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Navigating the New Normal

A Qualitative Study on the Evolving Role of Managers in the Transition to a Hybrid Work Model

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Having the ability to wish for what supervisor to be acquired was an opportunity not all the peers took advantage of. When getting to know Nadja Sörgärde during the final semester of the program, we knew straight away that if there was anyone who would challenge us and make us develop our reasoning - it would be her. Beyond that, she has believed in us and cheered us on throughout, despite some bumps along the way. We would like to thank you Nadja for all the good advice and making us see more clearly from start to finish.

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.... Thank you and enjoy the reading!

Abstract

Title: Navigating the New Normal - A Qualitative Study on the Evolving Role of Managers in the Transition to a Hybrid Work Model

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Key words: Hybrid Work Model, Manager role, Leadership, Knowledge-Intensive Work

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to contribute to a greater understanding of the change of the managerial role in knowledge-intensive firms as organizations transfer into a more hybrid work model.

Research Question: *How has the role of the manager changed in the transition to a hybrid work model?*

Methodology: In order to address the purpose of this study, a qualitative research method was conducted. Ten interviews with a semi-structured character were held with managers with more than five years of managerial experience. The study thereby adopts a constructionist perspective and an inductive approach.

Theoretical perspectives: This study is positioned within the spectrum of research on managerial work and in the context of a hybrid work structure. Multiple concepts and dimensions are presented and more significant focus lay with Mintzberg's (1973) model on managerial roles.

Empirical foundation: The empirical data is collected through ten qualitative interviews and highlights the managers perceived changes of their role as managers. The rich material generated a lot of insights and eventually crystallized into interesting trends and patterns.

Conclusions: The study has shown how the role as manager in knowledge-intensive work indeed has changed when transitioning into a hybrid work model. The new context has brought various implications and perceived need to adapt one's managerial efforts in order to ensure a beneficial organizational outcome.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 is described by Kniffin et al. (2020) to have unleashed an unprecedented wave of disruption that spread across the global work landscape. Organizations had to quickly adapt to the changing circumstances, prioritizing the health and safety of their employees by adopting remote work arrangements which led to a drastic shift in the way we work. As the world gradually has emerged from the grip of the pandemic, organizations have faced a complex question: What will the future of work look like? The crisis has prompted an examination of traditional work models, challenging conventional ideas of where and how work can be accomplished. During this time of change, a prominent trend has emerged - the widespread integration of hybrid work structures (Naqshbandi, 2023).

The hybrid work model is described by Iqbal et al. (2021) to entail a flexible combination of remote work and in-person collaboration, allowing organizations to cater to a broader spectrum of employee preferences and needs. Vyas (2022) describes how it represents a significant departure from the strictly office-based work culture that has long dominated organizations. By embracing hybrid work structures, organizations aim to strike a balance between the advantages of remote work, such as increased autonomy and flexibility, and the benefits of face-to-face interactions, including collaboration, social cohesion, and innovation.

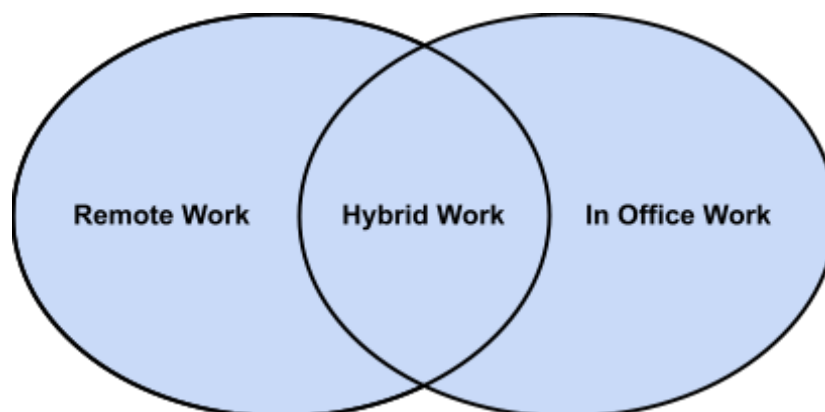


Figure 1: Visual of Hybrid Work

1.2 Problematization

Despite most managers agreeing that the future of knowledge-based work is of a hybrid structure, many organizations and managers have yet to think through and express the specifics of how to shape a more permanent structure of mixing remote and in-office working. A report published by McKinsey & Co (2021) discuss that while this flexible work arrangement offers numerous benefits for both employees and employers, it also presents unique challenges, particularly for managers who play a crucial role in ensuring the smooth functioning of teams and achieving organizational goals. As the workplace landscape undergoes a fundamental transformation, it becomes imperative to explore and problematize the changing role of managers in this transition.

A McKinsey & Co (2022) report also highlights how one of the central issues that arises with the adoption of a hybrid work model is the need for managers to redefine their traditional responsibilities and adopt new skills and strategies to effectively lead remote and dispersed teams. Unlike the traditional office-based model, where managers could directly observe and interact with their employees on a daily basis, the hybrid work model introduces a physical distance and a potential lack of real-time visibility into employees' activities and well-being. This shift challenges managers to develop new methods of evaluating structures for performance, fostering collaboration, and nurturing social relations within the organization.

Moreover, the transition to a hybrid work model calls for a shift in managerial mindset and practices. Managers must navigate the delicate balance between providing employees with the autonomy and flexibility they often desire while also ensuring coordination and curating an organizational culture. They must adapt their leadership style to cater to the unique needs and challenges that remote and in office work present. The changing role of managers in the hybrid work model also raises questions about the impact on employee engagement, motivation, and well-being. Managers must find innovative ways to foster a sense of belonging, support employee well-being, and provide adequate feedback and recognition in a remote and hybrid work environment.

Despite hybrid work being a very relevant topic, previous literature have yet to study theories in regards to the managerial role in the context of the hybrid work model which leaves a large need for further research. Mintzberg's recognized theory published in 1973 that presents the

role of the manager in ten categories is still considered relevant, but needs to be revisited as they now act in a changed context. We thereby aim to contribute to reducing this perceived knowledge gap.

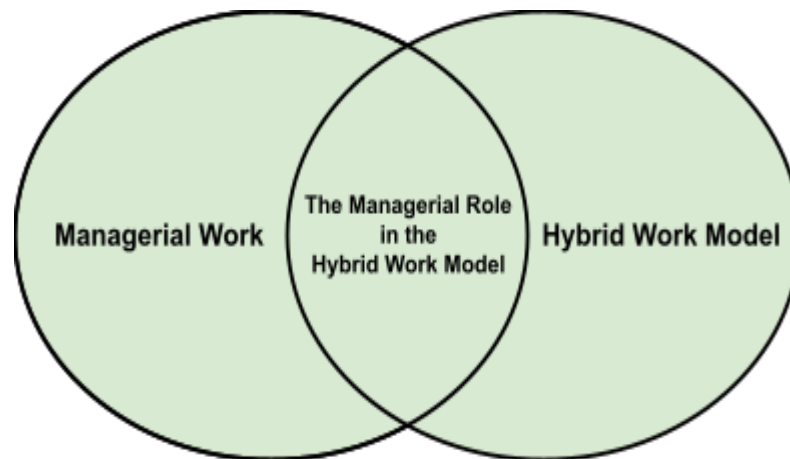


Figure 2: Visual of the Problematization

1.3 Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a larger understanding of the change of the managerial role in knowledge-intensive firms as organizations settle in a more hybrid work model. This will be carried out through analyzing managers' perception of their role in this new scenery. The research question of which the study is conducted is thereby:

How has the role of the manager changed in the transition to a hybrid work model?

Understanding the evolving role of managers will not only provide valuable insights for organizations and managers themselves but also contribute to the development of best practices and guidelines for successful implementation and optimization of the hybrid work model.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

After the introduction, the second chapter of this study provides a detailed explanation of the methodology, by discussing the scientific approach applied in this study. It outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques used. The chapter also addresses research trustworthiness and credibility considerations.

Following this, the third chapter will cover a literature review of previous research done on the subject. It covers an overview of research in regards to the post pandemic workplace as well as management in knowledge intensive firms. The chapter further dives deeper into managerial work by introducing the theoretical lens, Mintzsbergs' *model on managerial roles*, that will be used to investigate the research question within the defined context.

Moving on to the fourth chapter, it unveils the empirical findings derived from the analysis and coding of the collected data. The discussion section thereafter establishes connections between the empirical results and the existing literature by utilizing the proposed framework.

In the concluding chapter, a review of the thesis's key observations and interpretations is presented. The chapter then proceeds to highlight the theoretical and practical contributions made to the field. Lastly, the chapter will be acknowledging the limitations of the study and suggesting potential areas of future research.

2. Literature Review

This chapter will present the contextual framework in regards to theory that is needed for an understanding of the studied area. This chapter will begin by introducing a broad and general presentation of the context, in terms of the post pandemic environment related to the workplace as well as introducing the reader to the Hybrid Work Model. Followed by this, more general concepts and dimensions of the manager's work will be discussed before a further deep dive into the role of the manager in the organization described by Henry Mintzberg (1973). The aim is for the reader to gain a good preliminary understanding on the subject and for them to acquire a theoretical lens.

2.1 The Post Pandemic Workplace

2.1.1 Covid-19 and the Remote Work Model

The Covid-19 pandemic thoroughly changed what previously was considered conventional work routines (Kniffin et al., 2020). The majority of knowledge-intensive firms had to transition from traditional office settings to solely digital environments. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, remote working was not an unfamiliar concept, as certain organizations had already embraced it as a way to achieve cost savings and due to it being a preference by some employees (Lewis & Cooper, 2005). A study carried out by Gartner (2020 cited in Kniffin et al., 2020) revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic led to a situation where more than 80% of employees in companies began to work remotely during the initial stages of the pandemic outbreak.

While the remote work model offers various advantages, and facilitated the continuous work through the pandemic, research indicates that there are several negative effects associated with the complete adoption of the remote work model (Kniffin et al., 2020). For instance, studies have discovered that employees frequently encounter difficulties in maintaining the boundaries between their work responsibilities and leisure time (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Moreover, Kniffin et al. (2020) highlight that the remote work model's disruption of social interactions adversely affects the mental and physical health of employees. According to Cacioppo et al. (2006), what is considered even more drastic than the lack of social connections is that employees feel significantly more lonely.

The presence of loneliness in the workplace has been found to have a negative impact on employee behavior, commitment and performance (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Furthermore, the remote work model has led to various consequences in terms of practical considerations. Studies have observed that when individuals work remotely, there is typically an increased requirement for meetings to ensure effective coordination and meet performance expectations (Kane et al., 2021).

2.1.2 Adapting to a New Normal Way of Working

This era has fueled the progress of communication technologies and made it easier for people to work remotely (Kniffin et al., 2020). According to Kane et al. (2021), numerous companies have successfully embraced long-term digital transformation within a few months due to the impact of the pandemic. Based on this article, a complete return to pre-pandemic routines and workplaces is deemed unlikely and that management must adapt by embracing innovation and contemplating organizational restructuring to enhance resilience against various disruptions (Kane et al., 2021). To mitigate the negative effects of remote work while fostering a flexible work environment, a hybrid work model has emerged that combines remote work with working in the office (Sampat et al. 2022).

