Edited by
Svein Bergum · Pascale Peters · Tone Vold

Virtual Management and the New Normal

New Perspectives on HRM and Leadership since the COVID-19 Pandemic

Virtual Management and the New Normal

"This is a timely and important book since responses to Covid-19 marked a juncture in how human resources are managed, particularly where work is done. It brings together an impressive set of contributions offering insights from research conducted in public and private sector organisations across a number of European countries. Its focus on what can be learned from experiences of remote working during this time and resulting implications for future ways of working in a post-lockdown world, means that it represents an invaluable resource for researchers, policy makers and managers as organisations adjust to a new normal."

—Clare Kelliher, Professor of Work and Organisation, Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University, UK

"When the idea of 'telecommuting' was introduced 50 years ago, the notion that people should be allowed and enabled to work remotely instead of travelling to a traditional office seemed both obvious and far-fetched, as veteran telework guru Jack Nilles outlines in his foreword to this excellent edited volume. Despite tremendous advances in technology and work organisation, the fundamental challenges surrounding remote working have hardly changed. What has changed, however, is the wealth of knowledge that is now available to deal with these to make virtual management both effective and beneficial for all, which is summarized in this outstanding book."

—Karsten Gareis, Senior Project Manager and Researcher, empirica GmbH, Bonn, Germany

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New Perspectives on HRM and
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Pandemic

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Foreword

Jack M. Nilles, "the Father of Telecommuting"

Evolving Telework

The Beginning

In the 1960s and early 1970s—those were my rocket scientist days—I often wondered how the technology we used for space could be applied to real-world situations. As part of my search in 1971 I came across a regional planner who said to me, "If you people can put a man on the moon, then why can't you do something about traffic? Why can't you just keep people off the freeways?" It was a revelation to me. Why not indeed?

I started to examine the problem from the first principles. Why do we have traffic, particularly rush-hour traffic? It turned out that a large proportion of rush-hour traffic comprises people driving to or from their homes and their workplaces. What do they do when they get to their workplaces? A little research showed that almost half of them were working in offices. What do they do when they get to their offices? A substantial amount of their time, at least in 1971, was spent on the phone talking to someone somewhere else.

If that is the case, I thought, then why can they not just phone from home and save the trips, not to mention gas costs, energy waste, air pollution, and depreciation to their cars?

I happened to be the secretary of my aerospace engineering company's research committee at that time. I asked the committee members to spend some effort and funds on the idea of substituting telecommunications (the telephone) for transportation (the freeways). They asked me what I would need to do to conduct the research. I said that we would probably need to hire a psychologist or two and maybe an economist— we already had many engineers—to examine the implications of this rearrangement of work. Their response was disappointing. "We are an engineering company. We don't want to deal with this touchy-feely stuff." I could not convince them otherwise.

I was complaining about this reaction to a friend of mine who taught in the School of Engineering at the University of Southern California (USC). I told him that USC had the right kind of people to do this research, whereas my engineering company did not. Shortly thereafter, I repeated my assessment to the Executive Vice President of the university. He asked, "Why don't you do it here?" So, I left the engineering company and went to USC to become its first director of Interdisciplinary Program Development. My job was to develop and manage research programmes that involved multiple schools of the university.

As part of that job, I applied to the National Science Foundation for a grant entitled, *Development of Policy on the Telecommunications-Transportation Tradeoff*. I got the grant and my chance to test my ideas in the real world. My team, comprising university faculty from the Schools of Engineering, Communication, and Business, enlisted the support of a major national insurance company. The insurance company's motivation had nothing to do with our attempt to test our theory. Their objective was simply to reduce the rate at which employees left the company. They were willing to try distributing their workers into satellite offices near where they lived, instead of requiring them to come into the company's downtown offices every day.

In the test project, the output of the employees' work in the satellite offices was transmitted to in-office minicomputer concentrators. The minicomputers uploaded each day's work to the company's mainframes

every night. The project ran from 1973 through 1974, and was a resounding success. Worker productivity and job satisfaction increased, along with other positive indicators, and none of the employees involved in the project left. We estimated that the company could save several million (1973) dollars annually by broadly adopting our design.

Early in the project, I decided to call the process *telecommuting* or *teleworking*, depending on the audience, to make it more understandable to people than *the telecommunications-transportation tradeoff*. A book based on the project was published in 1976 in the US and 1977 in Japan.

To my dismay, the project did not continue. The company management was concerned that, if their workforce continued to be scattered around the region, it would be too easy for them to be unionized. A few months later, I spoke with a planner for the AFL/CIO about our research. He also said that telecommuting was a terrible idea. Why? Because, if the workers were scattered all over the region, how could they be organized by the union? Both rejected telecommuting, though for completely opposite reasons. I was getting the idea that telecommuting might be a bit too radical for both groups, as fear of change seemed to be an issue.

The Middle

Then there began a series of requests for research funding, trials, and demonstrations of telecommuting in the real world. In the 1980s, we enlisted the support of a number of Fortune 100 companies, many of which adopted telecommuting for their own employees. While giving us data on how well telecommuting was working in large US corporations, those projects produced another problem. Like the initial project with the insurance company, we were not allowed to divulge the names of our participants. Therefore, when executives of prospective telecommuting-adoptive companies asked who else was doing this, all we could say was "Fortune 100 companies."

In the meantime, the technology of the telecommunications infrastructure was rapidly improving. In 1973, the option for telecommuting from home was out of the question since the telephone system could not provide the necessary transmission bandwidths at a reasonable price.

With the introduction of the IBM PC in 1981, the technology landscape suddenly grew brighter for home-based telecommuting. The PC provided the office at home, thereby reducing the need for always-on connectivity, while faster modems allowed ever easier communications to the traditional office.

Yet, we still had the same fundamental problem in expanding the use of telecommuting. We quickly learned that enlisting potential *telecommuters* was no problem. However, attracting their *management,* particularly middle managers, was another issue altogether since we could not point to specific companies to say, "The Xers have adopted telecommuting and are enthusiastic about it." We would point out telecommuting's improvements in productivity reduced the use of sick leave, reduced turnover, and diminished facilities costs for very little in up-front investment. The response was often, "It may work for X, but it won't work for us." The idea that managers might not be able to check on their employees' progress was a clear issue. "How do I know they're working if I can't see them?" [Yet, once that reluctance was overcome, and the managers were trained to think about performance differently, telecommuting generally became a great success.]

Frustrated by all this reluctance, we tried another tack by going to government agencies. With governments involved in telecommuting, we could run the demonstration projects and release the data publicly. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, we and others had successful projects with state and municipal governments. After these projects, several people have learned to design and run successful telework projects, both in industry and in government. We knew how to manage them successfully and developed the tools. I even wrote some books on the details; foremost among them is *Managing Telework: Strategies for Managing the Virtual Workforce*. My wife Laila and I spent a considerable amount of time in Europe, under the auspices of the European Commission, and in Asia in the 1990s giving presentations about telework.

Yet, as the saying goes, the other shoe did not drop. Many managers were still reluctant to take a chance on telecommuting for the reason already stated. After all, what you knew now may be troublesome, but something new might be worse. Risk aversion was endemic, except in many small- to medium-sized start-ups that got the message beginning in the 1980s. Even IBM and Yahoo gave up telework in the twentieth

century, largely because of management errors for which telecommuting was blamed (in my opinion).

So, what could be the secret sauce that would grab the attention of CEOs everywhere? What is the sauce that would break their reluctance to change?

The Dawn, Among Other Things, Breaks

The secret sauce is a microscopic virus called COVID-19. Essentially overnight, the world learned how important it is to keep people isolated from each other in order to avoid becoming infected with a severe, often fatal, disease. For roughly half the workforce in developed countries, tele-work, alias remote work, became the key to survival.

Even so, my first thought in March 2020 focused on all those millions of people, managers and teleworkers alike, who were thrust into tele-working without a clue as to how to do it. For many, it was a formidable struggle, though for long-time teleworkers it was business as usual. Those who adapted quickly learned to manage by results, not by visual observa-tion. Now that effective vaccines have arrived, the panic has abated. So, are we about to go back to business as it was before 2020?

I think not. Evidence is growing daily that a substantial number of these newly bred teleworkers like it just fine, and do not want to go back to that pre-2020 office environment—at least not full time. The new "normal" is becoming a hybrid; a mixture of home-based and office-based work, with the average about half time in each location. The office work-space of the future also is a different concept than yesterday's cacopho-nous, dysfunctional rows of cubicles. It is morphing into a centre for comfortable face-to-face communication, both formal and informal. Much of the sensitive interpersonal communication is performed in the office; the detailed, focused work is done at, or near, home.

The successful management of the future is not necessarily what you are used to. But you may enjoy it more.

Los Angeles, CA, USA   Jack M. Nilles
June 2021

Preface

Since the 1970s, when the American engineer Jack Nilles coined the term telecommuting, scholars like us have been interested in innovative ways of working in which people can work away from their employer or principle, enabled by information and communication technologies (ICT), meanwhile reducing commuting time, and, hence, contributing to "a good cause." Since that time, expectations about the possibilities for remote working, for example working from home, have been high. In contrast to the dystopian views on alienation due to the lack of physical human contact being replaced by machine-mediated connectivity, as pictured in the short story "The Machine Stops" by E. M. Forster (1909), futurologists, such as the American Alvin Toffler, known for his book "The Third Wave" (1980), predicted that technology and new social structures would drastically change our everyday lives. According to Toffler, in the short-term, administrative staff would only travel to work in Japan because the collectivist culture would not fit with working from home. In the rest of the world, the work was expected "to come" to the administrative staff, living in their home-centred societies, providing opportunities for new forms of entrepreneurship. Due to the rise of working from home in "electronic cottages," central offices would no longer be needed.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a huge interest for telecommuting and telework, as an innovative means to decentralize work, and

stimulate regional development. Concepts such as telework centres and satellite offices were launched as alternatives to the home office. Then, people could work closer to home, but share technology and maintain social contact, which were seen as problems of individual work at home. In the late 1990s and early 2000, the diffusion of mobile communication and internet made work even more independent of time and space, and concepts such as mobile telework and multi-locational work received growing interest.

Despite high expectations and forecasts, in practice, changes in the traditional way of working did not go as fast as expected. Many articles about working from home, or remote working in general, including ours, started by noticing that IT-mediated working was not as big a trend as thought. Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands were runners in front, partly because of their individualistic national cultures, advanced infrastructure, trust-based leadership, and independent employees. However, in those countries too, the number of home workers only rose slightly over the past decades, and remained a privilege for some groups, such as highly educated workers in knowledge-intensive industries. Obviously, most organizations, managers, and people stuck to old routines; there was no urgent need to change the traditional way of working and, in many cases, a loss of communication, control, coordination, cooperation, cohesion, co-learning, commitment, coaching, and career progress, to name some well-reported issues, were feared.

About 50 years after Nilles' first experiments with telecommuting, however, the tremendous health risks of the COVID-19 virus caused a great breakthrough of working from home. Never had workers around the globe worked from home on such a large scale, so intensively, so inclusively, as during the lockdowns in the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, previous discussions on the pros and cons of remote working, for employers, employees, their families, communities, and customers, and the way remote work and collaboration can be managed have been rekindled.

This book is aimed at both scholars and practitioners who are interested in "where remote working is going after the COVID-19 pandemic." To further stimulate the scientific and societal conversations, and to explore possible directions, the authors of the chapters of this book

present novel insights based on sound scholarly research. All of them reflect on how the COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions in "the world of work" in their particular contexts and the (potential) consequences for organizations, employment relationships, HRM, leadership, and people, both at the time of the pandemic and beyond. The general belief is that governments and businesses will continue to focus on (part-time) remote working as the "new normal." Although some contours of the "new normal" may be visible, the question remains: Will the "new normal" be a utopian or a dystopian, or perhaps both? The answer to this question for a large part depends on human decision-making.

One of the triggers of the 1970s experiments with telecommuting was the Yom Kippur War in the Middle-East, which led to scarcity of oil. In the last stage of this volume being published, a new war has again affected the oil prices (amongst other things) to a near staggering double over a short period of time and is predicted to rise to the double of this within a short period of time. Will this, combined with our experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic, prepare for new remote working experiences? As the cost of electricity in Europe has also risen dramatically, the cost of commuting may influence on the number of employees choosing to work from home, where this is provided as an option. Hopefully, this book will be able to contribute towards insights for making decisions for the "new normal."

We sincerely hope that society has learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and that these insights provide "a window of opportunity" to realize multiple values that can be strived for by adopting remote working. Based on the insights from the chapters in this book, we can conclude in any case that for the "new normal" to be sustainable, we need to consider multiple societal, organizational, and individual values. In view of potential paradoxical tensions, we will argue that this demands a continuous balancing act. Regarding "people," we need to strive for health, safety, work-family balance, and labour market and (gender) equalities, among other values. Regarding "profit," efficiency, innovation, and continuity for organizations and people's careers are important values. Regarding "planet," values such as environmental sustainability, diversity, and inclusiveness need to be considered.

To conclude, we would like to thank all those who have contributed to and supported the publication of this volume. First, we would like to express our gratitude to all the authors for their cooperation and insightful chapters. Second, we would like to thank the crew at Palgrave Macmillan, Alec Selwyn, Mary Amala Divya Suresh, and Liz Barlow, for their help throughout the project. Third, we would like to thank Jack Nilles for his swift and valuable reply with a foreword to this manuscript. Fourth, we would like to thank our universities, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences in Norway and Nyenrode Business Universiteit, in the Netherlands, for their support during the process. Last, but not least, we are thankful for the warm support from our spouses Ingebjørg, Hendrik, and Yngvar.

