data from in-depth interviews with managers and employees at a company in Sweden to describe and explore the perceived challenges. The analysis of empirical data further develops preliminary categories of challenges and results in an extended framework with final categories, subcategories, and their definitions. In total, twelve categories are included, of which four new ones are added compared to the preliminary framework. In addition, the analysis identifies interrelations between the separate challenges and results in a network visualizing these interrelations. Finally, the thesis discusses the identified challenges and interrelations in relation to previous findings in the literature and suggests future directions for research.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the last few years, the interest in and the adoption of flexible work arrangements or alternative work arrangements have increased. Flexible work arrangements can be defined as non-traditional jobs where flexibility is present in determining where, how much, and when work is performed (Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Mas & Pallais, 2020), including part-time, compressed work weeks, flexitime, and remote work. From 2002 to 2019, the percentage of employees in the European Union who worked sometimes from home grew from five to around eleven percent (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a further acceleration in the adoption of alternative work arrangements, more specifically remote working and flexible scheduling (Cheng et al., 2023). The pandemic forcefully caused changes in work arrangements and the habits and behaviors of employees. These inevitable disruptions in work arrangements caused nearly half of the European employees to have remote work for at least some time during the pandemic, increasing the uptake and availability of remote work (Eurofound, 2020). An example of one of the behavioral changes of employees is their increased importance for ways to combine their work and non-work lives, increasing the attraction for alternative work arrangements (Mas & Pallais, 2020). Consequently, this newly increased appeal has made remote work and other alternative work arrangements commonplace in new company policies, which reflect organizational efforts to catch up with recent shifts in work conditions and the emerging needs of their employees.

Before the pandemic, Sweden was already a frontrunner in Europe when it came to alternative work arrangements, such as remote work and flexible hours (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017). It has been shown that in 2019, more than 35% of Swedish employees worked sometimes remotely (Milasi et al., 2020). Additionally, over 80% of Swedish organizations offer flexible work schedules, and 43% of employees make use of this option (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). This makes Sweden an interesting context to study, as the practices for these alternative arrangements can be considered established.

However, the established context does not negate the companies' need to continuously refine their policies to meet the changing needs of their managers and employees. The continuous refinements to accommodate changes in employee habits and behaviors bring about shifting challenges perceived in the practice of new alternative work arrangements. Research into these practical challenges can aid in further developing company policies and creating a better match between policies and employees' needs.

1.2 Problem statement

A thorough examination of previous research on perceived challenges in establishing alternative work arrangements has revealed several limitations. Firstly, research on flexible work arrangements is interdisciplinary by nature. As a result, a wide range of research traditions and many different types of methods were followed, causing a fragmentation in the body of existing literature on the topic. The many traditions followed in research on flexible work arrangements include applied psychology, human resource management, economics, and many others (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019; Mas & Pallais, 2020). Among the many methods used, surveys (Anderson et al., 2014; Beltran-Martín et al., 2008; Biron & Veldhoven, 2016; Chen & Fulmer, 2018), experiments (Bloom et al., 2013; Dalton & Mesch, 1990; Dunham et al., 1987) and semi-structured interviews (Adamson et al., 2023; Conley, 2006; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011) are the most common.

Secondly, the challenges have thus far been studied in isolation, without attention paid to the interrelations between them, or how different types of challenges influence each other. Studying these interrelations would increase the ability to understand the complexity of these challenges and their interactions. This would give insights into the possible effects of these challenges on each other, which are valuable to managers and organizations when establishing alternative work arrangements. Thirdly, research is often conducted from an organizational perspective, focusing on human resource outcomes and not on the perceptions and practices of managers and employees. However, challenges arise in the team context, and therefore insights into the team's perceptions are crucial to fully understanding the challenges. Lastly, a lack of research in the post-pandemic era is identified in the Swedish context. Studies conducted in a Swedish context all date from before (Allard et al., 2007; Bjärntoft et al., 2020; Elldér, 2019) or during the pandemic (Babapour et al., 2021; Nilsberth et al., 2021; the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE), 2021).

Given the fragmentation in literature and the knowledge gap in the post-pandemic era of the perceived challenges in establishing flexible work arrangements in such a frontrunner country as Sweden, research that supplies a framework to systematize the study of the challenges perceived by both managers and employees after the COVID-19 pandemic and their interrelations in the Swedish context would be highly valuable for the research community. Moreover, this framework can help organiza-

tions and managers analyze their own contexts and create a common language that enables cross-organizational knowledge sharing on the topic.

1.3 Research question and purpose of the study

The context explained and the problem stated above have led to the following research question:

> What are the current challenges perceived by both managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements in Sweden after the COVID-19 pandemic?

In answering this research question, the current study aims to fulfill three purposes:
a Identify and analyze perceived challenges in establishing alternative work arrangements in existing literature and develop a theoretical framework for describing and analyzing them.
b Describe and explore the current challenges perceived by managers and employees in establishing alternative work arrangements in an empirical context in post-COVID-19 Sweden.
c Identify the interrelations between the described and explored challenges.

1.4 Outline

This research paper starts with the methodology section (chapter 2), which specifies the research approach and design, data collection and analysis and discusses the overall chosen methodology and ethical considerations. Next, the literature study (chapter 3) describes the historical developments in flexible work arrangements and then identifies and analyzes all previous challenges in chronological order. It concludes with a preliminary theoretical framework for describing and analyzing challenges perceived by managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements (section 3.4). This preliminary framework is further examined and adapted based on the empirical findings presented in Table 4.1 (chapter 4). Another research outcome presented in chapter 4 includes the interrelations of the described and analyzed challenges, which are visualized in graphs 4.1 and 4.2. This chapter ends with a summary of all the findings. Subsequently, chapter 5 re-contextualizes the findings, and, finally, chapter 6 concludes the study and suggests potential areas for future research.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the approach and methodology that were followed during the thesis are explained. Firstly, the overall approach and design are further described. Secondly, selection criteria and methods for data collection and analysis are explained. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the chosen methodology and ethical considerations.

2.2 Research approach and design

With the research purposes in mind, the current study followed a mixed constructionist approach designed to capture as many challenges and as accurately as possible. The overall approach was mostly inductive, with specific customization based on each of the three research purposes. Firstly, to fulfill purpose a, an abductive approach was chosen for the literature study, using deductive reasoning to identify previously researched challenges and using inductive reasoning to develop a theoretical framework. In addition, qualitative data was used to strengthen the constructs that constituted this framework. Secondly, an inductive approach was chosen to fulfill purpose b, where qualitative empirical data was analyzed to capture new phenomena and generate new knowledge. Thirdly, an inductive approach was chosen to fulfill purpose c, where inductive reasoning was followed to identify the interrelations between the challenges. Overall, how the specific approach choices were made throughout the study is further discussed below.

Because the challenges of interest come from the empirical field rather than from existing theories, it was necessary to measure them based on the personal perceptions of the managers and employees in a specific empirical context. Thus, the current study took a constructionist approach to describe, explore, and analyze such challenges. The challenges were theoretically constructed through a comprehensive literature review and further tested and developed using collected empirical data. For this purpose, the study collected and analyzed multiple accounts of challenges

that were seen, experienced, and recounted by managers and employees in the same setting to reinforce and develop the identified constructs. This need for qualitative data suggested the use of in-depth interviews as an appropriate choice. Multiple vivid descriptions and explanations of the same set of challenges within the same context helped increase the validity of the research findings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). However, an established framework needed to measure the perceived challenges in establishing flexible work arrangements was not yet available, requiring the current study to develop a new framework for describing, exploring, and analyzing such challenges.

The development of this framework was carried out in two steps. Firstly, a preliminary framework was created based on the analysis of all challenges identified and described in previous studies (purpose a). Available academic research literature was collected and analyzed to evaluate previous and current research and synthesize theoretical concepts used in critical discussions of the challenges perceived by managers and employees in implementing flexible work arrangements and new ways of working. The evaluation of previous research identified strengths and weaknesses in terms of research design and findings to better inform and support the design of the current study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In addition, the synthesis of concepts built a theoretical foundation for further empirical research and mitigated potential obstacles in researching the field (Renard et al., 2021). Due to the fragmentation and isolation in existing research, as mentioned in section 1.2, this literature study followed both an inductive and deductive approach to combine findings from multiple perspectives and research streams. More specifically, the literature study deductively identified specific challenges that have been previously identified and studied, mostly in isolation. Subsequently, the literature study used inductive reasoning to construct a framework with distinct categories for relating these challenges and studying them together.

For the literature search, LUBsearch (powered by EBSCOhost) and Google Scholar were used with search terms including flexible work arrangements, alternative work arrangements, flexible hours, flexible scheduling, organizing work, and new ways of working, in combination with challenges, driving factors, attitudes, perceptions, managers, and employees. From this initial search, a wide range of academically published papers and books were identified. A small number of them are conceptual discussions, followed by a larger number of meta-analyses and literature reviews. The largest body of literature consists of empirical studies, usually conducted in specific contexts within the last fifty years. The identified literature was filtered by narrowing down to research that specifically focused on flexible work practices, including flexible time, flexible place, and flexible organization. We included research on the practices and their implications (challenges) and excluded papers that focused only on the benefits of flexible work arrangements.

Secondly, the preliminary framework was tested against empirical data by using categories from it to structure an interview guide for data collection. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were chosen instead of completely structured interviews so

that the study can both further develop its framework (purpose a), explore challenges beyond the preliminary categories (purpose b), and identify the interrelations between the challenges (purpose c). Therefore, the final output of the study includes the final framework for exploring and analyzing challenges perceived by managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements, findings about these challenges based on their description and analysis, and a network of interrelations between the challenges.

2.3 Selection criteria

As mentioned in section 1.2, studying the team context is crucial in identifying the perceived challenges. Therefore, both managers and employees were interviewed for this study. For participation in this study, teams (manager and employees) working in the same Swedish company were looked for in order to control variables related to the setting, such as company culture and policies around alternative work arrangements. Gathering the data in the same team and setting enables the collection of different accounts of the same set of challenges, which increases the construct validity of the findings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Another criteria for selection was that the teams were currently working in a hybrid work arrangement. Through a call for participation, three teams (mainly software engineers) under the same department at the Nordic office of a global tech company volunteered to participate. This sample size was considered sufficient due to time restrictions and the limited number of managers in the same department willing to participate. Additionally, it became clear during analysis that theoretical saturation was reached and, therefore, the sample size can be considered suitable (Bryman & Bell, 2004). To ensure validity and honest responses from the interviewees, an agreement was made to keep their identities anonymous. Therefore, the information from every interviewee was encoded and the corresponding codes to be used in the rest of this thesis can be found in Table 2.1.

Role	Team	Code
Manager	Team 1	Manager, Team 1
Employee	Team 1	Employee 1, Team 1
Manager	Team 2	Manager, Team 2
Employee	Team 2	Employee 1, Team 2
Employee	Team 2	Employee 2, Team 2
Manager	Team 3	Manager, Team 3
Employee	Team 3	Employee 1, Team 3
Employee	Team 3	Employee 2, Team 3

TABLE 2.1: Overview of interviewees' role, team and corresponding code

2.4   Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for empirical data collection. This type of interview is often used when the researchers start with a relatively clear focus. In this case, the current study focuses on categories of perceived challenges in establishing flexible work arrangements, as constructed by analyzing available knowledge on the topic (for the preliminary framework that was used for formulating interview questions, see section 3.4). Despite this clear direction, keeping an open mind is important in this research to capture rich and diverse qualitative data, as specified in the approach. Therefore, questions were asked to address specific themes while also offering more general and follow-up questions aiming to identify newly emerging categories. The semi-structured format still gives the interviewers the opportunity to change the order of questions or to ask additional relevant questions, as opposed to a fully structured approach (Bryman & Bell, 2004). By allowing these additional questions, the interviewers can probe divergent directions, which leads to an enhanced depth and significance of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2004). This rich extraction of knowledge from empirical data aligns with the inductive approach of this study. Lastly, semi-structured interviews give great insights into what the interviewee considers relevant and important (Bryman & Bell, 2004). This is crucial to understanding the perspectives of the interviewees. As this research aims to understand the perspectives of both managers and employees, both have to be interviewed. Studying the challenges from these two perspectives gives a broad base for analysis and allows an investigation into how these perspectives are intertwined, which is consistent with the constructionist methodology.

Before starting the interviews, an interview guide was made. This was based on the preliminary framework with categories identified in the literature and contained different types of questions. All of the questions were open-ended and not leading in order to limit bias. Further, the nine different types of questions according to Kvale (1996) are all present. These include direct, indirect, specifying, interpreting, introducing, follow-up, probing, structuring questions, and silence (Kvale, 1996). Asking different types of questions aids in maintaining the interest of the interviewee and allow interviewers to increase the depth of the gathered data (Bryman & Bell, 2004). Using the first version of this interview guide, two pilot interviews were conducted. One interview was held with a manager and the other with an employee in order to see if the questions were clear and yielded answers related to perceived challenges. After these interviews, some questions were altered to improve clarity. The interview guide was adapted again after the analysis of the first interview to better incorporate the specific company context. The final interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

The interviews were planned over a time span of two weeks, with a maximum of three in one day in order to allow for breaks for the interviewers. This was to reduce fatigue so that the interviewers would stay active in all of the interviews and get a higher quality of data (Bryman & Bell, 2004). Further, during all interviews,

both interviewers were present. This has the benefit that one 'passive' interviewer can assess the overall development of the interview and can jump in to ask additional questions when he or she feels further probing is needed (Bryman & Bell, 2004). Additionally, using two interviewers allows for different styles of questioning to be incorporated and can contribute to a more informal atmosphere similar to a discussion between three people as opposed to an exchange between two people (Bryman & Bell, 2004).

The interviewees were given the choice to join the interview online or in person. Only one manager opted for an online interview; the other interviews were held on the premises of the company. All the interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the interviewees. In total, eight interviews took place, all of which lasted approximately one hour. The interviewees were told not to prepare in advance and were all given the same structured introduction at the start of the interviews. This introduction included an explanation of the study and its purpose, followed by questions that checked the selection criteria and asked about the background of the interviewees.

2.5   Data analysis

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed using Word's transcription function. This tool generated highly accurate transcripts, which were manually double-checked by the interviewers using the original recordings. Transcription is useful to help the human memory and to allow a more thorough analysis of what has been said (Bryman & Bell, 2004). Additionally, it allows the interviewers to avoid distraction by taking notes during the interview itself and to focus on what is being said and follow up on interesting ideas (Bryman & Bell, 2004).

After the transcription, a thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the empirical data. For this, the data was first broken down into fragments (between one and five sentences). Each fragment contained one observation and was coded based on the categories, or themes, established in the preliminary framework (see section 3.4). The end of this process was, for each interview, a color-coded text based on these sub-themes that allowed for the analysis of links between the sub-themes. This permitted the consolidation of some sub-themes and the division of others, eventually maturing the sub-themes into final themes with sub-categories. For example, the codes for physical setting, social setting, and distractions at work were consolidated in the overarching theme workspace, which already had subcategories, including distractions at home and technological access. For each of these themes, a separate Word document was made, containing all the text fragments belonging to that theme. This whole process was not linear, as in each step, re-coding could be performed when a text fragment was noticed to have a better fit elsewhere or when a new code emerged. Finally, based on the separate documents for each theme, an analysis was conducted to answer the research question. This yielded an analysis of each

separate category and the relations of one category to other categories. A relation was identified when multiple codes were found in one observation, showing the influence of one category on another. The identification of all these relations was brought together in a network.

2.6   Discussion of the chosen methodology

As in any study, choices in methodology have to be made, and this leads to certain strengths and limitations. The strengths and limitations related to the choices made in this thesis are further elaborated on below.

A strength in the choice of methodology is the fact that the focus lies on studying phenomena regardless of the name given to them. Although the categories are named based on previous research and the analysis of the researchers, the phenomena are confirmed by the different perspectives and further confirmed by the validation interview, which is explained below.

The choice to collect data from the perspectives of both managers and employees can be considered both a strength and a limitation. By gaining insights from both perspectives, the data gains richness and includes differences in perception. On the other hand, the need to interview both managers and employees created a smaller sample size for each perspective than if only one perspective had been investigated.

Another limitation of the study is the need for a trade-off between diving deep and creating a broad overview when the categories were created. As both cannot be accomplished at the same time, this trade-off was made by the researchers, causing subcategories in some categories but not in others. The (sub-)categories from this research are developed to the furthest extent this research can achieve; further development and revision are open for future research.

There are limitations influencing the validity of the study. Firstly, a limitation was found in the choice of setting for the data collection. As the whole data set is collected from three teams within the same department, the findings are difficult to generalize and require additional testing for validity (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Secondly, the fact that all interviewees are male (due to the fact that the tech sector is predominantly male (García-Holgado et al., 2018)) and none of them have small children also affects the validity of the study. To mitigate the validity issues related to both the setting and the characteristics of the interviewees, a validation interview was performed. For this interview, a woman in a different technological company with young kids working in a hybrid work arrangement was interviewed using the same interview guide as in the other interviews for employees. This interview was transcribed, coded, and analyzed in the same way as the others and is included in a separate section in the findings (see section 4.15).

2.7 Ethical considerations

Throughout the research, all measures were taken to ensure the respondents were protected. Before starting the interview, the participants were clearly informed that participation was fully voluntary and that they could stop the interview at any given point in time. The participants were also made aware that the gathered data would be fully anonymous. Their permission for the audio recording was also asked, making it clear that these recordings would only be available to the researchers for the purpose of transcribing and for the purpose of this thesis.

Chapter 3

Literature Study

3.1 Introduction

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the historical challenges that arose along the evolution of flexible work arrangements and new ways of working, to give readers an idea of the problem that this thesis focuses on and the need for the conducted research. As challenges in flexible work arrangements and new ways of working are the core of this work, a detailed literature analysis is performed to provide a theoretical framework which fulfills research purpose a (see section 1.3).

3.2 Flexible work arrangements

The interest in flexible or alternative work arrangements has been growing since the 20th century, due to the increasing need for flexibility on both the employer's and employee's sides (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). These alternative work arrangements can be arranged both formally and informally, where formal arrangements are written down in a contract or policy and informal arrangements are made between an individual and their line manager (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019).

In this section, a historical overview of alternative work arrangements will be given, followed by a more in-depth explanation of the different forms that these arrangements can take. The classification of these forms is based on Spreitzer et al. (2017), who identified three dimensions: flexibility in employment relationship, flexibility in the scheduling of work, and flexibility in the work location. As Spreitzer et al. (2017) mention, all the forms of alternative work arrangements cannot be strictly fitted into one of the dimensions. Many of the types share two or more dimensions of flexibility. For example, part-time workers can be fitted both in flexibility in employment relationship and flexibility in work schedule, depending on whether the employer or the employee chooses this type of work arrangement. For practical reasons, all types of arrangements are strictly allocated to one dimension based on the most common motivation (why the flexibility was chosen).

3.2.1 Historical overview

The traditional work arrangements emerged due to the industrial revolution, which witnessed a change from small individual craftsmen who controlled their own schedule to assembly lines in factories with fixed schedules and high costs for working from home (Mas & Pallais, 2020). This traditional model of work remained dominant for most of the 20th century and consists out of a full-time contract where work is performed following a fixed schedule at the company's location (Spreitzer et al., 2017).

During the 20th century, alternative work arrangements started to emerge. As women started to enter the labour market, an increased demand arose for part-time jobs as they were expected to combine their work with childcare (Mas & Pallais, 2020). Soon after this, in the late 1970s, the first studies on the effects of alternative work arrangements on worker performance were published (Golembiewski et al., 1974; Nollen, 1979; Schein et al., 1977).

As the years went on, several factors contributed to an increase in the emergence and adoption of alternative work arrangements. The first factor is the increase in innovations and discoveries in information technology that facilitated the shifting needs and capabilities of modern workers. The invention and adoption of mobile devices and more recently cloud technology made it possible for employees to work from almost anywhere and at anytime (Spreitzer et al., 2017). These advancements increased the uptake of alternative work arrangements by both employers and employees as they allowed for flexible work schedules and easy remote work (Mas & Pallais, 2020; Urbaniec et al., 2022).

Two other factors are the awareness of the potential benefits for companies and the companies' increased attention for employees' needs and preferences (Urbaniec et al., 2022). These potential benefits include reduced costs, increased organisational efficiency and the enhanced ability to attract and retain motivated employees with the desired talents (Kröll & Nüesch, 2019). Further, alternative work arrangements can give the firm additional agility by regulating employment according to the changing demand on the global market (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019; Spreitzer et al., 2017). This globalization causes increased market competition and requires companies to adopt new business and work models in order to stay competitive (Urbaniec et al., 2022). In addition, the globalization also increased the need for communication and collaboration with stakeholders located in different time zones and with different work patterns, further increasing the demand for alternative work arrangements (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019).

Lastly, demographic and societal changes also increased the uptake of and demand for alternative work arrangements. Dual-earner families and single parents value the increased flexibility offered by alternative work arrangements, which allows them to combine their jobs with child care (Spreitzer et al., 2017). Additionally, workers are increasingly seeking ways to combine their work and non-work life, causing them

to demand more flexibility in their work arrangements to improve their work-life balance (WLB) (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019; Mas & Pallais, 2020).

All of these driving factors caused an increase in awareness about and the up-take of alternative work arrangements in the 21st century. From 2002 to 2019, the percentage of people in the European Union (EU) that worked sometimes or usually from home grew from five to around eleven percent (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021), with Sweden having the highest rate of home workers in the whole EU, 35% in 2019 (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden burst in the uptake and offering of alternative work arrangements, specifically in remote working and flexible scheduling (Cheng et al., 2023). As during the pandemic it was shown that the productivity of workers remained not only stable but in some cases even improved (Smite et al., 2022), the post-pandemic landscape aims to further make use of alternative work arrangements.

3.2.2 Flexibility in employment relationship

Definition and context

Flexibility in employment relationship can be defined with the help of Atkinson's seminal model of the flexible firm (Atkinson, 1985). He defines the flexibility of a firm in four ways: temporal, spatial, functional, and numerical. Temporal and spatial flexibility are not part of flexibility in employment relationship but each relates to its own dimension, flexibility in work schedule and flexibility in work location respectively. Functional and numerical flexibility do define flexibility in employment relationship.

Numerical or external flexibility is concerned with adjusting the number of em-ployees or the total number of hours worked based on the demand (Atkinson, 1985). In general, numerical flexibility can be achieved through three categories of con-tingent workers, as defined by Cappelli and Keller (2012). The first category is direct employment beyond the standard employment relationship. This entails all employment contracts adopted with the goal of reaching higher flexibility for the firm and that are not standard full-time contracts, such as part-time, on-call, and seasonal workers. The firm still chooses to hire the employees directly, train them, and socialize them into the firm's culture. The second category is agency work or co-employment. In this case, the employment relationship is between three parties: the client organization, the staffing organization, and the worker him/herself. These temporary agency workers come with several benefits for the client organization because they can be recruited quickly, are easy to let go, and often cost less than full-time employees (Kalleberg, 2001). The third category is contract work. Here, specific people are hired due to their knowledge or skills that should be used in a usually short-term project. Examples of this type of work include freelancers and gig workers.

Functional or internal flexibility involves training staff members on several tasks so

they can be deployed over a range of functions, creating flexibility depending on demand (Atkinson, 1985). It is based on having a core of stable workers that are multi-skilled, trained in multiple functions and, in contrast to temporary workers, have in general good employment security (Kelliher & Riley, 2003).