2.2 The Hybrid Work Model

2.2.1 Adoption of Hybrid Work

Organizations have increasingly adopted the hybrid work model, which integrates remote work from home or other locations with office work (Sampat et al. 2022). After the pandemic, organizations transitioned from a period of remote work and began returning to a sense of normal. Sampat (2022) acknowledges that, during this time, many employers started implementing the hybrid work model as an option for their employees in response to an increasing demand for greater flexibility in work arrangements. This model typically includes regulations that outline the proportion of working time that can be allocated to remote work compared to the time required to be spent in the office (Grzegorzczuk et al., 2021). Research supports the notion that the hybrid work model is often favored as a preferred approach, as it accommodates varying preferences and allows individuals to work in the setting that suits them best (Shao et al., 2021).

2.2.2 Considered Advantages with the Hybrid Work Model

According to Palumbo et al. (2021), health-conscious employees favor this approach over remote working due to the numerous health concerns arising from exclusive remote work situations. Hybrid work has the potential to mitigate the risk of blurring the boundaries between work and private life, this could provide employees with a greater opportunity to achieve a favorable work-life balance (Sampat et al. 2022). Additionally, it promotes autonomy and flexibility among employees, granting them a higher degree of control over their work obligations (Lichtenberg et al., 2020). Through the facilitation of work flexibility, allowing individuals to monitor and manage their own routines and schedules, studies have demonstrated a positive impact on the employee's level of organizational commitment (Shao et al., 2021). Another potential benefit of the hybrid work model is that team building becomes more manageable compared to fully remote work scenarios (Sampat et al. 2022). Team-building encompasses both formal and informal practices on a group-level, with the objective of improving social interactions and clarifying responsibilities. Moreover, team-building endeavors to facilitate the resolution of tasks and issues among colleagues that have the potential to impede team performance (Potnuru et al. 2019).

2.2.3 Possible Challenges with the Hybrid Work Model

Evans (2020) argues that organizations should focus on fostering a sense of belongingness among employees in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the hybrid work model and to cultivate employee motivation to come to the office voluntarily. Additionally, Sampat et al. (2022) highlight the significance of organizational culture in attaining work-life balance and work flexibility, making it a crucial factor to consider when implementing an effective hybrid work model. The implementation of a hybrid work model may face challenges if the organizational culture is weak, leading to potential implications (Sampat et al. 2022).

In a study conducted by Shao et al. (2021), a hypothetical work scenario is presented that may arise in a hybrid working model. This scenario explores the possibility of employees experiencing an overwhelming workload due to increased demands in their position, such as extended working hours and responsibilities exceeding their capabilities. It is important to note that the current understanding of factors influencing an employee's intention to work in a hybrid working model is limited due to the scarcity of research in this area. (Sampat et al. 2022).

2.3 Management in Knowledge-Intensive Firms

According to Alvesson (2004 cited in Ceci, 2005) , so-called Knowledge-Intensive Firms (KIFs) have emerged as a distinct work form in response to the technological shifts experienced in recent decades. Alvesson emphasizes that KIFs are “organizations that offer the market the use of fairly sophisticated knowledge or knowledge-based products”. Furthermore, Alvesson stresses the need for top management in KIFs to dedicate attention to develop, advance and employ knowledge. He also highlights the importance for the management of making employees more loyal in the KIF, due to the fact that the human resource of employees is the most significant resource in this type of work. When talking about knowledge creation in a management setting, Nonaka (1994) suggests that managers should be viewed as “catalysts”.

Hansen et al. (1999) claims that a strategy for knowledge management is *personalization*. The effectiveness of the personalization strategy heavily depends on fostering social interactions, where the management of knowledge involves carefully curating a blend of diverse situations and individuals. Another contrasting strategy that Hansen et al. suggests is *codification*, which are efforts made to leverage the potential of information technology, with the aim of extracting organizational knowledge from individuals and transforming it into databases. Based on these two strategies Hansen et al. (1999) claims that the process of codification is encapsulated within the notion of formalization, which serves as a fundamental element in the structure of bureaucratic organizations. To contrast, Alvesson (1995) claims that personalization can be considered synonymous with what scholars studying knowledge-intensive firms have consistently emphasized as crucial for such organizations: the dependency on the expertise and capabilities of individuals. A significant emphasis among knowledge management scholars is placed on the fundamental role of communities in shaping knowledge (Cohen, 1998; Leonard & Sensiper, 1998; Swan et al., 1999). According to Von Krogh (1998), care plays a facilitative role in driving innovation. Alvesson, M., Kärreman, D. & Swan, J. (2002) conclude their article by emphasizing that in the context of knowledge management the managerial role needs to promote social interactions, fostering ideas and experience sharing and cultivating ideas and values within the business.

2.4 The Central Dimensions of Managers' Work

Wenglén's (2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012) theory portrays central dimensions in the manager's work within an organizational context. Understanding these six dimensions provides insights into the challenges and dynamics that managers face and offers a framework for effective management practices. The dimensions cover how managers can interpret and act on their role and tasks, and tend to overlap each other.

Superiority and Inferiority

Managers navigate in a hierarchical structure, with responsibilities to both their subordinates and superiors. They must support and guide their subordinates while representing the interests of higher-level managers. This dual responsibility creates a balancing act. Delegation is common in the hierarchy, with managers entrusting tasks to their subordinates. This delegation can be a source of pride but also a burden, as they may lack the authority or autonomy to fully exercise their judgment in carrying out the tasks.

Complexity

A manager's work is complex and ambiguous, with no straightforward solutions. They navigate intricate stakeholder relationships and balance conflicting interests. The importance of different stakeholders varies, adding to the complexity. Integrating and differentiating tasks and responsibilities is a challenge, as is managing the manager-employee relationship. Balancing leadership and approachability, authorization and delegation requires skill. There is no universal way to manage a company.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism in management involves adapting to specific situations and prioritizing effectiveness over principles. Managers develop their own subjective theories and practical styles based on experience. These approaches are situational and can be adjusted or abandoned as needed. Balancing principles and pragmatism is important, considering employee preferences and individuality. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of management approaches are necessary.

Diplomacy

Managers play a crucial role in navigating the intricate political landscape of organizations. They must effectively manage and respond to the influences of diverse stakeholders, both internal and external. Diplomacy becomes essential in handling these influences. Building strong connections and informal networks within the organization and utilizing the art of rhetoric are key components of diplomatic leadership. This enables managers to address problems, gain insights, and effectively engage with stakeholders in their chosen approach.

Moral

Managers face moral considerations in their work, dealing with questions of right and wrong. Balancing personal convictions with organizational expectations can be challenging, leading managers to prioritize collective interests over individual opinions. They adopt a situational approach to navigate moral dilemmas. However, certain moral principles like honesty and adherence to societal norms are non-negotiable. The flexibility of moral perceptions can sometimes lead managers to refrain from opposing or contributing to questionable actions. Managers have different approaches to morality, including aligning with superiors' convictions, compromising, relying on personal moral compass, or adopting a flexible approach to ethics.

Identity

Managers must adapt their management style to align with their unique personality, considering their strengths and weaknesses. Their sense of identity shapes how they perceive themselves and interpret their role as a manager. Identity is an ongoing process that evolves through interactions and experiences within the organization. Managers need to embody and manage multiple self-images to navigate diverse social relations. They grapple with the idealized image of a rational, planning manager, which can be challenging given the complex nature of their role. Managers are responsible for interpreting their surroundings and making sense of their own self-images, which influences their decision-making.

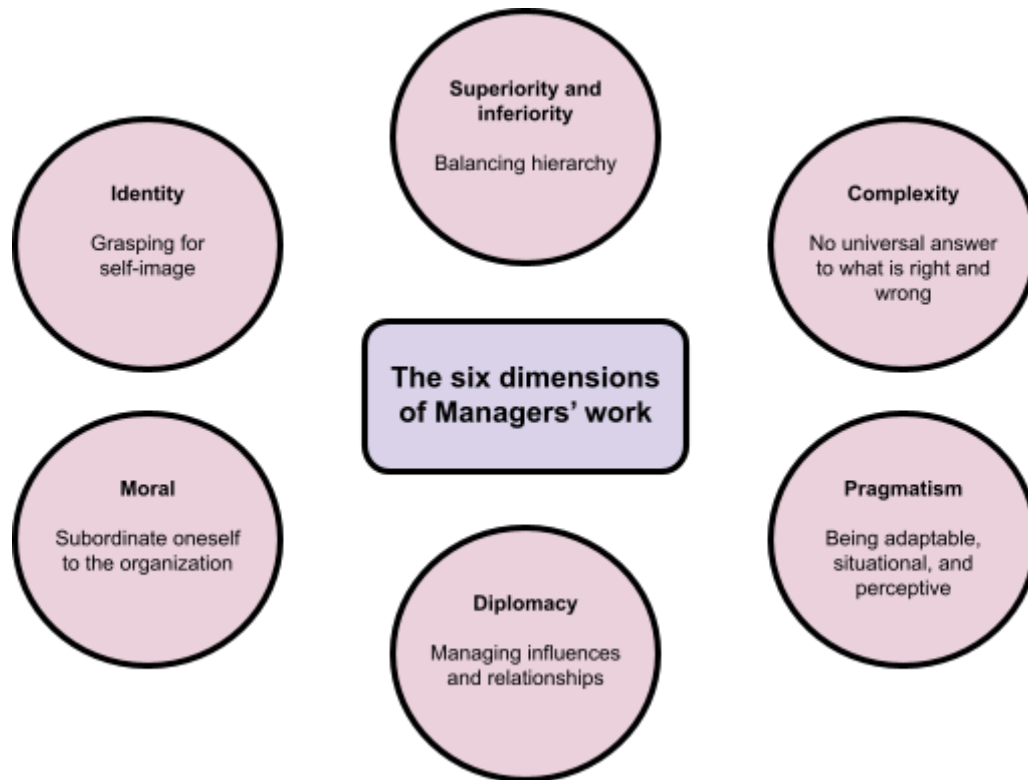


Figure 3: Visual of Wenglén's central dimensions of Managers work (2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012, pp. 390-404)

2.5 Mintzberg's Managerial Roles Model

The Model on Managerial Roles, developed by Henry Mintzberg in 1973, is one of the most established theories relating to the roles that managers perform in organizations. Mintzberg's theory proposes that managers fulfill distinct roles that are directly associated with their work tasks and responsibilities. These roles play part in shaping the managerial functions and activities within an organization, and can be interpreted differently by different managers given personal and situational circumstances. This can affect in what way they are performed. The model highlights ten concrete managerial roles, which are divided into three separate clusters of interpersonal, informational and decisional roles.