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Tone Vold lectures at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway, in courses within digitalization of workforms and knowledge management, and is particularly interested in knowledge management, e-learning, and games for learning. Her PhD is about work relevance of higher education for innovative and entrepreneurial behaviour in organizations.

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Introduction

Svein Bergum, Pascale Peters, and Tone Vold

The COVID-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization March 2020, and the social distancing, quarantines, lockdowns, and self-imposed isolation that followed, can be characterized as both a health crisis and a disruptive event that affected the 'world of work' and 'the rest of life' in many areas, and perhaps irreversibly. The pandemic reinforced

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trends that had been going on for several decades, including the flexibilization of labor according to time and place, variously referred to as telecommuting, or "telework, remote work, distributed work, virtual work, flexible work, flexplace, and distance work, among other labels" (Allen et al., 2015, p. 42). Although these related terms each have slightly different conceptualizations, in this chapter, we use the concept of remote work, which refers to "any form of work not conducted in the central office, including work at branch locations and differing business units (Allen et al., 2015, pp. 43–44)."

Organizing work requires management. This, however, has been a challenge not only during the pandemic, but also with remote work generally. Most of the literature on leadership and management is about leading and managing employees that are at the office or other workplaces in close proximity to the management. However, during the pandemic, many employees were at their home offices, which requires a somewhat different approach, also labeled virtual or e-leadership (Das Gupta, 2011). In this book, the initiatives on both leadership and management in the context of remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic are referred to as virtual management, which is reflected in the title of this book.

To reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus, during the pandemic, face-to-face communication was limited as much as possible. To continue their operations, many organizations introduced, scaled-up, and/or intensified work-from-home practices, regardless of them or their stakeholders having experience with remote working and how to manage it. This type of remote working was particularly introduced for people in so-called non-essential occupations who could use information and communication technologies (ICT) to communicate with managers, colleagues, customers, and other stakeholders. Those in so-called essential jobs that require physical presence due to the nature of the work activities, such as health care professionals, could not work remotely. Dingel and Neiman (2020) estimated that particularly high-income economies have a high share of jobs that can exclusively be done at home, which are usually more-paying jobs.

Whereas in 2017, only 5% of the working population in Europe worked from home on a regular basis and 10% only occasionally, in April

2020, 37% of the employed had started working from home due to the pandemic, either exclusively or partially. This stepped up to 48% in July 2020 but decreased to 42% in February/March 2021 (Eurofound, 2020, pp. 27–36). In line with the findings by Dingel and Neiman (2020), the home-working figures differed widely across countries, depending on the type of economy. For example, in the Netherlands, before the COVID-19 pandemic about one in three people worked from home at least occasionally, of which about 6% of them did so (almost) exclusively. At the beginning of the pandemic, about 45%–56% worked remotely, of which many of them (almost) exclusively (Hamersma et al., 2020). Regarding the proportion of people who worked from home during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic exclusively, Eurofound (2020) estimated that this ranged from around one-fifth of the workers in Croatia, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary to more than 40% in France, Spain, Italy, and Ireland. In Belgium, this proportion even was 50%. Conversely, whereas less than 25% of the workers in Belgium and Spain worked from their employer's premises only, this was more than half of the workers in Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Slovakia (Eurofound, 2020, p. 33).

Also, outside the European context, the proportion of people who worked from home during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic differed widely. In May 2020, almost half of the workers in the United States worked from home (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020). In the UK, virtual working reached 43.1% in April 2020 (Felstead & Reuschke, 2020). For Japan, the Cabinet Office reported that the virtual work percentage was 34.5% at the end of May 2020 and Morikawa (2020) reported that approximately 32% worked remotely in June 2020. Delaporte and Pena (2020) wrote that in Latin American and Caribbean countries, the share of individuals who worked from home in that period varied from 7% in Guatemala to 16% in the Bahamas.

Strikingly, also in jobs and for activities that were previously not considered technological 'teleworkable,' many people could work remotely. The focus on health risks associated with the COVID-19 virus, meanwhile enabling continuity of organizations' operations, were weighed more heavily than the reported 'work-from-home risks' around control, coordination, cohesion, knowledge sharing, and work motivation as perceived by managers. Managers' perceptions and attitudes had been

hindering them to change organizational routines, hence the break-through of remote working, since the 1970s (Illegems & Verbeke, 2004; Peters & Batenburg, 2015; Peters et al., 2010). In fact, history shows the uptake of remote work always to have been prompted by some sort of crisis (Peters, 2020).

In response to the oil crises of 1973–1974, resulting from the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East, and to traffic and environmental problems of that time, in 1973, engineer Jack Nilles (see the preface of this book), who worked for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in the United States of America, came up with the idea 'to move work to the people,' rather than the other way around, which he coined 'telecommuting' (Allen et al., 2015; Nilles, 1998). These experiments were also inspired by the alarming report *The Limits to Growth* (1972) that warned for overconsumption. After a first phase of experimenting with isolated projects and (governmental-supported) pilots, and following some early telework adopters, such as IBM in 2018, depending on countries' technological, labor-market, economic and ecological developments, organizations had started to adopt remote working mainly as a strategy to save overhead costs, deal with workforce issues, meet the demand of mainly highly educated professionals for more job autonomy and flexibility, or, often pressured by national policies, to support labor-market participation of people who are (partly) disabled for work (Allen et al., 2015).

After 2005, much inspired by the white paper entitled the 'New World of Work' by Microsoft's chief executive officer (CEO) Bill Gates (Gates, 2005), new concepts, broader than teleworking, attracted attention. The volatile, uncertain, and complex and ambiguous markets called for new organizational philosophies, cultures, and designs, referred to as 'new ways of working,' that could increase work engagement and stimulate knowledge sharing and open innovation. Under this credo, and enabled by new information and communication technologies, organizations implemented activity-based working, encouraging employees to 'work remotely' and to proactively self-manage their work, and, thereby, to come up with creative solutions to problems in the workplace to enhance organizations' resilience (Peters et al., 2014). Also, with the deployment of so-called flexworkers and mostly 'voluntary' self-employed persons without staff, the required labor flexibility of organizations was further

increased. Moreover, natural disasters, such as the earthquake and nuclear disaster in Fukushima in Japan in 2011, forced organizations to adopt working from home. In Japan, organizations invested in their 'telework infrastructure' to be better prepared for new natural disasters and crises (Deccan Herald, 2011), despite the cramped housing of the Japanese population and the collectivist culture with long office days. In the years of economic crisis and uncertainty, an increasing number of organizations in Western economies implemented some form of new ways of working to reduce overhead costs or simply to mimic the new ways of working.

Surprisingly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a large proportion of remote workers, including those who were not used to working from home before the COVID-19 pandemic, appeared to be very capable of organizing their work themselves, taking responsibility together and coming up with creative solutions and succeeded to maintain or even enhance their productivity. Others, however, experienced a loss of productivity and even financial security, job satisfaction, and well-being (Lund et al., 2020), enhancing existing social inequalities (Spreitzer et al., 2017). Also, many employees missed the direct contact with colleagues and customers, and the spontaneous meetings at the office, where they can also distance themselves physically, mentally, and behaviorally, affecting their physical and mental health (Lund et al., 2020). Moreover, research into the division of tasks and work-life balance, for example, shows that the corona crisis may be experienced different for fathers and mothers (Yerkes et al., 2020).

Early 2022, the rules around the COVID-19 pandemic were relaxed, schools were re-opened, and people started to become mobile again. In future phases of the pandemic, or perhaps, endemic, organizations need to reflect, learn, and act. The 'work-from-home risks' that were taken for granted at the beginning of the pandemic must be managed sustainably (Peters, 2020). But how? Some organizations are thinking about how working from home can further reduce travel costs and buildings and track remote workers through *employee surveillance* technology and analyze their behaviors and productivity through *big data*. However, can such 'micromanagement' motivate home workers? What are the physical and mental health consequences of working from home under these

conditions? Are people sufficiently supported in their professional development? Or is social inequality being further increased?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, all stakeholders had to give meaning to the pandemic (together) and had to improvise, creating opportunities for learning and innovation. It can be argued that the crisis not only offered threats but also opportunities to take new and hopefully more sustainable paths. After all, the technical infrastructure that has been built and strengthened over the past period, and that now makes working from home possible, offers the possibilities to combine the multiple *values* that were intended with remote working in the past: *people, profit,* and *planet.* This, however, requires organizations, governments, and individuals to seize the momentum to think now about the impact organizations and their incumbents want to have and to adapt their strategies, policies, practices, and leadership accordingly (cf. Contreras et al., 2020; Peters, 2020).

So, what has been learned from the pandemic? What will be different after the pandemic in terms of the organization of work in time and space, employment relationships, human resource management (HRM) (i.e., systems and processes), and leadership (i.e., personal and interpersonal dynamics) that guide, motivate, and provide opportunities to people to perform? And how will that affect the behavior of and outcomes for managers, employees, and other stakeholders? To answer these questions, it is timely to update our knowledge, as management and working in times of the COVID-19 pandemic may be different, and perhaps differently perceived compared to previous periods. This book, entitled *Virtual Management and the New Normal: New Perspectives on HRM and Leadership Since the COVID-19 Pandemic* aims to add new knowledge on the debate on the management and consequences of (the future of) remote working. The focus of the book is on how organizations, HRM, leadership, leaders, and individual workers have been affected by remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic and how the new experiences with enhanced remote working and management can be applied in what has been coined the "new normal." The book presents theoretical chapters, and quantitative and qualitative (longitudinal) studies, based on data from organizations, managers, and employees in different, mainly European countries, but also from Canada. With few exceptions,

previous studies have argued for general requirements for virtual leaders. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced managers to differentiate their management style in relation to different people and different situations, but how? And technology and digital services have never been used as extensively in previous telework studies as during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our book, therefore, focusses on topics lacking in previous studies and will also contribute in view of the context of the COVID-19 pandemic mentioned earlier.

This book starts with a unique preface written by 'the father of telecommuting' Jack Nilles. He gives us his personal journey through the history and evolution of telework, from the 1970s "Telecommunication-Transportation Trade-off" until todays telework related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The remainder of the book is divided into three thematic parts. The first part is called: "Reflections on Remote Working in the Past and Future and the Impact on the Organizational Level: Remote Working Pre-Pandemic and Post-Pandemic." In this part the focus is on organizational perspectives and the impact of the pandemic on organizational culture, identity, collaboration and trust issues.

In Chap. 2, the Norwegian scholars Pedersen and Bergum discuss three fruitful theories that can explain the past, current, and future adoption of and changes related to remote working and leadership: the technological, the performance gap, and the institutional perspective.

Chapter 3, by the Dutch scholars Van der Velden and Lekanne Deprez, discusses the future of remote working, refered to as 'hybrid working.' More specifically, the authors argue that hybrid collaboration requires a multidisciplinary understanding and effort in which (top) management, employees, and other internal and external stakeholders share knowledge, interact, and work together to generate sustainable value. They describe three stages: before the COVID-19 pandemic, during the lockdown, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, they discuss some dilemmas and paradoxes that future hybrid organizations will encounter.

In Chap. 4, the Norwegian scholars Aksnes, Underthun, and Hansen explore how managers at different levels of authority experience various levels of organizational presence in a remote workspace, and the organizational identity before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Their qualitative approach focussing on managers in 10 public and private

organizations in Norway has sought to unveil the impact that telework has had on management approaches, the dynamics, and 'sense of flux' on organizations.

In Chap. 5, the case study by Skogseth and Bergum, conducted in the Department of Culture at the City of Oslo, builds on semistructured interviews with managers and employees. More specifically, the authors explore how trust, which depends on a close relationship between manager and employee, can be maintained when going digital.

In Chap. 6, using a qualitative approach, Mikael Ring seeks to investigate some of the sociospatial aspects of thickness and thinness in large Swedish organizations as these arise from working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. He explores how the post-pandemic work can be organized and how technology can aid in the process of creating 'thick places.'

The second part of the book is "Reflections on How to Manage Hybrid Working: HRM and Leadership," and is focused on leadership and HRM issues in contexts where employees work both at the office and remotely.

In Chap. 7, building on a psychological contract lens and the concept of inclusive leadership, the conceptual paper by the Dutch scholars De Ruiter and Schalk discusses how employees experienced the employment relationship and virtual leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how those experiences shape mutual obligations between employees and their organizations beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. By focusing on challenges regarding distrust, micromanaging, and generational differences, the authors forecast that safe working environments and inclusion and diversity will be important dimensions of future psychological contracts.

In Chap. 8, based on web-based survey data, Løkke and Wunderlich examine the use of high-performance work systems (HPWS) practices among HR managers in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway in the later stages of the lockdown. They categorize the HPWS practices into three dimensions (ability-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing HR practices) that are important for business continuation in times of crisis.

In Chap. 9, combining the notions of geographical and cognitive distance and the paradox perspective, Bergum and Haukåsen employ data

from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents to highlight how tensions between distributed HR advisors affect their innovative capability in an abrupt and comprehensive change process in a Norwegian hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Chap. 10, in their literature review, the Portuguese scholars Tomé and Costa compare three situations: the 'old normal,' the 'new normal,' and the 'renewed normal,' regarding four aspects of human resource development and within virtual development relations, namely: work environment, competences, training, and skills.