As mentioned before, firms feel pressured to increase their efficiency to stay competitive in the global, changing economy where short-term financial results often drive decision-making (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019; Spreitzer et al., 2017). The emergence of this flexibility in employment relationship offers possibilities for the firms to use labour in non-standard ways to increase the efficiency and even save labour costs, creating greater profits (Kalleberg, 2001; Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). In this way, firms have been using subcontracting and outsourcing as ways to be able to concentrate more on their core competences and thereby becoming more efficient (Kalleberg, 2001).

When it comes to the prevalence of flexibility in employment relationship, a clear distinction is visible between functional and numerical flexibility in terms of available data. The only found available data for functional flexibility is based on a survey in the UK in the 1998 that showed that functional flexibility is non-existent or negligible (Cully et al., 1998). It is highly unbelievable this case would still apply to today's landscape, as Kelliher and Riley (2003) mention that functional flexibility is often used in the service industry, although they do not provide numbers. Therefore, it can be assumed that the measurements are just lacking for this type of employment relationship flexibility.

More data is available when it comes to numerical flexibility. The European annual review of working life of 2018 (Aumayr-Pintar et al., 2019), showed that 18.5% of all workers in the EU work part-time. 25.5% of them are working part-time involuntary and would prefer to work more hours. Temporary employment on the other hand (both direct and agency employment) accounted for 11.2% of the total employment in 2018. Of these, 57% could not find a permanent job and only 12.6% actually did not want a permanent job. This is somehow alarming, as these kind of working arrangements do offer firms more flexibility but seem to trap people in a working arrangement that they did not opt for. In this way, the EU's 'More and Better Jobs' program could help. It makes a commitment to growing total employment but also aims to give employees a degree of choice over their working arrangements (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019).

Drivers and inhibitors of uptake

The uptake of flexible employment relationships can be enhanced or inhibited in several ways. Firstly, the legislation at both national and international (EU) level, can influence the ease of implementing alternative work arrangements in general (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). If at national levels support is given, then in theory these types of arrangements should be widely available (Kelliher & De Menezes,

2019). In the Nordic countries, employees even have the right to flexible employment, not just a right to request flexible working as in many other countries like Australia and the UK (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019).

When it comes specifically to flexibility in employment relationship, the predictability of the fluctuations in demand is important and can serve as a driver for uptake of either functional or numerical flexibility (Kelliher & Riley, 2003). If changes can be easily predicted in advance, numerical flexibility is a suitable choice. If the changes are difficult to predict, functional flexibility can create a more rapid approach as the employees are already available.

Another factor that influences the uptake of functional flexibility is the nature of present activities in the organization (Kelliher & Riley, 2003). If all employees are carrying out the same simple task, then implementing functional flexibility will give little benefits. As tasks become more complex and the variety increases, functional flexibility can be of better use.

The last factor that can enhance or inhibit the uptake of functional flexibility is the learning capability of the workforce (Kelliher & Riley, 2003). In order to implement functional flexibility, workers have to learn other activities, meaning they will have to learn additional new skills. This will require training but also a suitable selection process to hire employees with these capabilities in order to guarantee a successful implementation.

Outcomes

Whether or not the effect of implementing flexibility in employment relationship is beneficial for the firm or the employee has been a subject of investigation for already several years. On overview of the effect of flexibility in employment relationship on several variables, like performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, well-being, and absenteeism, will be given.

First of all, no studies on the effect of these variables for seasonal workers or on-call workers, except for one, were found in the literature search. All further discussed outcomes are therefore for the other types of flexible employment relationships. The need for research in this field has already been indicated in two extensive literature reviews, from 2013 (Wilkin, 2013) and from 2017 (Spreitzer et al., 2017). During the literature search, articles related to seasonal workers only studied the factors that played a role in the retention of seasonal workers for the next season. The only relevant article was a recent one by Guillaume et al. (2018), which concluded that the service quality performance of standard employees was higher than that of seasonal employees. Due to the limited amount of available material, no general conclusions can be drawn on the effects of on-call and seasonal workers. More research in this area is needed.

As flexibility in employment relationship mostly emerged as a way for companies to stay competitive, it is to be expected that there are many benefits associated with this type of flexibility for organisations. A first benefit is the general decrease in labour costs. This originates from two sources. On the one hand, the efficiency of labour will increase and so the same amount of work can be done with less people, increasing operational functioning overall (Beltran-Martín et al., 2008; Kelliher & Riley, 2003; Kunn-Nelen et al., 2011). On the other hand, functional flexibility will reduce the number of line managers needed and will thus diminish the labour costs further (Beltran-Martín et al., 2008). Additionally, the use of contingent workers allows for cost-effective hiring solutions, increasing numerical flexibility and a broadened talent pool (Santra, 2021). In conclusion, several benefits emerge for companies when implementing flexibility in employment relationship .

From an employee perspective, the effects found in several studies do not demonstrate a clear relationship. Some studies on the effect of contingent work on performance show an increase in performance for agency temporary workers (Broschak et al., 2008; Bryson, 2012) while others show a decrease in performance (Eldor & Cappelli, 2020). These mixed findings can be explained by the findings in a study by Clinton et al. (2021). They performed a study on 131 work groups with varying proportions of temporary agency workers. They found that negative effects on performance originate when the performed jobs of temporary and permanent workers are very similar and even see a positive effect when the jobs are highly different. This study can explain the mixed findings in earlier studies, however, more research is needed to confirm this relationship. Also findings related to part-time work are mixed. A study on primary care physicians showed that the productivity per clinical hour was higher for part-time workers than for full-time workers (Fairchild et al., 2001). On the other hand, a study by Broschak et al. (2008) found that part-time workers were not more productive than full-time workers. A study by Rosendaal (2003), can explain these mixed findings. He found a negative relationship between the hours worked per week and the efficiency. He showed that the gain in efficiency diminished when working longer than 20 to 30 hours a week. As part-time work can show high variation in the hours worked per week, his findings should be kept in mind in future research to incorporate this relationship.

The findings around job satisfaction and flexibility in employment relationship also do not show a clear effect. A minority of the identified studies show a negative association with job satisfaction for contingent workers themselves (Wilkin, 2013) or for their colleagues (Bryson, 2012). Two of the studies report no significant difference in job satisfaction (Broschak et al., 2008; Norlander et al., 2021) and the majority of the identified studies, show a positive relationship between part-time work or functional flexibility and job satisfaction (Beltran-Martín et al., 2008; Booth & Ours, 2013; Hohl, 1996; Kelliher & Riley, 2003). These inconsistent findings could be due to the self-reporting nature of the studies and mixed study designs, a more unified approach could benefit future research.

In most studies, flexibility in employment relationship is associated with low organisational commitment and higher turnover (Liden et al., 2003; J. Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Rosendaal, 2003; Santra, 2021). However, a study by Kelliher and Riley (2003) showed reduced levels of turnover for functional flexibility and a study by Kelliher and Anderson (2010) found increased organisational commitment for people working reduced hours. A possible explanation for these findings could be the difference between contingent workers that often are not bound to the company and functional flexibility and part-time work where workers are part of the company directly. Further research should investigate this difference in order to conclude the relationship between flexibility in employment relationship and organisational commitment.

Also well-being is mostly negatively associated with flexibility in employment relationship. Health is negatively influenced by company-based flexibility (Costa et al., 2004; Santra, 2021) and the gig economy (Davis & Hoyt, 2020; Mills-Finnerty et al., 2022). In contrast, a study by Kelliher and Anderson (2010) showed that part-time workers in general reported slightly lower levels of stress but also indicated the nature of their work as a source of stress as the workload has to be completed in less hours. In contrast, Kelliher and Riley (2003) showed in their study that functional flexibility does not come with increased stress for workers. This can be explained by the overall higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation for functional flexibility (Beltran-Martín et al., 2008; Kelliher & Riley, 2003)

Data on the relationship between absenteeism and flexibility in employment relationship was only found for part-time work. A systematic literature review of Bernstrøm and Houkes (2018) showed the evidence was inconclusive and no relationship can be shown between work hours and absenteeism.

In conclusion, the effect of implementing flexibility in employment relationship for the firm is clear while the effect for the employee is still questionable. Studies related to worker performance, job satisfaction and absenteeism do not show a clear relationship. On the other hand, the effect on organisational commitment and turnover does show a general decrease and increase respectively and also the well-being of employees is mostly negatively associated with flexibility in employment relationship. Further research is needed for seasonal and on-call workers, worker performance, job satisfaction, and absenteeism.

3.2.3 Flexibility in the scheduling of work

Definition and context

In defining flexibility in the scheduling of work, the definition as stated by Costa et al. (2004) covers all aspects: "Flexible working hours should involve a continuous choice on behalf of employers, employees, or both, regarding the amount (chronometry) and temporal distribution (chronology) of working hours" (Costa et al., 2004, p. 835). In its simplest form, flexibility in work schedule is about the ability to switch shifts

with colleagues (Costa et al., 2004). On the other side is something called "trust hours". Here employees freely choose when and how much they work as they are only evaluated on performance criteria (Costa et al., 2004). Somewhere in between these two ends of the scale, lies flexitime, where the employee chooses freely when to start and finish work, whether or not with core hours determined by the organisation where presence is mandatory (Costa et al., 2004; Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). Another known option of flexibility in work schedule is the compressed work week, where the normal 36-40 hours every week are performed in less than five days (Kopelman, 1986).

The first known implementation of flexibility in work schedule was in an aerospace company in West Germany in 1967 (Kopelman, 1986). Only two years later, already around ten companies in West Germany were using flexible working hours (Kopelman, 1986). As the years went by, this type of work arrangement was quickly adopted in other West European countries (Kopelman, 1986). Initially, this type of work arrangement was implemented in order to relieve problems around commuting and transit (Berkery et al., 2020). However, when women came into the labour force, it quickly became a way to attract women with family responsibilities (Berkery et al., 2020). More recently, the increasing awareness of their WLB, makes employees increasingly choose this type of flexibility (Downes & Koekemoer, 2011).

The prevalence of flexibility in work schedule is high. In the third EU survey on working conditions (Costa et al., 2004), it was shown that more than one-third of the self-employed and more than one-fifth of employed workers do not work the same hours every day and/or the same number of days every week. Further, a European company survey in 2013, showed that 66% of organisations in Europe offer their employees the choice over the start and finish times for their work (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). Specifically in Sweden, over 80% of the organisations offer flexitime and 43% of Swedish employees use this (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). The overall prevalence of flexibility in work schedule is high, but in nearly all cases more women make use of it than men (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019).

Drivers and inhibitors of uptake

The uptake of flexible work schedules can be enhanced or inhibited in several ways. Firstly, as with flexibility in employment relationship, the national and international (EU) legislation can assist or inhibit the uptake (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019).

Secondly, the setting has to be suitable, meaning the task and technology has to fit. When employees have very independent tasks on isolated modules, the setting would be suitable (Kopelman, 1986). If however, sequential tasks or fragmented work that needs a substantial amount of communication and coordination is required, the setting will be less suited (Kopelman, 1986). Additionally, due to the high number of hours performed on one day for a compressed work week, employees should be preferably without family responsibilities and the work should also be not very mentally or physically demanding (Kopelman, 1986).

Thirdly, the organization must be sufficiently flexible. If a unit needs to be fully staffed at all times, using employees from other units might be necessary (Kopelman, 1986). Therefore, functional flexibility might be necessary for successful implementation of flexibility in working schedule (Kopelman, 1986).

Fourthly, support from union partners and management is crucial (Kopelman, 1986). Especially first-line managers will have to deal with most difficulties that arise from implementing flexible work schedules (Kopelman, 1986).

Further, employee characteristics can enhance the chances for successful implementation of flexible working schedules (Kopelman, 1986). Implementation is more likely to succeed when employees are young, without family responsibilities, part of dual-career families, and if they value convenient work schedules (Kopelman, 1986).

Lastly, clarity into why the flexible work schedules are implemented is important. As will be discussed later, evidence on the improvement in performance is mixed and having this expectation as an organization will lead to discontinuance (Kopelman, 1986). Therefore, it must be clear that these types of decisions are mostly made to improve the WLB of employees (Kopelman, 1986).

Outcomes

Whether the effect of implementing flexibility in the scheduling of work is beneficial for the firm, or the employee, has been a subject of investigation since the beginning of research on alternative work arrangements. An overview of the effect of flexibility in the scheduling of work on several variables, like performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, well-being, and absenteeism, will be given.

When it comes to the effect of flexible work schedules on the performance of employees, most of the studies point towards a positive influence (Baltes et al., 1999; Berkery et al., 2017; Chow & Chew, 2006; Dunham et al., 1987; Facer & Wadsworth, 2008; Godart et al., 2017; Greene, 1984; Kim & Campagna, 1981; Kopelman, 1986; McCampbell, 1996; Nollen, 1979; Rainey & Wolf, 1981; Ronen & Primps, 1980; Schein et al., 1977; Shepard III et al., 1996), although some also report a decrease in productivity (Greene, 1984) or no significant change at all (Baltes et al., 1999; Berkery et al., 2020; Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Dunham et al., 1987; Hornung et al., 2008; Narayanan & Nath, 1982; Orpen, 1981; Pierce & Newstrom, 1982; Ronen & Primps, 1980; Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Schein et al., 1977). For the compressed work week, some studies (Greene, 1984; Kopelman, 1986) argue that especially at the end of the day, performance can decrease significantly as monotony and fatigue become more and more pronounced. For flexible work schedules, it is found that a schedule with a narrow core and a broad bandwidth are positively associated with performance (Pierce & Newstrom, 1983). This dependence on the exact match of the flexible work schedule and the work task can explain the mixed finding related

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to performance, although in general a positive relationship seems dominant.

Regarding job satisfaction, most findings point towards a positive relationship between flexibility in the scheduling of work and job satisfaction. Several studies (Baltes et al., 1999; Greene, 1984; Hohl, 1996; Orpen, 1981; Rainey & Wolf, 1981; Ronen & Primps, 1980) show how both flexible work schedules and the compressed workweek cause an increase in job satisfaction. A few studies (Dunham et al., 1987; Facer & Wadsworth, 2008; Narayanan & Nath, 1982; Pierce & Newstrom, 1982) report no significant difference and only one study (Greene, 1984) was identified in which the job satisfaction decreased. This one study (Greene, 1984) was concerned with implementing a compressed work week schedule of four days with each ten hours. It is hypothesised that this decrease in job satisfaction is related to the monotony and fatigue that builds up throughout the long day (Greene, 1984).

Studies around organizational commitment and employee turnover, show a strong case for a positive relationship between flexibility in the scheduling of work and organizational commitment. Many studies (Berkery et al., 2020; Berkery et al., 2017; Chow & Chew, 2006; Moen et al., 2011; Pierce & Newstrom, 1982; Ross & Ali, 2017; Scandura & Lankau, 1997) show that after the implementation of flexible work schedules, the organisation commitment increased and the employee turnover rate decreased. However, two studies (Dalton & Mesch, 1990; Hornung et al., 2008) were identified that found no relationship between organizational commitment, employee turnover and flexible work schedules. Dalton and Mesch (1990) comment in their study on its time limitations. The study lasted a year and this might have not been long enough to study the effects in turnover rate. This could explain the deviating result from the other studies. Also, Hornung et al. (2008) refer to time limitations as a possible explanation for their findings. So in general, it seems that flexible work schedules are positively related to organizational commitment.

Many studies have also tried to investigate the relationship between well-being and flexibility in the scheduling of work. Studies that have investigated the effect on WLB, have found positive influences (Bryan & Sevilla, 2017; Dunham et al., 1987; Facer & Wadsworth, 2008; Galea et al., 2014; Hooker et al., 2007; Hornung et al., 2008; Kopelman, 1986; McCampbell, 1996). Contrasting these results, one study by Schieman and Young (2010) found that schedule control can actually contribute to work-family conflict by causing the blurring of the work-family roles. Additionally, Allen et al. (2013) also notes that the potential for flexible work schedules in reducing work-family conflict can be limited especially when no organizational support is given. Further, one study by Costa et al. (2004) also indicates that in general more flexibility seems to be associated with better health but that longer and irregular working hours are associated with lower health levels. Additionally, studies on stress show mixed findings, ranging from studies that find a reduction in stress (Kopelman, 1986; Pierce & Newstrom, 1983) to a study that finds no significant effect (Pierce & Newstrom, 1982). It seems that most often flexible work schedules are related to improved well-being, although dependent on the exact work schedule and organiza-

tional support.

The effect of flexibility in the scheduling of work on absenteeism seems to be in general positive. Numerous studies (Bailyn et al., 1997; Baltes et al., 1999; Greene, 1984; Hohl, 1996; Kim & Campagna, 1981; Kopelman, 1986; McCampbell, 1996; Narayanan & Nath, 1982; Pierce & Newstrom, 1982; Ronen & Primps, 1980) show that flexible work schedules cause a reduction in absenteeism. In contrast, three studies did not reach a level of significance in this relationship (Baltes et al., 1999; Berkery et al., 2020; Costa et al., 2004) and two studies found a higher absenteeism (Rainey & Wolf, 1981; Venne, 1997). In the study by Venne (1997), the experimental group already had higher absenteeism rates than the comparison group before the implementation of the compressed work week. Another factor that could have played a role is the steep increase in working hours per day, from eight till twelve. The study by Rainey and Wolf (1981) tried to investigate the long-term effect of implementing flexible work schedules and found an increase in absenteeism, which is perplexing. However, they were not able to identify the cause of this increase. This is slightly in line with the findings of Dalton and Mesch (1990), who found an initial reduction in absenteeism and yet a subsequent return to baseline after a two-year period. This study can both explain the higher absenteeism found in most studies and the studies that do not find a significant relationship.

In conclusion, implementing flexibility in the scheduling of work shows strong cases for increased performance, increased job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, decreased turnover, improved well-being and reduced absenteeism. Although, all of these relationships are very dependent on the exact work schedule and the time-span of the study.

3.2.4 Flexibility in the work location

Definition and context

To define flexibility in the work location, the definition of telecommuting by Gajendran and Harrison (2007) will be used. "Telecommuting is an alternative work arrangement in which employees perform tasks elsewhere that are normally done in a primary or central workplace, for at least some portion of their work schedule, using electronic media to interact with others inside and outside the organisation" (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007, p. 1525). In most of the arrangements, the employees have the choice over where they will work (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). Alternative names used in literature include teleworking or remote working.

Flexibility in the work location has been implemented by organisations for several reasons. First of all, it can help organizations reduce overhead costs related to renting office space, electricity and heating (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Dimartino & Wirth, 1990). This reduction in costs does outweigh the additional costs related to teleworking (Dimartino & Wirth, 1990). Another reason is the general increase

in awareness of employees to their WLB, as mentioned before. Also reducing the air pollution and saving commuter costs are reasons for implementing teleworking (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Employees' choice to work remotely is determined by a few predictive factors (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). The first set of factors is related to the work environment and includes manager's willingness, workplace interaction, and self-perceived job suitability. When it comes to manager's willingness, trust is important to allow independent work away from local supervision (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). The job suitability is related to the nature of the tasks. When employees think they cannot perform their job away from the office, they will not choose teleworking (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). The second set of factors is related to the personal environment of the employee and his/her preferences. This includes personal discipline, work environment at home, family orientation, workaholism, and preference for social contact (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

The prevalence of teleworking changed dramatically due to the pandemic. The share of employers in Sweden who offered teleworking increased immensely from 36% in 2003 to 51% in 2014 (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017) and right before the pandemic, in 2019, more than 35% of employees in Sweden indicated they sometimes or usually work remotely (Milasi et al., 2020). In July 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, a European e-survey showed that nearly half of the European employees worked remotely for at least some time during the pandemic (Eurofound, 2020). While the pandemic caused an extreme surge in the uptake of teleworking, no European data is available on whether or not this high prevalence is here to stay.

Drivers and inhibitors of uptake

The uptake of flexibility in work location can be enhanced or inhibited in several ways. Firstly, as with flexibility in employment relationship and in the scheduling of work, the national and international (EU) legislation can assist or inhibit the uptake (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019).

Not only legislation but also culture in a country can enhance or inhibit the uptake of remote work. For example, in Spain, employees feel the need to be present as their work culture is based more highly on being present and less on meeting objectives (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017). This results in a generally lower uptake of teleworking (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017).

Another possible driver or inhibitor of uptake is the nature of the job. Remote work is per definition more applicable in some jobs than others (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). Relatively independent tasks that involve the use of electronic devices such as laptops are more suitable (Kelliher & De Menezes, 2019). Especially the ICT sector is suitable, in contrast to manufacturing or retail (Kelliher & De Menezes,

2019).

Further, the workplace environment is another factor. The level of trust between managers and employees is critical as managers must trust that the employee can perform from home and the employee must trust that their manager will not treat them differently (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017; Martinez-Sánchez et al., 2007). Also, the manager's attitude plays a role. Managers in Sweden take a more positive stance for teleworking than managers in other countries (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017). Additionally, the quality of the work environment at home plays a role in the uptake of teleworking (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017).

The last factor that plays a role in the uptake of flexibility in work location is the personality of the employee. To what extent does an employee want or need social workplace interaction and face-to-face time with co-workers and his/her manager (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017; Martinez-Sánchez et al., 2007).

Outcomes

Whether or not the effect of implementing flexibility in work location is beneficial for the firm or the employee, has been a subject of investigation since the advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) made teleworking easier. An overview of the effect of flexibility in work location on several variables, like performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, well-being, and absenteeism, will be given.

Several studies on the effect of teleworking on performance exist. Most of these (André, 2013; Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Biron & Veldhoven, 2016; Bloom et al., 2013; Dimartino & Wirth, 1990; Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Gajendran et al., 2015; Kurland & Bailey, 1999; B. Martin & Mesler, 2012; Stavrou, 2005) support a positive relationship between teleworking and performance. However, some side notes have to be made. Although in most studies the increased ability to focus at home is given as a reason for improved performance, some of these studies also point out that in average more hours are worked (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017) or less breaks are taken (Bloom et al., 2013). On top of this, most of these studies also often work with self-evaluation methods to measure productivity. Employees who choose working remotely only benefit from creating the idea of a positive relationship with performance and thus these self-evaluation might be biased (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). In short, although most studies point towards a positive relationship between teleworking and performance, care must be taken as these studies often rely on self-evaluation or fail to investigate a corresponding increase in working hours.

The relationship between job satisfaction and flexibility in work location has been well investigated. Several studies (Bloom et al., 2013; Dimartino & Wirth, 1990;

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Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Hohl, 1996; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Kraut, 1989; Kurland & Bailey, 1999) show that working remotely is associated with a higher job satisfaction, employee moral and motivation. However, two studies (Caillier, 2012; Kurland & Bailey, 1999) show that this increase is not valid for any type of teleworker. Kurland and Bailey (1999) show that only home-based telecommuting and neighbourhood work centers are related with a higher job satisfaction, not the mobile work or satellite office option. The study by Caillier (2012) distinguished between frequent and infrequent teleworkers and shows that infrequent teleworkers have higher levels of job satisfaction. All of these findings can be explained by a study conducted by Virick et al. (2010). This shows that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between the frequency of teleworking and job satisfaction. According to them, job satisfaction will be highest when the frequency of teleworking is moderate. This shows that depending on the teleworking frequency of the studied subjects, the results related to job satisfaction can vary.