2.5.1 Theoretical Position

The positioning of this study creates a focus on six out of the ten roles in the model. These being *Leader*, *Monitor*, *Disseminator*, *Entrepreneur*, *Resource Allocator* and *Negotiator*. This makes *Figurehead*, *Liaison*, *Spokesperson* and *Disturbance Handler* the dimensions not discussed throughout the study. The selection is based on what is covered in the empirical material, as the externally focused nature of Figurehead, Liaison and Spokesperson, as well as the lack of data on disturbances in the hybrid work model in relation to Disturbance Handler, does not correspond with the elements of this thesis. The ten roles are explained in accordance with Mintzberg's (1973) definitions below in Figure 3.

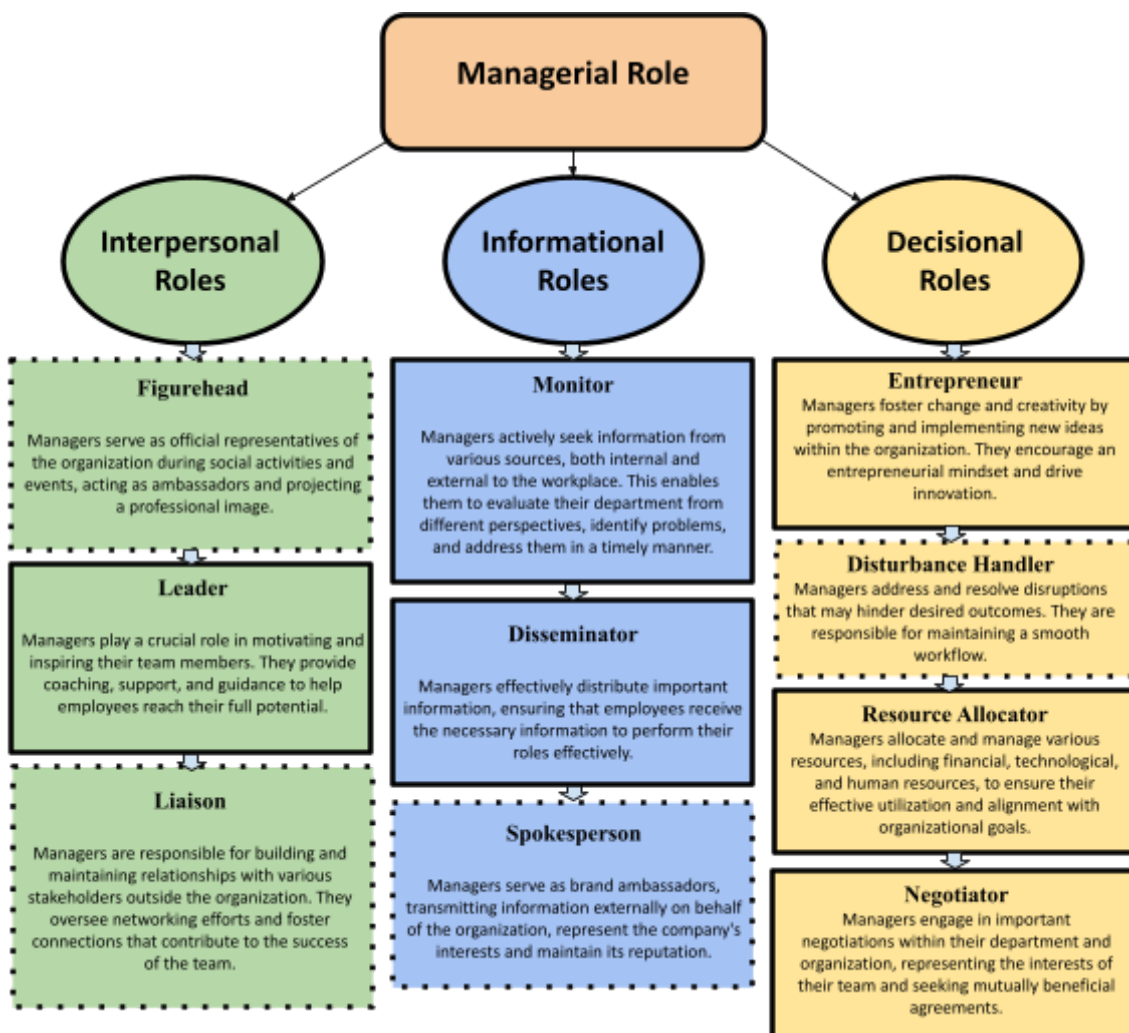


Figure 3: Visual and Positioning in Regards to Mintzberg's Managerial Roles Model (1973)

The *Leader* role is described by Mintzberg (1973) as the managerial role of establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with their own subordinates. Additionally, this involves the need for managers to acquire and onboard new employees, continuously further educate and develop their existing workforce and motivate them in their daily work. In the light of this, it is essential for the manager in the Leader role to adapt their needs with those of the organization.

A second set of roles are stated by Mintzberg (1973) to be the task of managers to process information. The *Monitor* role is described by Mintzberg as the manager's job in seeking and receiving information about the organization in order to understand the workplace atmosphere and operational context. Mintzberg emphasizes that the manager already receives much information through being privileged with the status of the leader role and through their network.

The *Disseminator* role revolves around the manager's responsibility to effectively share information with various stakeholders (Mintzberg, 1973). In this role, managers act as canals of information, distributing relevant and important data to employees, other managers, and stakeholders. They facilitate communication between different departments or teams, ensuring that information flows smoothly throughout the organization and reach relevant personnel.

The *Entrepreneur* role which is included in the cluster of decisional roles. In this role, Mintzberg (1973) states that managers continuously observe and try to identify problems and opportunities within the organization. This includes initiating projects to solve problems and realize these opportunities. Based on this, the role implies that the manager is the driving force in terms of change in the organization according to Mintzberg.

The *Resource Allocator* role necessitates managerial decision-making regarding the allocation of organizational resources, including human resources, time, technology and finances (Mintzberg, 1973). Given that resources are often limited, managers face the challenge of determining the most effective and efficient ways to distribute these resources. This role entails making strategic decisions to optimize resource allocation throughout the organization (Mintzberg, 1973).

The *Negotiator* role is described by Mintzberg (1973) to cover the manager's ability to engage in negotiations with both external and internal entities, advocating for their organization's interests as well as other departments or team members' interests. This enhances a manager's ability to achieve mutually beneficial agreements and foster constructive collaborations. The level of a manager's negotiation skills impacts their likelihood of reaching favorable outcomes and establishing productive relationships (Mintzberg, 1973).

2.6 Positioning of the Study in Relation to Existing Research

To conclude, we aim to enhance understanding regarding the role of the manager in a hybrid work structure, and how changes may have occurred in accordance with the role in a more traditional in-office setting. This will be done by contextualizing and accommodating existing perspectives and research on the subject of the managerial role in organizations.

The theoretical approaches that are presented are grounded in the empirical data of our study, that cover managers' in knowledge-intensive firms' perception of their role as managers in this new context. The vast majority of previous research is however premised on a traditional in-office work setting, which often is referred to as a work setting of the past. Post the Covid-19 pandemic, the hybrid work model, which combines remote work with working in the office, has become the new trend. The research agrees on the change of prerequisites regarding this new landscape, but seems as yet to be focused mainly on advantages and challenges entailed in the perspective of the employees.

Hence, given the new conditions under which a manager must navigate, there seems to be a shortage of previous studies covering in what ways the managers must act differently with their role in the hybrid work model. Being a relatively new and relevant topic, studies have yet focused on challenges and advantages with the hybrid work setting, less weight having been put on actual managerial efforts in relation to these.

3. Methodology

The following chapter provides a description of the method used to conduct the study. It will begin by presenting the methodological approach that describes and motivates the qualitative research method, as well as discussing the inductive view on theory and other elements. Thereafter, the research design will be defined by presenting the chosen objects of study as well as the structure of the interviews. The following section presents how the gathered empirical data is being processed and analyzed. Lastly, the section is being concluded by an assessment of the quality of the research method in terms of trustworthiness and authenticity, as well as discussing possible implications.

3.1 Methodological Approach

3.1.1 Qualitative research method

In order to understand subjective experiences and perspectives of managers in the hybrid work structure, the study is conducted with a qualitative research method (Bryman & Bell, 2019). As the study aims to research how the managerial role has changed in the transition into a hybrid work model, this research method is more suitable than using for instance a quantitative approach. The qualitative method allowed for the collection of rich and detailed data through interviews held with the selected research objects. As the qualitative research method gathers subjective perceptions shaped by the managers individual experiences in the social context, the study adapts an interpretative position (Bryman & Bell, 2019). This constitutes that the study is based on two-stage interpretations, as we in turn do interpretations of the managers' descriptions which is discussed further later on.

3.1.2 An Inductive View on Theory

The study is conducted with an inductive view on theory as it allows for a more exploratory and flexible approach to understanding the particular phenomenon. The process began by collecting observations and empirical data that was later used to develop generalizations and theories that could help explain the observations. Working with this approach allowed us to be more open-minded and to discover unexpected patterns that could have been less apparent

through a deductive approach. The risk of making pre-made assumptions were limited and the focus was put on generating new insights and understandings.

3.1.3 A Constructionist Ontology

A constructionist position on ontology considers the nature of reality through social, cultural and individual processes (Bryman & Bell, 2019). The study is conducted in a manner that views reality as not based on objective facts, but rather shaped by our experiences, beliefs and interpretations. According to this approach, everything that we know is constructed through our interactions with our surroundings which would consider reality as not fixed - but rather something that is continually created and recreated through ongoing interactions and interpretations. This also means that different groups or individuals may construct different understandings of reality based on their experiences and perspectives.

3.1.4 Epistemological Considerations

The second element of the philosophy of social science is epistemology, which in turn determines the theory of knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2019). As the study observes social phenomena which cannot be described with absolute truths, this is an important aspect to consider. According to Bryman and Bell (2019), a crucial aspect of qualitative research is the researchers' epistemological stance as an interpreter of events. We have taken into account that the empirical material comes from subjective perspectives and perceptions of the managers as individual. The conclusions are the result of our interpretations of the perspectives of the managers, where we have processed the gathered data and identified interesting and relevant findings that could contribute in bridging gaps in the understandings of the studied subject.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Objects of Study and Sampling Process

When deciding upon the ten objects of study, we used *purposive sampling* in order to more accurately contribute to the aim of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2019). We created three main criterias in order to foster good circumstances to gather rich data on the research topic. As we are observing the managerial work in hybrid workplaces, which became more frequently used post the Covid-19 pandemic, the first criteria was that the manager had more than four years of experience of a managerial position for them to have experienced the change. They can thereby relate to managing in the more traditional in-office setting, a fully remotely setting as well as in a hybrid context. Furthermore, the company which they work for being knowledge-based and have more than 100 employees in order for them to have experience of management in a context where many and various of interactions between management and the subordinates take place. The third and final criteria is that a significant part of the workforce works partly remote and partly in office.