Onboarding during COVID-19 pandemic also poses some managerial issues. In Chap. 11, the Italian scholars Russo, Morandin, and Manca review the literature on the primary challenges faced by organization regarding the online onboarding process, which is illustrated by some practices that companies have used, including social onboarding, gamification, and the use of collaborative tasks and tools. They explore the objectives of the onboarding process and the main challenges experienced by the newcomers that are onboarded during the pandemic. Issues such as social isolation, learning opportunities, and trust development are raised and addressed.

In Chap. 12, Haave, Kaloudis, and Vold also address the onboarding, but here from a knowledge management perspective. Using a qualitative approach, they interviewed newcomers in a Norwegian public organization to investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the onboarding process. In addition, they examine the participants' perspective of a desired 'new normal' when it comes to onboarding within their organization.

In Chap. 13, Edelbroek, Coun, Peters, and Blomme present a longitudinal quantitative study conducted in the Netherlands and Belgium to draw lessons from employees' experiences with leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, starting from a mutual-gains perspective, they investigate the mediating role of work-related flow in the relationships between empowering and directive leadership, on the one hand, and innovative work-behaviour and work-family balance, on the other.

The third part of this book is entitled "Reflections on Outcomes of Remote Working" and focuses on outcomes of the new way of working

during the COVID-19 pandemic for managers and employees, particularly on issues such as safety, general well-being, work-life balance, and work-family boundary management.

Chapter 14 by Vartiainen opens this part by presenting results of a survey study examining what kinds of challenges and opportunities were perceived by Finish teleworkers in a leadership position and employees during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic when everyone was forced to work from home, and what can be learned from these experiences for the future. The theory on virtual teams and leadership, as well as on the quality of relationships between teleworkers (encompassing issues such as trust, socialization, work life balance, and frequency of interaction) has been used to explain the findings.

Chapter 15 by Suomi and Somerkoski from Finland presents a framework to understand new security issues in remote work. More specifically, they explore data security and privacy, physical safety, and mental well-being issues, which are of vital importance for both organizations and employees but are not always paid enough attention to in times of crisis. They draw upon theory on data security and data privacy issues involving private devices, storage issues, security regarding communication and networks, and access to help desk services. Also, they focus on the physical safety regarding working from home, such as ergonomically issues and injuries, and mental well-being due to social isolation, including how autonomy and self-leadership affect productivity and work engagement.

Chapter 16 by Ollier-Malaterre from Canada addresses trends in organizations that rather enhance management control. She focuses on active regulation of technology and its implications at work and outside of work that have become an integral part of work in many occupations. She argues that the management of work in the "new normal" should include considering how to deal with three major issues: (a) constant connectivity, (b) self-presentation, and (c) privacy.

In Chap. 17, Pagliari from the UK and Tursunbayeva from Italy explore how organizations can organize a safe 'return to work' by introducing a 'COVID-19 vaccine passport.' More specifically, they examine sociotechnical considerations for HR professionals managing new demands by pointing to important issues such as employment rights, privacy, and ethical issues. Using discourse analysis and articles written by

HR professionals available on LinkedIn and Google, they present a contextual analysis of the adoption of innovations—such as the implementation of COVID-19 passports—focussing on technology, organization, environment, and task/processes, tied to the utilization of the innovation.

In Chap. 18, Van Engen, Peters, and Van de Water present a quantitative study among Dutch employees to investigate the relationship between perceived lockdown intensity and work engagement, the mediating role of work-family conflict (work-family and family-work conflict), and the moderating role of family supportive supervisor behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. Perceived lockdown intensity refers to employees' negative feelings and experiences resulting from national and organizational COVID-19 regulations, hindering their perceived ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) to perform their work. They argue that perceived lockdown intensity can enhance work-family conflict and hence, reduce work engagement. Therefore, they also examine whether leaders' attention paid to employees' work-family situation can mitigate these negative outcomes associated with the COVID-19 lockdown.

In Chap. 19, based on an interview study conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic with 20 public and private sector managers in Sweden, Mellner explores perceptions on leadership in telework and experiences of managers' own and their employees' management of work-nonwork boundaries. More specifically, using reflexive thematic analysis, the role of authentic leadership is shown to play an important role in managing telework situations.

In the final chapter, the epilogue, Bergum, Peters, and Vold summarize and reflect on the chapters in this book in the light of the increasingly loud call for purpose, 'sustainability,' inclusiveness, and responsibility in strategic HRM and leadership, whereby attention is drawn to human and social aspects of work and organization, such as health, motivation, based on a broader, inclusive long-term objective, with respect for all labor market parties' career potential (Aust et al., 2020; Booysen, 2021; De Prins et al., 2015; Van Ingen et al., 2021).

The chapters introduced above present us with a comprehensive picture of different issues concerning organization, HRM, and leadership before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic and their consequences for people in organizations. Moreover, they also provide leads for

organizations and organizing the 'afterlife' of the pandemic. The 'new normal' will be affected by what has been experienced and will be experienced in the future and how the use of technology has put an imprint on the future of work. Hopefully, this book will be able to contribute towards insights for making decisions for the 'new normal.' We hope you enjoy the knowledge and the thought-provoking insights presented in the following chapters!

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Part I

Reflections on Remote Working in the Past and Future and the Impact on the Organizational Level: Remote Working Pre-Pandemic and Post-Pandemic

Three Organizational Perspectives on the Adoption of Telework

Tor Helge Pedersen and Svein Bergum

Introduction

Even though telework is often carried out at alternative locations to the central workplace, telework happens within organizational structures, with their geographical and organizational distribution of units, tasks, functions, responsibilities, rules, roles and people. Key terms defining telework or virtual work are geographic dispersion (e.g. home offices) and a dependence on technology in the work-related interaction between employees (e.g. Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Raghuram et al., 2019). In the context of telework, virtual leadership can be understood as having subordinate employees working at workplaces other than where the leader is located (Bergum, 2009). The interest in teleworking was sparked in the 1970s (e.g. Nilles et al., 1976), and is still seen as a rapidly growing working arrangement, which "warrants greater research attention" (De Vries et al., 2019, p. 588). For example, there is still a growing literature on

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telework in relation to its benefits and challenges (Baruch, 2001; De Vries et al., 2019; Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2015; other contributions in this volume). However, less literature has paid attention to the organizational theoretical perspectives that can help to understand organizational responses to telework and virtual management. For example, over the past 20–30 years, many public sector organizations have adopted organizational forms that include multi-located organizational units, in which leaders and part of their subordinates' work in different geographical locations. Such units may be seen as one of several forms of telework and distance leadership (virtual management). Telework can therefore take different forms, and these forms are not mutually exclusive:

1. Multi-located units (e.g. new organizational model)
2. Telework by choice (the telework option)
3. Enforced telework (the COVID-19 practice)

The first form is a multi-located unit. As mentioned, multi-located units are units with work activities in several locations, and where a leader may have his/her primary workplace in another location than his subordinates. These units may be adopted with telework as a goal in itself, but also as a consequence of other organizational changes (Bergum, 2009, p. 12).

The second form or category is telework by choice, which had already been introduced by many organizations before 2020 (Caillier, 2012). It was more recently studied as an innovation in the public sector context that "offers a fundamental change to existing work practices and is intended to change the organization" (De Vries et al., 2017, p. 271), and that can "improve the working conditions of public servants" (De Vries et al., 2019).

The third form is "enforced telework" in connection with natural disasters or the COVID-19 lockdown of workplaces and consequently work in home offices (e.g. Anderson & Kelliher, 2020; Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2015), but which is not necessarily intended to change the organization. Whereas a leader or employees in a multi-sited unit may have colleagues at his/her workplace, the teleworker in a home office is normally alone.

This chapter focuses on multi-located units and enforced telework. It presents and discusses three influential organizational perspectives (the technological, the performance gap and the institutional perspective) in relation to changes in telework adoption before, during and after the COVID-19 lockdowns of physical workplaces. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to contribute to the discussion on telework adoption by illustrating and discussing three organizational perspectives to changes related to telework, and especially on how these can help understand the emergence of a "new normal" (Nilles, 2022; Vyas, 2022), or widely accepted prescription after the pandemic. More precisely, the contribution is to extract factors from the perspectives that may affect the prescribed hybrid telework solutions (the mix of home-based and office-based work) among the same type of organizations. The accepted prescription may vary from sector to sector, for example, it may vary between health care and higher education.

The chapter is organized as follows: In Section "Three Organizational Perspectives", three perspectives are outlined that have been used in research on technology and organization, and that represent examples of the rational and institutional tradition in organization's research. These perspectives represent different lenses on continuity (no change or slow change) and change, and they highlight different drivers of change (e.g. technology and institutional pressure), for example, related to telework and virtual management. These perspectives are not used here to analyse rich empirical material, but rather to illustrate lenses that help to understand organizational changes in relation to telework before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Section "Teleworking in Multi-Located Units (Pre-2020)" illustrates how these theoretical perspectives help us to understand how organizations can adopt multi-located units. In many cases, these units are based on virtual leadership. Finally, before concluding, Section "Understanding Telework in the Lockdown and Post-COVID-19 Period" discusses how these perspectives help us understand the lockdown and emergence of a "new normal" in different sectors in the post-COVID period. The chapter is limited to factors extracted from the three perspectives.

Three Organizational Perspectives

This section presents the three organizational perspectives that represent three lenses to understand changes in relation to adoption of telework, for example, around the drivers behind these changes.

The Technological Perspective

The technological perspective on organization has a technologically deterministic undertone. More specifically, it assumes the impact of technologies on society and organizations, for example, that the communication revolution will lead to the "death of distance" (Cairncross, 2001) and better organizational performance (Brynjolfsson & Hitt, 2000). In relation to organizations, there are old assumptions that mechanical production technology has a strong impact on various aspects of the organizational structure, such as the span of control (Woodward, 1965). In addition, information technology is believed to have a dramatic impact on the centralization in organizations, and on the shape of organizations and the nature of managerial jobs, for example, that levels of middle management would disappear (Leavitt & Whisler, 1958). Leavitt and Whisler talked about a "far-reaching impact on managerial organization" (p. 41) and "revolutionary effects" (p. 44) and urged managers to prepare for these. Nonetheless, such a perspective has been criticized (Plesner & Husted, 2020). There are also different studies that indicate a connection between technology and new organizational forms such as "the telegraph, and then the telephone, helped to make possible centralized supervision of a number of geographically scattered operating units" (Chandler, 1977, p. 316). The telephone enabled the physical separation of management headquarters from field operation (Culnan & Markus, 1987; Pool, 1983), as well as corporations to become large (Huber & McDaniel, 1986).

However, Whisler and colleagues later pioneered more non-deterministic studies on the impact of computers on organization structure and activities (e.g. Whisler, 1970a, 1970b). In particular, Whisler (1970a) is recognized as a milestone for later studies of computing in organizations (Kling, 1980). Based on the assumption that information

technology affects organizations, Whisler carried out two comparative studies on information technology and change, and on the impact of computers on different aspects of organizations, such as decision-making, authority and control, job content and organization structure (Whisler, 1970a, 1970b). Within this tradition or school, later studies studied the effects on a wide range of variables, such as power, stress, and structure (e.g. Robey, 1977).

Outside the technological perspective, there are more recent studies that have explored how digitalization and other driving forces challenge organizational forms based on geographical regions in three nation-wide state agencies. Lindberg and colleagues (Lindberg et al., 2020; Lotsberg & Lindberg, 2019) concluded that digitalization was an important driving force behind the changes from geographically based to task-based organization. In their view, digitalization has led to more standardization of tasks and to tasks becoming less place dependent (Lotsberg & Lindberg, 2019). Coordination across widespread locations became challenging and led to increased use of leadership at a distance (Lotsberg & Lindberg, 2019, pp. 140–141).

To sum up, the technological perspective, although not as deterministic as in its earlier days, sees "technology as an exogenous force, which determines or strongly constrains the behaviour of individuals and organization" (Markus & Robey, 1988, p. 585). Moreover, significant advances in information technology may have led to new organizational design options (Huber, 1990; Huber & McDaniel, 1986). For example, since the 1970s, scholars have discussed the possibilities with telework.

The Performance Gap Perspective

The performance gap perspective has its roots in March and Simon (1958). More recently, this perspective has also been discussed in innovation research (Damanpour, 2020; Van de Ven et al., 1999; Wischnewsky & Damanpour, 2006). According to this perspective, organizations can be seen as open, adaptive, and goal-seeking entities. Performance is a primary goal of organizations, and when performance falls below prospects, it provides feedback that the organizational decision-makers need

to start to search for new solutions (Cyert & March, 1963). "The rate of innovation is likely to increase when changes in the environment make the existing organizational procedures unsatisfactory" (March & Simon, 1958, p. 183). Hence, performance dissatisfaction, or a performance gap, is a stimulus for innovation and change.

Performance gap can be defined as the perceived difference between an organization's potential and actual accomplishment (Damanpour, 2020; Downs, 1966; Zaltman et al., 1973). These gaps may result from changes in the environment, but "even in the absence of environmental change, there is a continuous mild pressure toward innovation and change of program" (March & Simon, 1958, p. 183). Other sources of performance gaps may be technological changes in the environment (Downs, 1966; Zaltman et al., 1973), environmental shifts, such as radical changes in technology, regulation and competition (Damanpour, 2020; Wischnewsky & Damanpour, 2006), but also an attractive opportunity (Damanpour, 2020); and, finally, changes in the internal environment (e.g. turnover and technological change). A couple of examples are changes in the demand for the organization's output and technological changes in the larger environment (Downs, 1966).