When it comes to the association between teleworking and organizational commitment and turnover intentions of employees, most studies show a positive relationship for organizational commitment (Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Hunton & Norman, 2010; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; B. Martin & Mesler, 2012) and a negative one for turnover intentions (Bloom et al., 2013; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kurland & Bailey, 1999). However, some studies also show that remote working can be negatively related to organizational commitment (Caillier, 2012), employee turnover intentions (Choi, 2018), and the turnover intentions of non-teleworking colleagues (Golden, 2007). Also the frequency of teleworking plays a role again, as indicated in studies by Caillier (2012) and Hunton and Norman (2010). They both found that employees who frequently or exclusively work remotely show a lower organizational commitment than those who balance their time in the office and remotely. The results of a study conducted by Choi (2018) can explain some of these mixed findings. They demonstrated that institutional and managerial support are negatively associated with employee turnover intentions. So overall, it seems that the relationship between teleworking and organizational commitments and turnover intentions is respectively positive and negative. Regardless of frequency, institutional and managerial support may play a role in the exact outcome of teleworking on these variables.

Research on well-being in relation to teleworking shows very mixed findings. A study by Anderson et al. (2014) showed that the effect varies significantly with individual preferences and therefore, the findings of all the studies further discussed will not lead to a general relationship between teleworking and well-being. One of the effects on well-being that is often found in studies, is that boundaries between work and family roles blur when working remotely. In several studies (Allen et al., 2013; Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017), this leads to an increase in work-family conflicts. However, other studies show a decrease in work-family conflict (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kraut, 1989; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012) and a better WLB (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017; Hooker et al., 2007; Hunton & Norman, 2010). Another studied factor is the stress associated

with working remotely. All identified studies show a decrease in stress (Anderson et al., 2014; Dimartino & Wirth, 1990; Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Kraut, 1989; Kurland & Bailey, 1999; Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012; Trent et al., 1994). In general, it can be found that, working remotely occasionally can have a positive influence on the health and well-being of employees (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017). However, effects on stress, WLB and work-family conflict are also highly dependent on individual preferences and so generalizing findings in this area is hard.

All identified studies (Hohl, 1996; Kurland & Bailey, 1999; Stavrou, 2005) related to absenteeism show a reduction when teleworking. Two of these studies are based on self-reporting and are only performed within a short time frame. As mentioned in 3.2.3, the time frame of the studies might influence the results and thus further research needs to be performed to confirm any type of relationship between flexibility in the work location and absenteeism.

Finally, some benefits for the organizations are also linked to teleworking, such as easier recruitment and increased retention of workers considering to leave such as women after maternity leave or seniors nearing retirement (Dimartino & Wirth, 1990). Additionally, offering remote work will also allow companies to recruit employees outside their region, creating a bigger pool of suitable candidates to choose from (Dimartino & Wirth, 1990).

In conclusion, implementing flexibility in the work location has a relationship to increased performance, increased job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, decreased turnover, and reduced absenteeism. However, the reported effects on well-being are very mixed and all of the findings are influenced by the frequency of teleworking and the individual preferences. Further, most studies rely on self-reporting or have limited time-spans which could have an influence on the results.

3.3 New Ways of Working

New Ways of Working (NWW) is a recent research area that encompasses various practices identified within flexible work arrangements, combining research on flexibility in the scheduling of work and in the work location (Renard et al., 2021). As a concept, NWW originated in professional settings, referring to certain ways of organizing work that entail high levels of flexibility, such as flexible working hours and teleworking, as opposed to traditional time- and place-bound work conventions, such as working from nine to five and five days a week at the office (De Leede, 2016). NWW is usually conceptualized as a bundle of practices in the evolving world of work, where ICT enables workers to be independent of constraints posed by time and location (Renard et al., 2021). As a review of the available academic literature

on NWW, this section contextualizes NWW challenges by relating them to their emergence and current challenges in research and practice.

3.3.1 The emergence of New Ways of Working

The term New Ways of Working was first used by management consultants and managers in the Netherlands to refer to a set of flexible working practices facilitated by ICT (De Leede, 2016; Jemine, 2021; Kingma, 2019; Renard et al., 2021). Jemine (2021) identified the two major trails to the origin of NWW, both from the empirical field and located in the Netherlands. One is attributed to the 1990s Dutch consultants, most notable of whom was Erik Veldhoen—one of the pioneers in implementing flexible work spaces who authored multiple managerial books that predicted the end of traditional work offices and proposed the key concepts and dimensions that would form the practical foundation for NWW (Jemine, 2021).

The other trail of origin is traced back to Microsoft Netherlands, the organization that underwent major re-configurations of the way their company worked. In 2005, a famous white paper authored by Microsoft Netherlands leaders pointed out the delay between an organization's work practices and technological progress, meaning that the way an organization organized work was always behind what became newly possible in the "New World of Work" (Jemine, 2021). The company described its adaptation to this New World of Work by establishing its "New Way of Work" in its annual reports and other advertising material, making it the trendsetter and major dissemination of the abbreviation NWW (Jemine, 2021). The popularity of NWW in consultancy and managerial practice was quickly followed by the popular success of nonacademic literature on the topic, especially books (Jemine, 2021). Even though the nonacademic books were about NWW in practice, they lacked a consistent usage of the term, a theoretical foundation, and scientific support (De Leede, 2016).

Academic interest in NWW has also grown over the last two decades, forming a research stream in the 2000s dedicated to wide-ranging ways to organize flexible working, usually including similar sets of practices, such as flexible working hours, flexible working locations, remote working, home offices, telecommuting, hybrid working, etc. (Alfes et al., 2022; De Leede, 2016; Jemine, 2021; Renard et al., 2021). The large number of practices is due to the fact that this research stream brings together scholars from multiple fields with attention paid to different aspects of certain practices (Renard et al., 2021). Some examples reviewed by Renard et al. (2021) include organizational psychology (Peters et al., 2014), management (Assarlind et al., 2013), human resource management (HRM) (Peters et al., 2014), and architecture (Gorgievski et al., 2010).

The abundance of practices and academic perspectives constitute challenges in reaching a universal definition for NWW and a clear delineation for NWW studies, which was problematized in Jemine (2021)'s literature study. Two other systematic literature reviews by Alfes et al. (2022) and Renard et al. (2021) with different foci

and approaches also attempted to create frameworks to counter these theoretical challenges, but their effective contribution to the field remains to be seen in future research. Therefore, sub-purpose a of this thesis is dedicated to creating a framework for investigating challenges perceived by managers and employees during the implementation of NWW practices. The remainder of this section will provide an overview of the recent literature, which establishes a theoretical foundation for understanding NWW challenges in research and practice.

3.3.2 NWW challenges in research

De Leede (2016) edited one of the first comprehensive volumes on NWW practice, which introduced NWW as a management fashion in its upswing phase, based on five arguments. Firstly, De Leede (2016) stated that the NWW definitions in NWW research were used with such breadth and looseness that they caused the academic rigor of the concept to be questionable. Secondly, NWW entails a tendency to simplify reality into the old versus the new ways of working. Thirdly, NWW authors tend to generate prescriptive material for management and employee practices to follow for maximum potential benefits. Fourthly, the NWW concept aligns with modern views of organizing and thus goes under consideration for implementation by organization leaders. Finally, the majority rhetoric surrounding NWW underscores its potential as a concept to increase knowledge workers' productivity and thereby improving their well-being.

In other words, the NWW concept is at the peak of its usage in both academic and professional contexts, but in an oversimplified and derivative manner, lacking support by strong theoretical foundation, scientific evidence, and critical perspectives. De Leede (2016) emphasized that a reliable definition and theoretical framework for NWW is the crucial basis for further research. The evidence and insights provided by scientific research is what differentiates valid and credible NWW claims from "'consultancy-selling-promo-talk' with lots of promised and non-real claims" (De Leede, 2016, p. x). Therefore, it is high time that research investigated the antecedents and outcomes of NWW, which will form the framework for understanding and further supporting or challenging NWW claims.

De Leede (2016) proposed that the definition for such ambition should be based on the disentanglement of the ambiguous NWW concept into specific concepts. He compared five different NWW definitions from major existing NWW research, which overlapped in two main characteristics: workers' autonomy (i.e. they can choose when and where to work) and technology (i.e. how ICT technology developments enable NWW practices). Combining these two main characteristics (the organizational perspective and the technological/workspace perspective) with the practical origin of NWW, De Leede (2016) defined New Ways of Working as "practices in which employees are able to work independent of time, place and organization, supported by a flexible work environment which is facilitated by information technologies" (p. xiii). The NWW practices mentioned in the definition include teleworking, mobile

working, satellite offices, flexible work-spaces, flexible working hours, social networks, and collaborative tools.

This list of practices functions as a research tool for focus and alignment, rather than a requirement checklist. Additionally, it helps clarify that the NWW concept is usually practiced as a set of practices combining a few, but not all of the listed practices. These practices are concepts-in-practice that allow NWW researchers to build NWW knowledge on previous knowledge generated from other long-standing streams of research and publications. For example, an organization can practice NWW in the combination of teleworking, mobile working, flexible working hours, and collaborative tools. NWW research conducted at this organization can study their work organization in relation to previous literature on flexible work arrangements, which comes with such long established academic terms as flexible working times and virtual teams, or HRM practices, with empowerment and autonomy concepts.

However, Jemine (2021) problematized NWW researchers' individual attempts at defining NWW, which caused fragmentation in the study and theorization of NWW and motivated him to propose a new five-dimensional definition. Jemine (2021) critically viewed common conceptual approaches in existing literature, such as the empirical approach describing NWW as a set of practices as previously taken by De Leede (2016), among others. He argued that these approaches tend to be substantialist in that they attempt to define the contents of NWW (what NWW entails or should entail) in competition with the consultants and managers that had brought NWW to its upswing as a management fashion. The downside to this competition, according to him, is that it always leads to the conclusion that NWW is an umbrella term, which is of little value to future research. Instead, Jemine (2021) suggested that NWW researchers allocate their efforts to understanding what NWW is, not what it is or should be about. This claim motivated his comprehensive re-conceptualization of NWW, resulting in five ways of understanding NWW, as a management fashion, as a set of discourses, as practices of organizational change, as material work-spaces, and as emerging work practices.

In response, Renard et al. (2021) acknowledged both the importance of the five-dimensional concept by Jemine (2021) and its distance from empirical research in comparison with current published NWW research at the time of writing. In other words, Jemine (2021)'s highly conceptual definition is comprehensive but difficult to transfer to empirical research. As a result, Renard et al. (2021) produced a synthetic definition reconciling the concepts proposed by Jemine (2021)'s and those found in available literature to add conceptual weight to content-driven definitions. The new definition is as follow:

> As part of a broader transformation of the world of work and organizations, NWW are made of practices, supported by ICT, intended to increase the flexibility, autonomy, work performance, as well as well-being of knowledge workers in their delivery of daily work, letting them choose

when and where to work. (Renard et al., 2021, p. 12)

This definition clarifies the context, content, and motivations of NWW practices while retaining both the organizational and technological/workspace perspectives. Thus, it can sufficiently support a framework for relating empirical findings to academic concepts. Based on this definition, a framework for studying NWW challenges is introduced and explained in section 3.4.

3.3.3 NWW challenges in practice

While NWW practices aim to enhance employees' work-life balance, job satisfaction, and organizational performance, their implementation also poses several challenges for managers and employees. Such challenges have been found in recent research.

The majority of current research on NWW practices and their implications focuses on performance and psychological outcomes, such as increased productivity, autonomy, innovation, well-being, changes in teamwork behavior, and leadership (Alfes et al., 2022; De Leede, 2016; Renard et al., 2021). A study on the productivity outcomes of a specific NWW practice (telework) found work intensity consequences caused by the number of week hours (Hoornweg et al., 2016). Another group of researchers explored the association between the number of weekly working hours and psychological detachment and sleep. They tested their hypotheses on a large dataset of Swedish professionals and found that working without time boundaries tend to lead to longer working hours per week and difficulties in detaching from work (Mellner et al., 2016). Similar research also found that the increase in productivity enabled by NWW practices tend to be achieved at the expense of employees' WLB and well-being (Kotera & Correa Vione, 2020; Van De Voorde et al., 2012).

In this line of thinking, NWW research on challenges can be linked to previous research on challenges associated with certain flexible work arrangements such as telework and flexible schedules (see section 3.2). In addition, NWW challenges are closely connected to well-being, which is one of the most pressing challenges in the world of work in the 21st century (Cvenkel, 2020). While NWW is currently implemented to achieve organizational goals, it might be so at the expense of employees' well-being by increasing stress and fatigue and decreasing their control over personal activities (Jensen & Van De Voorde, 2016; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Spector, 2016). Renard et al. (2021) argues that research findings are still unclear regarding how NWW is implemented to maximize both employees' performance and well-being. Even though these two outcomes are the main focus of the human resource (HR) literature (Van De Voorde et al., 2012), more research can be done to deepen current knowledge on the relationship between them and specific NWW practices.

According to Renard et al. (2021), using the typology of HR results, such as employees' performance and well-being (Van De Voorde et al., 2012), can benefit future NWW research. Firstly, unexplored variables can help expand the field of research by

enriching current frameworks. Secondly, established and frequently used HR-rooted variables in NWW research can help systematize the analysis of NWW outcomes. Similarly, the framing and analysis of NWW challenges can benefit from using concepts and themes derived from related streams, such as HRM, management, virtual teams, psychological impacts, and flexible working arrangements.

Another group of challenges identified in research on NWW practices are related to communication and collaboration. Because NWW practices often involve virtual teams and remote work, effective communication and collaboration become crucial for successful implementation (De Leede, 2016). Nevertheless, Renard et al. (2021) and Jensen and Van De Voorde (2016) found that communication barriers and difficulties in maintaining social relationships and trust can arise in NWW settings. Furthermore, virtual communication creates a challenge for on-the-job training and knowledge transfer among junior employees (Beauregard et al., 2019) Virtual communication tools may also lead to information overload and distraction, affecting productivity (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019). Therefore, it is important that future research further explore these challenges and their implications on managers and employees. One way to address such implications is to explore the relationships between different challenges. While several challenges have been identified in the literature reviewed throughout this section, they have been studied in isolated instances and fragmented terms. This characteristic indicates the need for a more clearly unified framework that not only utilizes established academic concepts but also enables the analysis of how the challenges are interconnected and influencing one another.

Last but not least, Alfes et al. (2022) identified a research gap in the implementation of NWW, more specifically hybrid working arrangements. Even though NWW practices can be implemented on the organizational level as a HR policy or regulation, the specific enforcement on the unit level is dependent on the line managers who interpret the policy and employ his/her own measures (such as managing by trust) to enforce the policy in the unit (Adamson et al., 2023). More empirical evidence is necessary to explore how NWW practices are implemented, not only on the organizational level, but down to the unit and individual levels. Certain challenges on these levels might escape research from a purely organizational perspective. Future investigation into the line managers' interpretation and enforcement of NWW practices in different units and potential implications will enrich current research on challenges in implementing NWW.

In summary, current research on NWW practices and their implications focuses on performance and psychological outcomes, and challenges related to well-being, communication, and collaboration. Using established HR-rooted categories can help systematize the analysis of NWW outcomes and transfer knowledge from related fields to further understanding NWW practices. A new framework that integrates these concepts and adds structuring dimensions to research can help deepen current knowledge on the challenges that managers and employees face during the implementation of NWW practices.

3.4 A framework for NWW challenges

The literature review in subsection 3.3.2 and subsection 3.3.3 has shown that a new theoretical framework for NWW challenges is crucial to generating transferable empirical evidence that can enrich academic research findings. The theoretical framework serves to offset the fragmentation of available knowledge on the topic and thus needs to be supported by consistent conceptualization and empirical evidence (De Leede, 2016; Renard et al., 2021). By following Renard et al. (2021)'s new definition, this study integrates both the organizational perspective and technological/workplace perspective in NWW research to explore and describe challenges that managers and employees face when implementing NWW practices. The framework consists of a list of challenges (see below) that have been explicitly identified in available NWW and alternative work arrangements literature. The list of references on which the framework is based can be seen in Appendix B.

- **Organization**
  - ❖ Individual preferences
  - ❖ Nature of the task
- **HR outcome**
  - ❖ Employees' performance (work quality)
    - ∗ Productivity
    - ∗ Work intensity
    - ∗ Work hours
  - ❖ Employees' well-being
    - ∗ Emotional and mental health
    - ∗ Loneliness
    - ∗ Work-life balance
- **Team and leadership**
  - ❖ Communication
  - ❖ Virtual teams
  - ❖ Knowledge sharing
  - ❖ Relationships
- **Workspace (work environment)**
  - ❖ Home office
  - ❖ Office hours
  - ❖ Distractions
  - ❖ Detachment from work
- **Technical tools**
- **Changes in the world of work (old vs. new)**

The above list is organized in themes and serves as the preliminary structure for the semi-structured interviews. These themes are simplified for the sake of structuring data collection while maintaining the connection to available knowledge. In other words, it provides a preliminary structure to facilitate the semi-structured interviews

conducted to collect empirical data. It guides the interviews to cover existing themes and potential relationships between them and allows enough space for questions in between and outside such themes for exploration of newly emergent challenges in establishing alternative work arrangements in the current post-COVID-19 era. When combined with updated empirical evidence, this frame would be further developed into an extended framework that include both previously identified and newly emergent categories of challenges, as a part of the output presented in chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Empirical Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the empirical findings resulting from the semi-structured interviews will be presented. Firstly, the framework from section 3.4 will be used to analyze the gathered empirical data, followed by a discussion on the identified challenges. Each of the categories of challenges will be presented with quoted data that allow the reader to grasp the category from the interviewees' perspectives. Secondly, the emerging network of challenges is presented, showing both uni-directional and bi-directional relations between the categories of challenges. Thirdly, the findings from the validation interview follow are shown. Lastly, a summary of all the findings is presented.

As mentioned in section 3.4, the preliminary framework provides a conceptual foundation for the empirical study. It helps researchers formulate interview questions in the interview guide (see Appendix A). While this guide provides a conceptual foundation for the empirical study, additional layers of analysis need to be added to generate new findings from the collected empirical data. These layers of analysis are shown in Table 4.1. On the first layer, the list of specific challenge categories are expanded to include newly explored themes or categories of challenges from the empirical field, which are further divided into subcategories and displayed in the second column of Table 4.1. The first column indicates the corresponding sections of the chapter where specific categories are analyzed in detail. On the second layer, the list of newly identified challenges replace the previous one, as identified in the literature study. The thematic analysis of the empirical data provides new definitions of the categories and aligns the new with the old themes to make sure they retain conceptual value and comprehensiveness. These definitions take the third column of Table 4.1. The third layer involves the quantification of qualitative data, which incorporates exact numbers of instances (observations) that a theme or sub-category of challenges were addressed throughout the interviews (the fourth column), accompanied with percentages per theme (the fifth column).

This quantification step is a crucial part of empirical data analysis, because it allows for additional interpretations regarding the attitudes of the interviewees toward specific challenges and potential implications (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This step involves capturing the number of times each challenge was recounted and calculating their percentages within each category. The quantification indicates the relative importance of the categories and subcategories (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), but not their definite importance, which is beyond the scope of this study and reserved for future undertakings.

Section	(Sub)category	Category definition	No. of observations	No. of observations in % of observations
4.2	**Coordination and organization**	Establishing a common way to work for multiple different individuals	174	22%
	By individual preferences		77	44%
	By nature of the task		71	41%
	By mode of participation		17	10%
	By unit		9	5%
4.3	**Collaboration and communication**	The communication of information and collaborative work between employees, managers and other work partners	140	18%
	General		71	51%
	Global working		42	30%
	Spontaneous meetings		16	10%
	Knowledge sharing		11	8%
4.4	**Relationships**	The way in which employees and managers are connected to other people they work with	83	11%
	Inside the unit		43	52%
	Outside the unit		40	48%
4.5	**Well-being**	The state of being happy, satisfied, comfortable or healthy	64	8%
	WLB		46	72%
	Emotional and mental health		9	14%
	Loneliness		5	8%
	Physical health		4	6%
4.6	**Managerial responsibilities**	Tasks which line managers are responsible for, as part of their position	55	7%
	Performance management		16	29%
	Well-being management		12	22%
	Policy enforcement		11	20%
	Availability		8	15%
	Facilitation		8	15%

Section	(Sub)category	Category definition	No. of observations	No. of observations in % of observations
4.7	**Workspace**	The setting in which employees perform their tasks	47	6%
	Physical setting		17	36%
	Distractions at home		15	32%
	Social setting		7	15%
	Distractions at work		7	13%
	Technological access		2	4%
4.8	**Work quality**	The extend to which the work delivered by the employees meets the expectations of the managers and the company	44	6%
	Employee performance		22	50%
	Employee focus & engagement		20	45%
	Handling the workload		2	5%
4.9	**Technical tools**	The ICT tools that make flexible work arrangements and new ways of working possible	41	5%
4.10	**Leadership**	Actions or behaviours of the manager that go beyond the strict managerial responsibilities	40	5%
	Trust		17	42%
	Connection		10	25%
	Accessibility		10	25%
	Motivation		3	8%
4.11	**Old vs. new**	The evolving changes in managers' and employees' habits and attitudes following the changes in work arrangements	38	5%
4.12	**Rules**	The set of principles put in place by the organization that individual employees must follow	32	4%
	Rules around flexibility in the work location		21	66%
	Rules around flexibility in the work schedule		11	34%
4.13	**Innovation**	The creation of a new idea, product or method that creates additional value for the company	20	3%

TABLE 4.1: Identified challenges perceived by both managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements

4.2 Coordination and organization

Coordination and organization challenges in establishing alternative work arrangements refer to the challenges of establishing a common way to work for multiple different individuals in terms of the mode of participation, the working unit, the nature of the tasks involved, and individual preferences. In total, 174 observations were made in this category and further categorized into four subcategories, ranking from high to low frequency: coordinating by individual preferences (44%), coordinating by the nature of the tasks (41%), coordinating by mode of participation (10%), and coordinating by unit (5%). Findings within these subcategories will now be presented and further explained, along with their relations to other categories.

4.2.1 Coordinating by individual preferences

Coordinating by individual preferences refers to the coordination and organization of work while still taking individual preferences into account to the fullest extent. This subcategory of challenges is common for both managers and employees, as observed by all three managers and five employees.