The objects of study were contacted through either email or by telephone and the interviews were scheduled within the following three weeks. The table below shows the specifics of each manager interviewed. Since four interviewees wished to remain anonymous, we chose to anonymize all participants in order not to affect the perception of the results as a consequence of irregular information being provided regarding the studied objects.

Pseudonym	Company Size	Managerial Responsibility	Managerial Experience
Anderson	150+ Employees	10+ Employees	15+ years
Bengtson	4500+ Employees	15+ Employees	5+ years
Carlson	600+ Employees	30+ Employees	20+ years
Davidson	200+ Employees	10+ Employees	10+ years
Ericson	240+ Employees	10+ Employees	20+ years
Fredricson	3500 Employees	15+ Employees	20+ years
Gunnarson	2000 Employees	50+ Employees	10+ years
Hanson	300+ Employees	15+ Employees	5+ years
Isacson	500+ Employees	10+ Employees	5+ years
Johanson	10 000+ Employees	15+ Employees	5+ years

3.2.2 Interview Structure

To avoid making early generalizations as a result of too narrow and leading questions, we decided upon conducting interviews with a semi structured character (Bryman & Bell, 2019). We prepared for the interviews by creating an interview guide that consisted of a number of topics. In order to gather rich material, the questions were open whilst giving the interviewee a certain leeway in how to reply. The interview structure was flexible and the questions were not presented identically in each interview, but shaped according to the responses to get a good order and flow. We also used follow-up questions to challenge the interviewees to elaborate their stance and gain deeper insights in certain areas.

To start the interview, we asked questions from the first grouping in the interview guide, *general questions*. The objects of study were asked to describe their role and the overall organizational structure of the company to get an understanding of the context. Following this, we began asking questions related to the *transition to new forms of work*, where the

interviewees discussed how their workplace had done adaptations since the Covid-19 pandemic and mentioning possible challenges and changed work procedures. The interviews were then led into examining if the overall *perception of the managerial role* had been affected, both through the perspectives of the managers themselves, but also their interpretations of the subordinates' expectations of them as managers.

The interview guide was revised twice to create a more accurate structure in relation to our findings. The first time when having carried out the two initial interviews, we then decided to remove a number of questions as we found them redundant and wanted to gain a greater focus upon other aspects. The second time, we decided to further reduce the areas of focus in the still extensive interview guide, while keeping the questions open.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Creating Order

The interviews were transcribed in order to allow us to analyze the data in detail and to avoid missing out on essential inputs or data. Once the data had been transcribed, we reinspected the material manually to assure accuracy. Following this, the data from each interview were gathered into one document in order to begin processing the material.

The initial step was to generate an overview by creating a *coding schedule* that covered the different topics and events being brought up in the interviews. As described by Bryman & Bell (2019), the coding schedule is of particular importance as the collected material was substantially based on open interview questions. We quickly realized that the material was very rich and extensive, which made this process an important task to get thoroughly done in order to identify trends. This process was facilitated by having gathered all the empirical findings into one document, which also reduced the tendencies of variability in the coding and when identifying themes in the material (Bryman & Bell, 2019).

We then began by processing the material further, making individual notes about observations to later discuss them as a group. The initial codes were reviewed several times and slowly began being transformed into categories.

3.3.2 Reducing the Material and Defining the Findings

Each category was assigned a color to visually mark segments of the transcribed material, which really facilitated the process and gave us a greater understanding. Due to the comprehensive material and many observations, this step of the analysis process demanded being carried out several times to fully expose and crystallize the trends and patterns. We then began the process of gradually reducing the material, by sorting out what we did not see aligned with the overall trends or that were considered to be shallow arguments. We turned the material over and over and could finally discern the outlines of our study and settled on three very interesting key observations that we believed could generate a contribution to existing research.

The final step of processing the material was to choose specific quotes that we argued would motivate the observations the best way possible. This required discussion and eventually led to a clear structure of the analysis chapter. Nine out of ten interviews were conducted in Swedish and thus needed to be translated into English. To avoid a too extensive and redundant translation, we chose to translate only the quotes that were finally selected to represent the empirical data in the analysis.

3.3.3 Acquiring the Right Tools

After having distinguished the content of the study, we could start exploring previous research in the field that would help us explain and interpret the findings. We began by having a very large scope, reading about the work environment that has emerged in recent years as well as reviewing research made on the role of managers. Over time, we were able to delve deeper into the topic and read up on relevant theories and phenomena. The last step in this process was to gain focus and position the study in regards to the theoretical framework by specifying what areas of it that would be considered.

We thereby generated knowledge to be able to describe, interpret and make sense of the material. At this stage we had begun to acquire the right tools to reach the purpose of contributing to fill the knowledge-gap. This research is concretized and presented in the *literature review* chapter.

3.4 Trustworthiness and Authenticity of the Study

The following subchapter constitutes a quality assessment based on the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity. As the study is carried out using a qualitative research method, the empirical data constitutes the managers own experiences and are thereby highly subjective, portraying their perception of reality. The subjective nature of the data can thereby be a limitation as our biases and interpretations will shape the outcome and might deviate from the manager's intent (Bryman & Bell, 2019). To counteract this and strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, we were asked follow-up questions during the interviews. This gave the managers an opportunity to clarify their statements and ensured us that we had understood them correctly to a greater extent.

The interview guide was designed without theoretical influence, which meant that the questions were left open, whereby the empirical material instead subsequently led us to the choice of theory. An overall focus on the role of the manager and the hybrid work structure formed the framework, which gave the respondents the opportunity to partly determine the direction of the study, instead of the answers being forced into theoretical frameworks. An important aspect of the study's credibility is also to determine the extent to which the conclusions have been substantiated, which presupposes that the results are not colored by the researcher's own values or a specific theoretical orientation (Bryman & Bell, 2019). The empirical material has been analyzed as a group, to avoid bias based on personal interpretation.

The trustworthiness and authenticity of the study was revised during the writing process through a peer-review seminar. This gave us an opportunity to consider the identified potential shortcomings into account when continuing the process onwards. One of the challenges highlighted was how to make sure accuracy in the translation of the interviews held in Swedish. This made us alter our initial approach of translating the entire interviews at an early stage. Instead, we kept the collected material in Swedish until we selected the quotes that would strengthen the empirical data and argue for our findings. In this way, we were able to ensure that these quotations were portrayed in the most faultless way possible.

4. Analysis of Empirical Evidence

The following chapter presents the core findings of the study, gathered through ten interviews with managers. The analysis is divided into three subchapters, each one representing an identified change or added responsibility to the role of the manager in the transition into a hybrid work model. Each subchapter is then structured by initially presenting the underlying circumstances creating the need for change. Thereafter, The new perceived challenges for managers will be highlighted, followed by analyzing their approach in coping with these challenges.

We will begin by discussing the need for the individual manager to decide upon its subordinates' work structure. This is followed by analyzing the perceived need to promote and stage the social interactions between the individuals of the organization. The third and final category describe the need for managers to follow up on employee wellbeing.

4.1 The Need to Be the Decision Maker when Settling the Hybrid Work Structure

4.1.1 Changed Settings when Deciding upon Work Structure

In the aftermath of the global pandemic, most of the workforce now have experience of working both in the office and remote. This has led to preferences in regards to work structure and flexibility, which has made managers face often difficult decisions on how and where the work should be carried out. It has become more and more challenging to implement one fixed structure for everyone, as different opinions throughout the organization are more loud now than ever.

“So that's what we're talking about when we talk about leadership in this hybrid working life, and that's the big challenge, to find and get along with your team in every possible way. How do we meet? Are we physically present, do we meet in a hybrid environment or do we meet digitally so that everyone actually gets their needs met?” - Fredricson

Fredricson discusses how the scenario in which managers have to navigate and come to conclusions regarding how the team is supposed to work has changed. It is portrayed as a complex and sometimes challenging environment to take decisions in. As organizations are relatively new to the hybrid work model, many questions remain in regards to how to structure it in an optimized way.

Davidson, among many of the interviewees, states how there has emerged an increased need to be flexible as a manager. This as each separate scenario and context contain different individuals and teams which demands a certain approach from them as leaders.

"But then it has become more like people don't want to do it, and then it wasn't a problem anyway because people still want to be on site. Then, what do we mean here? We have a huge range of employees. Our youngest employee is 23 and our oldest is 68. Which makes it clear that we need to be a flexible employer in several ways." - Davidson

"I believe in flexibility and I believe in empowering and trusting my team members to make it to their preferences and as long as the business is happy I'm happy that is basically the way of thinking." - Bengtson

As Davidson indicates, there is a larger need for the manager to obtain a situational and personalized approach depending on the team and the individuals when it comes to finding the most suitable work structure for each scenario. As well as the need of being flexible as an employer becoming the new norm, and that one solution might not be suitable throughout the whole organization. It has become more important to get to know the team and to become familiar with the broad variety of employee profiles as there are many life scenarios, preferences and personality traits to consider. Bengtson also highlights flexibility being crucial and that it is important to trust the team in being able to participate in constructing a sustainable way of working. The end result and performance is the determining factor, rather than *how* it is achieved.

Fredricson follows on this track by describing how the diversity of their workforce has become more visible coming out of the period of fully remote work, and the new need for the manager to find a solution on how to communicate and set structures for different kinds of profiles and individuals.

"We have so many different profiles. From what you could call the geekiest system developer or the technicians to the flashiest management consultant, if you like, and this is what we have now. We can look at both profiles, but since we humans are different, we have different needs, so there are many who have also benefited from remote work. They have come more into their own when you communicate in a digital way. If we're going to package people into compartments, it's clear that an introverted system developer comes more into his own when you distribute the word in a digital forum as they are more used to communicating in chats and so on." - Fredricson

"Well, the pandemic's impact on leadership, you know. Yes, but I think it's about those who are sitting at home. It's clear that if you, for example, have employees who are single parents, then you often need to spend a little more time on them." - Anderson

Fredricson portrays how there are various profiles and thereby preferences found in their organization. This is discussed to create a need for managers to find ways to create solutions in terms of work structures that comprise and meet their needs and preferences to some extent. Anderson further mentions the time of remote work during the global pandemic as having had an impact on the leadership. The manager stresses the new need as a leader to know your employees regardless if they are working in the office or fully at home. Knowing your employees' life situation can be of large importance in identifying what support you as a manager have to provide for each individual. These quotes underline the initial argument that a new need for managers has occurred, in taking individual preferences into account when deciding on how to structure their hybrid work model.

There has been a need for managers to become more attentive in order to see the individuals as they are not necessarily present at the office, but scattered around in a remote workplace. They as managers have identified a need to adopt a flexible approach that recognizes and accommodates these differences to promote a more inclusive and engaged work environment. This has shown how the role of the individual manager in the hybrid work structure comes with a greater responsibility but also power to decide what approach to go for in regards to the work structure, which will be discussed in the following subchapter.