The performance gap perspective can include shocks as drivers for change. One example can be found in another (non-COVID-19) context. In the Minnesota studies on innovation, March and Simon's hypothesis is referred to when seven case studies found that shocks, whether internal or external to the organization, triggered innovation (Schroeder et al., 1989; Van de Ven et al., 1999). It was stressed that "a shock can come in many forms" (Schroeder et al., 1989, p. 123). "Ideas were often generated but are not acted on in an organization until some form of shock occurred" (p. 123).

To sum up, decision-makers interpret the organizational performance by comparing it with historical and social (comparison with peers) aspiration levels (Cyert & March, 1963). The motivation to change is the lack of performance in relation to the organization's aspiration level (satisfactory). Thus, a hypothesis in this perspective is that when performance relative to aspiration level decreases, the probability of change increases.

The Institutional Perspective

The institutional perspective goes back to 1977 (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), and has more recently been suggested by several authors in relation to digital transformation (Hinings et al., 2018), innovation (Damanpour, 2020), tele-homeworking (Peters & Heusinkveld, 2010) and the COVID-19 disruption (Mishra, 2021). Nowadays, this perspective is referred to as the neo-institutional perspective, which emphasizes the importance of the institutional environment and institutionalized rules and ideas in society that function as powerful myths that organizations ceremonially adopt (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). To maintain conformity, organizations decouple their formal structures and actual work activities. In the institutional perspective, new technology and other solutions are seen as symbols. By adopting popular solutions, organizations demonstrate conformity with expectations, and aim to maintain legitimacy.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) introduced the concepts of organizational fields and isomorphism. In their work, a field refers to "those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services and products" (p. 148). Organizations are embedded in different fields. In an organizational field, isomorphism (similarities) proceeds through three different mechanisms (or pressures) that are useful to understand the organizational adoption of ideas, models and technologies, also in public sector organizations.

Coercive Pressure

The coercive mechanism occurs, or "results from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in society within which the organization function" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150). For example, in the public sector, governments, ministries and directorates can exert formal and informal pressure on subordinate organizations to adopt something to avoid sanctions, for example, a policy or new idea.

Normative Pressure

Normative isomorphism occurs because organizations are motivated to respect social obligations or through pressures related to professional standards. Professional associations, education and external networks are keywords: "The greater the participation of organizational managers in trade and professional associations, the more likely the organization will be, or will become, like other organizations in its field" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 155). For instance, leaders of state agencies participate in governance networks (advisory bodies) around the Norwegian digitalization policy and the Digitalization Agency (White paper 27, 2015–2016), or HR leaders participate in networks outside their organizations.

Mimetic Pressure

The term "mimetic pressure" emphasizes the role of positive examples under situations with uncertainty. In uncertain environments, organizations tend to follow perceived successful organizations or peer organizations. Even though the institutional environment is usually seen as an important source of understanding changes in organizations, later contributions have also included managers' beliefs and attitudes into the analysis. For example, Peters and Heusinkveld (2010) studied the influence of institutional pressures, especially normative and mimetic, on managers' attitudes towards tele-homeworking. More precisely, they focused on managers' perceptions of the relative advantage of teleworking, and concluded that studies of telework should pay more attention to the importance of both the institutional environment and managers' subcultures.

In sum, according to the institutional perspective, major organizational changes are driven by pressure to conform with expectations, rather than by forces of competition. However, first and foremost, adoption leads to legitimacy and a better reputation than better organizational performance (limited impact and symbolic effects) (March & Sproull, 1990).

The three perspectives summarized in Table 2.1 have in common that they provide assumptions about changes related to telework and virtual

Table 2.1 The three theoretical perspectives and their assumptions

	Technological perspective	Performance gap perspective	Institutional perspective
Organizational change	Driven by the impact of technology	Driven by dissatisfaction among stakeholders or perceived performance gaps	Institutional pressures (coercive, mimetic or normative) on organizations as well as managerial attitudes to teleworking
Lockdown	Environmental shock (lockdowns) proves the advantage of new technologies	Environmental shock creates performance gaps and fosters the use of available new technologies	Uncertainty leads organizations to follow successful examples or recommended policy
New normal	Optimism that advances in information technology increase the attractiveness and advantages of new technology	Dependent on the level of satisfaction with the practice from the stakeholders	Dependent on regulation, normative standards or successful prototypes outside the organization (and managerial attitudes)

leadership such as different drivers, how leadership at a distance can be understood and factors affecting the emergence of a "new normal." The keywords will be illustrated in the next sections by providing examples on how leadership at a distance can be understood, starting with the example of multi-located units in the next section.

Teleworking in Multi-Located Units (Pre-2020)

This section offers illustrations around telework and distance leadership in multi-sited organizational units in three different sectors. The section illustrates that organizational models based on multi-sited units became popular among hospitals, higher education institutions and state agencies

in different periods. Even though the model was basically the same, the drivers and experiences differed. While digitalization was perceived as the important factor in several of the state agencies, it was not the most important factor in the hospitals and in higher education. In the hospitals, the rationale was to avoid duplications, as well as that the model was an alternative to the physical merger of hospitals. In higher education, the rationale was mostly about creating stronger professional milieus without carrying out physical mergers. The coming illustrations can be understood from the three perspectives.

The hospital examples illustrate institutional pressures (adopting a popular model), and that hospital mergers create performance gaps such as duplications in the new organization. In the reorganizations that followed the creation of health enterprises (*helseforetak*) in connection with the Norwegian hospital reform of 2002, several of the hospital enterprises attempted to implement new organizational models for the organizationally merged hospitals. One of these models was based on clinical divisions (the so-called clinic model organized after medical services), in which the leader of these divisions therefore became the leader of departments that were geographically dispersed, that is, located at different places, while local top management was abolished as a level. In 2009, a total of 71% of the Norwegian health enterprises had such units based on distance leadership (Pedersen, 2013). According to an institutional perspective, similarities in organizational model may result from various institutional mechanisms within their respective fields, such as coercion, normative and mimetic pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

More specifically, before the hospital reform of 2002, the Inland region had hospitals in five towns. In 2003, in connection with the reform of 2002, these were merged into a new hospital enterprise named *Sykehuset Innlandet HF*. The new hospital enterprise was first organized into territorial divisions with local top management. However, in 2004–2007, the hospital tried a model with ten clinical divisions, and abolished the local management. For example, the division of surgery had departments at four different hospitals. In 2007, the clinical division model was partly reversed. Only a couple of divisions were from then on organized as crosscutting clinical divisions with leadership at a distance, whereas other divisions once again received local or site management (Pedersen, 2013).

Another example started in 2009. The Oslo University Hospital was created through a merger of three large hospitals. The new hospital, with over 20,000 employees and activities at more than 40 sites, adopted a similar model based on medical divisions with activity several places. In 2011, approximately 70% of the leaders were leaders at a distance in relation to a part of their departments or other units (Storvik, 2011). The purpose of this new leadership style was to avoid duplications. However, it became controversial during the first years, and interpreted as an absence of local leadership in some of the hospital departments (Pedersen, 2013). However, the hospital carried on with this model, with some adjustments toward the needs of local or site management. As seen in these hospital examples, distance leadership was not well received for the first 10 years after the hospital reform of 2002. Instead, it was seen as an absence of local management in a time of a limited use of digital leadership. It should be added that hospital organizations often require a higher degree of vertical communication because of the high complexity and diversity of tasks (Udell, 1967), as well as a high level of expertise among organizational employees (Meyer, 1968).

A second illustration of the use of multi-located units is that of higher education in Norway. This example also illustrates institutional pressures around the same model, and to a certain degree, performance gaps as well. In connection with the structural reform of higher education in Norway, which was also about creating larger institutions through mergers (White paper 18, 2014–2015), several of the consolidated (merged) institutions opted for a similar model to the health enterprises based on leadership at a distance. In the new model, a faculty leader could be the leader for different institutes located at different places in the region, and an institute leader could even have activities and employees at different geographical workplaces. This was the case at the University of Southeast Norway, comprising eight campuses, the University College of West Norway, comprising five campuses, and the Inland Norway University-College of Applied Sciences, comprising five campuses.

A third illustration is the restructuring in several nationwide state agencies between 2016 and 2020—and these examples illustrate all three perspectives. Several of the agencies abolished a model based on geographical regions (and regional management), and instead implemented

a function-based organization with functions (also called divisions, departments) with nationwide responsibility. These restructurings took place in the Norwegian Tax Administration, the Norwegian Public Roads Administration, the National Archives Services of Norway, Norwegian Customs and the Norwegian Labor Inspection Authority. In all these organizations, the regional management level was removed. For example, in the Norwegian Tax Administration, the new model replaced an older form based on five geographical regions. The Public Roads Administration abolished their former geographical regions and instead implemented six divisions (functional divisions) with nationwide responsibility with division management in Oslo, Arendal, Bergen, Tromsø, Trondheim, Moss, and Drammen. All these functional divisions have personnel located at different places in the country. However, the management subordinate to two divisions (Road and Transport Society) follows the older regional organization, with personnel located where the earlier regional offices were located. In several of these examples (within tax, public roads and archives services), digitalization was perceived as the most important factor for adopting a new organizational form. According to a technological perspective, new and better technology may often have advantages that enable new organizational forms, for example, in reducing the problem of physical distance, which makes organizational tasks less place-dependent, as was the case in these Norwegian state agencies (Lotsberg & Lindberg, 2019). Even so, these examples also illustrate institutional pressures around the same model (institutional perspective) and performance gaps. In the case of Public Roads Administration, the organization lost 1850 employees in connection with another reform (the so-called Regional Reform). This created a performance gap or opportunity for restructuring.

Understanding Telework in the Lockdown and Post-COVID-19 Period

The Lockdown Period

The lockdown period is the period in which governments impose a new restriction on organizations, namely expectations to use home offices, reduced travel or the total lockdown of physical workplaces. From a technological perspective, it can be argued that the possibilities of the new technology (to use digital solution) were taken into consideration in government decisions on lockdowns. Therefore, this perspective helps us to understand government decisions, as opposed to decisions in organizations.

From the institutional perspective, this period can be understood in two ways. First, lockdowns or other restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as coercive pressures (new rules and regulations) that organizations were expected to conform to. Second, from the institutional perspective, it can be argued that under uncertainty, there are mimetic pressures; nations follow other nations, and organizations tend to follow other organizations in their field or apparent successful organizations.

However, an alternative understanding can be provided from a performance gap perspective. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns represent a severe shock that affects organizational (and national) performance. Besides performance gaps, however, the pandemic also creates opportunities. As outlined earlier, changes and innovation may be triggered by shocks (Van de Ven et al., 1999). When decision-makers (and other stakeholders in the organization) perceive the organization's course as unsatisfactory, they search for solutions. It may be an opportunity from the environment (e.g. a new technology), and it may be an unrealized plan (e.g. to finally put a technology into use). Today, there are several examples in which the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the use of technologies that had been available in organization for several years (e.g. digital lectures and digital meetings with users and digital onboarding).

The Post-COVID-19 Period: And the Emergence of the "New Normal"

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over and the "new normal" is dependent on the organizational field, the organizational characteristics and the tasks that need to be performed. There are now several different surveys on home offices, and on what might be the future practice (e.g. Lund et al., 2021). How can the three theoretical perspectives help us to understand the post-COVID-19 period?

In relation to our three perspectives, different surveys may tell something about: (1) whether the new practices with home offices represent a perceived advantage with technology and progress (technological perspective); (2) possible trends, managerial attitudes, organizations' plans or employees' preferences (institutional perspective), and (3) the level of satisfaction of decision-makers and employees with performance (performance gap perspective).

Even though the technological perspective emphasizes the technological impact on organizations, this impact is dependent on the advantage of the technology. By definition, telework is dependent on technology. From the technological perspective, it can be expected that technology gets better, and affects managers' and employees' experiences (and that of other stakeholders, such as customers and patients) along with it; this normally increases the perceived advantage and attractiveness of the technology, as well as the use of home offices.

From a performance gap perspective, it can thus be expected that the most important factor is how stakeholders (especially decision-makers) perceive the performance of the organization relative to its aspiration level. A lockdown period represents a kind of forced experiment in which managers obtain new information about the cost of running the organization (e.g. reduced travel costs), as well as the experience with controlling and leading the organization. Employees experience different aspects of home-based work. According to the performance gap perspective, it is performance dissatisfaction (sometimes also an attractive latent opportunity) that can trigger change from the existing situation. The lower an organization's satisfaction with its performance, the more likely it is that

new programs will be initiated (March & Simon, 1958), for example, toward more intensive telework practices and virtual leadership. Organizational performance is normally compared with past experiences of performance or peer organizations (Cyert & March, 1963). Even though this is dependent on the individual organizations, different surveys around lockdown practices (e.g. home-based work) today may indicate something about emerging trends and the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (among decision-makers and other employees) with such practices.

Although the institutional perspective does not necessarily tell us what the "new normal" will be, it does allow us to analyse the mechanisms or institutional pressures that will be at work. First, regarding coercive pressures, the "new normal" within a field may be dependent on regulation around telework (e.g. regulations on telework performed by employees do already exist in Norway). Organizations, such as a ministry or directorate, may revise and set norms for telework practices in subordinate organizations. Hence, the coercive mechanism will be at work.