One challenge related to this subcategory is mainly managerial, occurring when managers need to manage and adapt their individual work schedule to the individual preferences of the people they meet with, both in time (how often) and in place (where):

> Some people love to be at home, sitting in a room, not being disturbed at work, and don't reflect on the fact that they need to meet up with other people. Maybe they only see the benefits of being at home, and another one gets really, really stressed by sitting at home and not meeting our people at all. So if we're starting up there between them, then it's up to us as managers to find the best setup for everyone. *Manager, Team 1*

According to both managers and employees, individual preferences range from starting and ending the workday earlier or later compared to the managers to only joining online meetings, making it even more difficult for the managers to coordinate:

> But if it's like a more regular working day where there are meetings on Teams or other things, then most people, for practical reasons, prefer to stay at home. *Manager, Team 2*

> Of course, if there is a need for other meetings, then I'm driving out to the office, still trying to take all face-to-face meetings when I'm at the office. *Manager, Team 1*

Besides the one-on-one meetings, the multiple participation meetings also entail contradicting preferences for when and where to meet and thus pose difficulties for coordination:

> That is different from person to person. I can't say. Maybe some people feel more comfortable speaking up online when they are not face-to-face. Some people prefer to meet, and so this is something different from person to person. *Employee 1, Team 3*

> It's also very different for different people. It's a private choice. *Employee 2, Team 3*

In general, a feeling of happiness towards the flexible work rules is expressed, although some interviewees indicate that if they had the choice, they would choose to either work more or less from home:

> The ones that don't really like working from home can come here even if they don't come here for the full day. They might work five hours in the office and three from home or something. *Manager, Team 3*

> I think it depends a little bit on the persons involved, because some people are happy with the setup we have now. They have these needs, and that is perfect for them because even if they were five days in the office, they may be spending half the time sitting on their own, trying to focus and trying to concentrate. *Manager, Team 2*

> It's not that I'm looking for five days in the office, but I think it's a very good benefit to meet people both in your team and in other teams with whom you might not have that much contact in your daily tasks. *Employee 1, Team 2*

> It's even slightly beneficial, to be honest, because I don't waste time getting into the office every day and getting home. *Employee 2, Team 2*

The preference for working from home is related to the work environment. Employees with this preference usually have a space specifically designated for working, while others indicate saving commute time and using break times to carry out quick house-care tasks as beneficial:

> But I enjoy that you can work from home as well. So then you don't have to commute, and you can do some other tasks with more concentration. I mean, if you need some time to focus on some things, I think it's good to have that on those days that you work from home. *Employee 1, Team 2*

On the other end of the scale, employees who prefer to work at the office tend to have more basic or temporary home office setups. Some of them find the environment at home distracting, find more motivation to work, and deal with pressure when working in the presence of their colleagues:

> If I really need to focus on the work I need to complete on time, I prefer the office. That's better. *Employee 2, Team 3*

Employees with preferences toward this end of the scale appreciate not only the social contact at the office but also the possibility to communicate in person, such as by walking up to a colleague and asking quick questions, which facilitates collaboration and knowledge sharing:

> It's quite often that I'm sending emails, and then I take a walk over to another desktop and ask them to discuss it. *Manager, Team 1*

As mentioned above, relations exist between this subcategory and well-being, managerial responsibilities, rules, workspace, relationships, and communication. Additionally, individual preference is also related to the nature of the task. For example, an employee who appreciates meeting with the team in person might still prefer to have work meetings online with their camera off in order to feel comfortable talking and

sharing their thoughts. In summary, relationships can be drawn between coordinating based on individual preferences and well-being, managerial responsibilities, rules, workspace, relationships, communication, and the nature of the task.

4.2.2 Coordinating by nature of the tasks

In total, 71 observations were made about coordinating by nature of the tasks, including the coordination of flexible tasks (38%), team tasks (37%), and fixed tasks (25%). Tasks of different natures entail different challenges when it comes to the coordination of work. The three different groups of challenges related to the nature of the tasks will be further explained below.

Flexible tasks

Flexible tasks give employees the complete freedom to choose the time and place to work. The main challenge with coordinating tasks of this nature is for the employees and managers to make their own individual decisions so that work quality is maximized.

Some employees indicate that they find certain tasks easier to be performed at home or in the office:

> But those kinds of challenges that I find easier to solve when working from the office are at the beginning of that project. But once everything's in place for the project, then it's just straightforward. There's not much stress in that sense. *Employee 1, Team 3*

> Right now, I'm rewriting a lot of old documents where the links don't work. I can sit here and do that because I don't have the discipline to start that at home. *Employee 2, Team 2*

> We have an end-of-year performance management that we deal with individually for everyone. We have salary talks, and we start off the new performance management from square one. So there are a lot of things that need to be prepared, and that is much easier for me to do at home when I don't get disturbed at all. *Manager, Team 3*

However, this perception varies for every employee. Most interviewed subjects indicate a preference for taking meetings in person in order to maintain relationships and have better communication:

> I want to be present when I'm at the office, so if someone went to my desk and disturbed me, it was not a disturbance for me at that moment because I changed focus to that person. *Manager, Team 1*

> In the office, it's mostly meetings. And everything else is for working from home. *Manager, Team 3*

In addition, they also indicated that newcomers might have higher needs for in-office time with experienced colleagues:

> There's always a problem if you're taking in new people and giving them a chance to learn something new, because then you might have to arrange periods in the office where you can sit with people and work with them, but otherwise, if you know your job, then unless there's some physical part of it, I don't think there's any practical reason anymore. *Employee 2, Team 2*

In summary, there are relations between coordinating flexible tasks and work quality, workspace, relationships, and communication.

Team tasks

Team tasks always require interaction with at least one other person and are not completely fixed or flexible but are negotiable with the team. Therefore, the main challenge here is how to make the best negotiation of work arrangements:

> I need personal interaction with people to get the most out of certain tasks, and I try to plan them at the office, in face-to-face meetings, innovation or workshop meetings, and ops meetings. *Manager, Team 1*

> But it differs a little bit depending on what kind of activities people have. If there is an activity on a Thursday or Friday that actually has the benefit of being present in the office, then people come to the office for such events or activities. *Manager, Team 2*

> It depends on whether there are other people here and maybe the type of meeting. I mean, if it's just more of a meeting where someone will go through some regular stuff that we do every week or so, then maybe it's not so important to be here. But if we are going to work on something, to progress something, maybe to come up with new ideas, and so on, then it can be a bit easier to be in the office. *Employee 1, Team 2*

> I don't really work with anyone in the office anymore, and practically, all the people I really support are either the projects in Tokyo or customer teams in Europe, and they don't sit there, so the impact on my work from COVID was zero.*Employee 2, Team2*

This challenge is closely related to individual preferences, which can be treated as a mediating variable that might allow for many options with several arguments or limit the available working options due to potential incompatibilities. In summary, this subcategory of challenges is related to communication, old vs. new, and well-being.

Fixed tasks

Fixed tasks are tasks that can be fixed by time (a strict time frame, schedule, or urgent deadline) or location (a specifically reserved location or one with special equipment with limited access and mobility). Therefore, the main challenge is associated with organizing and coordinating work according to the restrictions of time and/or space.

One important aspect is that some physical equipment with restricted access can limit how flexible the task can be performed:

> Only those who really need equipment—they need the lab—come here for more than two days. Some of them come five days a week. They come here for the full week to work because their type of work is like that. *Employee 1, Team 3*

> If your project requires you to operate our machines or networks, it's not possible to work remotely, so you have to be in the lab or in the office. *Employee 2, Team 3*

Another crucial aspect is that different stages of certain projects might cause the tasks to be fixed in different ways:

> I fix what I need for the software releases and so on, and that is always more ad hoc. You always have delivery dates, of course, but it's always been more about what's gone wrong in the inbox today, and you take that and run with it and fix it. *Employee 2, Team 2*

Tasks with high time pressures also require a lot of focus, but whether they are preferred to be performed at home or in the office depends on individual preferences and work space:

> There are things that we need to do more or less the same day or during the week that they appear: we need to deliver this, and so on. If you have that kind of task and a lot of them filling your agenda for the full day, then I think it's more efficient to do that from home because you're less disturbed and you can really focus, and then you stay focused and you have to do this task. *Manager, Team 2*

Last but not least, meetings fixed by a recurring schedule might be difficult to set up and maintain, or they might cause unpredictable schedule interference:

> I ask the person instead, "How often do you want to have a meeting?" and I have a minimum of that, like meeting up every third week, and then I'm more or less having more space because everyone won't want to meet me every week and don't have the need. I will not force it because it's a matter of planning for me. I'm also trying to avoid administration at work, so that's also giving me more space at work. *Manager, Team 1*

> Some things you have to do right away, or you know you have to deliver on Tuesday or Wednesday, or answer this email, which I have to do anyway. But for other tasks during the work week, I can schedule them or do them on a Monday instead. *Employee 1, Team 2*

To summarize, relations can be drawn between coordinating fixed tasks, work quality, individual preferences, and workspace.

4.2.3 Coordinating by mode of participation

This subcategory refers to how employees choose to participate in certain work activities, such as meetings. The alternative work arrangements allow the employees to participate physically, online, or in a combination of these two, leading to divergent choices and adding to the challenge of coordinating and organizing a way of working that is optimal for everyone involved. Within this subcategory, 17 observations were made in total, of which 71% are related to physical participation, 24% to mixed participation, and 6% to online participation. These three sub-subcategories will be further explained below.

Physical participation

This sub-subcategory includes the challenges related to coordinating work that requires the participants to be physically present. Likewise, the main challenge in this sub-subcategory is how to coordinate work at a time that allows everyone to be physically present. One important aspect of this challenge is to maximize the potential benefits that physical meetings have, such as increasing innovation and enhancing personal relationships among employees:

> If we don't have those meetings at the office that drive innovation and friendship, there is a lot missing. *Manager Team 1*

> I think you need to put some kind of demand, and you should try to work it out by motivation, not by rules, that they should appear in the office and at a certain frequency, like the model we have, which encourages them to come in two days at least. *Manager, Team 2*

> When I'm in the office, I have a lot of face-to-face meetings and basically don't have time for anything except meetings, especially during the spring. It's a hectic period if you're a manager. *Manager, Team 3*

Additionally, the tools that are only available in physical meetings, such as a white board, are crucial for facilitating collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation:

> In some meetings, especially when you try to create something new or you're working with a difficult problem that you need to really discuss, you may need a whiteboard to write on. Or that can also be easier when you meet in person, and that's how we try to organize it. *Employee 1, Team 2*

Furthermore, physical presence is also necessary for effective leadership and managerial tasks. For example, as mentioned in the categories of managerial responsibilities and leadership, walking by and starting spontaneous conversations with employees have been described as effective ways of motivating employees, showing additional availability, and managing well-being and performance. In summary, this subcategory is related to innovation, relationships, workspace, and managerial responsibilities.

Mixed participation

Mixed-participation meetings engage both physically present and online participants, thanks to the increased flexibility provided by ICT tools. This flexible mode of participation comes with the challenge of motivating an equal amount of contribution from participants who joined in different modes. An observation highlights that the physical participants in mixed meetings tend to be the dominant contributors, as opposed to the online participants, who tend to miss the small informal talks before and after the meeting and experience a barrier to speaking up and raising their voices. Furthermore, online participants tend to miss certain social cues and gestures that can only be caught directly at the scene or miss information when someone in the room speaks too quietly:

> The meeting could be basically only physical, or it could be only virtual. "Only virtual" means that everybody is on Teams, on their computer or phone, and so on. It could be only physical when everybody is in the same room. Or it could be hybrid, where some members are physically in the same room while others

are on Teams, and I would say that perhaps the trickiest one is when you have a mix. *Manager, Team 2*

If you have a meeting where you have interaction, then I think people who are on the call suffer more. Maybe people start meetings five minutes before walking into the room and continue afterwards, and they miss those parts and then miss the interaction. *Manager, Team 2*

These aspects of physical meetings are what ICT tools have not yet replicated, and will be further elaborated on in the category tools. Overall, coordinating mixed participation can be related to tools and collaboration.

Online participation

The main challenge of coordinating online participation has to do with retaining employees' participation in meetings that are optional for them but might benefit from their unique perspective and expertise. A pattern of change that is consistent in the meeting habits of the interviewed subjects is that they tend to participate less often in meetings that have switched from engaging physical participation to online participation:

Maybe I spend a little less time on meetings when I'm at home compared to when I'm here in the office, because there is a tendency, and maybe that was even more before we had a lot of crowded agendas with meetings back-to-back. Everyone once in a while, maybe I skip some of those meetings now because I don't just hang on to someone else. *Manager, Team 2*

Therefore, the challenge entails creating and maintaining motivation similar to what was used to bring diverse perspectives to open meetings. In summary, this subcategory is related to old vs. new, workspace, relationships, and managerial responsibilities.

4.2.4 Coordinating by unit

Coordinating by unit refers to coordinating work between people inside the unit, outside the unit but still within the same organization, and outside the organization. In total, nine observations were made, with six related to the coordination of work between people inside the unit and three about coordinating work between people outside the unit.

People inside the unit

The main challenge with coordinating work between people inside the unit concerns creating a common time frame for all employees to meet and for the manager to meet individual members of the unit. One important aspect of this challenge is related to the managerial responsibility for managing employees' well-being, which requires the manager to frequently check on the employees' personal situation:

Every two weeks, the manager will book this 30-minute face-to-face meeting and talk with each team member in this meeting. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> We set that up as a coffee meeting on Teams, but we were not supposed to talk about work but talk about what you normally talk about at the coffee table. But after the pandemic, we have continued to use that as more of a check, and sometimes we do coffee. *Manager, Team 2*

> I think it's good to have at least one meeting every week with everyone. As much as possible. *Manager, Team 3*

Another aspect has to do with personal preferences for meetings, which further complicates the coordination meetings to satisfy the unit's need for aligning on tasks and effective communication between team members. The coordination of such meetings is facilitated by the rule that people have to be present at the office two days a week. On the one hand, the rule makes it easier for managers and employees to determine when to have a physical or online meeting. On the other hand, the large number of meetings necessarily competes for the limited time that all members can spend together aside from their individual obligations:

> We have the operative meeting on Monday, and the information type of meeting is on Friday. And then mid-week, we have half an hour that we use whenever needed, which is not always, just to follow up with things in progress, see if there's anything we need to do, or just gather for half an hour. It's on Wednesday, so that is when we are in the office normally. So the other meetings are actually normally remote because they're on Monday and Friday. *Manager, Team 2*

Additionally, mixed-participation meetings are unavoidable and connect this challenge back to the previous subcategory. Overall, relations can be drawn between coordinating people inside the unit and managerial responsibilities, individual preferences, and communication.

People outside the unit

Coordinating people outside the unit entails careful consideration of the procedures of the company or the policies of external companies. This challenge is relevant to global working in that they both entail different and initially contradictory working methods and cultures:

> The organization and the working method are very different from ours. *Employee 2, Team 3*

With people outside the unit but still within the same organization, the procedures for asking for help or inviting long-term collaboration tend to be arbitrary and multi-leveled, which calls for proactive efforts from the line managers to support their unit members' needs:

> You don't just borrow him to work on your team for half a year or something. For that, of course, the manager needs to agree. *Employee 1, Team 1*

With people outside the unit and outside the organization, both managers and employees perceive the need for regular meetings, the coordination of which depends on the policies and ways of working within different departments or companies:

> When it comes to outside the company, of course we have our customers and partners, and for them we also have some regular meetings either on a monthly or biweekly basis. *Manager, Team 2*

In summary, relations can be drawn between coordinating people outside the unit and global working, managerial responsibilities, and relationships.

4.3 Collaboration and communication

Challenges with collaboration and communication concern the communication of information and collaborative work between employees, managers, and other work partners. In total, 140 observations were made about challenges in this category, which can be further allocated into four subcategories: general collaboration and communication (51%), global working (30%), spontaneous meetings (11%), and knowledge sharing (8%). Findings within these subcategories will now be presented and further explained, along with their relations to other categories.

4.3.1 General

General challenges with collaboration and communication encompass the other subcategories to a certain extent. The main challenge here is to choose the best way for collaborative work and communication. Despite the numerous remote options available, most employees and managers tend to see in-person meetings as the best option for most tasks that require high levels of collaboration and communication.

Most employees assert that they find themselves communicating and collaborating more effectively with others when they work in person. While remote teamwork remains a viable option, some employees believe that they can explain and understand one another faster in person, especially when it comes to complex and new tasks. In-person collaboration also gives them the social interactions, body language, and physical cues that help strengthen their relationships:

> I enjoy working here in the office because if you're working in an office with everyone, you can discuss face-to-face. It's easier for you to complete your work. You can ask questions. You can get a reply immediately, and you can cooperate. *Employee 2, Team 3*

> I think a physical meeting is definitely the best, where you have everyone in the room, because then you have the interactions; you can make eye contact with the one talking or not talking or everybody at the same time; you can do the sketches on the screen; you can have another screen with the sound on; and so on. *Manager, Team 2*

> Even though we are given all the tools so nothing can be blocked, it still doesn't feel as good as just talking to a person. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> If you're in the office, you spend more time with and talking to people in the coffee room, at lunch, and so on. When I was five days a week in the office, I had more of this kind of social talk than I do in a hybrid situation. I still have the social talk, but it's mainly when I'm in the office; there's less social talk when you're at home. *Manager, Team 2*

For managers, face-to-face meetings are especially needed for discussing difficult matters, which allows the managers to read the employees' attitudes and body language and the employees to feel safe and have a chance to explain themselves:

> It's always easier to have a tough discussion face-to-face than in MS Teams.
> *Manager, Team 1*

> I've told everyone that they should let me know if they see that there's something boiling. Especially now that I work from home, it's even harder for me, so I don't find out too late. And then I talk to them individually, and most of the time, if it's between two people, I bring them into a room and we sit down and discuss. Normally it works, and they don't always agree, but it usually helps to sit down and discuss it instead of writing angry emails or talking to others.
> *Manager, Team 3*

Whereas it is clear that face-to-face meetings are preferred for quicker and more effective collaboration and communication, another challenge arises when some work meetings have to wait until the in-office days to take place or until there is a spot in the schedule that works for everyone. One way to solve this problem is to spread out the frequency of the different types of meetings, but this approach ends up delaying certain collaborative and communication processes:

> It might take a little bit longer to sync with or discuss with other people. When you're not meeting, some tasks might take a little bit longer in calendar time because you might have to wait until you're in the office to complete them. But I also think it can take a little bit longer if you're only using chat, email, and so on. Then some things can take a little bit longer, or you have to put a little bit more work into them than if you knew that everybody was in the office and you could start the discussion right away. *Manager, Team 3*

In summary, relations exist between general collaboration and communication challenges and relationships, work quality, tools, and coordination and organization.

4.3.2   Global working

The challenges in this sub-category are more specific to remote teams that are globally distributed. One challenge with a global remote team is coordinating synchronous working time. While all team members can flexibly choose when to work, their choices need to be coordinated with choices made by colleagues with different tasks and preferences, to different extents:

> They don't speak English well because they don't require it for their daily work. When they are here, they can discuss things with you in English. Sometimes they don't know how to explain it, but we have more methods, like being able to draw and show our body language and the specific operation. Sometimes you have to discuss it several times a week or even for the coming weeks, and we still don't understand each other. *Employee 2, Team 3*

For teams that can come to the same location for collaborative work, they still have the option of coming together if necessary. However, for global teams, face-to-face collaboration is more difficult to organize due to costs and happens only occasionally due to travel restrictions following the COVID-19 pandemic:

> We used to travel once a year, at least to Japan or somewhere similar, to meet up with other teams and so on. And still, that's what's important. But nowadays we're taking a lot more Teams meetings, and it's more expensive and difficult to travel. So that's kind of a challenge that we need to continue taking at least one trip a year to continue having relationships. *Manager, Team 1*

> We suffer from that also between sites; for instance, we don't have the same interaction with the people at our headquarters in Tokyo because we don't meet them spontaneously. We only meet them in arranged sessions. *Manager, Team 2*

> We have collaboration with different teams. Totally different teams, different countries. We don't come to each other. *Employee 2, Team 3*

Most employees appreciate the positive effects of the occasions that they have had in the past to meet their colleagues from other parts of the world. Most employees state that an initial meeting in person to get to know one another personally tremendously helps them establish and maintain a relationship with global colleagues, who would otherwise appear to them only as a name on the screen:

> For some of my colleagues in the Tokyo team, they are just names in the system. I don't even know which one is their first name and which is their family name, but I know they are responsible for certain areas. I will ping them, type them, or move cases and tickets to them. But to me, they're still just names rather than people in the flesh, which I see here. That's why we need them to travel to visit us sometime, or we can go there and visit them. Then you build up this human bond with them. Then it makes things easier. *Employee 1, Team 1*

The occasional visit by colleagues from abroad also creates opportunities for them to share knowledge and spark innovation. Because these benefits are missed due to the current lack of in-person meeting opportunities, the challenge for both employees and managers is to find remote alternatives with similar benefits.

In general, this subcategory of challenges is related to relationships, knowledge sharing, innovation, managerial responsibilities, and well-being.

4.3.3 Spontaneous meetings

The challenges with spontaneous meetings are closely related to the challenges with relationships and innovation because spontaneous meetings are perceived as part of relationship building and innovation. For both managers and employees, spontaneous meetings are a good way to start ad hoc discussions and initiate knowledge sharing. They enjoy running into colleagues, sharing what they are working on, and finding someone who happens to have the expertise to add to their project. This kind of encounter usually only happens in the office, but it promotes collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation. Most employees indicate meeting colleagues spontaneously as an easy way to find help and support:

> You can ask if it's an easy, simple question, or you can ask them to do it in Teams. But if it's a long question, you can book a time in any of the meeting rooms, just like we have now. You can book a room and discuss, or just sit around your desk. *Employee 2, Team 3*

Therefore, managers also prioritize having time at the office to increase spontaneous meeting chances with their team members. This prioritization aligns with the managers' approach to managing performance and well-being, thus relating this subcategory to the category managerial responsibilities. Meeting spontaneously also creates a more natural, caring feeling than a scheduled inspection or micromanagement. However, a challenge arises when the two days in office are packed with

back-to-back meetings, preventing the managers from meeting and discussing with their employees spontaneously, which is the only way they get in touch with "people in the periphery" that they are interested in communicating with but normally do not have a lot of chances to, except running into them at the office:

> There are always some spontaneous meetings. *Manager, Team 3*

> Maybe on Tuesday or Wednesday, when I'm in the office, I can meet [a colleague] and we can discuss. So you get a little bit more of those ad hoc discussions, but if you were here all the week, then maybe it would be the same amount of discussions but spread over 5 days. *Employee 1, Team 2*

In summary, this subcategory is related to relationships, knowledge sharing, innovation, and managerial responsibilities.

4.3.4 Knowledge sharing

As mentioned before, knowledge sharing can happen informally in spontaneous meetings, but it remains a challenge to organize formal ways to integrate knowledge sharing into the daily work of the employees. There are sync meetings scheduled for the synchronization of work among different team members so that everyone is on track and can help one another see the overall big picture status of the ongoing project. This kind of meeting concerns the operative aspect rather than the innovative aspect of knowledge sharing and therefore is more of a procedural task:

> They share issues or problems not only with me but with other members so that they can always communicate and exchange knowledge. And then eventually I also tell them some information that I get from the management, the project management, if there is something they are not aware of. I give them this kind of information, so we keep this sync meeting in all phases of the project from the beginning. *Employee 1, Team 3*

> But there is a need for my team to share information because you can't solve things on your own. Or you can, but there is always someone in the team who has the knowledge. So asking around and getting more knowledge are definitely helpful. You need to have different views on things. *Manager, Team 1*

Usually, the good relationship between team members facilitates knowledge sharing in these meetings, even without the participation of the managers. More often than not, some employees feel the need to share knowledge spontaneously, but the complicated coordination discourages them from doing so. The many options for communication complicate their own choices. Furthermore, knowledge sharing also concerns the educational information that newcomers need to settle into their new position. In addition to on-boarding efforts from the manager, other team members also feel the need for extra efforts to spend in-office time, meet face-to-face with the newcomers, and increase knowledge sharing opportunities:

> There's always a problem if you're taking in new people and giving them a chance to learn something new, because then you might have to arrange periods in the office where you can sit with people and work with them. *Employee 2, Team 2*

In summary, this subcategory is related to coordination and organization, and relationships.

4.4 Relationships

The category relationships can be defined as the way in which employees and managers are connected to other people they work with. In total, 83 observations were made in this category, of which 43 (52%) belong to the sub-category inside the unit and 40 (48%) to the sub-category outside the unit. Each of these subcategories will now be further explained, along with their relations to other categories.