4.1.2 Decision Making Power Allocated with the Individual Manager

The responsibility for setting up the hybrid work structure that takes each scenario's prerequisites into greater consideration falls heavily on the shoulders of the one managing the specific team or division. All interviewees highlight how there is, at least not yet, communicated an organization-wide policy or set up disclaiming the decided work structure. Instead there has become a perceived larger freedom in making their own decisions in regards to what fits their assigned teams.

"Oatly has said that it is pretty much up to each manager and group. Depending on what you work with, the tasks and what you feel, etc... So, we have pretty free reins to do as we want. Which, for my part, works well." - Carlson

"What we have done is to delegate that responsibility to each manager. As a leader within our organization, you should keep track of whether your team is handling working from home or not in a good way, and how many days you need to be in the office or vice versa since everyone has different ways of relating to it." - Isacson

"The relationship is important, proximity is important, working together is important, but we leave it up to the nearest leader to decide how it works best for each specific team, due to the fact that the activities are so different" - Fredricson

As mentioned, a recurring statement is that managers have a relatively large amount of freedom to make their own decisions. The shape and form of the tasks as well as the individuals of the team will often play a large role in shaping the decision as Carlson highlights. Isacson further discusses how they as leaders need to identify their teams ability to work well and perform in a remote work setting. Fredricson highlights the need for it to be the leader closest to the team that decides what works best for each team, as they have a better insight and knowledge of their needs and preferences.

That this decision tends to be delegated to each individual manager is discussed to shed light on different leadership styles throughout the organization.

"We as managers also have the freedom to sort of see what works in our own teams, decide upon a setup and see to the span of control in terms of geography and so on. I have been very flexible which could be considered one end of the range, you will find other managers in our company who will have taken an entirely different position than the one I have" -

Bengtson

Bengtson discusses a larger possibility for the individual manager to have a greater influence on how work structures are governed and managed. This can create a large variety of set guidelines and structures around work structure throughout the organization as the decision tends to be coloured by the leadership style of each manager.

Another aspect that is highlighted in the study is that a more relaxed approach from a manager's perspective has become possible, where the end result is what matters, rather than necessarily how the work is executed, as previously touched upon.

"I had already implemented a quite liberal attitude towards working from home even before the pandemic, which Norway and the headquarters definitely did not have, where you were supposed to be at the office. I believe that flexible individual solutions are important, and you have to keep an eye on it so that it doesn't go in the completely wrong direction. That's my philosophy..." - Anderson

While this enlarged freedom and decision making power with the individual manager is perceived as something positive for most of the managers, Gunnarson highlights that there are those who would prefer to have an organization-wide policy or guideline to fall back against.

“It may be that the manager doesn't understand what the team needs, and thereby thinks it would be nice to have a common company policy to lean on so that he doesn't have to stand up and explain why things should be done in a certain way. It can be quite gratifying to point to HR and say that they have decided how it should look.” - Gunnarson

The manager highlights a contrasting approach to the often very positive response to the enlarged decision making power of the individual manager. When having a difficult time understanding the team needs, the enlarged individual responsibility of the manager in setting the structure also could be considered a challenge. Without a consistent approach to how work is structured across the organization, there may be a greater need to be able to justify your decision as a manager and could accumulate to uncomfortable situations.

In conclusion, there has emerged a greater need for each individual manager to take decisions in regards to the work structures throughout the organization. There are a number of trade-offs that the manager now needs to take into account. On one hand, there is both the balancing act of accommodating different individual preferences and needs of the employees in working remotely or in the office, but also what the practical tasks of the team allows for. On the other hand, as the decision making is delegated to each manager, the leadership style and preferences of that specific manager also has a larger influence on how the work structure is set. The outcome is thereby a larger identified responsibility for the individual manager to decide upon these matters and that the set structure can vary a lot throughout the organization.

4.2 The Need to Promote and Stage Social Interactions

4.2.1 The Emerged Scenario Creating the Need

Before the pandemic, there were rarely any discussions about whether or not to come into the office where social and interpersonal interactions occurred more naturally. The managers have thereby discovered a need to stage and set the frame for more informal social settings. While having worked almost solely remotely during the years of the pandemic, employees have adapted to a new reality. The changed work structures are argued to have enhanced the work life balance by making it easier for employees to get the daily life puzzle together. Managers are now facing a new challenge in motivating people to return to the office to some extent. They have had to try and find strategies and ways to effectively motivate and engage employees, often through acknowledging the benefits of interpersonal and social interactions.

“We still have challenges with those who, for example, don't want to come into the office, who have found a daily routine that works so well for them that they think it's just nonsense to have to come in three days out of two.”

- Hanson

“Some employees comment how they are totally drained because they work best individually and at home - and it is a really important part of the managers responsibilities to create frames that suit and serve everybody. But yes, sometimes the one that gets a bit drained on the Wednesdays, well they would need to suck it up because of the greater good” - Bengtson

Bengtson further points out how the transfer back to working in the office can be challenging for managers as some employees have settled and come to prefer the habits of a remote work structure. Having to come back to the office is perceived as a larger challenge than it was before.

Another facet of this matter, that makes the transfer back to working in the office more challenging for managers to promote, is the claimed increase in productivity as a result of remote working. This is described to occur partly as the remote work model allows for the employee to focus on their assigned task as well as schedule for more meetings. The empirical material shed light on the experiences of different managers and organizations in this regard.

"We see the same effect as many others - there is room for many more meetings per day when working remotely. The meetings are more efficient, and we've also worked actively to avoid having too large meetings, i.e. people who think it's not relevant to sit and listen to a meeting should be able to attend parts of the meetings as well. This has probably generally increased efficiency in most parts of the organization." - Ericson

"We did very well during the pandemic. We just can't show that productivity went down or that engagement levels went down - rather the opposite. Of course this could be due to several factors, it is difficult to know what is what, but we have no clear evidence that it has been negative for our company to not meet physically." - Gunnarson

Ericson highlights the advantages of remote work, emphasizing both an increased efficiency in meetings and an increase in the number of meetings possible to attend in a day, as well as the ability to attend only the parts of meetings that are relevant for each individual. Likewise, Gunnarson shares that their company performed well during the pandemic, with no clear evidence of negative effects on productivity or employee engagement due to the lack of physical meetings.

There is thereby a perceived need for managers to promote and stage for social interactions both in the office but also in the digital environment. While remote work offers certain advantages, such as flexibility and individual productivity, the managers state that there are other things to consider in the work environment such as social aspects and interpersonal relationships that require other forms of interactions throughout the organization.

4.2.2 Creating Opportunities for Social Interactions

As mentioned, the social interactions have been affected by the shift towards a more hybrid work structure. Employees are less likely to meet each other in spontaneous work encounters, having relaxed conversations unrelated to work, or having contact with their colleagues to the same degree as they did before the temporarily fully remote work environment. As a result, managers have an increased responsibility to create opportunities for socialization in the organization, and to ensure that the benefits of interaction between colleagues are valued and appraised by the employees.

“People just found each other again post the pandemic, now you as a leader really need to create the frame of fostering these relationships and create the psychological safety for people. We don't necessarily have the opportunity to get to know one another during the “Fika” in Sweden, at their lunch breaks, going out grabbing some drinks or whatever people do....and we don't necessarily have these social elements in our work day so that really comes back to the full responsibility of the manager to sort of set up the frames for people to interact in that sense, and that I found to be really really important.” - Bengtson

"Being in an office where you meet your colleagues in spontaneous meetings is something you don't get via Teams. Now everything has to be a little more organized. Those spontaneous meetings when you run into someone at the coffee machine, in the corridor or somewhere else are valuable. It could be talking about the weather, something private or even something related to work that you come to think of when bumping in to a certain colleague” - Carlson

As Bengtson highlights, managers need to set the frames and staging the social settings that is considered a valuable part of the work environment in connecting people, forming psychological safety and networks of relationships within the team. By emphasizing the value of informal social interactions in the office, that now has been reduced in a hybrid work environment, Carlson’s statement adds depth to Bengtson’s argument. This further underlines what we have identified as a significant change in the role of the manager. These relationships

may help generate added value in creating high morale and loyalty towards the company and to fellow colleagues, as well as support in situations where it is needed.

4.2.3 Regaining the loss of creativity

The managers highlight a perceived loss in creativity as a result of remote and hybrid work structures. This as they claim that social interactions and bringing employees together is needed for it to fully occur, which again highlights the need for the manager to set interactive work structures. Creativity and innovation can further be considered another facet of productivity which some of the managers point out. A recurring dilemma for the manager again becomes how to balance the productive benefits of working remotely mentioned earlier, and creating the conditions to be creative together that occur when meeting as a team in the office.

"I think that, in terms of productivity, we may even have improved - but in terms of creativity, I think we haven't yet found the ways in which we can be creative together. Because it's actually in the meeting between people that creativity emerges. You can sit at home and produce things from the outside, but you don't get any input from anyone else. You don't get an iterative process that leads you to new results." - Hanson

"The meetings are more direct when you sit in the digital meetings, you go through the agenda but there is not much discussion, dialog and creativity. I also see advantages in having a whiteboard and being able to hold meetings on site." - Isacson

Hanson and Isacson emphasize the dilemma of the benefits of working remotely whilst nurturing creativity and innovation in the workplace. They discuss how they perceive creativity to be the result of social interactions and people being brought together in discussions and open dialogues. This concludes that the managers agree on a certain loss of creativity, which further indicates that as a manager you have to set the frames and stage the interpersonal meetings to a greater extent.

“You gain some productivity when working remote, but you may miss out on some opportunities that you would otherwise have a share of....I don't want to say innovation, because I don't think innovation actually declines due to remote work. But it definitely hampers it. It is what happens just by chance at a coffee machine.” - Johanson

Johanson also argues that there is an increase in productivity by working remotely, but in contrast to Isacson and Hanson the loss is not necessarily defined as creativity or innovation. Instead, what happens by the coffee machine is described as the unexpected that can't be staged.

"Again, I am 100 % sure that we have never had higher performance than during the pandemic. But the question is whether we were working on the right things or not. Maybe we didn't make as much progress as we would have done now that we are already back. As I said, today it is full in this office and there are lots of people who meet in various meetings and sit and talk and are creative together. I am pretty sure that when they come home they have all 100 emails in their inbox that they have not had time to answer. They will have to sit down with a couple of powerpoints, but they will feel so happy and excited that they have a context and they contribute something. And that's why I think hybrid can be the best of both worlds, which is what we have now." - Hanson

Hanson discusses this further by talking about how there on the day of the interview were a lot of people in the office, and hence all these people who come together and socialize at the coffee machine will have tasks to carry out when they get home that they did not manage to do in the office. This being said, Hanson still believes that they have received the value of feeling they are working in a context and that they contribute to a larger context, and have had the time to socialize with colleagues which can be more important than clearing the inbox.