Second, professional networks for managers or groups within organizations (e.g. HR Norge and HR personnel) often act as carriers of ideas and practices that prescribe how organizations and their various functions should function (Peters & Heusinkveld, 2010). From the institutional perspective, it can also be expected that the "new normal" in a field will be dependent on the normative pressures or expectations on how organizations or functions within organizations should be carried out (e.g. how should future telework be applied in future HR). Different groups of employees, with different tasks, may develop expectations about future work during the time working from home. These expectations may affect discussions in professional networks.

Third, the post-COVID-19 period is one of uncertainty for many organizations. There are many voices about what the "new normal" will be. The institutional lens also directs our attention to such a situation. Under uncertainty, organizations imitate perceived successful organizations, peer organizations or those with a higher status (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hinings et al., 2018). An increased acceptance of teleworking in different organizational fields may increase institutional pressures on other organizations and managers. The "new normal" within a field

will be dependent on apparent successful examples. For instance, if hybrid telework becomes the norm among such organizations, others may follow suit, and telework adoption therefore becomes a way of demonstrating legitimacy (Hinings et al., 2018), or even gaining a competitive advantage (March & Sproull, 1990). Finally, institutional pressures may affect managers' normative attitudes toward telework or home offices (Peters & Heusinkveld, 2010). Experience with home offices may change ideas and prescriptions in "occupational networks," and thus also managers' attitudes and perceptions of the relative advantage of teleworking.

In an institutional perspective, the "new normal" is dependent on regulation around telework, professional standards around telework from external networks and/or practices of perceived successful examples (Table 2.1). Unlike the performance gap perspective, the institutional perspective focuses on how pressures from the institutional environment affect managers' attitude and decisions about future alternative ways of working within organizations (e.g. telework). While the perceived performance of the organization is central to the performance gap perspective, trends and institutional pressures from the environment are important factors in the institutional perspective.

Conclusion

Rather than pinpointing what the "new normal" will be, this chapter has extracted some of the factors that will affect the development towards one or several "new normal practices." The factors or expectations are derived from three perspectives that can be useful to understand telework and leadership at a distance in multi-located units or other telework arrangements. We conclude that the same perspectives, though in varying degrees, are useful lenses to understanding both the lockdown period and the emergence a "new normal" in various sectors.

The extracted factors from the perspectives (e.g. normative pressure, performance gaps and advantage of the technology) represent a part of the knowledge contribution of this chapter. The future direction of research could be on different factors in relation to adopting new telework practices (e.g. the variant of hybrid telework) in different

organizations and sectors. A research stream on consumption (adoption) of management ideas already exists within organizational studies (e.g. Sturdy et al., 2019). This future direction of research implies some integration of telework studies and management idea studies (that have focused less on technology).

A second direction of future research could be on the post-pandemic situation regarding telework in different organizations. Some examples of questions are: What becomes the new norm—or "new normal"—in different types of organizations? What affects organizational decisions on new telework practices? What factors are taken into consideration when a new practice is established? What considerations are important when a performance level is perceived in different organizations?

A third direction of research could be on the effects of new physical structures. In rational theories on organization design in public sector organizations, the factor of "organization locus," that is, the physical arrangement of the organization, is assumed to affect decision-making behaviour and performance (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018). Telework and leadership at a distance can be connected to the design factor of "physical structure," particularly in organizational structures based on multi-located organizational units. A future direction of research could be on this design factor ("physical structure"), which has gotten less research attention compared to factors such as organization structure and organization demography (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018).

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3

Shaping Hybrid Collaborating Organizations

Jeroen van der Velden and Frank Lekanne Deprez

Introduction

Due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, millions of people were forced to shift their lives and work into a "digital everything"-mode. Historically, pandemics have forced people to break with both the past and the present to refocus their view on the world. While the pandemic caused human tragedies and imposed severe restrictions on all aspects of organizations and people's daily lives, it also provided a unique opportunity to conduct thousands of "forced" experiments, innovate to some extent, develop new skills that could be applied to discover new—unforeseen—opportunities. In addition, the crisis lowered the resistance to change—crises simple *force* people to act—and stimulated organizations to get rid of deeply entrenched, dysfunctional practices that would be difficult to shed in "normal times."

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Our goal with this chapter is to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic measurements have opened the door to widespread hybrid work collaboration arrangements, that is, combining flexible (Kossek et al., 2021) onsite and remote collaboration in and across organizations. What organizational principles should be implied to help people adapt to the challenges of hybrid work, so they can benefit most from this widespread collaboration when looking at performance, employee involvement, and innovation power? And, in addition, will the balance in flexible hybrid work differ when we look at the collaboration within teams, within organizational boundaries, and at ecosystem-level. The latter refers to the collaboration with all the outside parties that the organization is related to or collaborates with. Data collection has been based on literature research and practice, based on observations over the past two years.

Various collaboration activities at different levels of aggregation—team, intraorganizational and interorganizational (ecosystem)—are explored with the expectation that this might lead to promising combinations of activities and working practices varying per level. In this respect, the Activity-Based Working approach (Eismann et al., 2022) might be well applicable. This approach recognizes that people perform different activities in their day-to-day work, and therefore need a variety of work settings supported by the right technology and culture to carry out these activities effectively. Activity-Based Working emphasizes the creation of a culture of connection, inspiration, accountability, and trust to empower individuals, teams, and the organization to perform to their potential. On a personal level, Activity-Based Working enables each person to organize their work activities in a flexible, productive, safe, and enjoyable way that best suits what, when, where they need to do it, and with whom they need to do it (Eismann et al., 2022; Kamperman, 2020).

This chapter follows the path to three recent stages that may have led to a paradigm shift in individuals and organizations working practices, mainly induced by the lockdowns at the start of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic when offices were closed. Before the lockdowns, stage 1 (until March 2020), most collaboration activities—within teams, organizations, and ecosystems—took place in an onsite setting. During the first lockdown, stage 2, the "forced" lockdown collaboration took place in a

remote setting (March 2020–August 2020). Stage 3 (September 2020–March 2022) is portrayed as a hybrid setting—combining the two collaboration contexts of the first and second stages—where management is partnering with employees on an individual basis what works best for them, allowing employees to have autonomy to create their own paths. This so-called post-pandemic hybrid flexibility is often characterized by a largely *employer-determined* mix of remote and office work—"hybrid work"—arrangements. Each stage is briefly explored and discussed.

Before COVID: The Onsite Stage

Before the corona (BC), remote collaboration was limited. At the beginning of this century, much attention was given to new ways of working, integrating remote work or telework, as part of working practices. At that time, many research-based and practice-based articles and books saw the light of the day (or where "reused") on various topics, such as virtual organizations (Cooper & Rousseau, 1999), managing off-site employees (Fisher & Fisher, 2000), virtual work (Makarius & Larson, 2017), virtual teams (Anderson et al., 1996; Gilson et al., 2015; Lipnack & Stamps, 2000), and work and rewards in the virtual workplace (Crandall & Wallace, 1998). However, the impact and the distribution of these new ways of working were limited to relatively "digital savvy" organizations, like Microsoft, Intel, Sony, and IBM.

In addition, working from home was a privilege to only a few. For example, before 2020 about half of the 150 companies surveyed by Josh Bersin Academy (2020) did *not* permit work at home. In 2020, work at home was allowed by 99% or more. *Melanie Collins (Chief People Officer at Dropbox) stated that* prior to the pandemic, Dropbox was far from a remote-first culture, with only 3% of employees working from home (Dropbox, 2020). When the pandemic shifted its employee base to a remote model, Dropbox seized the opportunity to redesign their workplace arrangements.

During the Lockdown: The "Full/Strictly Remote" Stage

As the average person spends *over a third of their lives at work*, workplace satisfaction, or lack of it, is a common topic of conversation (FirstUp, 2022). During the COVID-19 virus outbreak, the world of work and life was hit by a tidal wave that induced a big shift in work and life practices and arrangements. The boundaries between work and our personal lives became increasingly "unbounded" and have therefore changed the work-life reality forever. Especially the introduction of "social distancing" caused the closure of offices, schools, shops, theaters, and other—"non-essential"—public services all over the world. Virtual work practices became the only way to get safely ("zero-touch") connected to each other. So instead of a limited number of "formally" privileged virtual workers, organizations were forced to switch to "remote-work-only"-scenarios in which the virtual workforce was located in "on-the-fly" adapted office/home/satellite/co-working spaces. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, these alternative approaches were tolerated because these actions were predominantly reactive due to the unprecedented crisis situation of the pandemic. According to the EU (2020), teleworking was a necessary practice for many organizations and employees during the lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, after six months of being part of the world's largest "work-remotely experiment," remote employees really began to experience what it is like to be "always on, always connected," with work following them everywhere. Remember, "you're not 'working from home', you are 'at your home, during a crisis, *trying* to work'" (Peters, 2021, p. 222, *italics* added).

During the first lockdown (March 2020–August 2020), there were more than 100 organizations worldwide that were working *fully remote* (Wikipedia, 2021), such as GitLab, Coinbase, and DuckDuckGo. These organizations do not have a physical office (or "headquarters") where people work, but they may have a "mailbox for headquarters" (for postal and legal purposes). GitLab is a "fully-" or "all-remote" company with 1000+ employees, located in 60+ different countries and regions. GitLab's workforce works fully remotely and asynchronously often without ever

coming into contact with each other in the physical world (Choudhury et al., 2020). GitLab's chief executive officer (CEO)—Dutch born Sid Sijbrandij—thinks remote working is only effective when everyone participates. In his somewhat radical view, partial measures will create tiers of employees, dividing the workforce over time, driving away top-performing remote workers who don't want to compete with lesser-achieving onsite colleagues. "We'll see some companies … go back [to offices] and try to make the best of it, and I think they'll struggle" (Konrad, 2020, p. 1).

Looking at the impact of fully remote collaboration on organizational performance, employee involvement, and organizational innovation power during the COVID-19 pandemic, some interesting insights emerge. In service organizations, with an emphasis on financial services and information and communication technology (Oude Hengel et al., 2021), the impact of the lockdown on productivity was limited or productivity even increased. Moreover, in software development teams, for example, distributed working agile teams even performed better remotely than when gathered at a joint location (Thompson, 2021). Call center employees also appeared to be able to provide services efficiently and effectively from home. And let's not forget about the "zero location" companies, such as the current Dropbox, that can fully function without a shared office. A precondition, however, seems to be that the team members have the right competences to work together (Gilson et al., 2021; Leonardi, 2021). In some cases, we can also notice an increase in customer satisfaction (Yang et al., 2022).

At the same time, however, various organizations are reporting a limitation in their innovative capacity since fewer "chance encounters" take place within the company and because the informal network is maintained or expanded to a lesser extent (Yang et al., 2022). Also, the worldwide number of patent applications from Dutch companies and inventors in 2020 stagnated. As an example, in 2020, Philips applied for 8% fewer patents than the previous year. In addition, the CEO of Philips claimed that physical meetings are important for creative jobs (FD, 2020). Also, the HRM director at ASML claimed in an interview that the innovation process does not benefit from working from home (Telegraaf, 2020).

Hence, on the one hand, virtual collaboration undermines creativity and activities that foster innovation, such as brainstorming, and could to some extent be better performed face-to-face. On the other hand, various studies have shown that, for example, group-decision support-systems can virtually lead to good decisions and also lead to results in brainwriting (Thompson, 2021)—a more sophisticated cousin of brainstorming—because participants can anonymously contribute to a shared virtual whiteboard without significant group/team influence. In addition, various reports mention the feeling of isolation of employees in their home situation. At the same time, overall, the (private) work-life conditions seems not to be negatively affected by fully remote working practices and we see an increase in the number of working hours among home workers (Oude Hengel et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022).

A study conducted within Microsoft (Yang et al., 2022) regarding the effects of remote work on collaboration among 61,182 US Microsoft employees over the first six months of 2020 estimated the causal effects of firm-wide remote work on collaboration and communication. For long-term policy decisions regarding remote, hybrid, and mixed-mode work to be well substantiated, decision-makers need to understand how remote work can impact information work without the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. To answer this question, the researchers (Yang et al., 2022) treated Microsoft's company-wide work-from-home (WFH) policy during the pandemic as a natural experiment that, subject to the validity of our identifying assumptions, enables them to causally identify the impact of firm-wide remote work on employees' collaboration networks and communication practices. One of the interesting findings was that teams that had become remote, communicated significantly more within their teams, but less outside their teams. The authors build upon the social network research of Granovetter's (1973) theory of weak ties—that is, the idea that people with whom you share few connections ("your weak ties") are more beneficial to the diffusion of your ideas than people with whom you share many connections ("your strong ties"). The ability to collaborate seamlessly within and across teams/communities/networks is often initiated by chance encounters—having a quick chat around a watercooler or coffee corners—where people do not know each other well or

perhaps not at all (the weak ties)—enable to see problems, opportunities, and solutions in novel ways.