4.4.1 Inside the unit

For managers and employees, it is challenging to build and maintain relationships with colleagues within their team while still maintaining flexibility. The interviews indicate that being at the office creates closer relationships, which allows for more trust and better work quality:

> It is easier to build a relationship in real life, and that helps you in your overall work performance. *Manager, Team 3*

> I think the bond or trust between the team members was already built up before we went into this flexible working scheme. I think it might be challenging because, for some other companies, let's say everyone joined the company from a remote location. Then it might be tricky. But for us, because you know the person, it doesn't matter if you don't see him face-to-face or online; but if you never saw him, it might be a little bit tricky. So my personal feeling is that I have more trust and bond with the colleagues that I see here compared to the [colleagues from other countries]. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> But at least within our team, we usually have lunch together, and we're sitting quite nearby. We can always have some chitchat, and I think every half a year, we have this team-building activity where we go bowling or pool, and then we have dinner and we can talk to each other. So I think this is the company's effort to help us have a good relationship. *Employee 1, Team 1*

In the second work environment, the home environment, chitchat and small conversations where more personal questions can be asked do not take place spontaneously. Therefore, one of the managers claims that long-term relationships are not built by sitting at home:

> Of course, if you're in the office, you spend more time with and talking to people, like in the coffee room, at lunch, and so on. So when I was five days a week in the office, I had more of this kind of social talk than I have in a hybrid situation. I still have the social talk, but it's mainly when I'm in the office; there's less social talk when you're at home. *Manager, Team 2*

Hybrid working combined with a good relationship between team members comes with several benefits:

> So if you stay a little longer with them [colleagues], you will know the common time. So you will know when to find them and where to find them. *Employee 2, Team 3*

> Not a lot, but there is from time to time. To be honest, I think it [conflicts] has been less of a problem since we started with [hybrid working]. It could be

that people are not sitting next to one another, five days a week, and if there's something someone is writing like this and it annoys you. It's only two days a week. *Manager, Team 3* (conflicts)

In addition, the relationship between employees and their manager turns out to be less formal in general, not much different from that between colleagues. It is also mainly built on trust, as mentioned in the leadership section:

He has a lot of trust in us, so he's more like a colleague to me. *Employee 1, Team 2*

In summary, relationships inside the unit are related to work quality, workspace, collaboration and communication, and leadership.

4.4.2 Outside the unit

Most employees found it important to build their relationships with colleagues outside the unit through in-person interactions, at least at the beginning of their working time together. This has now become a challenge for employees who work in virtual teams and for stakeholders from distant locations. Having face-to-face interaction at the beginning is crucial for developing a functional working relationship:

So a first-time meeting is always good to be face-to-face, and after that, it will make communication easier. When you meet people face-to-face, you know them and they know you. Take coffee with them or take fika with them. *Employee 1, Team 3*

It's not like I don't trust them [global colleagues], but I trust the people here I see even more so. I do have that feeling because for some colleagues in the Tokyo team, they are just a name in the system to me. *Employee 1, Team 1*

Building relationships with people at Lund is something I do at work. It's easier to take a cup of coffee, walk by a desk, and so on. *Manager, Team 1*

I think it's still a big benefit to meet some time, and then you can, of course, have your digital meetings and so on. But it's easier to build a relationship. Especially if you need to negotiate something, if they have a problem that you need to solve, and so on. *Employee 1, Team 2*

For globally remote colleagues, relationships have rarely been established through physical gatherings since the pandemic but are slowly coming back into practice due to the need for informal and personal relationships to facilitate virtual collaboration:

Regularly, they will send someone or the whole team to have a visit here for us to meet in person, because once you actually talk to a person face-to-face or have dinner or lunch together, it makes it much easier in the future when you discuss further problems online. It's like you have this human connection and touch. *Employee 1, Team 1*

[Meeting each other a few times] is important. It improves things. Of course, it's not a must, so they do not come every year. *Employee 1, Team 3*

We don't have the same interaction with the people at our headquarters in Tokyo because we don't meet them spontaneously. We only meet them in arranged sessions. *Manager, Team 2*

In summary, relations can be drawn between relationships outside the unit and communication, global working, coordination, and innovation.

4.5 Well-being

Well-being can be defined as the state of being happy, satisfied, comfortable, or healthy. It comprises both mental and physical health as well as the balance between work and non-work. In total, 64 observations were made during the interviews, and the following subcategories were identified: WLB (72%), emotional and mental health (14%), loneliness (8%) and physical health (6%). Each of these subcategories will now be further explained, along with their relation to other categories.

4.5.1 Work-life balance

The challenge related to work-life balance and flexibility identified in the interviews is for the employees and managers to use the given flexibility in a way that improves their WLB and to avoid blurring the boundaries between work and life, which leads to overwork.

A first insight from the interviews is that most interviewees indicated several ways in which the flexibility offered to them by the set rules improves their WLB. The flexibility in their work schedule and work location allows them to do small chores or family-related tasks in between:

> You manage your life and work balance better when you're working from home. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> They're grown-ups, but it's really easy for people to work too much or too little, but they do it well. I would say that if they work one extra hour one day, they could be off during the morning another day. *Manager, Team 1*

> Yeah, but I can run a washing machine, a dish machine, and that kind of thing. You can always do these small things at home; otherwise, I will have to do them this evening. It's that kind of small maintenance that takes a few minutes, but it's so much better for my life in general to have that incorporated because it doesn't affect my work at all. *Employee 2, Team 2*

> But if I'm going to get up, get dressed so I don't get arrested, sit in the morning traffic, then go home in the traffic, and so on. I mean, that's one and a half hours per day for nothing compared to just getting up, taking a cup of coffee, and starting the computer. *Employee 2, Team 2*

> I went to one of the shooting clubs for air rifles, usually on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. So for me, it's possible to end work earlier on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Then I compensate on other days. *Employee 1, Team 1*

In contrast, some interviewees indicated more blurred boundaries between work and life related to the current flexibility. This is very much related to personal preferences, as some find it easy to set strict boundaries, others find it difficult, and one interviewee indicated he actually prefers to have blurred boundaries as this makes him feel more relaxed:

> I mean, the boundary between work life and private life can be a little bit blurry. If you're in the office, you finish your day at 4:00 PM, then you go home. Then you could find a way to just forget about the work-related stuff. But for us, sometimes we are talking to engineers in both India and the US, in different time zones. Let's say you are waiting for some emails, but you are at home, and since your computer is always running, you do receive the email. Then you just voluntarily continue working on that since it is kind of natural. If it's in the whole office situation, you can just ignore that and come back to the office tomorrow morning and continue working. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> There could be such problems [as overworking] definitely. I mean, that is one of the things that I think we all need to be aware of: when you have this work-from-home opportunity, [the boundaries] are more blurry. The difference between work and leisure is blurry, and then there is the risk that some people don't really finish their work. *Manager, Team 2*

> But some people, when they work from home if they're alone, at least start making some food and stuff, but in most cases they are so focused on doing work all the time. Then it's easy for the line to get blurry between work and leisure. *Manager, Team 2*

> That's a thing about working truly globally; it makes sense to read the mail before you go to bed because then you can catch things that the US has sent and send them on to Japan before they wake up. So it's a different rhythm. My job is weird, but it has never bothered me to not have a strict line between work and social life because it helps not to have it, as I have been working. *Employee 2, Team 2*

As indicated in the text above, relations exist between WLB and individual preferences, work quality, work environment, and nature of the task. Other relationships consist between WLB and communication and tools. When leaving work for personal matters, communication with team members is crucial. For this, tools like the status in Teams or a message in a Teams channel are often used. In short, WLB is related to individual preferences, work quality, work environment, nature of the task, communication, and tools.

4.5.2 Emotional and mental health

Emotional and mental health challenges are related to how employees organize their work so that their emotional and mental health do not suffer. This originates from finding a balance between using the given flexibility in work schedule and work location. Some interviewees indicate that the possibility to decide where and when to work allows them to have lower stress levels as they use more hours to spread out their work:

> I probably work more hours when I'm working from home, but I still feel more relaxed because I spread it out more over the day. *Manager, Team 3*

On the other hand, other interviewees indicate that working from home with flexible working hours can cause more stress as it is difficult to stop working and to draw the line between work and leisure time, as already explained in the sub-category WLB. Lastly, the interviewed managers indicate that they find it easier to assess the

emotional and mental health of their employees in person, as they find it hard to sense that through video:

> Being a manager, you want to have contact in person because that's a better way to feel that these guys are feeling well. It's hard to sense from a remote dialogue even if you have a video connection, and so on. *Manager, Team 2*

The subcategory of emotional and mental health is related to global working, as the presence of colleagues all over the world calls for a more flexible way of working that could potentially interfere with emotional and mental health. Further, as managers in Sweden are responsible for the well-being of their employees, this sub-category is also related to managerial responsibilities. In conclusion, emotional and mental health are related to global working and managerial responsibilities.

4.5.3 Loneliness

Loneliness is another challenge related to the well-being of employees. Some interviewees indicate that they have all their social relationships outside of work. However, others indicate they don't have any planned activities outside of work. It is this last group that is particularly sensitive to loneliness:

> If you don't have any scheduled activities, there's no other meeting with anyone, there is no time for practicing, or whatever you want to do in your leisure time, then there is a risk. *Manager, Team 2*

When working in the office, talking to people, or grabbing lunch or coffee together, the setting allows for social contact and the building of relationships with colleagues. These relationships are not built when working from home:

> The thing is that people don't build a long-term relationship with sitting at home. *Manager, Team 1*

From this, a relation between loneliness and relationships can be seen. Additionally, a relation also exists to individual preferences, as some people prefer not to have much social contact and others enjoy and need more social contact. In conclusion, loneliness is related to both relationships and individual preferences.

4.5.4 Physical health

It is challenging for employees to use the given flexibility in a way that allows them to improve their physical health. The flexibility in work schedule and location gives employees the opportunity to plan doctor's appointments or other health-related appointments more freely, often leading to faster aid:

> If you have a situation at home, like needing to go to the dentist, it's OK. You take half an hour to drive there and then go back to continue working. *Employee 2, Team 3*

Additionally, this flexibility can allow sick people to still work at home. This could actually have a negative impact on physical health as the body does not get the rest it requires. On the other hand, people who might have gone to work anyway while sick might now work more comfortably and at a lower pace at home and might see an improvement in their physical health. Finally, one manager indicated that he

moves more when he works from home. This, in the long term, can have benefits for his physical health:

> You take breaks in a different matter. I've got two dogs. When I work from home, I try to take a walk with them. *Manager, Team 3*

The subcategory of physical health is related to rules and communication. The rules around flexibility make it possible for the employees to use this in favor of their physical health. Further, communication is needed with colleagues and managers when having to leave for a doctor's appointment or when being sick. In short, rules and communication are related to physical health.

4.6 Managerial responsibilities

The challenges in the theme of managerial responsibilities can be defined as strictly related to the tasks for which line managers are responsible, including being available to generally support employees, managing performance, managing well-being, facilitating communication and collaboration, and enforcing company policies in terms of flexible work arrangements. A total of 55 observations were made within this theme, which are divided into five subcategories: performance management (29%), well-being management (22%), company policy enforcement (20%), availability (15%), and facilitation (15%). Each of these subcategories will now be further explained, along with their relations to other categories.

4.6.1 Performance management

The main challenge related to performance management is to make sure that their employees perform, regardless of when, where, and how they choose to perform their tasks. More specifically, in connection with their trust-driven leadership style (see section 4.10), the interviewed line managers perceive the real challenge in managing performance without closely monitoring it or micromanaging. They try to catch signs and patterns of performance from frequent meetings and especially in-person interactions. They connect with the employees through personal conversations and trust that these conversations will reveal under-performing or over-performing patterns:

> It's not so easy to catch in that sense. You're seeing it over a longer period of time. Of course, you can measure KPIs and so on, but that's not how we work. It is more that you can see that the people stop being present, I would say. Then you need to take that and have a discussion. *Manager, Team 1*

> It's tougher to follow people, but you will see little patterns. You will see that they're not showing up. *Manager, Team 1*

Another challenge in this subcategory is ensuring that employees are not working too hard. Performance management without micromanagement also requires managers to maintain high trust in their leadership style, close relationships with their employees, and frequent communication to determine patterns and manage their performance. All managers indicated that having face-to-face meetings and in-person interactions

helps them understand their employees' situations and anticipate performance patterns. In summary, this sub-category can be related to leadership, communication, coordination, and relationships.

4.6.2 Well-being management

The challenge with well-being management involves trusting that employees will manage themselves and making sure that they feel well while working, regardless of the time and place in which they choose to work. Again, this managerial challenge is related to the trust-driven leadership utilized by all three interviewed managers. They set up regular one-on-one meetings with individual employees and prioritize meeting face-to-face. During in-person interactions, they can catch up and watch the social physical cues to evaluate if the employee is going through a stressful time or having some trouble that is interfering with their work. Even though this approach provides an agile tactic that allows the managers to adapt and apply it to different employees' situations, it also requires intensive practice and interpretation:

> If you're building trust in individual meetings, it's easier. Building trust is good for the team in the long run, but if you're having a tough discussion about something like a drinking problem or salary, then it's easier to do that face-to-face. *Manager, Team 1*

> The responsibility you have as a manager for your employees' well-being ... requires that you ask the people to be here and then ... explain that to the people who are hesitant. I have the responsibility to make sure that you are feeling well ... I think it's good for you to be here to meet people and so on, however introverted you may be. *Manager, Team 2*

Another approach taken by a manager is to increase spontaneous meetings with his employees during the office days. He walks up to his team members and has quick conversations with them to check on how they are doing. Most interviewed employees perceive their managers' efforts to take care of their well-being and appreciate their ability to see and support them in difficult situations:

> [Manager, Team 2] is a very good people manager in the sense that he's very caring. He asks about stress levels, and he is attentive to that. I mostly don't need him for my work in the technical sense, but he is very good at picking up stress levels or other problems. *Employee 2, Team 2*

In summary, relations can be identified between well-being management and performance management, leadership, relationships, spontaneous meetings, and well-being.

4.6.3 Company policy enforcement

On the organizational level, the company where the data collection was conducted only had general flexible policies specifying how employees could choose to arrange their work to be performed. Therefore, the responsibility falls on the managers to interpret the specifications of the policies, decide what works for their employees, and communicate their own guidelines:

> It's up to us as managers to find the best setup for everyone, I would say, and the best setup for everyone is not that we're working from the office full-time,

> but it's not that we're sitting at home during that time either. We try to balance a complex pick. *Manager, Team 1*

In other words, the main challenge in this subcategory is to enforce company policies regarding flexible work arrangements via the managers' decisions and communication. In this case, the managers found a need for in-person interactions and made a decision accordingly. In order to meet this need, the department of the interviewed managers decided to create a fixed time frame in the week when everybody works at the office simultaneously. The in-office work days are Tuesday and Wednesday. While some managers specifically refer to it as a mandated rule, others understand and enforce it as a recommended guideline:

> We [all managers in the department] discussed it, and then we said yes, 2 days, let's try it, and then we evaluated it after three months. I think we're still looking into it. It's the best. *Manager, Team 3*

> It's totally up to how we, as managers, handle that situation. So I think there is a lot of freedom. There is no demand—hardly any demand. *Manager, Team 2*

Because this rule or guideline for in-office days does not apply to the rest of the company and is not announced in any formal document, it operates on mutual informal agreement and trust. It is the managers' responsibility to enforce it, maximize its potential benefits, and evaluate its efficacy. In general, the interviewed employees understood the rule a little differently depending on their manager's enforcement. The way the manager enforces the flexible work arrangement also depends on the employees' individual needs, which are linked to their preferences and the nature of their job:

> We need to make a statement. We need to do that and say, "Now we start to work from the office," because there are people who don't want to come back for sure. *Manager, Team 1*

> If you manage to get a lot out of a person being here once a week, they still get what they need from a social point of view, and then they have four days working from home and being very productive, even more productive than being in the office. Well, then why shouldn't you be able to do that? *Manager, Team 2*

> I think you can explain [the rules] also to the people who are hesitant: I have a responsibility to make sure that you are feeling well; I think this is a good way of doing that; I think it's good for you to be here to meet people; and so on, however introverted you may be. Then, by doing that, I hope that more or less everyone is motivated to do that. *Manager, Team 2*

In summary, the manager's enforcement of the work arrangement is related to individual preferences, the nature of the tasks that employees perform, the relationship between employees, and also leadership.

4.6.4 Availability

Being available or showing availability to employees who work with schedule and location flexibility is perceived as a challenging task for line managers because they have to balance the amounts of time allocated to different ways of being available and determine whether their availability sufficiently meets the employees' needs:

> Available, yes, but I do not always have to work. I always say to my team members or anyone else that I'm more or less always available. If anything happens, call me, text me, or whatever. I might not always answer your call, but I will come back. *Manager, Team 2*

> I think you should be in the office two or three days a week, so people have at least one opportunity every week to meet you. So that if they have questions, they have the opportunity to meet you in person and ask them. *Manager, Team 3*

In addition, being available in person proves to be a challenge. Being available in person for meetings is possible to plan ahead for, but simply being at work and available for spontaneous meetings is usually difficult to anticipate and plan ahead for. On the one hand, the recommended guideline that everyone should work at the office on Tuesday and Wednesday allows the managers to plan their in-person availability. On the other hand, this policy crowds these two office days of managers with back-to-back meetings, which compete for the limited in-person availability:

> Even if it's mostly meetings [during the office days]. If you have a one-hour meeting, it normally ends after 40 minutes when you have 20 minutes at your desk and when someone comes. But it's true—I'm not standing at my desk for 8 hours and waiting for people to come. *Manager, Team 3*

Overall, challenges in this subcategory are related to leadership, communication, work quality, and workspace.

4.6.5 Facilitation

Managers are responsible for facilitating communication and collaboration between their team members and many different parties, including employees outside their teams, other managers, business partners, and outsourced teams. The differences between these different groups have to do with not only geography, time, and work style but also work culture, which are beyond the managers' control and further complicate communication and collaboration. Usually, the managers stand in between to make sure that communication takes place among all interested parties and collaboration is not interrupted by conflicts:

> We have teams all over the world. Naturally, it makes it easier if everyone in the team is working from home, because then you don't have ten people meeting up and making decisions at the office, and then you have ten people sitting at home believing that they were not able to be part of it. *Manager, Team 1*

This managerial responsibility is closely related to leadership and relationships because managers need to make additional efforts to manage uncertain and often contradictory variables associated with communication and collaboration and also help build sustainable relationships between the people involved. In summary, facilitation is related to leadership, communication, and relationships.

4.7 Workspace

Other challenges identified in the interviews are related to the workspace or work environment. The work environment is defined as the setting in which employees

perform their tasks. This category has a total of 47 observations and can be divided into five subcategories: physical setting (36%), distractions at home (32%), social setting (15%), distractions at work (13%) and technological access (4%). Each of these subcategories will now be further explained, along with their relations to other categories.

4.7.1 Physical setting

Several challenges emerged from the interviews related to the physical setting of the work environment. Firstly, managers in Sweden are responsible for creating a good physical work environment for their employees. With employees working both in the office and at home, this work environment is much harder to control:

> I can't control this at all [at home]. But here [in the office], there's some stuff that I do. Starting with the hardware and the tables and everything. That is, we try to influence them so they get everything they need. If you want the raisable table, et cetera, and the lighting, et cetera, we try to influence that, and then if people talk too much in the landscape, we will let them know that they should go to a meeting room. *Manager, Team 3*

> Well, we have had the chance to borrow some equipment from the office if we wanted to. For us, it has been more that you could borrow stuff if you needed it, and so we have had some support, but they haven't controlled it. *Employee 1, Team 2*

Secondly, challenges also come for all employees (including the managers) in creating the right home environment and knowing what to transfer between the two work environments:

> I think that depends on how much space you have, but it's such a simple thing to put in a small dedicated desk somewhere to allow you to have your small office. It doesn't have to be a room, just a corner. *Employee 2, Team 2*

> A lot of people still use the kitchen table with just their laptops, with no mouse, no screen, or anything else. I have my office setup at home, so there's no physical downside. *Employee 2, Team 2*

> [Making an additional commute] happens to me, mainly because I forget something at home. So I go back to catch it. Yeah, sometimes there are some, like machines or some of our hardware. Sometimes it's just your lunch box. *Employee 2, Team 3*

As employees have to create this home work environment and also have to move things between the two work environments, organization is related to the physical setting. Further, managers are responsible for the physical setting of employees, and thus a relation to managerial responsibilities exists. Finally, a relation to old vs. new also exists as the borrowing of equipment originated during the pandemic. In short, the physical setting of the work environments at home and in the office is related to coordination and organization, managerial responsibilities, and old vs. new.

4.7.2 Distractions at home

The challenge related to distractions at home is for both managers and employees to create an environment at home with as few distractions as possible. During the interviews, it became clear that working from home often comes with fewer distractions and less noise, yielding a higher ability to concentrate:

> If I'm at home, people don't just call me. They take me on chat or something, and then I can let them wait for 20 minutes. Then I can focus for at least half an hour at a time. *Manager, Team 3*

> Things [tasks] that need to be prepared are much easier for me to do at home when I don't get disturbed at all. *Manager, Team 3*

> Yeah, I would say, generally, I mean, I think most people feel like they are less disturbed when they are at home and can better concentrate. *Manager, Team 2*

> Since I'm really comfortable at home, I can perform better because I can be more concentrated on things. Because you don't have people walking around in the office, the noise level is also reduced. *Employee 1, Team 1*

However, additional distractions at home were also identified during the interviews:

> I get more distracted at home because you are just kind of alone, sitting there at the table. You tend to check your phone more often than in the office. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> Maybe I need to do the laundry, or when I don't have anything urgent, maybe I skip this one [task], I can do it tonight, or I can do it tomorrow, or so on, and then instead, yeah, I can do this thing at home. That happens sometimes. *Manager, Team 2*

> Yeah, maybe at home you have more things to be concerned about, like when you're working in the dining room. Maybe your cat will come to you, or maybe your friend will come; it happens sometimes. *Employee 2, Team 3*

As mentioned above, distractions at home are related to communication (chatting instead of calling), work quality (concentration), and nature of the task (performing specific tasks at home).

4.7.3 Social setting

The challenge related to the social setting is to find a combination that gives you the best of both worlds in terms of social contact. At home, our interviewees indicated a more relaxed environment, as the company policy does not require the use of video in online meetings. They stated that this makes them feel more comfortable and relieves some social pressure:

> We usually don't have the video, and that makes you more cozy and flexible at home. So, if you're eating and drinking, that's fine; people are not seeing that as long as you mute your mic. *Employee 1, Team 1*

However, this social pressure that is present in the office was also pointed out as being beneficial in some cases by some of the interviewees. With your colleagues around you, you cannot just sit and stare; you have to work. Another benefit of

sitting in the same space in the office as your colleagues is the ability to more easily communicate, collaborate, and maintain relationships:

> In the office, it's easy because we are sitting together in this open-floor solution. So it is easy to ask people, and you can also hear a little bit if some other two people have a discussion; maybe it's of interest to you as well. *Employee 1, Team 2*

As clear from the text above, the social setting is related to three categories: relationships, communication and collaboration, and leadership.

4.7.4 Distractions at work

The challenge with distractions at work is creating a good work environment in the office without any distractions. During the interviews, several sources of distraction at work were identified:

> That means people come to me; I never get more than 5 minutes to focus on something when I'm in the office. *Manager, Team 3*

> Yesterday, they were struggling to work in the open landscape because there was too much noise around them. *Manager, Team 2*

> So since we're sitting in this open office, it could be that you hear someone talking. Of course, you can put in ear plugs or headphones, but some tasks are definitely more efficient from home. *Employee 1, Team 2*

As mentioned above, distractions at work are related to nature of the task and work quality (focusing ability). As no other relations were found, distractions at work are related to only two categories of challenges.