The managers agree to have found it challenging to find ways to nurture the creativity and innovation in the employee's work environment regardless of setting.

"To find a way back to the creativity that exists when we are in the same room when we use post-it notes that we hang on the board and interact with each other. We haven't seen that yet, but he has tried to achieve it in Teams with a few different whiteboards and so on. It's not very easy to do that, which is why I also say that in my own leadership, I require that we all physically come into the office a couple of times a year, even if it means flying into Stockholm, so that we can be creative together." - Hanson

"They still see a challenge in creating conditions for creativity in the digital meetings, something that comes more naturally when you are on site and can get direct input and an iterative process. The managers highlight that the digital meetings are more productive and "straight forward" while the creative process is lost. There's not as much energy with digital meetings." - Fredricson

"I think it's the interpersonal meetings between each other about projects or things that we need to work on, to come together somewhere as a team and group on what needs to be done" - Isacson

Some of the managers stress the reality of not yet having come up with a solution to fully compensate for the interpersonal meetings that used to happen regularly in the office and would forge creativity. As Hanson mentions, it is the role of the manager to manage the balance between remote and office work to take advantage of the productivity of working remotely and the benefits in creativity you get from working with colleagues in an office setting. Hence managers must find new ways to have colleagues collaborate and interact, whether through virtual or in-person events.

4.2.4 Finding Creative Ways of Aligning the Team

In order for managers to maintain social interactions and allow for creativity in the hybrid work model, they must actively implement and create the ways to ensure this type of regular communication and alignment within the team. The managers highlight how they have had to become creative in finding methods and initiatives to bring people together and aligning the teams. Bengtson mentions how one approach has been to set up “check-in” meetings with the whole team where the employee’s, who perhaps no longer meet each other on a regular basis, get the opportunity to interact.

“Now it really requires something from managers in a more structured way to have check-ins, and new employees should be assigned a buddy so that they have a person that they can connect with again digitally, it doesn't have to be on site. To have a connection point and a sort of safety net, not only from your manager and your current group of team members but also somebody else who is your sort of buddy and that is really important.” - Bengtson

Bengtson highlights the importance of creating frames for new employees enabling them to establish interpersonal relationships through digital connections and feel supported within the team. Bengtson also mentions the “check-ins” as an important part in fostering relationships and team cohesion, and that it is the managers task to structure these so that they suit all.

Other managers mention several additional and alternative ways that they have tried to cover for this perceived need.

“I would say that practically all teams have digital coffee breaks or check-ins, you can call it different things. But they have definitely found ways where they, with different regularity, at least once a week, connect through a digital check-in in some way.” - Fredricson

“But as mentioned, one has to be creative when finding ways to meet. Check-in meetings are popular and we have check-out’s with my team every Friday. “It’s Friday and time to do something else that has nothing to do with work”. We talk about everything from what people’s plans are for the weekend, if anything fun has happened the past few days - or someone has made a quiz. It is all about for people to relax and a way to build the relationships within the team.” - Carlson

The “check-ins” described by the managers serve as a means to keep remote and in-person team members connected, ensuring not only collaboration, but also the sense of belonging and psychological safety that comes with being socially involved with colleagues. Fredricson emphasizes this by how digital “check-ins” can be a useful tool in geographically dispersed team settings. Carlson also promotes “check-outs” that are used to serve as an opportunity for team members to engage in non-work-related discussions and activities, creating a space for socializing and bonding.

“Set up like a 30 minute Q&A on a weekly basis for people to cheque into like we call it open clinic but sort of create this open clinics for people to just jump into the corn, say hey, yeah you know, let’s discuss a dilemma or i don’t know, a technical issue or whatever it can be for people who are not working in HR, but using all of the leveraging on all of the knowledge and experience that you have across your team members to facilitate them using each other in in again are most structured way so really building up the frames in a different way with different frequency” - Bengtson

“I have probably been more focused on coming up with fun things now than I was before, being a little more creative in what we can do. I don’t know if you’ve ever been in such situations, but when you lead a meeting with 17 people in a conference room, it’s hard to get them to be quiet and return to the agenda. But when you lead it virtually, it’s the opposite. Now when you sit there, you look so bored and uninterested, and it’s hard to get energy in things, so I think I set it up differently today than I did before.” - Johanson

The statements from Bengtson and Johanson highlight the need for managers to be creative in their approach to a more virtual setting as it can be more challenging to generate energy and engagement. Therefore, managers must adapt how they structure and host meetings to maintain interest and ensure active participation from team members.

In conclusion, managers now must actively create opportunities for socializing, structure interactions, and balance the benefits of remote work with the advantages of in-person collaboration. They must find creative ways to foster collaboration, maintain team cohesion, and meet the diverse needs and preferences of their team members, whether they are working remotely or in the office.

4.3 The Need to Follow Up and Identify Employee Wellbeing

4.3.1 Managing Employee Well-being in the Hybrid Work Era

The hybrid work model has not only made managers realize the need to stage social interactions among the employees, but also the increased need to follow up and identify employee wellbeing through manager-employee interactions. Thereby, another challenge that managers now face is to find ways to monitor the wellbeing of their teams also through digital channels and making sure they take every individual into account, regardless if they work mostly in the office or remote.

“When I started my career in the good old days 20 years ago, you could quickly meet up with your manager that you just passed by in the office. You would meet up with a colleague when grabbing a cup of coffee or in the lunchroom, just to check in with each other and have spontaneous one-to-one meetings. This meant that you could really touch and feel if people were doing well. As a manager you could then observe some changes in behavior in employees, which could be a change in tone of voice or in terms of thriving. Not only in terms of performance, but also to get a feeling of how the individuals in your team are doing.” - Bengtson

“Knowing how someone is feeling is an area where virtual and hybrid working is not always helpful. The old traditional way of working in the office is definitely more effective. It's hard to pick up on employees' body language and how they are really feeling when you can't even see them from the shoulders down.” - Johanson

“When I come into the office and have a coffee with my team, I believe I can get a good sense of how the team is doing, and we can have open-minded discussions.” - Isacson

Bengtson explains, there has been a shift where it is no longer certain that you as a manager will meet your employees on site. Therefore, the manager doesn't have the same possibilities to identify the wellbeing of employees as when the majority of the workforce were at the office. Johanson supports this argument by emphasizing the more traditional office work structure as more effective in identifying employee wellbeing through their full body language. Isacson highlights the convenience of meeting the team in the office as a manager to get a feeling of how the team is doing. These statements further highlight the increased complexity that the managerial role is exposed to and the significant difference and disadvantage of interacting through platforms like Teams compared to meeting face-to-face in the office.

“As a manager, I think it's quite important that in addition to doing different tasks, I want to know how people are doing. This is also more difficult via Teams, it is easier to hide there. I do have one-to-one talks with my employees, but I feel that it requires much more of me as a manager. Therefore, I prefer to have my employees in the office, because I want to see them and know how they are doing.” - Carlson

“Of course every individual is different, but I can see a tendency among employees to stay more at home or stop turning on their camera when they are not feeling well. In my role, it is important to support the leaders in our organization so that they can indicate if someone is not feeling well in an early stage. Which is something that is so much easier when you have someone in the same office or in the same room. This challenge is something we are still working on.” - Fredricson

Carlson adds to the discussion that through digital tools it is easier for employees to hide and therefore prefers seeing them in the office. In contrast Fredricson mentions to have found ways to identify when employees are not doing good through digital tools. For example, by recognizing when an employee stops turning on their camera or stays more at home could be an indication that someone is not feeling well, but also agree upon it being a challenge and to be something they are continuously working on.

According to the managers, having the workforce at the office and being able to interact face-to-face with employees really facilitates monitoring their well being. In the hybrid work model, managers now need to review their old practices and find new solutions. This implies the new need for managers to adapt and apply new work methods to compensate for the lack of time in the office to maintain a sustainable work environment that values the employee's wellbeing.

4.3.2 Monitoring Employee Well-Being

To meet this new emerging need, Johanson claims to have had to become more systematic and organized in structuring one-to-one meetings with the employees. This in order to ensure to get time with each individual to be able to follow up on their wellbeing. Hanson states the same belief of experiencing a need to exercise greater diligence in ensuring encounters and meetings with every employee.

"I think I've become more systematic now than I was before. Before, I could get a bit more of a feel by bumping into employees in the office during the week, and by that get a pretty good feel for how they were doing. In that situation, if a coworker suggests canceling a one-to-one, there was no problem. But now in the new hybrid workplace, I quite quickly feel that I haven't met many of my colleagues for a long time. Then I believe I have become more systematic and organized around one-to-one meetings."

- Johanson

"And then I am very careful to ensure that I have my coaching conversations and one-to-ones with all my employees and don't take for granted that I see them in the office. Instead, you follow up on an ongoing basis." - Hanson

By implementing more structured one-to-one meetings with each employee, the managers foster a greater emphasis on the wellbeing of each individual. As Ericson expresses, it now revolves more around personal interactions between managers and employees that are customized for each individual.

"One thing that we have become much better at during the pandemic and that remains is that we have one-to-ones with all employees in the company at least once a month. We adapt the amount of one-to-one meetings according to the individual, it may depend on whether the employee has an intensive period in terms of work but also personally and situationally." - Ericson

"I don't need to adapt my leadership according to the role of an employee, rather depending on the individual and who you are as a person. People are different and have different needs. This means that some people that I don't meet in the office, but usually on Teams, I feel like I need to talk more with." - Carlson

“From a business perspective, if my employees feel good and enjoy their work they will also perform better. You could either view it from a business perspective or from the human aspect, but they harmonize with each other. So it is important to find the right structure in this new work model” -

Carlson

As Carlson emphasizes, some employees exhibit a greater need for regular check-ins and conversations with their managers. As it becomes more important to ensure one-to-one meetings, managers need to get to know each employee to be able to adjust the amount and structure of their meetings for each individual. Some employees might be more present in the office or have been in the company longer and don't need the same amount of individual meetings, while others might work mostly remote or might not have many social interactions outside of work. Carlson further highlights that there also is a business perspective to ensuring the well-being of employees, as they tend to perform better if they are doing well.

To summarize, managers face a new challenge of identifying and following up on employee wellbeing in a context where they cannot be sure that they will meet all employees everyday in the office. The study shows that managers have had to structure regular individual meetings with each employee and identify indications of poor well-being through digital tools. The analysis confirms the increased need for managers to create stronger relationships with their employees to adjust the one-to-ones to each individual. Lastly, the role of the manager of ensuring employee well-being also has a business intent, as the overall performance tends to increase if the employees are doing well.

5. Discussion

The following chapter will present a discussion where the empirical material is put in relation to existing literature and theories. We intend to contribute to fill a knowledge gap by applying recognized research on the role of the manager, on the emergent context of a hybrid work model. Mintzberg's (1973) theory on managerial roles will act as a theoretical lens, as well as be challenged in order to identify how a classic view of the managerial role has changed in the studied context. Since several of the roles are intertwined, we have chosen to mention those that we believe have been most affected or changed. The disposition is made according to the three key findings identified in the analysis.