The authors showed that "firm-wide remote work caused the collaboration network of employees to become more static and siloed, with fewer bridges between disparate parts" (Yang et al., 2022, p. 43). Teams with a shared history can often transfer information more easily, as they are more likely to share a common perspective, trust one another, cooperate with one another, and expend effort to ensure that recently transferred knowledge is well understood and can be utilized. By contrast, however, weak ties require less time and energy to maintain and are more likely to provide access to new, non-redundant information. Importantly, the results of the Microsoft study showed that the shift to *firm-wide remote work* caused business groups within Microsoft to become *less* interconnected. It also *reduced* the number of ties bridging structural holes (i.e., engage the practice of "knowledge transfer," in which experiences from one set of people within an organization are transferred to and used by another set of people within that same organization) in the company's informal collaboration network. This triggered individuals to spend *less time* collaborating with the bridging ties that remained. Furthermore, the shift to firm-wide remote work caused employees to spend a *greater* share of their collaboration time with their stronger ties, which are better suited to information transfer, and a *smaller* share of their time with weak ties, which are more likely to promote free thinking and create an environment that fosters creativity. The findings of the Microsoft study support the idea that *frequent collaboration teams* experienced less effect of remote working on their relationship than intra- or inter-organizational networks that collaborate less frequently and /or are more distant.

What can we learn from previous and current research on collaborating teams, organizations, and ecosystems in general and specifically during the stages "onsite" and "full-remote" work? At the team level, the impact of COVID-19 measures to work practices and arrangements were shown to be limited. Several studies claim even a rise in performance and an overall limited impact on employee involvement and engagement. Most of the impact can be found at the organizational level, especially regarding performance, employee involvement, and innovation power (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Lessons learned from previous and current research on collaborating teams, organizations, and ecosystems in general and specifically during the stages "onsite" and "full-remote" working during COVID-19 on performance, involvement, and innovation at team, organization, and ecosystem level

	Team	Organization	Ecosystem
Performance	Mixed effects on performance of teams: (Feitosa & Salas, 2021; Gilson et al., 2021; Sull et al., 2020) Performance same or increased (Anderson et al., 1996; Oude Hengel et al., 2021).	Mixed effects reported: Productivity before and after WFH: (Birkinshaw et al., 2020; Gibbs et al., 2021; Global Workplace Analytics, 2021).	Mixed effects reported (Altman et al., 2021; Carboni et al., 2021; Gratton, 2021; Sebastian et al., 2020).
Employee involvement	Mixed effects reported (Cable & Gino, 2021; Gibbs et al., 2021).	Interdepartmental relationships decrease – Organizational awareness decreases – Employee engagement decreases (Yang et al., 2022) – Distant networks lead to less strong collaboration bonds (De Smet et al., 2021; Hansen, 2018)	Involvement decreases – Distant networks lead to lesser strong collaboration bonds. – Work-life ecosystem: work-life/family harmony during COVID (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).
Innovation	Mixed effects reported (Cross & Carboni, 2021; Hansen, 2018; 2021; Thompson, 2021; Yang et al., 2022).	Innovation power increases: – Spotify model in ING (De Man et al., 2019) – Gitlab (Choudhury et al., 2020) – (Thompson, 2021). Innovation power decreases – Less collaboration between groups/teams (Yang et al., 2022; Zuzul et al., 2021) – Too much collaboration (Cross, 2021) – Less casual encounters, less serendipity (Cross, 2021; Hansen, 2009; Zuzul et al., 2021)	Innovation power increases: – Ecosystems/ micro-enterprises: – Bol.com (De Man et al., 2019) – Ecosystem of spaces in Fujitsu (Gratton, 2021; Gratton, 2022) Innovation power decreases – Less collaboration between groups/ teams (Yang et al., 2022) – Less casual encounters (Thompson, 2021; Zuzul et al., 2021)

Zuzul et al. (2021)—extending the research of Yang et al. (2022)—showed how full-remote working led to more intense communication *within* siloed groups. In fact, many companies around the world became *more siloed* during the emergency work-at-home measures of 2020, with employees digitally splitting off into more isolated and well-defined communication networks. Working with *Microsoft data,* researchers analysed about 360 billion Outlook emails sent among 1.4 billion email accounts at 4361 organizations over 24 months in 2019, the year before the pandemic, and 2020, the year the pandemic spread across the globe. They also analysed changes in communication within Microsoft, including shifts in employees' scheduled meetings and Teams, and chats. According to Zuzul et al. (2021),

> Dynamic siloing may reduce innovation in some organizations. Innovation often arises from novel combinations of distantly held knowledge. Interdisciplinary or cross-department collaborations provide access to new ties and information that can provoke innovative ideas. Increased isolation could reduce such access. Future research should examine the impact of shifts in modularity on innovation rates—measured through patents, publications, and so on. (p. 17)

After COVID: The Rise of Hybrid Work Collaborating Organizations

What will years be like after the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns? Are organizations globally reverting to the inflexible office buildings and physical workplaces performing work practices and arrangements from before the pandemic? According to Future Forum Pulse (2022)—a survey of 10,737 knowledge workers across the US, Australia, France, Germany, Japan, and the UK conducted from November 1 to 30, 2021

> It's time to move past the "remote versus office" debate. The future of work isn't either/or—it's both. Findings from the Pulse survey show that as of November 2021, the majority of knowledge workers have adopted a hybrid work arrangement, spending some time in the office and sometime remote. (p. 3)

Research indicates that organizations are choosing *not* to return to the "pre-pandemic workplace", but to go full steam ahead and invest in developing organization forms where hybrid work can thrive (Barrero et al., 2022; Kane et al., 2021). These hybrid work collaborating organizations enable valuable collaboration within teams, across teams and across organizational boundaries.

Recently Microsoft (Microsoft, 2021) has indicated that the shift from full-remote work to post-pandemic hybrid work arrangements has given rise to the so-called hybrid-work paradox. Satya Nadella (Nadella, 2021)—Chairman & CEO of Microsoft—believes that "every organization's approach will need to be different to meet the unique needs of their people. According to our research, the vast majority of employees say they want more flexible remote work options, but at the same time *also* say they want more in-person collaboration, post-pandemic" (p. 1). In other words, a successful shift to hybrid work will depend on *embracing* the *hybrid paradox*, in which people want the flexibility to work from anywhere, anyhow, and with whom, but *simultaneously* desire more in-person connections.

Will hybrid work will be the dominant work arrangement in hybrid collaborating organizations? Will organizations embrace the flexibility of WFH and working from the office, while collaborating within a team, across teams and across organizational boundaries? Organizations have always had and will continue to have boundaries (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Lekanne Deprez, 2016). As a result of their quest for global presence, external and internal organizational boundaries have opened up as never before. Lekanne Deprez (2016) argues that the "fitness" of a particular organizational design will determine an organization's capability toward continuous "morphing" (Rindova & Kotha, 2001), where the organization in an evolutionarily transition from one form to a different one is managed through a process of incremental steps. There is no single organizational design methodology that works well under all circumstances. Each organizational design effort can be considered an experiment and opportunity to learn. In business settings, *hybrids* involve two or more organizations that work together—that is, share, cooperate, or collaborate (Kelly, 2016)—to achieve an agreed-upon mutual goal. Hybridization—in which several forms are combined depending on

specific needs—can come in two forms: "One is mixing elements of different forms, another one is using multiple forms within one organization but in different parts of the firm" (De Man et al., 2019, p. 207). Hybrid work collaborating organizations can learn from other design options but, in the end, they *must* reinvent or reimagine their "own" blended form.

In general, *hybridity* denotes the *blending* of features that are assumed to be distinct such as public–private partnerships. With regard to *hybrid work collaborating organizations*, the focus will be on hybrid*y* as the blending of *remote first (office occasional) and office first (remote allowed)* work arrangements. In organizations, people not only want and value the flexibility of "mixing" these two work arrangements but also include *room to move* (*where, why, how* and *with whom* they want to work) and their *room to grow*. If not, people will vote with their feet: "If we're not growing, we're going."

As collaboration is the driver for increasing performance within *hybrid work collaborating organizations* poorly designed physical and digital collaborative organizational forms will hamper the quality of collaboration (Boughzala & De Vreede, 2015; Cross & Carboni, 2021; Leonardi, 2021; Yang et al., 2022), productivity (Cross & Carboni, 2021; Leonardi, 2021) and the loss of spontaneous interactions. Especially the loss of watercooler moments in the virtual world where chance encounters have been replaced by "overconnectivity" forcing members of teams/communities/networks to connect more often, squeezing even more scheduled meetings in a day. In such an overconnected world with more meetings, people become overloaded living within the limits of their attention's resources. Within such organizations, "go-to" persons are being increasingly required to contribute repeatedly, there is a risk of them becoming overwhelmed, emotionally drained and /or burned out. Prioritize the time they spend on focused work and encourage to set boundaries to protect it (Cross, 2021; Cross & Carboni, 2021).

The question, however, is what people actually want and expect from an organization? In their report *The great executive—employee disconnect* (Future Forum Pulse, 2021), the Future Forum Pulse surveyed 10,569 knowledge employees in the US, Australia, France, Germany, Japan, and the UK between July 28 and August 10, 2021. The results showed that

flexible hybrid work practices are now deeply ingrained and valued, and that expectations are not budging. A total of 76% of the employees want flexibility in *where* they work, where 93% want flexibility in *when* they work. Moreover, hybrid work models should be based on employee preferences and prioritize employee-driven flexibility (Kossek et al., 2021). As an example, pharmaceutical company Novartis employs a "choice with responsibility" model that empowers employees to establish new norms around their work (Pavel, 2022). The policy shifts responsibility from manager-approved to manager-informed, empowering associates to choose how, where and when they work within their country of employment (Novartis, 2020). In other words, the interpretation of hybrid cooperation and collaboration becomes the result of the choices and preferences of the individuals within the organization.

Discussion

At the beginning of 2022, it became clear that organizations were neither going to "return to normal," nor did they establish any new predictable (work) routines. The Future Forum Pulse (2022) stated that "it's time to move past the 'remote versus office' debate. The future of work isn't either/or—it's both" (p. 3). With everything disrupted and in turmoil, many organizations were pioneering in reimagining hybrid work organizational forms. They continued to experiment—introducing so called work-from-anywhere (WFA) or work-from-wherever (WFW) approaches—and to share experiences. As outbreaks of new cases and variants of the COVID-19 ebb and flow hit the world, approximately 25% of the global working population (Gottlieb et al., 2020) has to deal with *embracing* the *hybrid paradox*, in which people want the flexibility to work from anywhere, anyhow, and with whom, but *simultaneously* desire more in-person connections. In hybrid work collaborating organizations, people want to be treated like adults—responsible humans capable of good choices. They want (radical) flexibility (Novartis, 2020; Pavel, 2022) and room to grow. Management has to clear about the growing concerns among employees about "proximity bias," or the risk that

in-office workers will receive preferential treatment simply by being physically closer to their managers.

In the meantime, employee expectations during 2022 will continue to *change*. Employees' answers to the question whether one prefers "working in one place versus another" is becoming increasingly contradictory—for example, some 23% of the Microsoft employees believe that the ability to conduct online meetings makes *working from home a desirable option*, while others (70%) believe *team collaboration is a reason to be together in person* (Microsoft, 2021). These contradictory results—that is, dilemmas—imply that every organization's approach will need to be *different* to meet the unique needs of their teams/communities/networks/ecosystems and other relevant stakeholders.

Hybrid organizing should not only be perceived as an employee-driven choice, but also as a strategic management choice. Management will be fostering an organization-wide culture of trust moving from span of *control* & narrow supervision to span of *support* & guidance and feedback to *really* work together in a creative and innovative process to generate concepts, try it out, don't hold them back, unleash their potential, allow them to fail, and the manager is there to *support*. Admit that the organization is experiencing things that we have not experienced before, and it is okay to say *we don't know*. Both choices will pave the way for realizing its desired level of competitive advantage. As hybrid work is idiosyncratic, every organization must discover its distinctive matching hybrid work collaborating organization to improve its performance, employee involvement and innovation power. This requires a holistic approach combining topics ranging from strategy, organizational design, change and transformation management, technology development and implementation (Van der Velden & Van Fenema, 2006).

In order to steer the transition to a hybrid work collaborative organization in the right direction, a number of dilemmas follow that need to be taken into account. Organizations are only as productive and value creating as the quality of the interactions that take place among people. Overall, organizations should develop a hybrid work collaboration strategy in which Activity-Based Working practices are defined; instigate interventions to create employee awareness and ownership and to increase hybrid work collaboration skills, competences and capabilities.

Furthermore, make hybrid collaboration capabilities part of the employee selection and learning and development requirements. And, last but not least, develop and provide a digital collaboration infrastructure (Leonardi, 2021) taking into account the team, organization, and ecosystem perspective, the culture of the organization, and the employees' needs.

Consequently, concepts such as Activity-Based Working (Eismann et al., 2022) will have to be further developed. This concept impacts the way offices are equipped and the demands on the communication infrastructure providing safe physical and virtual access for employees inside and outside the organization—including stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, and other trusted partners. It's already been discussed that collaboration means far more than a simple "willingness to work together" (Hill et al., 2014, p. 27). Sharing something in a distinctive way likely increases the number of "moments of value" (Lekanne Deprez, 2016). The focus must be on fostering a "psychologically safe climate"—for example, creating a "fearless organization" (Edmondson, 2018)—and where people feel able to speak up when needed, feel free to contribute ideas, share knowledge, report mistakes, and have constructive conflicts.