4.7.5 Technological access

The challenge in terms of technological access is to get a stable and quick connection that allows you to work in the same way from home. The interviewees indicated that they could not really see any problems anymore with internet access or technical equipment, as opposed to during the pandemic. However, one interviewee indicated that connecting to a company's databases is slower when trying to connect from home:

> It helps when I work in the databases because we have a quicker connection from the office compared to from home. *Employee 2, Team 2*

This meant that the interviewee went to the office when he needed to work with the database. This dependence on the type of task shows a relation between technological access and nature of the task. No other relationships were identified.

4.8 Work quality

The category work quality is concerned with the extent to which the work delivered by the employees meets the expectations of the managers and the company. This category is divided into three subcategories: employee performance (50%), employee

focus and engagement (45%), and handling the workload (5%). Each of these subcategories will now be further explained, along with their relations to other categories.

4.8.1 Employee performance

The challenge related to employee performance is two-fold. On the one hand, the employees need to use the given flexibility in such a way that they maintain or even improve their performance. On the other hand, the managers have the responsibility to make sure the employees still perform considering the given flexibility, as already explained in managerial responsibilities.

A first set of observations is linked to newcomers. As mentioned before, the interviewees state that the hybrid model could be more challenging for them, making knowledge transfer, relationship building, and getting into work harder:

> I know that there was feedback about new joiners having problems getting into the work. Also, having people set up what kind of things they need to learn and so on. *Manager, Team 1*

A second set of observations is closely related to communication. Efficient and fast communication can improve efficiency overall and, thus, performance. Several interviewees indicate that communication in the office is often faster:

> If I am in the office, it's easier to go to the team directly to ask them questions and talk to them. This is faster. From home, I need to communicate online on Teams, and if the person is available or not, [they will] answer me later or maybe immediately. *Employee 1, Team 3*

> It might take a little bit longer to sync with or discuss with other people. I mean, when you're not meeting, some tasks might take a little bit longer in calendar time because you might have to wait until you're in the office to take them. *Employee 1, Team 2*

More specifically for managers, it is the manager's responsibility that the employees perform well, and the interviewed managers indicate that not everyone is able to perform when working from home. Therefore, guiding people in making this choice is important while taking into account that individual performance can be influenced by both the work environment and individual preferences, as already mentioned in these sections:

> Not everyone [might combine in the right way to work better]. *Manager, Team 3*

In conclusion, several categories are related to employee performance. As indicated above, managerial responsibilities, knowledge transfer, relationships, communication, individual preferences, and the work environment can all influence the performance of employees.

4.8.2 Employee focus and engagement

Another challenge for employees and managers is to keep their focus and stay engaged in all the different settings that flexible work arrangements bring. As already

discussed in the section on workspace, focus can be different in different settings due to the distractions and physical setting of the work environment.

Further, online meetings also influence focus and engagement:

> Sometimes you need to ask their name loudly. Where are you? And they will answer. I'm here. *Employee 2, Team 3*

> Sometimes I do it [multitasking during a meeting] myself, especially when I'm working from home and especially in meetings where I listen in and am not planning or expected to give any feedback or anything. *Manager, Team 3*

> If you are in the meeting and you are doing something else, you might get less information from the meeting or have less involvement in the meeting's decisions. [However,] it might increase efficiency if you do some other things in parallel. So it depends on the task that you are doing. It's about finding the balance. *Employee 1, Team 3*

> If you are in a digital meeting, of course you know that some people may also check their e-mail or do something else. But for me, it depends on the meeting. In these big meetings where it's just more broadcast, someone is talking, and it's more one-directional, there's less engagement than in a small meeting. Yeah, it's easier, of course, in a digital meeting to do something else because it's more difficult for others to notice it. *Employee 1, Team 2*

Physical meetings call for more engagement due to the social pressure, according to our interviewees:

> Yeah, I think, to be honest, if we have physical meetings, you're more engaged because you're physically there, and out of respect, you don't check your mobile phones or eat stuff. *Employee 1, Team 1*

In short, a relation exists between the workspace and the focus of employees, as their focus is influenced by the workspace they find themselves in. Another relation exists with the nature of the task, as the required engagement in a meeting is dependent on the type of meeting. So, employee focus and engagement are related to two other categories: workspace and nature of the task.

4.8.3 Handling the workload

Another challenge related to work quality is the ability of employees to finish the assigned workload within the time frame so they don't overwork. From the interviews, it is clear that overwork is very rarely performed. However, the interviewees indicate that sometimes a specific task can come up that requires overwork because of a deadline:

> Sometimes I have to put in a little bit of extra time as well, depending on some specific tasks. *Employee 1, Team 2*

However, due to the flexibility of their work schedule, they are free to work less on other days in order to balance their working hours. In conclusion, handling the workload shows a relationship to well-being, as overwork can affect the overall well-being of employees.

4.9   Technical tools

Challenges with technical tools are related to the ICT tools that make flexible work arrangements and new ways of working possible. The main challenge in this category is the fact that tools still cannot replace certain in-person interactions, despite the abundance of alternative working arrangements they provide. The technical tools make communication activities instantly and always possible, but they cannot eliminate the social barrier to contacting colleagues, even when active statuses are apparently indicated:

> You can see each other's status in Teams, so you can know if this guy is away or online, so you can then know when to ask them, if they are taking meetings, or if they have a call. So even if you work remotely, the software will make it similar to when we used to stay in the office. *Employee 2, Team 3*

> We use Teams chatting or video, and to me, even though in this tool you can have voice, video, or share your screen, it does not feel as easy to communicate as meeting in person. When you are talking in person and you can see his facial gesture, he is pointing at some things, and sometimes doing this online is a little bit difficult. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> Those things [difficult conversations] are really tough to do in distance. Of course there are tools and so on, but it will never be equally as good as meeting up with people. *Manager, Team 1*

Overall, 41 observations were made, and relations can be drawn between this category and communication, managerial responsibilities, rules, leadership, and relationships.

4.10   Leadership

As became clear in the section on managerial responsibilities, leadership is closely related to managerial responsibilities. Therefore, the category leadership is defined in relation to the category managerial responsibilities as actions or behaviors of the manager that go beyond the strict managerial responsibilities. In total, 40 observations were made in this category. During the data analysis, the following subcategories were identified, in order of most frequent appearance: trust (42%), connection (25%), accessibility (25%) and motivation (8%). Each of these subcategories will now be further explained, along with their relation to other categories.

4.10.1   Trust

The challenge with hybrid flexible work arrangements is trusting employees to allow for the agreed-upon flexibility. Both team members and managers have to trust that work will be done or hours will be performed even when working from home or when their team members are not online for a while. Further, managers have to trust that employees will communicate any difficulties or trouble they encounter, as this is harder to catch in a home environment. Consequently, trust was indicated as an important factor by the managers:

> It is important to build trust and let people take ownership of the tasks assigned to them. *Manager, Team 3*

According to the interviews, building trust is dependent on many factors:

> Even if we are not together, even if I don't see them working online or offline, at least the outcome of the work [shows me they are doing well]. *Employee 1, Team 3*

> I think you always need to build [trust]. That is easier when you see the people in person. *Manager, Team 3*

> I have that trust because I've managed my job for many, many years. *Employee 2, Team 2*

As mentioned, trust is related to work quality (the outcome of the work), relationships, and communication. Further, as it is built over time, trust is related to old vs. new due to its dynamic nature. Lastly, trust has a relationship to organization and managerial responsibilities. When trust exists, micromanagement does not, even though a manager has responsibility for the results of the team. The manager trusts his team members with the work and leaves the organization of their work to them. Overall, trust shows relationships to work quality, relationships, collaboration and communication, old vs. new, managerial responsibilities, and coordination and organization.

4.10.2   Connection

The challenge related to connection is to establish or maintain a connection between the manager and individual team members as well as mediate the connection between the team members. This connection is defined as a relationship that goes beyond the purely professional one, where on a more personal level a connection or relationship is created.

The interviews showed that managers put in an active effort to create a connection between themselves and the individual team members. The methods they used for this are:

> I have face-to-face meetings depending on needs and wishes, but in general, I have face-to-face meetings with people from every week to every third week, depending on what they want. *Manager, Team 1*

> During individual meetings, during all the interactions in the office space—the coffee machine, big meetings, small meetings—listen and try to remember. *Manager, Team 3*

> I would rather take fives on Teams calling each other than write a lot in Teams. This makes it easier to understand each other. *Manager, Team 1*

It also became clear that managers feel that this type of connection is easier to establish and maintain in person:

> But what you miss is the walking around and catching information without planning, kind of the walking around leadership. *Manager, Team 1*

Further, from the interviews, it became clear that managers also put in an effort to mediate the connection between team members by asking questions about the personal lives of their employees and by seeking out the opinions of the team:

> [The manager] introduced a kind of routine where, at the end of every section meeting, everyone turns on their mic and shares some of their life experiences. So I think that is at least one of the efforts to try to build up or maintain the connection. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> I mean, for some tasks, we need to discuss how to do things. Then we normally have that discussion with the whole team. So I'm just introducing the question: how should we handle this? And then there is an open discussion on what the best way is to do these kinds of tasks. *Manager, Team 2*

Several relations can be seen with other categories. Individual preferences play a big role in the manner and frequency of regular individual meetings, as the manager tends to adapt to individual needs and wishes and also includes his own individual preferences. Another relation can be seen with communication and collaboration. Guiding discussions within the team requires a good amount of communication and collaboration skills to be successful. Further, as establishing connections can be seen as creating personal or informal relationships, this sub-category is closely related to the category of relationships. Another relation exists between connection and work quality. One observation created a link between asking meeting participants questions about their personal lives and a more active engagement in online meetings. As this method was established during the COVID-19 period, this sub-category is also related to the category of old vs. new. In short, this sub-category has relations to individual preferences, communication and collaboration, relationships, work quality, and old vs. new.

4.10.3 Accessibility

The challenge with accessibility is for the managers to be perceived as accessible by their employees both in the office and at home. As mentioned in section 4.6, many of the interviewed managers have a lot of meetings on the days they are in office. Therefore, being accessible to their employees when in the office is not that straightforward, and they have to more actively make space for people to approach them in the office environment. Also, working from home can impact the perceived accessibility of managers:

> Meeting people at the office means making space to have the possibility of meeting people at the office. *Manager, Team 1*

> I'm probably not as accessible as I used to be, but I've told everyone that they shouldn't hesitate to contact me when I'm not in office. *Manager, Team 3*

Further, the managers also indicate that they find it important to be accessible:

> I believe that is a driver for everyone that they have a manager that can explain and give feedback on what they're doing. *Manager, Team 1*

Accessibility is related to relationships and communication. One manager said that he thinks he is perceived as more accessible when a relationship between the person and him is already in place. Additionally, good communication between the manager and employees about availability and accessibility in both work environments can influence perceived accessibility. In short, accessibility is related to two other categories: relationships and communication.

4.10.4 Motivation

The challenge related to motivation is to motivate team members into making real hybrid work arrangements and not just a masked remote work arrangement, and not to have to force this by rules:

> It's up to you to motivate your colleagues. It doesn't help that there's a rule: you must, right? Because that tends to be counterproductive. *Manager, Team 2*

According to the managers, bringing people back to the office is not so easy as employees see all the benefits of working from home and are very hesitant to come back to the office. However, the managers saw that when people started coming back, they realized after a while that they had missed something:

> People realized when they came in for a few hours that they had actually missed something [interaction]. Those people quickly get motivated to be in the office for one, two, or maybe even three days. So motivation is much better and stronger than having a rule. *Manager, Team 2*

> Maybe you need to arrange some activities while they're here. Because if you just get them in but don't arrange anything, they just sit here, similar to how they sit at home, and there aren't many meetings or other activities. Well, then maybe they can say, "Oh, why am I here?" But I think after a while, people start to arrange things themselves and start to arrange meetings with others. They feel like it's really useful if I talk to this guy or that guy, if we have this meeting, or if we have this interaction somehow. *Manager, Team 2*

This sub-category is related to rules, relationships, managerial responsibilities, and work quality. As rules can be a start to getting employees back to the office, ultimately motivation should be the force to drive them back into the office a few days a week, as this is stronger than any rule and won't lead to frustrated individuals. Interaction at the office will automatically build or maintain relationships, and this will contribute to the well-being of the employee, which is in Sweden a managerial responsibility. Summarizing, motivation is related to rules, relationships, managerial responsibilities, and work quality.

4.11 Old versus new

Old versus new challenges are inferred from how the managers' and employees' habits and attitudes evolve according to the changes in work arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic caused lockdowns and in-office restrictions, most employees switched from five days working in the office to five days working from home. In response to this, some felt that they missed the presence of their colleagues and the social activities. To offset this shortcoming, the managers organized alternative remote social activities, such as coffee meetings, through Teams:

> But when we are at home during these online meetings, I think they increased the frequency [of team meetings] to once a week. It's not because we have that many things to share; we just needed to create opportunities for everyone to talk and to share their life experiences. *Employee 1, Team 1*

On the positive side, some of these new habits created by managerial practices remained after the switch back to some in-office work after the pandemic. On the less positive side, some practices that used to be dedicated to well-being and relationship building have come to serve strict work purposes:

> The midweek meeting was something we created during the pandemic because it started out more like a virtual coffee meeting: we need half an hour, and we can chit chat about social things. So we set that up as a coffee meeting on Teams, but we were not supposed to talk about work but talk about what you normally talk about at the coffee table. But after the pandemic, we have continued to use that as more of a work check. *Manager, Team 2*

Thus, the main challenge falls on the managers' shoulders to sustain the positive practices that came out of the pandemic adjustments. This challenge can also be related to workspace and coordination by individual preferences because the company no longer provides proactive support for home offices, but many employees still prefer working from home, even without home office support. Overall, 38 observations were made in this category, which are in relation to rules, coordination and organization, workspace, managerial responsibility, and relationships.

4.12   Rules

The category rules can be defined as the set of principles put in place by the organization that individual employees must follow. Within this category, 32 observations were made during the interviews. More specifically, in relation to hybrid flexible work, two subcategories were identified: rules around flexibility in the work location (66%) and rules around flexibility in the work schedule (34%). Each of these subcategories will now be further explained, along with their relationship to other categories.

4.12.1   Rules around flexibility in the work location

The challenge with rules around flexibility in the work location is for both managers and employees to align the team and themselves with the policies and rules set by the organization and department. The rule around flexibility in the work location that was currently in place in the interviewed department was for everyone to be there on two fixed days in the week, being free to choose the work location the other three days. Two of the teams interviewed (both managers and employees) saw this as a mandatory rule, mentioning the benefits:

> Since we've said that everyone should be here on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, they just follow. There is [no need to deal with individual preferences]. *Manager, Team 3*

> I think having fixed days is better because everyone has those fixed days, so we will meet everyone at the same time, on the same day. *Employee 1, Team 3*

One manager called the current rule a guideline and said it was up to the manager to decide if he needs his team in the office and for how many days:

> We call them guidelines. Right now, we normally spend two days in the office. We have chosen Tuesdays and Wednesdays; those are the core days, and the rest

of the days we want to be here, but most people instead work from home. But it differs a little bit depending on what kind of activities people have. *Manager, Team 2*

As mentioned above, the sub-category rules around flexibility in the work location is related to individual preferences, nature of the task, and leadership (motivation). Further, the fact that one manager stated that it is up to the manager to decide when his team should be in office means that there is a relations to managerial responsibilities as well. As rules changed compared to before or during the pandemic, they are of a dynamic nature and therefore show a relation with old vs. new. Lastly, for colleagues to know who is working from home or who will come to the office, communication is needed. In conclusion, rules around flexibility in the work location show relations to individual preferences, nature of the task, leadership, managerial responsibilities, old vs. new, and collaboration and communication.

4.12.2 Rules around flexibility in work schedule

The challenge concerning rules around flexibility in the work schedule for managers and employees is to align their working hours with the rules set by the organization. The current rules in place are: working 39 hours a week, no paid overtime, and being accessible during office hours, which are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Further, some teams have to report their hours weekly. This is due to the nature of their tasks, as they work on projects that require time tracking.

Something that also came up during the interviews was the need for managers and employees to be reasonable with their flexibility. Mediators here are the set rules for accessibility and arranged meetings, which most often take place during regular office hours:

> So you don't need to necessarily note [the hours worked less] down because this is how flexibility works. As long as you were not away for a day, did nothing, and did not report it. *Employee 1, Team 1*

> It's not mandatory to start at 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m. Even if you take a longer lunch break, you can catch up a little bit later. But the company would want you to work within a certain reasonable time frame. You cannot just say, I want to start working at midnight. That will be too strange. *Employee 1, Team 1*

As mentioned above, a relation exists to nature of the task and communication. Additionally to these relations, a relation exists to employee well-being, more specifically work-life balance. These rules around flexibility in the work schedule give employees the freedom to work in a way that is closer to their lifestyle, which allows them to have a better work-life balance. Overall, rules around flexibility in the work schedule are related to nature of the task, collaboration and communication, and well-being.

4.13 Innovation

The category innovation emerged from the interviews and can be defined as the creation of a new idea, product, or method that creates additional value for the

company. In total, 20 observations were made in this category, and no subcategories were identified.

The challenge related to innovation is to foster an environment where both flexibility and innovation can go hand in hand. This challenge is predominantly a managerial challenge, as all managers brought it up. Only two employees talked about innovation in the interviews, and they see it more as something they are involved in but not as a personal challenge.

All the managers indicate the importance of meeting face-to-face for innovation:

> I think, compared to teams that are five days a week in the office, we lack some interaction, some coffee talk that leads to new ideas. *Manager, Team 3*

Additionally, it is more difficult to have unstructured meetings with a large group of people online:

> It's tougher to have innovation meetings with bigger teams in a non-structured setting where you want to get feedback. *Manager, Team 1*

> By working remotely, you need to have meetings that are more structured, and innovation is not a structured way to do the best things. Innovation should be free. It should pop things up naturally.*Manager, Team 1*

Further, certain online tools exist to create break-out rooms or guide brainstorms, but these remain inferior to meeting face-to-face:

> There are tools. We're doing it by breaking up into small groups and having those discussions, having different rules where we question each other, and so on. But I still believe that it's better to have it person-to-person when it comes to innovation. *Manager, Team 1*

Lastly, meeting people spontaneously in the office also plays a role in innovation:

> The office means that you have spontaneous meetings, like in the corridor, in the coffee room, or in the lunch area; it's not planned, but you meet with a colleague who may be working in different departments and you overhear something and you discuss something, and then all of a sudden that leads to something. *Manager, Team 2*

Innovation is related to many other categories. As innovation is about sharing ideas, discussing them, and brainstorming, communication plays an important role. Additionally, spontaneous meetings contribute to innovation, so collaboration is also related to innovation. Further, innovation depends on interactions and relationships not only within the team but also outside of it. This means a relation exists between innovation and relationships. Lastly, a relation exists between innovation and tools, as the current online tools remain inferior to those in a physical setting. In conclusion, innovation is related to communication and collaboration, relationships, and tools.

4.14 Network of interrelationships

As a final step in the analysis, an overview of the relations between challenges, as already discussed in the previous section, will be shown in the form of graphical networks. This graphical representation makes it easier for the reader to get an overview

of all the challenges and the corresponding relations that have been identified in the empirical setting.

Figure 4.1, shows a graphical representation of the network that includes all identified relations. Every category has its own color of arrows to show the relations for that specific category. As can be seen, many categories relate to various other categories, and a complicated network emerges. As this was not part of the research, nothing can be said about the strength of these relations, and this network only serves as an indicator of possible interrelations between these challenges.

As the network of all relations becomes very complex, looking into the bi-directional or mutual relationships can give additional information. A mutual relationship indicates that both categories influence each other in a more complex way than in a uni-directional relation. Figure 4.2 shows the network of mutual relations. In total, 29 mutual relations have been identified.

An example of one of these mutual relations is the relation between the categories of well-being and coordination and organization. On the one hand, the way the employees and managers manage their WLB influences coordination and organization. The employees' choice on where and when to work, depending on what fits their WLB best, influences the mode of participation in meetings, the coordination of team tasks, and other organizational aspects. On the other hand, coordination and organization influence the freedom of employees and managers to manage their WLB. The need to create a common time for everyone to meet and the presence of certain fixed or team tasks create a limitation on the flexibility for employees to create their own WLB. Consequently, a mutual relation exists between well-being and coordination and organization.