5.1 Being the Determiner

The first observation that emerged from the analysis of the empirical material is a trend of each individual manager receiving a greater responsibility and power in setting the hybrid work structure for their employees. From having had one work structure as a set norm across the majority of the organization, to a changed scenario where the decisions tend to be decentralized and in the responsibility of each manager. This new scenario contributes to the statement that in the new normal way of working, management needs to consider reinventing the organizational structure to be more resilient to different types of disruption (Kane et al., 2021). Wenglén (2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012) discusses a cross-cutting dimension of managers' work being the one of *complexity*. The managerial role is characterized by complexity and ambiguity, which has not been mitigated in today's rapidly changing and uncertain climate. Finding ways to implement a hybrid work model is a relatively new task for most managers and as the analysis indicates, the managers have various parameters to consider when making decisions in regards to this matter.

All of the managers in the study state that their organization has decentralized the decision making on how managers should allocate their team on site or remote to each individual manager. One of the managers states this by saying: *“As a leader within our organization, you should keep track of whether your team is handling working from home or not in a good way, and how many days you need to be in the office or vice versa since everyone has different ways of relating to it”*. Having this added responsibility has had an effect on the manager's role in being a *Resource allocator*; brought up by Mintzberg (1973). Setting a hybrid work

structure that coordinates the human resources in a remote and in office-setting to ensure an effective reach of the organizational goals is a new and intricate process, where the managers have many parameters to accommodate. As in most managerial scenarios, there are no definitive answers, especially in this period of time when the world is adjusting post a global pandemic. Each decision becomes a *moral* dilemma where the manager has to balance different aspects (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012). What is right or wrong when there is no definite solution? The managers emphasize the challenge to decide what work structure that will be best for their team. This is linked to *moral* dilemmas of the managerial role, and in this case on what parameters to take into account and others to consider less when setting the structure.

One of the more central dimensions in deciding upon the work structure is in regards to *superiority and inferiority* (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012). The manager's role as *Negotiator* has been highly challenged in navigating the interests of both their employees, as well as considering the greater organizational goals and pressures from higher up in the hierarchy, when deciding upon a work structure (Mintzberg, 1973). The study has portrayed a variety of opinions and pressures from employees, due to personal preferences and needs in regards to their assigned work structure. To put it bluntly, it has shown that there are those who prefer and work better remotely, while there are others for whom coming into the office works better. Looking at it from a business and organizational standpoint, what is achieved through the set hybrid work model is what matters. "*As long as business is happy*" is mentioned multiple times by managers in describing that there is now a flexibility in *how* it is carried out, as long as the desired result is achieved.

This change has demanded managers to further consider the *diplomacy* dimension of their role as managers (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012). They need to actively make sure that they are aware of influences and working on their connections within the organization. In order to adjust the decision according to each situation, the managers state how they need to be attentive and get to know their team and the individuals within it. The broad spectrum of employee profiles within the organization mentioned by the majority of the managers, requires a variety of managerial initiatives.

The extensive role of being a *Leader*, described by Mintzberg (1973), covers large parts of the managerial role. The overall need to be a *pragmatic* leader in this new environment is mentioned by several of the managers to have become more and more crucial, having a situational approach and finding ways to adapt to the specific situation (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012). The decision will further be influenced by the managers personal management and leadership style, that is affected by their previous experiences. This could be considered another layer of the change, where the individual leadership style can receive a greater impact when shaping the work structure.

As the analysis portrayed, the change of the role and responsibility of the manager has often been perceived as a good thing and a positive development that works well for them and their organization. They now have a larger flexibility in the role as *Leader* and are able to adjust the set up to what they consider is suitable for each scenario and create a framework that help employee reach their full potential, which has potential to make the end result better (Mintzberg, 1973). Many of the managers do highlight several challenges in this role that they need to learn to handle with time. Worth mentioning in this context is that this is not always the attitude amongst managers, some appear to feel insecure in managing the decision due to not fully understanding the team need, or having to stand alone in motivating and justifying the decision.

To summarize this discussion around the identified need for managers to play a larger role in setting the hybrid work structure, we will present the key takeouts discovered in the analysis creating the combination of roles that constitutes we have come to label *determiner*. Firstly, the manager has had to take more responsibility in his role as *Resource allocator* in making decisions in regards to the work structure of the employees, which has not been as common in the past. Secondly, the emergent situation has become more complex and the manager has to take many different stakeholders and interested parties into account, making the role as *Negotiator* more intricate and of large importance. Lastly, we discussed how the role as *Leader* has taken a different meaning in aspects such as identifying team and individual needs, and really being pragmatic and flexible when navigating in the decision of setting a well functioning hybrid work structure. These observations and the combination of roles is what has generated what we have come to call the role of being the *determiner*.

5.2 Being the Socializer

A further observation that emerged from the analysis was that the manager often faces a need of being the one to promote and stage social interactions within their teams in the hybrid work model. This is partly a consequence of almost all managers seeing an increase in productivity when having the workforce in a remote setting, making it a challenge to balance the two. The gain in productivity is something that managers would not like to lose when structuring the frames for fostering social interactions in the organization. We have already concluded that the role of managing in a hybrid setting is *complex*, in accordance to Wenglén's (2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012) research, since there is no clear framework, and what is right and wrong is a situational and contextual matter. Balancing productivity and social interactions is one such example of complexity, where there is no evident line between one and the other. This requires managers to work the Mintzberg's (1973) role of *Negotiator*, both in relation to employee preferences as well as to statistics over performance. When talking about the increased productivity, we notice in the analysis that what is measured is the number of meetings per day and the efficiency in the meetings. Meanwhile, an observation from the analysis is that a majority of managers perceive an increase in creativity and innovation among the employees when they get the chance of collaborating in interactive office settings. The interpersonal interactions are what is described by these managers to foster energy and idea sharing that curate creativity and contribute to development. In this case, creativity and innovation achieved through in-office settings boost performance but might inhibit the more conventional view on productivity. On the note of complexity, managers must *monitor* and determine what is worth measuring to assess maximum performance (Mintzberg, 1973).

Setting the structure for social interactions also entails managers to navigate the power dynamics between themselves and their employees, again touching upon Wenglén's (2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012) dimension of *superiority and inferiority*. As the manager has the responsibility to create the frames for the interaction to occur, they also need to ensure what Mintzberg (1973) outlines as a *Disseminating* role to have all team members feel included and supported enough to be engaged in their work. Being in a superior position relative to the employees, they must ensure the positive outcomes of social interactions while also meeting the expectations placed upon them, as the analysis showed that managers felt

that some people within their teams valued remote work in regards to work-life balance. This once again requires that Mintzberg's (1973) managerial role of *Negotiator* come into use in representing the team and finding mutually beneficial compliance. While managers hold authority, they must balance it with a sense of openness to create a psychological safe environment where employees feel comfortable engaging and sharing ideas. This also entails a moral stance for the manager. Being able to know when to suppress personal morale in setting up appropriate structures for communication can, as previously mentioned, be difficult. As shown in the analysis, the managers' job would become much less complex if there was one set setting in which all employees had to settle with. With the decentralization of decision-making power, they could decide for themselves the approach that suits them best and facilitate their own work the most, why there is a need to be aware of moral as well as their self image of *Identity* (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012) in *negotiating* with one self for stances in the decision making process.

To promote ways of aligning the team also requires a willingness to embrace change, representing Mintzberg's (1973) *Entrepreneurial* role of management. As shown in the analysis, most of the managers emphasize that people have settled with a remote setting, and motivating new ideas on change can be difficult considering rocking the boat could affect the relationship and trust between manager and the employees. Here is a need to be *diplomatic* (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012) in obedience to Nonaka's (1994) portrayal of managers as *catalysts* when approaching the team with ideas of a new structure. Mintzberg's (1973) *Leader* role comes much in use here in presenting these ideas in a calculated manner and withholding smooth and strategic relationships by using assertive methods facilitated through the managers informal network within the organization. As the analysis highlights, there are many different preferences to be taken into account, why a wide informal network serves more useful to undertake appropriate unofficial managerial actions. Being diplomatic hence facilitates for managers to *negotiate* and act in the role as *Leader* (Mintzberg, 1973).

Another important piece of the puzzle is again the Wenglén (2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012) dimension of *pragmatism*. The manager must consider, based on their experience, what works rather than what makes their job the easiest. This is in accordance with the Mintzberg (1973) role of *Entrepreneur*, continuously seeking ways to improve team dynamics and collaboration by experimenting to find different methods and tools to facilitate social interactions to take place in order to drive creativity and innovation. One such initiative, as shown from the analysis, is check-in meetings which have been used by a number of managers to align the team given their diverse geographical location. These are used as a practical method to facilitate the alignment of the colleagues and to engage people into forming a relationship to the company, motivating them to perform and develop collectively.

To summarize the discussion around setting the scene for social interactions, the key takeouts will be highlighted. Firstly, the hybrid setting has enlarged the manager's responsibility to take action on determining appropriate setup for social interactions to take place in the *complex* organizational environment. The task involves making substantiated decisions based on the *negotiation* of trade offs of different settings as there are positive and more negative aspects of both the remote and working in the office. Secondly, the discussion also highlights that the measurement of performance, which includes the positive outputs of *creativity and innovation* when the employees collaborate in social contexts, may be more relevant for the managers than *productivity* when making decisions regarding the relevant design of team settings in hybrid. This includes the managerial need to monitor and disseminate relevant information to decide, support and creatively structure ideas of appropriate settings in the role of *Entrepreneur*. Thirdly, the manager must negotiate stances about their self image and personal *morals*, and have the ability to subordinate themselves to the organizational needs when deciding upon the design of the hybrid work structure. Finally, they must act in a *diplomatic* manner, using unofficial informal networks to facilitate the promotion of these structures, and to undertake a *Leader* role in motivating the employees to engage in the change and to generate full potential performance. This coordinated combination of dimensions and roles form the managerial need which we refer to as the managers becoming *socializers* of the organization.

5.3 Being the Auditor

A third and final observation that emerged from the analysis is changes in the managerial role in regard to managing employee well-being. A hybrid work structure allows for a large degree of remote work which increases the autonomy of employees. As a manager, you can no longer be certain to see all your employees in the office every week, which by most managers in the study was considered crucial in determining the well-being of their employees. This new scenario further increases the *complexity* of the manager's role and requires the manager to review existing working practices (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012).