As teams often have their structured and inclusive collaboration patterns, this is not the case at organizational and ecosystem level. Facilitating accidental, random encounters and stimulating serendipitous occurrences at the organizational and ecosystem levels can have a positive effect here (Cross, 2021; Leonardi, 2021). Full-remote collaboration negatively impacts the development of an informal network at intra organizational level. Inter-team or interdepartmental interactions both on a formal and informal organizational level should be fostered (Gibson & Grushina, 2021). One needs a collaborative attitude to put all their experience, all their ideas, all their openness to failure to come together and really contribute to the fullest. As an example, onsite informal meetings should be part of the onboarding process for new employees as they not yet join the informal networks at interorganizational and ecosystem level. When looking at benefits, such as people being more productive at home and working longer hours, also weigh the costs such as high productivity of employees often masking an exhausted workforce (Microsoft, 2021). When dealing with remote workers that have switched off, engagement

will drop refocus, your key workers will become unhappy, become burned out, and plan to leave (Cable & Gino, 2021).

Provide the digital collaboration infrastructure (Leonardi, 2021) that is needed and enable seamless team support for online/offline collaboration. This implies that reliable tools will be provided to the employees that collaborate remotely. Also provide a secure and state-of-the-art digital infrastructure that enables communication within and outside the organizational boundaries. Redesign and reimagine hybrid collaboration organizations including hybrid workplaces and onsite offices (Fayard et al., 2021) with a better fit for Activity-Based Working (Eismann et al., 2022).

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4

Constructing New Organizational Identities in a Post-pandemic Return: Managerial Dilemmas in Balancing the Spatial Redesign of Telework with Workplace Dynamics and the External Imperative for Flexibility

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Introduction

The COVID-19 shook the way in which workers and managers co-exist in their organizations. Instead of being physically co-located, a large proportion of the workforce had to resort to digital communication from home in a spatially redesigned workspace. The literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizations is growing, but much of the focus has been the uneven access to telework (Reuschke & Felstead, 2020) or on outcomes related to productivity, the individual well-being

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of workers and digital communication (Choudhury et al., 2021; Toscano & Zappalà, 2020). Less focus has been given on how spatial redesigns related to telework affect organizational identities and workplace dynamics, although Antoine (2021) is a notable recent exception. We argue that this constitutes an important field of research in the void after the pandemic. While telework and digital communication may be a welcome impetus for organizational innovation, the politics of organizational identities coming out of the pandemic also reflect important dilemmas.

In this chapter, we ask how the experiences of spatial redesign during the COVID-19 pandemic have affected discussions about organizational identities and the future of telework among managers in Norwegian organizations. By organizational identity, we refer to Alvesson and Empson's (2008, p. 1) definition of "Organizational members agreeing that an organization has certain distinctive features and knowledge about how the organization works and will respond in different situations." By spatial redesign, we refer to the reconfiguration of physical and virtual workspaces, for instance through changing office architectures or allowing/planning for more telework (cf. Halford, 2005). As Alvesson and Empson (2008) point out, questions about what constitutes organizational identity is subject to debate and often implies ambivalence and doubt about what the organization should become in the future. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations are in a state of flux about how or if at all they are to adopt telework as a permanent spatial redesign. Strategies are affected by considerations about organizational identities and internal workplace dynamics, on the one hand, and the attractiveness as an employer allowing greater geographical flexibility on the other (cf. Antoine, 2021).

The chapter is based on ten focus groups with two to five managers in ten different organizations from the private and public sector in Norway that were carried out in April and May 2021. An additional 15 interviews were carried out with selected managers from the same organizations in October and November 2021.

We organize the chapter in the following way. In Section "Theoretical Perspectives on Organizational Identities and Spatial Redesigns", we outline relevant theoretical perspectives on organizational identities and spatial redesigns related to telework and the COVID-19 pandemic. In

Section "Methodology and Major Characteristics of Spatial Redesigns During the COVID-19 Pandemic", we describe and discuss the methodology and the main characteristics of change in the ten organizations. In Section "Spatial Redesigns and Dilemmas of Trust-Based Management", we describe and discuss dilemmas associated with how the spatial redesign of telework has transformed management practices during the pandemic. In Section "Spatial Redesigns and Dilemmas of Workplace Dynamics", we turn to how our informants express the dilemmas of workplace dynamics and telework. In Sections "Organizational Strategies and Dilemmas in a Post-pandemic Return" and "Concluding Discussion", we go deeper into the question of organizational identity formation and the sense of flux after the pandemic. Here, we analyse how managers in our study seem torn between embracing the advantages of telework and proving the organizations' capacity for and willingness to be flexible on the one hand, and retain the physical workplace as a vital container for social dynamics and organizational identity formation on the other.

Theoretical Perspectives on Organizational Identities and Spatial Redesigns

In Albert and Whetten's (1985) formulation of the concept, organizational identity is that which is central, distinctive, and enduring about an organization's character. It refers to organizational members' shared vision about 'who we are' and 'who we are not', in terms of purpose, work forms, accomplishments, beliefs, and values (Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Antoine, 2021; Hatch & Schultz, 1997). As Hatch and Schultz (2002) point out, the concepts 'organizational identity' and 'organizational culture' are somewhat hard to distinguish. They are interrelated and overlapping, and often used interchangeably. For the purpose of clarity and because the identity concept appears to be more clearly defined, we have chosen this as our main lens.

The literature on organizational identity builds on an array of approaches, ranging from functionalist perspectives that focus on physical artefacts, social constructivist approaches that are sensitive to the fluid

nature of experiences and relationships that constitute an organization, psychodynamic perspectives focusing on unconscious processes of shaping collective identities, and postmodern concepts of organizational discourses, myths, or illusions (He & Brown, 2013). This chapter largely subscribes to a social constructionist approach where the organization's identity is not seen as static or passed on in a top-down process. We rather see the organization as a relational and continuously constructed phenomenon through ongoing interactions between organizational members and between the organization and its environment (Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Antoine, 2021). Even though much of the literature tends to describe identity as a 'thing-like phenomenon', a constructivist approach would imply that the term is too dynamic and fluid to be interpreted in such a way (Alvesson & Empson, 2008).

Besides organizational members' key role in shaping organizational identity, identity production is also influenced by how external constituencies, like customers, external collaborators, community members, and jobseekers perceive the organization (Bartel & Dutton, 2001; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Moreover, an important part of constructing organizational identity is 'making public' what is central, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). As Ashforth and Mael (1989, p. 28) point out: "It is tacitly understood by managers that a positive and distinctive organizational identity can attract the recognition, support, and loyalty of organizational members and other important constituents." An additional external constituent is how macro-level crisis and change, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the 2008–2009 financial crisis, can be highly conducive to bringing organizational identities off balance and into play as to what the identity can or should become in a new environment (He & Baruch, 2009). Later in this chapter, we will show that managers take both the internal and the external view on the organization into (re)consideration when planning how telework is to be integrated into the organizations' operations and identities.

Much of the organizational identity literature discusses the relationship between organizational identity and individual identity at the micro level (Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Scott & Lane, 2000). This research focuses on how organizational

members identify with and are committed to their organization and its particular practices (Dutton et al. 1994). As such, this strand of the organizational identity literature shares common ground with the literature on organizational commitment and loyalty (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Although we recognize individual subscription to organizational identities as important, this chapter is more committed to studying organizational identity as a relational concept that reflects shared conceptions of what the organization is and should become.

A shortcoming in the organizational identity literature is that it has not engaged fully with the importance of space and how this can affect workplace relations (see i.e. Halford, 2004; Van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010). Halford (2004, p. 13) argues that spatiality and physical space is an inherent part of social life as well as structures of control and recognition in organizations. Physical space can also extend beyond mere visual managerial controls in shared workspaces. Workplaces are arenas for collective resistance, creativity, and compromise, and can include the breaking of organizational norms, the formation of friendship, creative dialogues, or open harassment. Any change of physical spaces in the form of spatial redesigns can in this way also change the social dynamic of the workplace and by that—the way in which organizational practices and identities are constructed and contested. A common example of a spatial redesign includes the way in which the introduction of open-plan offices alters work routines and control mechanisms (Van Marrewijk & Van den Ende, 2018). Building on Antoine (2021), we argue that spatial redesigns or plans for spatial redesigns can have a profound effect on organizational identity in two main ways. First, spatial redesigns, such as telework, can alter internal dynamics, power relations and productive configurations of the organizations in a way that constitute a change of organizational identity. An example can be when civil servants expect more autonomy in an organization that is inherently rigid. Second, public discourses related to flexibility and the spatial redesign of work can put great pressures on organizations to alter practices, for example, by offering telework as a permanent option because they expect that would attract more qualified workers.

The sharp rise in telework after the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus represents a major spatial redesign that affected a large proportion of

organizations and workers across the globe. The International Labour Organization (ILO) hints to the radical and imperative nature of the spatial redesign by calling it the "[…] new era of teleworking" (ILO, 2020, p. 2), while recent contributions on telework during the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that both managers and employees are positive to more telework in the future (Athanasiadou & Theriou, 2021). Results from an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) survey among managers and workers in 25 countries indicate that respondents perceive teleworking to have positive outcomes on organizational productivity (Criscuolo et al., 2021). However, the OECD report also emphasizes the 'mixed blessing' of telework by pointing to the impaired communication and knowledge flows in the organizations and the need for adapting management practices to accommodate the spatial redesigns. The shift towards trust-based management is a typical organizational change that the literature emerging from the COVID-19 context points to as an important premise for a successful spatial redesign towards teleworking (Contreras et al., 2020; De Paoli, 2020). Such a shift may be inevitable as teleworking often implies higher worker autonomy. Yet, studies warn against passive leadership that may undermine the organization in the long run (Dambrin, 2004). It is also important to ask how appropriate trust-based, or even passive, management styles are in organizations whose identity has been dependent on the need for hierarchy and control. As such, the spatial redesign of organizations towards higher degrees of telework might put considerable pressure on retaining organizational identities. It may also hamper knowledge flows that are necessary to sustain creative and strategic processes (Taskin & Bridoux, 2010) and it may undermine well-functioning teams and work relationships in a more individualized work environment (Rocha & Amador, 2018). This may in turn affect work motivation and loyalty to the workplace (Golden, 2006). However, the potential downsides can be balanced by other factors. Offering telework as a flexible solution can strengthen both the retention of existing workers and recruitment drives (Tavares et al., 2020).

Methodology and Major Characteristics of Spatial Redesigns During the COVID-19 Pandemic

For the study, we carried out focus groups and interviews with managers in ten organizations across different industries, sectors, and sizes. The selection was made from three criteria. The first was that a large number of workers and managers in all the organizations had to work from home during the pandemic. The second was that the organizations had varied, yet limited experience with telework prior to the pandemic. Third, we selected the organizations by how they represented different identities, ranging from public and bureaucratic institutions, to production-based private companies and organizations that represent the creative industries (such as media and architecture). Table 4.1 includes major characteristics of the organizations, and preliminary plans for post-pandemic spatial redesign that we will return to later in the chapter.

We chose focus groups as the main data source as this method is particularly effective for capturing how participants "describe experiences in locally relevant terms" (Goss & Leinbach, 1996, p. 117). The focus groups lasted between 90 and 120 minutes and were carried out in groups of two to five managers and HR staff in each organization on the *Teams* digital platform in April and May 2021. At this moment, telework had become 'a part of the routine' after a year of on and off lockdowns. We followed a semi-structured interview guide focusing on four topics: (1) Experiences and organization of lockdowns; (2) Management and control; (3) Telework and the work environment; and (4) Health and safety. The focus groups enabled an understanding of the organizational framework for telework, rather than simply focusing on individual managers' experiences and attitudes.

In October and November 2021, we conducted additional interviews with one to two managers from each focus group. Since workers were allowed back between September and December 2021, these interviews represent points of transition that allowed more reflection on a full post-pandemic return.

Table 4.1 List of organizations and their characteristics

Industry/Sector	Size	Telework prior to the pandemic	Telework during the pandemic	Preliminary plans for post-pandemic spatial redesign
Architectural company	Small	Very limited	Extensive	Return to the workplace, with some exceptions
Insurance company	Medium	Some flexibility	Extensive	High degree of flexibility
Trading company	Large	Some flexibility	Split (extensive for office-based work)	Intention of 60–40 split
Manufacturing company	Large	Very limited	Split (extensive for office-based tasks)	Return to the workplace, with some exceptions
IT company	Large	Some flexibility	Extensive	Extensive
Media company	Large	Some flexibility	Split (extensive for office-based tasks)	Undecided, but will have some degree of flexibility
Public agency	Large	Some flexibility	Extensive	Intention of 60–40 split
State agency	Large	Some flexibility	Extensive	Undecided, but with considerable flexibility
Social welfare agency	Large	Very limited	Split (extensive for parts of the organizations)	Return to the workplace, with some exceptions
Municipal agency	Medium	Very limited	Split (extensive for office-based tasks)	Some flexibility

Prior to March 2020, the ten organizations had limited experience of telework. The obvious spatial redesign was the sudden shift towards digital communication, not only between colleagues but also between employees, customers, and clients. For instance, the social welfare agency was accustomed to physical meetings with clients in their offices, and the

state agency used to travel long distances to meetings with municipalities and stakeholders. Customer support in the insurance company shifted from co-location at call centres to each individual home. However, to some of the organizations, telework was not an option to all workers. The manufacturing company suddenly experienced a split workplace, where the engineers worked from home and operators still had to run the machines in the workplace, while the municipal agency and the trading company similarly were divided between those employees running day to day work in the 'field' or the shops, while remaining employees were at home.