Another example of a mutual relationship is between technical tools and collaboration and communication. On the one hand, the tools force a certain type of communication (continuously available and instant), while on the other hand, the employees sometimes specifically choose certain types of tools for certain types of communication (like messages or emails to create structure when informing). Therefore, a mutual relationship was identified between technical tools and collaboration and communication.
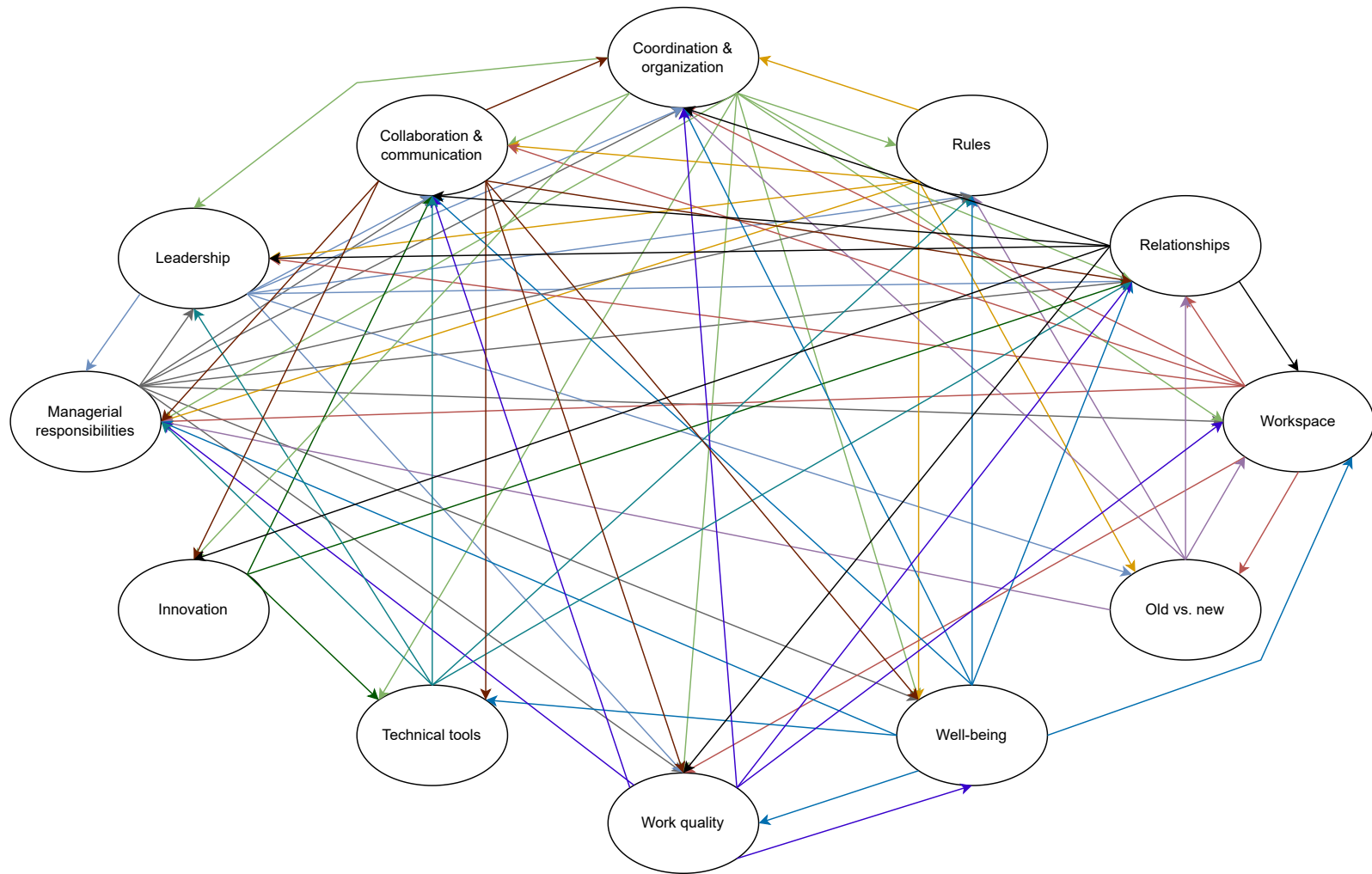
FIGURE 4.1: Network of all relations that exist between the identified challenges.
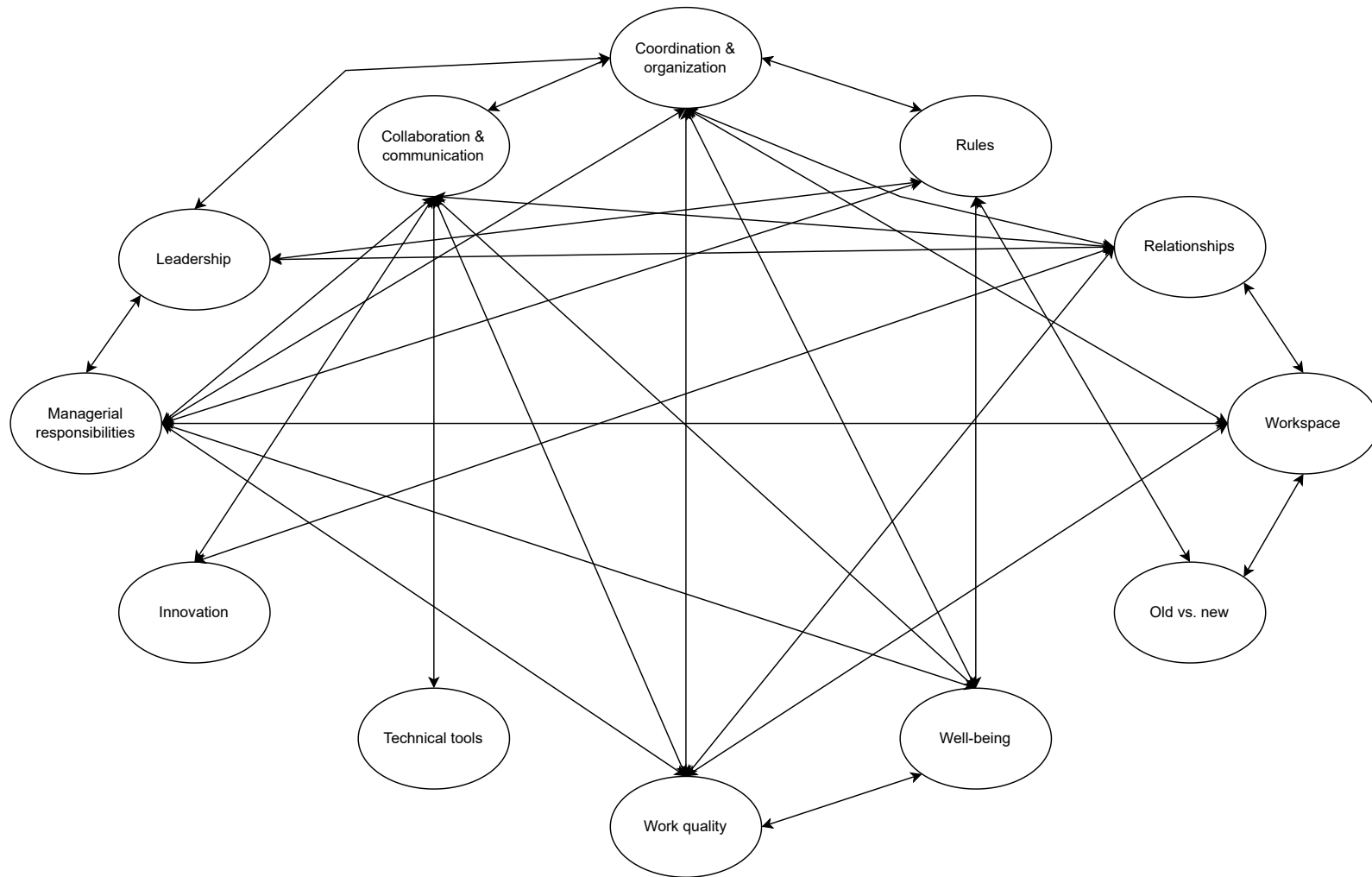
FIGURE 4.2: Network of mutual relations that exist between the identified challenges.

4.15 Results from the validation interview

As mentioned in chapter 2, a validation interview was performed to strengthen the validity of this study. Below, the findings from this validation interview will be presented. In Table 4.2, an overview of the number of observations per category and the percentages are shown. As already mentioned, this quantification of the data allows for an indication of relative importance but not definite importance.

Category	No. of observations	No. of observations in % of observations
Coordination and organization	16	22%
Collaboration and communication	12	16%
Relationships	7	9%
Well-being	11	15%
Managerial responsibilities	4	5%
Workspace	7	9%
Work quality	4	5%
Technical tools	2	3%
Leadership	3	4%
Old vs. new	3	4%
Rules	5	7%
Innovation	1	1%

TABLE 4.2: Identified challenges perceived by the validation interviewee in establishing flexible work arrangements

4.15.1 Coordination and organization

Regarding coordination and organization, all subcategories were identified in the validation interview. Individual preferences included five observations and were concerned with how individual preferences can be taken into account when coordinating and organizing work:

> When it comes to hybrid working. Or what would I change? I think the three day rule. I would like it if it were more of a personal choice.

> But I think for most of my team, people really want to come back to the office. There are a lot of us who actually go back five days a week.

Also, challenges related to the nature of the task are identified in nine observations. It was identified that the nature of the task can give rise to different challenges related to choosing when and how to work, negotiating around team tasks, and taking into account the space or time restrictions of tasks:

> I'm doing a lot of things that I can do on my own: calculations, etc. I get to be a bit more flexible than, for example, people who are really executing tests.

> So we [the team] are designing a new compressor. The first phase can be done virtually. We're not drawing physically on blackboards anymore. But the moment that you go to your first prototype, you cannot do that virtually; you have to come physically.

Regarding the subcategories by mode of participation and by unit, each of these was observed once. The challenges are related to finding the right mode of participation while taking individual choices and tasks into account and creating a common time for all employees to meet:

> I have to ask something that might involve proprietary information, and it's always safer to ask face-to-face rather than virtually.

> We have a biweekly team meeting, and we try to organize that physically once every two or three months so that there's at least one day every few months that everybody's at the office.

In summary, observations made in this category are related to rules, workspace, collaboration and communication, and innovation.

4.15.2 Collaboration and communication

When it comes to collaboration and communication, all subcategories were identified except global working. This is due to the fact that the job of the validation interviewee does not require her to work with anyone located in a different country. As for the other subcategories, seven observations were made in general, three in spontaneous meetings, and two in knowledge sharing. Observations were linked to the challenges of choosing the best way of collaboration and communication and creating space for spontaneous meetings and knowledge sharing:

> We have a Teams channel with all the direct colleagues; I will let them know if I have sick kids. I will try to work when they're napping, or if it's urgent, just call me. To the rest of the environment and external people, I am just out of office.

> The spontaneous collaborations or spontaneous interactions get completely out of the picture if you only work virtually.

In summary, observations related to the category of collaboration and communication show relations to coordination and organization, well-being, technical tools, and innovation.

4.15.3 Relationships

For the category relationships, both the subcategories inside the unit (five observations) and outside the unit (two observations) were identified. Building and maintaining relationships and creating opportunities to meet physically at the beginning of a working relationship have been identified as challenges:

> I think that's an illusion people had at the beginning of COVID: Let's just have informal Teams calls. They don't have them. You're not going to call a colleague for like 10 minutes; let's just chat because I just got a cup of coffee from my own coffee machine. You just don't do that.

> To know somebody's strengths, way of working, and way of collaborating, you need to know them on a more personal level. In the virtual calls, they don't really invite you to talk about family situations. It's especially true if you haven't met physically before.

In summary, relations can be drawn between this category and workspace and work quality.

4.15.4 Well-being

When it comes to well-being, only the category WLB was identified. In this sub-category, eleven observations were made, and the main challenge is related to using flexibility in such a way to improve the WLB and, more specifically, to combine being a parent with working:

> As a young parent, work-life balance is very difficult because you are at the start of your family life. You're required to work, and then at the same time, the school is out at 3:15. So you always feel guilty. You feel guilty because you're not working as many hours as you want to, and you're feeling guilty because you leave your kids at school for longer. But hybrid working does allow you the flexibility to, at least for me, do your hours and be at school at a decent time, so it does give me a little bit less guilt.

In summary, relations between well-being, coordination and organization, work quality, and collaboration and communication were identified.

4.15.5 Managerial responsibilities

For the category managerial responsibilities, only two subcategories were identified: well-being management and policy enforcement. As an employee was interviewed for the validation interview, the interviewee did not directly talk about a challenge but explained that managers are responsible for your well-being and how their enforcement of the policy can affect the employee's experience with it:

> If you are sick often, they [your manager] will ask you: How are you feeling with work? Are there any problems? Is it related to the work environment? So they do have some company policies on well-being in the company.

> But I think maybe my boss, who's very flexible, I don't know if that [having such flexibility] is the case in the whole company because I've heard other stories as well. But for me, in my situation, it's like that.

In short, one relation was identified between managerial responsibilities and coordination and organization.

4.15.6 Workspace

When it comes to the category of workspace, the subcategories of physical setting (four observations), social setting (one observation), and distractions at work (two observations) were identified. Distractions at home and technological access were not found in the validation interview. The identified challenges here are: creating a good physical environment at home; finding a good combination to use social control in the office at the right time; and creating a good work environment in the office with few distractions:

> In the beginning, I did not have a second screen at home, which is a very practical thing to have. So all those little things I adjusted to make sure that I had them at home.

> Sometimes I'm like, "No, I do need the social interaction or the social control from a work environment," and then I am more efficient at work.

> In social settings, I think you can be more inefficient because you get disturbed more and it requires more energy.

In summary, observations related to the category of workspace show a relation to coordination and organization, relationships, and work quality.

4.15.7 Work quality

When it comes to work quality, all subcategories were identified. One observation was made in employee performance, two in employee focus and engagement, and one in handling the workload. In general, the challenge is related to maintaining good work quality while choosing how and when to work:

> There are days that I really feel like I want to work from home because it will be more efficient.

> At home, I try to be more focused. You don't have those 10-minute talks with colleagues on the coffee break.

> I don't mind working a few extra hours per week, but we're only paid for five days a week. I'm not going to work a sixth day.

In summary, work quality is related to workspace, relationships, and well-being.

4.15.8 Technical tools

Two observations were made in the category of technical tools. One is related to the presence of a reservation system to reserve desks at the office (as a flexible desk policy is in place), and the other is related to the status on Teams as a means of communication:

> We have a reservation system, but everybody's very flexible, so if you really need a desk because you want to come or the situation at home does not allow you to work from home, you can just ask somebody. Like, is there anybody who's willing to give up his or her desk?

> You just sometimes get a call late. It's the good and the bad thing about the green mark in your Teams online. So yeah, some colleagues tend to call.

In summary, relations were found between this category and the categories of relationships and collaboration and communication.

4.15.9 Leadership

For the category leadership, three observations were made: one in the sub-category of trust, one in connection, and one in accessibility. Just as with managerial responsibilities, challenges were not identified as the validation interview was performed with an employee. However, the validation interviewee indicates the presence of trust and connection between her and the manager and also indicates her manager's accessibility:

> It's not that somebody is checking my software, in which I track my hours. It's really a trust system, and I think within our team it works well.

> I have a really nice manager. If I had to describe him, I would describe him as a family guy. He has four daughters, so he really understands the family struggles to get everything arranged. He's very understanding. So it also makes you feel like you can tell him.

In summary, a relation between leadership and coordination and organization was identified.

4.15.10   Old vs. new

In the old vs. new category, three observations were made. The interviewee started during the pandemic and indicated the challenges she faced as a newcomer in a fully remote setting:

> In the beginning, it's very difficult to really connect with colleagues because you're stuck at home, and I had a few colleagues who were so nice that they just continuously called to introduce themselves. But I've been working here for almost 2 years now, and there are still people at the coffee machine telling me, "Hey, you're new."

In summary, a relation between old vs. new and relationships was identified.

4.15.11   Rules

Five observations were made within the category of rules, and both subcategories were identified. For both work location and work schedule, the challenge for the interviewee is to align herself with the rules set by the organization:

> So for us, it's a hybrid situation at the moment. So we are expected to come at least three days per week to the office to be physically present. Although it's not a hard requirement, it's a company policy.

> Nobody is complaining that I haven't been to the office in three weeks, but I feel guilty because there is a rule that says you have to come three days a week. So if that were not there, I would feel less guilty.

In summary, a relation to coordination and organization was identified.

4.15.12   Innovation

In the category of innovation, only one observation was made. This observation was related to keeping innovation in the workplace given the possibility of flexibility. As the interviewee could not share any confidential information, she decided to use an analogy from her time working as a PhD student:

> I can take an example from my PhD. So one colleague of mine worked on something on the clavicle. Which has nothing to do with what I was doing, but because she was talking about it during an informal meeting, I said, Oh, you use that technique; maybe we can use that technique. Nobody ever thought of that, and it turned out it was not a great success, but just that informal talk allowed us to try it. If you don't have informal talks after meetings, before meetings, or at the coffee machines, similar situations won't occur. Now you say, OK, you have that issue; have you tried this? Because I've done this before.

In short, a relation is found between innovation and collaboration and communication.

4.16 Summarizing the findings

As presented earlier, an extended framework has been developed for exploring and analyzing challenges perceived by managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements (Table 4.1). Compared to the preliminary framework assembled in chapter 3, the extended framework incorporates newly explored categories of challenges, each accompanied with a definition and quantified data. The finalized framework contains 12 categories in total, some of which are unchanged or restructured from the preliminary framework, and the rest are newly explored. The finalized framework without empirical data is presented in subsection 4.16.3. Besides an adaptation to the preliminary framework, another output of the empirical data analysis is the interrelations found between challenges, which are visualized in graphs 4.1 and 4.2. Observations of flexible work challenges by managers and employees working in the same teams allowed researchers not only to construct the challenges but also to explore how they relate to one another within the same context. The adaptation of the framework and the identification of new challenges and their interrelations will be further discussed below.

4.16.1 Developing the framework for flexible working challenges

Overall, the multi-perspective empirical data helped the researchers examine and further develop the preliminary framework by describing and analyzing the same challenges from different perspectives. The development of the framework was shown in the evolution of codes during the data analysis process. Most codes were modified, and new codes were added, contributing to the construction of the final categories in the final framework. The adaptations made to the framework followed the study's constructionist approach, conceptually building the categories of challenges based on the personal accounts provided by managers and employees. Below, the developments in the framework will be discussed.

One major change to the categories was the integration of additional aspects into the preliminary categories. For example, the category of organization challenges became coordination and organization. Coordination was added to reflect individual coordinating efforts below the company-wide or organizational level of organizing flexible work. In other words, this category of challenges concerns not only higher-level decision-makers but also individual managers and employees down the line. The new category was observed 174 times (22% of all observations) and divided into four subcategories: coordination and organization by individual preferences (77 observations - 44% within the category), by nature of the task (71 - 41%), by mode of participation (17 - 10%), and by unit (9 - 5%). This quantified frequency of the observations per category allowed the researchers to assign relative importance to the category and subcategories. Furthermore, unlike individual preferences and nature of the task, mode of participation and unit are new subcategories that emerged during the data analysis. Compared to individual preferences and nature of the task, they cover more interpersonal aspects of coordination and organization challenges (see

subsection 4.2.3 and subsection 4.2.4). Similar adaptations were made in the creation of the category collaboration and communication (see section 4.3).

Another major change is the split-up of a category into separate categories with newly emerged subcategories. For example, communication was a sub-category in the preliminary framework (see section 3.4) but ended up being separated from team and leadership and adapted to the new category, collaboration and communication (see Table 4.1). This adaptation was due to a remarkably large number of instances (140 observations - 18%) in which interviewed managers and employees discussed challenges concerning collaboration and communication. Collaboration was combined with communication because they both appeared to be the core of teamwork. Within this category are four subcategories: general collaboration and communication (71 - 51%), global working (42 - 30%), spontaneous meetings (16 - 10%), and knowledge sharing (11 - 8%). While the subcategory general collaboration and communication was partly covered by the preliminary framework, global working, spontaneous meetings, and knowledge sharing emerged as new themes within the category and led to the incorporation of new codes during the data analysis. The observations coded with these new codes showed their own sets of distinct challenges and collectively account for 48% of the total observations within this category (for specific analyses, see 4.3.2, 4.3.3, and 4.3.4). Similar changes also occurred during the consolidation of these categories: relationships (section 4.4), well-being (section 4.5), work quality (section 4.8), and leadership (section 4.10).

Another significant change in the development of the extended framework is the incorporation of newly emerging themes not covered by the preliminary framework. An example is the emergence of the category managerial responsibilities, which appeared in 55 observations (7% of all observations). Furthermore, it is divided into five subcategories, ranked in order from high to low percentage of observation: performance management (16 - 29%), well-being management (12 - 22%), policy enforcement (11 - 20%), availability (8 - 15%), and facilitation (8 - 15%). The identification of new categories like this one fills the research gap on challenges perceived by managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements, as mentioned in section 1.2. Other new categories include rules (section 4.12) and innovation (section 4.13).

4.16.2 Interrelating challenges

In addition to developing the categories for describing and analyzing challenges in establishing flexible work arrangements, the findings from empirical data analysis also include specific challenges corresponding to every category (displayed in Table 4.3) and two visualized networks of interrelations between the categories of challenges (graphs 4.1 and 4.2). Graph 4.1 shows all relations, meaning how challenges within one category can influence those in another category, regardless whether the relations are mutual or not. Graph 4.2 shows only mutual, or bi-directional, relations, meaning challenges within one category can both influence and be influenced by those in

another category. These visualizations of findings from data analysis (discussed throughout chapter 4) provide readers with an overall understanding of the complex network of challenges that occur when one set of flexible work arrangements is practiced within the same context, filling the research gap identified in section 1.2.

4.16.3 Finalizing the framework

Below, the final conceptual framework, which has integrated both previous findings in the literature and current empirical findings, is presented.

- **Coordination and organization:** Establishing a common way to work for multiple different individuals.
    - ❖ by individual preferences
    - ❖ by nature of the task
    - ❖ by mode of participation
    - ❖ by unit
- **Collaboration and communication:** The communication of information and collaborative work between employees, managers and other work partners.
    - ❖ General collaboration and communication
    - ❖ Global working
    - ❖ Spontaneous meetings
    - ❖ Knowledge sharing
- **Relationships:** The way in which employees and managers are connected to other people they work with.
    - ❖ Inside the unit
    - ❖ Outside the unit
- **Well-being:** The state of being happy, satisfied, comfortable, or healthy.
    - ❖ WLB
    - ❖ Emotional and mental health
    - ❖ Loneliness
    - ❖ Physical health
- **Managerial responsibilities:** Tasks which line managers are responsible for, as part of their position.
    - ❖ Performance management
    - ❖ Well-being management
    - ❖ Policy enforcement
    - ❖ Availability
    - ❖ Facilitation
- **Workspace:** The setting in which employees perform their tasks.
    - ❖ Physical setting
    - ❖ Distractions at home
    - ❖ Social setting
    - ❖ Distraction at work
    - ❖ Technological access

- **Work quality:** The extent to which the work delivered by the employees meets the expectation of the managers and the company.
    - ❖ Employee performance
    - ❖ Employee focus & engagement
    - ❖ Handling the workload
- **Technical tools:** The ICT tools that make flexible work arrangements and new ways of working possible.
- **Leadership:** Actions or behaviours of the manager that go beyond the strict managerial responsibilities.
    - ❖ Trust
    - ❖ Connection
    - ❖ Accessibility
    - ❖ Motivation
- **Old vs. new:** The evolving changes in managers' and employees' habits and attitudes following the changes in work arrangements.
- **Rules:** The set of principles put in place by the organization that individual employees must follow.
    - ❖ Rules around flexibility in the work location
    - ❖ Rules around flexibility in the work schedule
- **Innovation:** The creation of a new idea, product or method that creates additional value for the company.