The hybrid work structure has added complexity to the managerial role by altering their ability to manage employees as stakeholders. The majority of the managers of the study emphasize that it is much easier to monitor and manage the well-being of employees when they are in the office. They highlight that they get a better overview of their team in the office and even identify individuals' well-being more clearly even in a group setting. Hence, it can be discussed that in the traditional work structure where employees were in the office five times a week, managers could monitor the well-being of their team as a more homogenous group. In contrast, in today's hybrid work structure where employees work more independently, a new challenge has emerged for managers to evaluate how their team is doing. As employees work more autonomously in this new work structure and their preferences of how they like to work are louder than ever, managers need to take every individual into account to a greater extent. In opposition to viewing employees as a more homogenous group in the traditional work structure, we can now argue that employees have become a more heterogeneous group for managers to manage in a hybrid work structure. To deal with this new challenge managers now need to rely on digital tools to connect with their employees on a daily basis. Almost all of the managers highlight that they find it difficult to really understand how an individual is doing or to read their full body language through digital communication.

This new challenge necessitates the addition of a new attribute to Mintzberg's (1973) managerial role as *Monitor*. In order to effectively assess how the whole team is doing, identify poor well-being or mental illness and address them in a timely manner, managers now need to find new ways to actively seek this information from employees that they do not

necessarily meet on a daily basis in the office. Most of the managers have begun to structure one-to-one meetings with each employee to follow up on their well-being. This was already done by some of the managers but they emphasize a greater need to do it more systematically now. In addition to one-to-ones, several of the managers again emphasize the need to be more *pragmatic* in their leadership (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012). Managers need to review their old management theories and practical rules of thumb to adapt to the new work structure. As a manager describes, to make use of the digital tools, a manager can identify certain behaviors to evaluate the well-being of employees, such as if they stop turning on their camera or stay at home more. This is a further practical example of what managers now need to do in the role of *Monitors* in order to obtain the information necessary to evaluate how their team is doing in a hybrid work structure (Mintzberg, 1973).

Most of the managers further highlight that by implementing more structured one-to-one meetings, this has created conditions for a leadership that is more focused on each individual. This is due to that one-to-one increases the manager-employee interactions, fostering relationships with employees. These one-to-one interactions can now be seen as an essential part of the role as *Leader* to motivate and support employees in a hybrid work structure (Mintzberg, 1973). Moreover, we can observe in the analysis that many managers admit that employees who feel appreciated and happy are more likely to be more productive and engaged in their work, which in the end can lead to an overall increase in performance. As previously stated in the discussion, the manager's role as *negotiator* has been significantly challenged in this new work structure, navigating both the interests of employees and organizational goals (Mintzberg, 1973). In the case of employee well-being and as the employee as stakeholder has become more complex, this further challenges the role as *negotiator* in navigating the interests of both *superiority and inferiority* (Wenglén, 2005; cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012). The analysis reveals that even ensuring the wellbeing of employees has a dual meaning for managers in regards to increasing the performance of their team to satisfy the organizational goals. A manager states this by describing it as: "*the business perspective and the human perspective of employee well-being and that they harmonize together*". This means that as a manager, you can ensure the productivity and performance of your employees by making them feel good and enjoy their work.

To summarize, the third observation that revolves around the identified need for managers to find new ways to monitor the well-being of their employees in the hybrid work structure, we will present the two key takeouts encountered in the analysis. Firstly, due to a hybrid work structure, employees as stakeholders have become a more complex group to manage due to diverse individual needs that have become more prominent. This implies that managers need to take the role of *Monitor* to obtain knowledge about the individuals well-being to be able to assess how the team is doing, regardless if they work in the office or remote (Mintzberg, 1973). Lastly, although balancing the interest of employees and organizational goals is stated to harmonize in terms of well-being, the increased complexity of the workforce has further challenged the role as *negotiator* in a hybrid work structure (Mintzberg, 1973). Again, the analysis unveiling this observation, followed by the discussion, has generated the concept of what we refer to as being the *auditor*.

6. Conclusion

The following section presents the conclusions of the study based on the analysis and discussion. Followed by this, we will present the study's theoretical and practical implication highlighting the contribution of the study to the existing literature. The conclusion further ends with a discussion of the study's perceived limitations and suggestions for further research.

6.1 The Changed Role of the Manager in the Hybrid Work Structure

The purpose of this study has been to contribute to a larger understanding of the change of the managerial role as organizations transfer into a more hybrid work model. A qualitative research method was conducted where ten managers in knowledge-intensive firms discussed their perception of their role as managers in this new context. With the praise of the hybrid work model pointing to the possible leverage effect of combining remote work with working in the office, the ultimate responsibility lies with the manager to make it work. The new scenario further increases the *complexity* of the manager's role and requires the manager to review existing managerial practices and incorporate new elements into their managerial role.

The first observation in regards to the change of the managerial role has been that decision-making now tends to be more decentralized and allocated with the individual manager in determining the structure of the hybrid work model - an observation that we have concretized with the manager having become the *Determiner*. The role of being a *resource allocator* is put in a new light when having the employees both remotely and in the office and the manager has to navigate and negotiate according to several intricate parameters. There is no given answer to what is the correct approach, and different scenarios require different measures made from the manager. The leader role now needs to create the best circumstances and gain the right knowledge to be able to make informed decisions on how to approach the work structure, as the individual manager has received greater decision making power and responsibility. This involves getting to know the team in order to identify needs and preferences, as well as determining what structure generates the best results in terms of the organizational goals.

The study further identified a need for the manager to act as what we have come to describe as *Socializer* in promoting and staging social interactions to a larger extent in the hybrid work model. This has come as a consequence of not surely having the workforce in the same place and in a setting where these events occur more naturally. The employees have become settled with remote work, some individuals prefer it and the managers indicate an increased productivity of their subordinates in this setting. This has required managers to embrace their role as *Entrepreneurs* in a new way, finding ways of setting the frames for interpersonal and social interactions to take place in the digital environment as well, and not only relying on the employees coming into the office for this to occur. The importance of the manager's role as *leader* is contextualized with the complexity of aligning people under the premises of balancing preferences surrounding advantages in work-life balance and productivity when working remotely. Meanwhile, in regards to their role as *entrepreneurs*, the empirical data further emphasized the value of interpersonal interactions to generate alignment, fostering employee creativity and innovation necessary for organizational learning. *Negotiation* therefore becomes an important concept for managers in approaching what measures to consider in achieving performance, and to design a mutually beneficial compliance. The analysis portrays how *diplomacy* can facilitate this role as negotiator in promoting new ideas in regards to the balance of social interactions in an organization and to negotiating in the role as a leader. This perception points us towards the *entrepreneur* role and the leader role of managers coming together into a more integrated role in which managers are required to

continuously seek creative ways of socializing the team to foster innovation and to further develop. One aspect highlighted in the analysis that further points to the value of this type of interaction, is that they find creativity and innovation being a result of people coming together. Finding the balance between remote work and working in the office when looking at these aspects has been identified as a challenging task for managers, as they wish to reap the benefits of the two settings to the largest extent possible.

The last observation found in the analysis of the empirical material was that the manager need to take the role as *Auditor* and find ways to manage employee well-being. When not meeting their employees in the office to the same extent, the managers claim to have found it difficult to identify aspects in regards to their well being, mainly as employees can disguise being unwell and hide behind the screen. To cope with this new challenge, the manager needs to be more *pragmatic* in their leadership. This includes reviewing their old management theories and practical rules of thumb to adapt to the new work structure. The manager needs to find alternative ways to identify and follow up on the well-being of their employees. This implies that the manager has a greater need to take the traditional managerial role of *Monitor* to reach out and obtain the knowledge of the employees well-being in order to assess how the team is doing, regardless if they work remotely or in the office. The observation also highlighted the added complexity to the workforce as employees now can work both remote and in the office, within the structure their manager has set. When working more remotely, employees become more autonomous, and as their personal preferences are perceived as louder in the new structure, the manager needs to acknowledge every individual to a greater extent than before. It can be argued that employees have gone from being a homogeneous group that the manager could overview in the office, to becoming a more heterogeneous group where the role as *Auditor* becomes important in ensuring each individual's well-being. The observation also highlighted the business aspect of valuing the well-being of their employees from the manager's perspective, as the employees tend to perform better if they are doing well, which additionally enhances the importance of finding new ways to identify and follow up well-being among employees in the hybrid work structure.

The study thereby constitutes a rather broad scope of change in the role of the manager when operating in the context of the hybrid work model. The empirical findings have made us identify three trends in the managerial role that have been generated through a combination of concepts from previous frameworks, and that are conceptualized in the roles of being a *determiner*, *socializer* and *auditor*. More traditional theories in regards to the managerial role have been applied to the emergent work environment, and have thereby been challenged. The need to revise and adapt theoretical frameworks to the Hybrid Work Model has been further brought to light.

6.2 Practical Implications

The purpose of this study has been to contribute to an increased understanding of how the role of the manager has changed with the emergence of a more hybrid work structure. We believe the work is of interest to the wider working world as it provides an understanding of phenomena that have not yet been widely discussed. Organizations were thrown into this accelerated change and, as the study indicates, companies in general have not yet landed on how to proceed in this changed environment in terms of several factors, among which the leadership role has a central role. In times of change, it is important to take time and reflect in order to navigate forward and find solutions to the challenges of the future, we believe that our analysis will help and contribute to this.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

Previous research has yet to explore the role of managers in the hybrid work environment. We want to contribute to a better understanding of how the role of the manager has changed and that there are new elements to consider in this new context. The study mainly analyzes the basis of Mintzberg's traditional managerial roles and highlights these in a new light and applies them to the hybrid work model. Our findings confirm that Mintzberg's managerial roles are still discernible in a hybrid work structure but that some of the roles have had to be emphasized, combined or changed to optimally serve the manager in the new structure. The study concludes that further trade-offs are required for the managerial role and that the manager needs to evaluate their own capabilities and leadership style when deciding on the work structure.

6.4 Limitations and Further Research

The conclusion will be rounded off by an assessment on possible limitations of the study. One of which being that the sample size of studied objects not being very extensive and its potential impact on the generalizability of the findings. This leads us to the limitation of subjective responses, and the reliance on qualitative interviews. The limited number of participants and limited number of organizations analyzed may not fully represent the diverse range of perspectives and experiences within their respective organization or industry. Also, in the analysis, solely the perspectives of managers were considered, overlooking the opinions of subordinates, who may regard the researched area to differ greatly from the managers perceptions. The focus of the study has been narrowed down to three overarching aspects, potentially overlooking other relevant factors in the context of the hybrid work environment that could influence the management. The study is based on specific theoretical frameworks that define the dimensions and roles of leadership. However, these frameworks might not encompass all the potential perspectives and dimensions of leadership, especially in relation to the new and relatively unexplored context of hybrid work, thereby potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

Considering these limitations, one suggestion to further research would be to incorporate the viewpoints of employees and followers. Taking their perceptions, needs, and expectations into account regarding the role of the manager in the hybrid work landscape could provide additional insights in this context. Building upon the current findings, it would also be valuable to explore the practical implications for managers based on change management-oriented theories, helping facilitate more actionable and concrete interventions. Lastly, given the evolving nature of the hybrid work environment, conducting longitudinal studies over an extended period would enable researchers to capture changes and trends in practice, allowing for the above mentioned suggestions for further research to also be included.

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