(Sub)category	Challenge	Example
Coordination and organization		
By individual preferences	the coordination and organization of work while still taking into account individual preferences	*I think it depends a little bit on the persons involved because some people are happy with the setup we have now. Manager, Team 2*
By nature of the task	making individual decisions in which work environment to achieve the highest work quality	*We have an end-of-year performance management ... So there are a lot of things that need to be prepared and that is easier for me to do at home. Manager, Team 3*
	making the best negotiation of work arrangements for every team member	*It depends on if there are other people here and maybe the type of meeting. Normally we try to put meetings [where we work together on something] on Tuesday or Wednesday when we are here in the office anyway. Employee 1, Team 2*
	organizing and coordinating work according to the restrictions of time and/or space related to the task	*If your project requires you to operate some machines or networks, it's not possible to work remotely. Employee 2, Team 3*
By mode of participation	choosing from different modes of participation while taking into account individual choices	*If you have a meeting where you have interaction then I think people who are on the call suffer more. Maybe people start meetings five minutes before walking into the room and continue afterwards, and they miss those parts and then miss the interaction. Manager, Team 2*
By unit	creating a common time frame for all employees to meet and for the manager to meet individual members of the unit	*I think it's good to have at least one meeting every week with everyone. As much as possible. Manager, Team 3*
	finding an optimal working process for both parties involved, which requires careful consideration of the procedures from the company or the policies from the external companies	*You don't just borrow him to work in your team for half a year or something for that of course. The manager needs to agree. Employee 1, Team 1*
Collaboration and communication		
General	choosing the best way for collaborative work and communication	*When you're not meeting, some tasks might take a little bit longer in calendar time, because you might have to wait until you're in office... But also I think it can take longer using ... chat and e-mail and so on. Manager, Team 3*

(Sub)category	Challenge	Example
Global working	coordinating synchronous working time	*We have collaboration with different teams. Totally different teams, different countries. We don't come to each other. Employee 2, Team 3*
Spontaneous meetings	finding time for spontaneous meetings on the days in office which are often packed with back-to-back meetings	*Maybe on Tuesday, Wednesday, when I'm in the office, I can meet [a colleague] and we can discuss. Employee 1, Team 2*
Knowledge sharing	coordinating meetings for knowledge sharing while encountering conflicts related to individual preferences and the decision of which mode of participation is the best	*But there is a need in my team to share information, because you can't solve things on your own ... So asking around and getting more knowledge than ... You need to have different views on things. Manager, Team 1*
Relationships		
Inside the unit	building and maintaining relationships with colleagues within their team while still maintaining the flexibility	*Of course, if you're in the office you spend more time with and talking to people like I call it in the coffee room or at lunch and so on ... it's less social talk when you're at home. Manager, Team 2*
Outside the unit	having face-to-face interaction at the beginning for developing a functional working relationship	*Regularly they will send someone or the whole team to have a visit here, for us to meet in person, because once you actually talk to a person face to face or having dinner or lunch together, it makes it much easier in the future when you discuss further problems online. It's like you have this human connection and touch. Employee 1, Team 1*
Well-being		
WLB	using the given flexibility in a way that improves the WLB and avoiding blurring the boundaries between work and life	*They're grown-ups, but it's really easy that people work too much or too little, but they do it well. They balance it well and then it's a give and take from us as a company. I would say that if they work one extra hour one day. They could be off during the morning another day. Manager, Team 1*
Emotional and mental health	organizing the work so that the emotional and mental health does not suffer	*I probably work more hours when I'm working from home, but still I feel more relaxed because I spread it out more over the day. Manager, Team 3*
Loneliness	having enough social relationships either inside of work or outside	*The thing is that people don't build a long-term relationship with sitting at home. Manager, Team 1*

(Sub)category	Challenge	Example
Physical health	using the given flexibility in such a way that allows them to improve their physical health	*If you have some situation at your home like you need to go to see the dentist. It's OK. You take half an hour to drive there and then go back to continue working. Employee 2, Team 3*
Managerial responsibilities		
Performance management	making sure that their employees perform, regardless of when, where, and how they choose to perform their tasks	*It's tougher to follow people one day but you will see little patterns. You will see that they're not showing up. Manager, Team 1*
Well-being management	trusting that employees will manage themselves and making sure that they feel well while working, regardless of the time and place in which they choose to work	*The responsibility as a manager for your employees' well-being … requires that you ask the people to be here and then … explain that also to the people who are hesitant. I have the responsibility to make sure that you are feeling well … I think it's good for you to be here to meet people and so on, however introverted you may be. Manager, Team 2*
Policy enforcement	enforcing company policies regarding flexible work arrangements	*It's up to us as managers to find the best setup for everyone. Manager, Team 1*
Availability	being available or showing availability to employees who work with schedule and location flexibility	*Available, yes, but I do not always have to work. I always say to my team members or anyone, I'm more or less always available. Manager, Team 2*
Facilitation	facilitating communication and collaboration between their team members and many different parties	*Naturally it makes it easier if everyone in the team is working from home, because then you don't have ten persons meeting up and making decisions at the office and then you have ten persons sitting at home believing that they were not able to be part of. Manager, Team 1*
Workspace		
Physical setting	creating a good physical work environment at home	*A lot of people still use the kitchen table with just your laptop and you have no mouse, no screen, anything. I have my office setup at home so there's no physical downside. Employee 2, Team 2*

(Sub)category	Challenge	Example
Distractions at home	creating an environment at home with as little distractions as possible	*Maybe at home you have more things to be concerned about. Like when you're working in the dining room, maybe your cat will come to you. Maybe when you work there, your friend will come. Employee 2, Team 3*
Social setting	finding a combination that gives you the best of both worlds in terms of social contact	*In the office it's easy because we are sitting together in this open floor solution. So it is easy to ask people and you can also hear a little bit if some other two people have a discussion maybe it's of interest for you as well. Employee 1, Team 2*
Distractions at work	creating a good work environment in the office without any distractions	*Yesterday they were struggling to work in the open landscape because there was too much noise around them. Manager, Team 2*
Technological access	getting a stable and quick connection that allows to work in the same way from home	*It helps when I work in the databases because we have a quicker connection from the office compared to from home. Employee 2, Team 2*
Work quality		
Employee performance	using the given flexibility in such a way that the performance is maintained or even improved	*Not everyone [might combine in the right way to work better]. Manager, Team 3*
Employee focus & engagement	keeping the focus and staying engaged in all different settings that the flexible work arrangements bring	*Sometimes you need to ask their name loudly. Where are you? And they will answer. I'm here. Employee 2, Team 3*
Handling the workload	finishing the assigned workload within the time-frame	*Sometimes I have to put in a little bit of extra time as well, depending on some specific tasks. Employee 1, Team 2*
Technical tools	the fact that tools still cannot replace certain in-person interactions	*Those things [difficult conversations] are really tough to do in distance. Of course there are tools and so on, but it will never be equally as good as meeting up with people. Manager, Team 1*
Leadership		
Trust	trusting employees to allow for the agreed upon flexibility	*It is important to build trust and let people take ownership of the tasks assigned to them. Manager, Team 3*

(Sub)category	Challenge	Example
Connection	establishing or maintaining a connection between the manager and individual team members as well as mediating the connection between the team members	*I have face-to-face meetings depending on needs and wishes, but in general I have face-to-face meetings with people from every week to every third week. Manager, Team 1*
Accessibility	being perceived as accessible by their employees both in the office and home environment	*Meeting people at the office means making space to have the possibility of meeting people at the office. Manager, Team 1*
Motivation	motivating team members into making a real hybrid work arrangements and not just a masked remote work arrangement	*It's up to you to motivate your colleagues. It doesn't help that there is a rule: you must, right? Because that tends to be counterproductive. Manager, Team 2*
Old vs. new	how the managers' and employees' habits and attitudes evolve according to the changes in work arrangements	*The midweek meeting was … created during the pandemic because it started out more like a virtual coffee meeting: … we were not supposed to talk about work but talk about what you normally talk about at the coffee table. But after the pandemic, we have continued to use that as more of a work check. Manager, Team 2*
Rules		
Rules around flexibility in the work location	align the team and themselves with the policies and rules around flexibility in the work location set by the organisation and department	*I think having fixed days is better because everyone has those fixed days, so we will meet everyone at the same time, on the same day. Employee 1, Team 3*
Rules around flexibility in the work schedule	aligning the working hours with the rules set by the organisation	*It's not mandatory: you need to start from 8:00 AM or 9:00 AM. But the company would want you to always work in a certain reasonable time frame. You cannot just say: I want to start working from midnight. Employee 1, Team 1*
Innovation	fostering an environment where both flexibility and innovation can go hand in hand	*By working remotely you need to have meetings more structured and innovation is not a structured way to do the best things. Manager, Team 1*

TABLE 4.3: Summary of currently perceived challenges by both managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements after the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden

Chapter 5

Re-contextualizing the findings

A dive back into the literature gives an idea of what findings from the empirical study are confirmed and what came out as new and even surprising. Below, the categories of challenges are re-contextualized one by one.

All the challenges related to coordination and organization identified in the interviews have been previously identified. Concerning individual preferences, Anderson et al. (2014) shows that the impact of teleworking on each individual employee differs drastically from that of another and thus concludes that accommodating individual preferences is a managerial challenge. Further studies (Babapour et al., 2021; Beauregard et al., 2019; De Leede, 2016; Smite et al., 2022) agree that employees choose different work methods and places for many different reasons, contributing even more to the challenge of coordinating work based on individual preferences. This coordination on where, when, and how to work, related to the identified sub-categories of coordinating by mode of participation and coordinating by unit, has also been identified as a challenge in studies by Babapour et al. (2021) and Downes and Koekemoer (2011). Lastly, Downes and Koekemoer (2011), Grzegorczyk et al. (2021), and Urbaniec et al. (2022) have also identified the challenge related to the nature of the task in their previous research. Noteworthy to mention, none of these studies dive deeper and make the division into the exact types of tasks that create these challenges, as is done in the current study, which looks into flexible tasks, team tasks, and fixed tasks.

The general challenge related to communication and collaboration on how to achieve the highest levels of collaboration and communication has been confirmed in previous research (Babapour et al., 2021; Beauregard et al., 2019; De Leede, 2016; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; Golden & Raghuram, 2010; Gratton, 2023; Nilsberth et al., 2021; Routley, 2020; Urbaniec et al., 2022). Routley (2020) identified this challenge in a study related to working from home, where difficulties in collaborating and communicating with colleagues were identified. Additionally, the author briefly touches upon the extra challenge that global working creates as collaboration and communication need to take place over different time zones. Interesting is the study

by Nilsberth et al. (2021) on the perceptions of Swedish teachers while online teaching during the pandemic. Here, it was identified that teachers lacked small talk and non-verbal responses from the students. This insight is in line with what was found in the current study, where interviewees preferred in-person collaboration due to their ability to perceive body language and physical cues. In terms of knowledge sharing, Gratton (2023) emphasizes how important it is to design hybrid work to encourage knowledge flows, and Babapour et al. (2021) indicates a lack of knowledge sharing in the home environment, as opposed to the office environment where knowledge sharing occurs organically. The identified subcategory of spontaneous meetings is also, to some extent, confirmed as a challenge by a previous study. Babapour et al. (2021) found that increased planned meetings are crucial to compensating for the face-to-face check-ins that used to take place spontaneously. The challenge related to spontaneous meetings, as well as that related to global working, are both to some extent mentioned in previous studies, but none of those investigated them to the extent done by the current study.

As for the category relationships, the findings in the current study are confirmed by Babapour et al. (2021), which investigated three Swedish public service organizations during the pandemic and identified challenges in relationships within the organizations. Just like the current study, they found that face-to-face interactions facilitate relationship building and maintenance. One of their identified challenges, employees feeling excluded if they are not in the office, is not found in the current study. The reason for this discrepancy could be that the studied organization in the current study already had a long established culture of remote working, while the organizations studied by Babapour et al. (2021) had only established flexibility in the work location one year prior to the pandemic. Contrary to the current study, no study so far has reported challenges related to relationships with people outside of the team or organization, although Gratton (2023) does wonder what the long-term consequences are if young employees cannot cultivate networks through face-to-face interactions.

When it comes to well-being, many studies have already identified the challenge of creating a good WLB (Babapour et al., 2021; Bjärntoft et al., 2020; De Leede, 2016; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017; Routley, 2020; the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE), 2021). These studies also discuss the challenge for employees and managers of blurred boundaries between work and personal lives. Consistently, individual differences in the ability to set these boundaries identified in the current study are previously mentioned by Bjärntoft et al. (2020). Further, Cvenkel (2020) also indicates the challenge related to mental and physical health, and Routley (2020) talks about the challenge related to loneliness. Both Anderson et al. (2014) and the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE) (2021) talk about the effect on loneliness of having a social network outside of work. This is also indicated by our interviewees as a mediator for loneliness.

As for managerial responsibilities, only the subcategories performance management and well-being management have been identified as challenges in previous studies (Babapour et al., 2021; De Leede, 2016; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE), 2021; Urbaniec et al., 2022). These studies also talk about the difficulties in monitoring the performance and assessing the well-being of employees when working from home is common. No studies were found that identified challenges related to being available or company policy enforcement. This is likely due to the fact that the studies are from during the pandemic, when availability was only possible online and the company policies were very often changed. In a hybrid, flexible way of working, availability both in person and online becomes important in order to be reachable by all employees. Also, company policy enforcement gains importance as the policy will be in place for a longer time, and therefore proper adherence is required.

All subcategories related to the workspace, except the social setting, are covered in previous studies (Babapour et al., 2021; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017; Franken et al., 2021; Grzegorczyk et al., 2021; Routley, 2020; the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE), 2021; Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021; Urbaniec et al., 2022). However, most of these studies indicate internet problems as the main challenge when it comes to technological access (Babapour et al., 2021; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; Grzegorczyk et al., 2021; Routley, 2020; the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE), 2021). In contrast, our interviewees indicated that, after the pandemic, people got stable and quick internet connections, which makes this challenge less relevant post-pandemic. However, challenges related to accessing databases or other company-related IT systems remain. Additionally, challenges with the physical setting and distractions both at home and at work also remain relevant. Challenges related to social settings seem to be new in the post-COVID-19 era, as no studies have identified them before.

In relation to work quality, several studies have looked at employee performance in several flexible work arrangements (Kelliher & Riley, 2003; Mas & Pallais, 2020; Spreitzer et al., 2017), but only a few have investigated the challenges relating to this (Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; Routley, 2020). Also, employee focus and engagement, specifically in online meetings, have been identified as challenges related to flexible working arrangements (Babapour et al., 2021). The ability to handle the workload given has been mentioned as a challenge for employees in a study by the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE) (2021) for Swedish workers in light of the pandemic. Overall, all the sub-categories in work quality have been identified as challenges in previous studies.

The challenge related to technical tools and their inability to replace in-person interactions has also been identified by Swedish teachers during the pandemic (Nils-berth et al., 2021). These teachers found digitally mediated interactions highly inferior to physical interactions. This is fully in line with the findings from the interviews.

Except accessibility, all subcategories identified in the category leadership have been previously identified (Babapour et al., 2021; Beauregard et al., 2019; De Leede, 2016; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE), 2021). Especially, managers' ability to build trust and connections is identified as challenging in a remote or hybrid environment (Babapour et al., 2021; De Leede, 2016; the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE), 2021). As already mentioned in a study by Beauregard et al. (2019), it is a challenge for managers to bring people back to work, meaning new ways of motivating them have to be found (Babapour et al., 2021). As accessibility emerges as a challenge from the combination of remote work and office work, it is to be expected that previous studies (which focused on full office work before COVID-19 or fully remote work during the pandemic) have not identified this challenge.

When it comes to the category of old vs. new, studies (Franken et al., 2021; Grzegorczyk et al., 2021) describe the changes in work arrangements and the subsequent changes in the habits and attitudes of managers and employees. More recently, some studies have started to wonder how to apply the positive practices that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic (Babapour et al., 2021; Franken et al., 2021). This confirms what the current study has found relevant to the challenges concerned with the category old vs. new.

When it comes to rules, the challenge that has been identified in literature is related to ambiguities and an inconsistent understanding of the rules (Babapour et al., 2021; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011). However, this challenge was not identified in the current study. As all interviewees came from the same department, it could be that the department and the managers communicated very clearly on the rules and how they can be interpreted, countering the challenge as such. Meanwhile, the challenge of aligning yourself with the rules, as identified in this study, has not been identified in existing literature yet. This could be due to the need for a clear understanding of the rules before employees can start aligning themselves with them.

As the COVID-19 pandemic caused companies to focus on continuing their activities in the changing environment and the pandemic was of limited duration, innovation has not been identified as a challenge. However, Gratton (2023) does wonder how virtual working and hybrid working will influence innovation, as it has been shown that collaboration networks become more static. Therefore, the identification of innovation as an explicit challenge in hybrid working is novel.

Finally, the findings of the validation interview strengthen the overall validity of the study. Overall, all categories of challenges were confirmed in the interview. Some subcategories were not identified. This is due either to the nature of the work (the interviewee does not work globally, so no observations on global working) or to the limited time-frame of the interview. As the interview is limited to one hour, not all sub-categories can be discussed in the same depth, and the discussed items

can indicate the relevance the interviewee gives to these challenges. For example, observations around well-being were only made in the category of WLB. As a young parent, kids are often put first, and their own physical or mental health can be seen as less challenging compared to trying to combine being a parent with working. As the interview of a woman and someone with young kids did not yield any new (sub)categories, the framework is further confirmed.

In summary, previous studies support the findings related to the categories of coordination and organization, communication and collaboration, relationships, well-being, old vs. new, and additionally the sub-categories of performance management, well-being management, physical setting, distractions at home, distractions at work, technological access, work quality, technical tools, trust, connection, and motivation. Besides these already previously identified challenges, this study provides deeper insights on challenges related to coordination of tasks, global working, and spontaneous meetings while also adding new challenges related to availability, company policy enforcement, social setting, accessibility, rules, and innovation. As a final new contribution, this study created a network that shows the interrelations between all the identified challenges.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Future Work

6.1 Conclusion

As the adoption of flexible working arrangements has been boosted since the COVID-19 pandemic and the pandemic caused changes in the habits and behaviors of employees, company policies have been adopted that allow for remote work and other flexible work arrangements. Although these flexible arrangements were already established in Sweden, companies continuously need to refine their policies to meet the changing needs of their managers and employees. Therefore, research into the practical challenges related to establishing flexible work arrangements can aid in further refining company policies and creating a better match between policies and employees' needs. The goal of this thesis is to identify the challenges currently perceived by both managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements after the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden. Additionally, identifying the interrelations between the described and explored challenges complements the overall goal. For this, a qualitative study was performed that developed a framework for the perceived challenges and a network of their interrelations. The framework helps overcome the fragmentation in literature and the knowledge gap in the post-pandemic era. This framework was first derived from the available literature and consisted of six categories with several sub-categories. After the update with the empirical data, the framework consists of 12 categories with several sub-categories. Changes from the initial framework to the final one include subcategories becoming categories, changes in the challenge related to the category, and the addition of four new categories (rules, innovation, old vs. new, and managerial responsibilities). To strengthen the validity of the study, a validation interview was performed that confirmed the final framework. In addition to this framework, a network of interrelations between the categories is also an output of this thesis. This is based on observations in the interviews that showed influences from one category on others. In summary, the development of the framework and the network of interrelations between the challenges means that all the research purposes of this thesis are fulfilled.

The overall contribution of this thesis is threefold. The theoretical contribution of

this thesis is the finalized framework of challenges perceived by both managers and employees in establishing flexible work arrangements, together with the network of interrelations among the challenges. The framework counteracts the currently existing fragmentation in literature and fills the knowledge gap in the post-pandemic era related to the perceived challenges. Further, the network contributes by increasing the ability to understand the complexity of the challenges and their interactions. This gives insights into the possible effects of the challenges on each other, which is valuable to managers and organizations when establishing alternative work arrangements and designing corresponding policies.

The second area of contribution by this thesis is the empirical data from the Swedish setting. The gathered data is the first known data set in the post-pandemic era related to perceived challenges in establishing alternative work arrangements in Sweden. This data set allowed the identification of new categories related to perceived challenges, expanding the collective knowledge of the perceived challenges in establishing flexible work arrangements.

Lastly, this thesis also contributes by utilizing a new method, interviewing both managers and employees, to identify the challenges. As most research is conducted from an organizational perspective, the perspectives of line managers and employees are not considered. As the challenges arise in a team context, insights from the team's perspective are crucial to fully understanding the challenges.

6.2   Future work

There are four suggested areas for future research to build on the knowledge contribution of this thesis on the challenges perceived by managers and employees in establishing alternative work arrangements in Sweden after the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, future research can further explore the challenges in other organizations within Sweden using the proposed framework to add to the data set generated by this thesis. Secondly, future research can apply the same framework and methods to explore challenges in various settings (e.g., other country settings) to diversify existing data. The incorporation of new data will help further challenge and develop the framework and allow comparisons across different contexts. Thirdly, quantitative methodologies can be developed to measure and evaluate the importance of each category and subcategory. Such findings will enable the ranking of challenges by importance and help managers and organizations prioritize their strategies to deal with these challenges. Last but not least, future research can also study the inter-relations between challenges in more detail to identify the strength and nature of specific relations. Such findings can further confirm or challenge the interrelations and further develop the network. The suggestions for future work above will benefit not only the research community but also the managers and organizations dealing with the challenges in practice.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview guide

A.1 For managers

- Background
  - Could you tell us your name and your current position within this organization?
  - What are your main responsibilities in your role according to you?
  - How is work currently organised? (criteria check)
- Rules
  - What are the current rules for your team in terms of work organisation?
    * How much flexibility is allowed? (where, when, how long?)
    * How is the division between remote and office work?
    * Are there fixed days when everybody has to be here?
    * How flexible are the working hours?
    * How much control do the team members have on their flexibility?
    * Tell us something about your people's individual preferences.
  - How different is your work arrangement compared to your team members?
- Challenges
  - Tell us something about hybrid working and flexibility in your team and how you are dealing with it.
    * How are your team members dealing with this?
  - What is your main challenge at the moment related to hybrid work?
  - Are there any other challenges you can think of?
  - What do you spend more time on now in a hybrid setting than in a remote or office-work setting?
  - What type of tasks do you do in the office and what type at home? Or are they the same?
  - Compared to other units in your organization, what challenges are more specific to your team?
  - Tell us how your leadership works.
  - What are your concerns about work quality being done in different settings?
  - How do you ensure your employees' well-being?

– Tell us something about collaboration and communication in your team.
- Relationships
    - How do you and your team members maintain the relationships between you and people outside of your teams and outside the organization?
    - How is your relationship with the team members in a flexible work arrangement?
    - How are the dynamics between the team members in a flexible work arrangement?
- End of the interview
    - Would you have any advice for managers who are struggling in keeping their team together in a hybrid setting?

A.2   For employees

- Background
    - Could you tell us your name and your current position within this organization?
    - What are your main responsibilities in your role according to you?
    - How is work currently organised? (criteria check)
- Rules
    - What are the current rules for your team in terms of work organisation?
        * How much flexibility is allowed? (where, when, how long?)
        * How is the division between remote and office work?
        * Are there fixed days when everybody has to be here?
        * How flexible are the working hours?
        * How much control do you have on your flexibility?
        * How do you actually choose to work?
    - How different is your work arrangement compared to your team members?
- Challenges
    - Tell us something about hybrid working and flexibility in your team and how you are dealing with it.
        * How are your team members dealing with this?
    - What is your main challenge at the moment related to hybrid work?
    - Are there any other challenges you can think of?
    - What do you spend more time on now in a hybrid setting than in a remote or office-work setting?
    - What type of tasks do you do in the office and what type at home? Or are they the same?
    - Compared to other units in your organization, what challenges are more specific to your team?
    - Tell us about the leadership style of your manager.
    - Tell us about the difference in work quality in different settings.
        * How is your focus influenced?
        * How is your performance influenced?

* How does your manager control the quality?
  - What is the difference in the work environment at home or in the office?
  - What does your manager do to support your work and well-being in different settings?
  - Could you tell us something about your WLB related to hybrid work?
  - Tell us something about collaboration and communication in your team and with the manager.
- Relationships
  - How do you and your team members maintain the relationships between you and people outside of your teams and outside the organization?
  - How is your relationship with the team members in a flexible work arrangement?
  - How is your relationship with the manager in a flexible work arrangement?

Appendix B

List of references for the framework

Theme	Sources
Organization	Anderson et al. (2014), Babapour et al. (2021), Beauregard et al. (2019), De Leede (2016), Downes and Koekemoer (2011), Grzegorczyk et al. (2021), Smite et al. (2022), and Urbaniec et al. (2022)
HR outcome	Babapour et al. (2021), Bjärntoft et al. (2020), Cvenkel (2020), De Leede (2016), Downes and Koekemoer (2011), Eurofound and the International Labour Office (2017), Jensen and Van De Voorde (2016), Kelliher and Anderson (2010), Mas and Pallais (2020), Renard et al. (2021), Routley (2020), Spreitzer et al. (2017), and the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE) (2021)
Team and Leadership	Babapour et al. (2021), Beauregard et al. (2019), De Leede (2016), Downes and Koekemoer (2011), Golden and Raghuram (2010), Gratton (2023), Nilsberth et al. (2021), Routley (2020), and Urbaniec et al. (2022)
Workspace	Babapour et al. (2021), Downes and Koekemoer (2011), Eurofound and the International Labour Office (2017), Franken et al. (2021), Grzegorczyk et al. (2021), Mellner et al. (2016), Routley (2020), the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (SAWEE) (2021), Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt (2021), and Urbaniec et al. (2022)
Technical tools	Nilsberth et al. (2021)
Changes in the world of work (old vs. new)	Jemine (2021) and Renard et al. (2021)

TABLE B.1: References for the theoretical framework

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