The managers in the focus groups unanimously describe 'mobilization effects' that included sudden adaptation to digital communication platforms, retained or even higher productivity among employees and hectic meetings among managers. Despite the shock of the lockdown, the organizations remained up and running. The initial outcome of instant teleworking thus seemed to be that employees remained productive. In some aspects, the initial mobilization seemed to boost loyalty and a collective pride as to being able to manage the situation. Yet, organizational identities came into play. The agencies in the public sector were forced to adopt a less hierarchical approach to management, while the architects no longer were able to co-create in common physical spaces. Similarly, the media company became more fragmented in content production and had to accept more trust-based management at a distance. To the IT company, the sudden shift towards teleworking seemed to consolidate an organizational identity in the making as the company already aspired to cutting-edge spatial redesign and the ability of employees to work from 'anywhere'. As such, the organizations had different points of departure into the radical spatial redesign of the pandemic. However, as the next section suggests, the organizations faced similar dilemmas related to management by distance and the way in which telework can disrupt social relations in the workplace.

Spatial Redesigns and Dilemmas
of Trust-Based Management

An important dilemma when it comes to trust-based management is that it can be difficult to maintain control. In our interviews, the dilemmas are not necessarily about sensing a loss of control over *what* the employees do, but rather about losing sight of many employees because they drift out of attention in a digital space that is dependent on active participation. A manager in the municipal agency says that when employees were co-located in the same workspace, he instantly knew what people were up to and could get across to all of them at the same time. A manager from the IT company also asserts that the digital organization of telework has seemed to create new polarizations within the organization that is both due to digital skills and the ambiguous visibility that some employees are uncomfortable with.

A manager in the public agency finds conversations with employees over the phone or through digital platforms challenging because the encounters need to be scheduled. This formalization also extends social distance between the manager and the employee and is ineffective for decision-making:

> It is very demanding with the phone, chat or video meetings […] often turns formal. You have to make room in the calendar […] everything becomes heavier. Unnecessarily so.

The director of the architectural company similarly describes the sense of losing information and control of the daily running of the organization:

> Not having the proper oversight […] like when people are sitting around you in a common office space, and other employees are getting back from inspecting the construction site […] You don't get that vibe now, so I am constantly worried about how the employees are and if they have enough or too much to do.

In this way, the spatial redesign of telework clearly challenges established management practices in the case organizations to the extent that they

must redefine how they operate. A typical response by managers across the organizations is that they have adopted trust-based management (see De Paoli, 2020). In telework situations, managers need to trust that employees perform their duties without much interference, even in line-and-command organizations. A manager in the public agency expresses that he is impressed by how employees delivered from home during the COVID-19 pandemic:

> The loyalty has been overwhelming […] as a manager I didn't need to worry about productivity [during the first months of the pandemic]. It was rather that they called me and said they were out of work. They wanted to do more, be helpful.

In this way, the pandemic and the spatial redesigns associated with higher levels of telework can have transformative effects on the organization. The HR director of the state agency says that the pandemic seems to propel a management transformation that was already on its way:

> We have moved towards trust-based management […] it's more about facilitation than control. As such, [the pandemic] pushed us in the direction that we intended to go for anyway.

The transformative effect on organizational identity seems to be strongest in the organizations that prior to the pandemic were in the hierarchical end of the management spectrum, but the changes were also clear among organizations that already had high degrees of autonomy. The IT company describes a shift towards expecting even more autonomy and a pressure on managers to accept this premise:

> We see that employees expect trust even if they aren't seen every day […] It has been fine so far, so 'don't start micro-managing me' […] But this does imply a change of mindsets […]

Yet, it is important to be aware that many of the managers across the organizations remain ambiguous about having too much faith in the employees' ability to self-manage. A manager from the social welfare

agency expresses concern about less organizational coherence in providing public services, while the HR manager from the IT company describes a situation where autonomy is unevenly distributed in the organization:

> Some employees are or have even become more dependent on being controlled and led […] They're not lazy, but some do not have […] the discipline or drive for self-management. They need closer management.

The shift towards trust-based management is an important dimension to how the organizations had to adjust to telework during the pandemic. Yet, dilemmas seem even clearer when considering how telework during the pandemic challenged workplace dynamics. This is the focus of the next section.

Spatial Redesigns and Dilemmas of Workplace Dynamics

A more pronounced dilemma that was raised in all focus groups and additional interviews was the way in which the broad use of telework may undermine the workplace as arenas for social community formation, belonging, and learning. While managers express that overall productivity and performance has been sound during the pandemic, they are more hesitant to accept telework as a defining principle of organization in the future. Confronted with how the working environment was affected by teleworking during the pandemic, the general manager of the insurance company emphasizes the importance of social interaction:

> Deep inside, the reason why we work is that we develop […] We are social beings, and we need […] to take part in something together.

Another worry is that telework might undermine the collective fabric of the organization in the long run. A manager in the social welfare agency observes an 'atomization' of the employees. When teleworking, employees can lose contact with colleagues and access to important information that is crucial to delivering services in a coherent way. Another

manager in the social welfare agency raises concerns about how employees tend to think more about their individual needs:

> Many employees have been happy [with teleworking] and say that sitting at home has improved their capacity to concentrate […] But we must deliver as a team. The employees might say to me, this works well. OK, but what about your colleague who needs your advice?

The tension between individual preferences and the collective needs of the organization is particularly pronounced when the managers talk about knowledge exchanges within the organization. Telework challenges the formal and informal exchange of knowledge that takes place in an organization. This dilemma concerns the whole organization, but according to the managers we have interviewed, the young and unexperienced employees stand out as most vulnerable. The manager of the architectural company shares her thoughts about the issue:

> We have two categories of architects. The experienced who are confident in the role. This category has thrived with telework […] The other group is the inexperienced with limited tenure […] there are so many things to learn, and a lot of that happens in lunch conversations or random encounters with colleagues during the day [...] I have used this example to pursue the experienced architects to show up.

The dilemma of knowledge exchange in the physical workplace extends to other employees. According to managers across the case organizations, a variety of employees report that it is more difficult to learn new things when teleworking, and this extends beyond learning new digital skills. As such, a common perception among managers we have interviewed is that telework either needs to be replaced by or complemented by workplace presence to facilitate satisfactory learning among and between all members of an organization. However, it is important to emphasize that it is not all bad. Many of the managers we spoke to remain positive towards teleworking, and stress that productivity levels and overall communication within the organization has worked well. Although acknowledging workplace dynamics dilemmas, the general manager of the insurance

company stresses that he thinks it is possible to maintain and nurture a sound work environment and collective, organizational identity even with substantial teleworking:

> I think it is beneficial to spend a lot of the time together […] but it is unfortunate to deny people to work from home, because I have seen it work so well. We have to find a balance.

The manager suggests that physical co-presence in the workplace has a significant role in producing community and learning, but also that it is not a prerequisite for identification or loyalty. On the contrary, workers may become more loyal to the organization if he or she is allowed a substantial amount of telework. Other managers, however, are more concerned about the physical distance between employees complicating attempts to develop or streamline organizational cultures (and identities).

Despite the obvious dilemmas and the different priorities, the organizations must have in order to retain workplace learning and collective development, the managers also talk about how the pandemic has made them more aware of what can be done outside the workplace, and what processes that are dependent on co-location. In other words, the sudden spatial redesign of the organizations has sparked new insights about existing capacities and what the organizations need. However, despite this reflection about the feasibility of future telework in the organizations, the managers also express that they expect considerable external pressure to stay flexible. In the next part of this chapter, we show how the balance between their own experiences and this perceived pressure puts organizational identities into contention.

Organizational Strategies and Dilemmas in a Post-pandemic Return

During fall 2021, the ten organizations were in three 'camps' considering the future of telework. Three organizations had (more or less) decided to return fully to office, five of the organizations were in the process of developing combined solutions, while the remaining two were

considering 'full flexibility'. The reason for choosing the different options seems to depend on the balance between internal and external factors. Among the internal factors are the nature of operations or tasks the organizations were performing, the particularities of the workplaces and, finally, their experiences of telework during the pandemic. As much as the managers are happily surprised by the level of loyalty and performance from employees working from home, they are unanimously concerned about how the organizations can be at risk if physical workplaces are disregarded as sources of identity production, creativity, belonging, and learning.

However, organizations cannot only rely on their own experiences and evaluations of telework during the pandemic when they are to decide a more permanent spatial redesign. The pandemic has also seemed to create an external kind of transformation pressure by the expectation of spatial flexibility in the labour market that the managers we interviewed feel forced to adhere to. A conversation in the trading company aptly illustrates the ambiguous position that many organizations are in:

> Interviewer: "After the pandemic, will you continue offering teleworking and flexibility […]?"
>
> Manager A: "I think this is a difficult question, but if we withdraw all the flexibility, I think it will affect our attractiveness as an employer […]"
>
> Manager B: "To me it's quite clear that if we want to be an attractive workplace, we can't expect people at the office five days a week if our competitors don't do that [...]."
>
> Manager C: "Well, perhaps I'm old fashioned. But I think it is easy to underestimate what the social environment at the workplace means to people."

Similarly, the manager in the architectural company acknowledges the external pressure for offering spatial flexibility to existing and new employees but refuses to accept that the physical workplace has lost its attraction. The manager also stresses that the spatial design of the organization can only be seen as a *part* of what the organization is to itself and to potential candidates for employment. According to this manager, young people are attracted by meaning, community, and prestige as much

as they are attracted by autonomy and whether they are allowed two days at home. In this way, she argues that organizations have to be very careful about how a potential spatial redesign of the organization can displace other core constituents of that identity.

Concluding Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has made a deep impact upon how organizations across sectors and industries regard the feasibility of working from home. Telework became the default for office workers through forced lockdowns, and the initial outcomes of this spatial shift in the organization of work have exceeded expectations in a positive sense. But will the experiences and experiments of spatial redesigns during the pandemic lead to radical transformations of organizations and organizational identities in a permanent manner? Based on interviews and focus groups with managers from ten private and public organizations in Norway, we conclude that the pandemic certainly has sparked discussions and new strategies for spatial flexibility, but that the depth of potential transformation varies. In some of the organizations, such as the IT company and the insurance company, managers argue that they will adopt spatial redesigns to facilitate substantial flexibility associated with telework and digital communication. In the other end of the spectrum, managers from the social welfare agency or the manufacturing company have concluded with rejecting telework as a permanent option. The remaining organizations we have studied are either undecided or have opted for a middle of the road solution of allowing some spatial flexibility.

The pressures on organizations for adopting spatial flexibility include those from inside the organizations, and the perceived expectations for flexibility in the external labour market. Even despite the perceived shortcomings of telework as highlighted in this chapter, it is a phenomenon that organizations must deal with. This brings organizational identities into contention and managers face dilemmas in how they should respond. But one thing is certain: Managers have now been compelled to actively engage in defining the futures of spatial designs and principles. And not only that. We argue that the pandemic has led to reflective processes

about what constitute core values and the defining institutional 'fabric' of the organization. To some organizations, a more flexible spatial design corresponds to this fabric. To other organizations, it seems impossible to stay true to inherent values and identities by allowing telework to become a permanent and dominant organizing principle. This is not to say that the 'spatially conservative' organizations do not allow any flexibility after the pandemic. The point is that the core organizational identities, and the purposes the organization serve, are not compatible with a permanent spatial redesign.

This chapter is based on interviews that were carried out during the latter half of the pandemic, although the follow-up interviews did allow for some experience with a near normal situation during the autumn of 2021. As such, the chapter only depicts early stages of potential organizational transformation, and this is an important limitation to our study. Future research will have more opportunity to incorporate extended experiences, and we think that further technological progress and adoption might break down some of the perceived contradictions between virtual and physical interaction.

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5

How Working Remotely for an Indefinite Period Affects Resilient Trust Between Manager and Employee

Marianne Alvestad Skogseth and Svein Bergum

Introduction

Looking at the literature, it can be observed that most of the literature on trust is focused on how to develop and build trust (Klayton, 1994; Nilles, 1998; and Greenberg et al., 2007), whereas less attention has been paid to how to maintain trust, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the exceptions, however, is Glomseth (2020), who claims that trust is just like "fresh and fragile products," in which value diminishes fast if not maintained in a proper way. This is in line with Robert et al. (2009) and Gwebu et al. (2007), who believe that ICT-based communication leads to a reduction in trust, since it is not possible to observe and control others in the same way as in face-to-face communication. This viewpoint contrasts with research, which claims that accumulated trust is

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resilient and robust, and can be maintained for a long period of time. For example, Nilsson and Mattes (2015, p. 235) say: "Once resilient trust has been created, our cases show that it can be maintained for long periods of time relatively independently from further face-to-face exchange." Therefore, according to Nilsson and Mattes (2015, p. 235), proximity is not a prerequisite for maintaining trust.

The aim of this chapter is to investigate how virtual managers during the COVID-19 pandemic managed to enhance and maintain mutual trust built up before the COVID-19 pandemic, despite working at a distance for an indefinite period through the use of frequent and good communication. And: How have employees perceived the changes in the way they have been managed? Is physical proximity crucial for a manager to maintain trust in employees? The primary contribution of this chapter is the focus on maintaining trust in a crisis, compared to many other studies focusing on building trust as a requirement for telework and management at a distance. We want to look at our research question from both a managerial and employee perspective, which we thought was interesting in view of the HR value chain (Boselie, 2014), thereby implying that we chose to interview both employees and managers.

The Concept of Trust

The definition by Mayer et al. (1995) is one of the most common definitions of trust: "The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party is based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party." The concept of trust always includes an actor (trustor) who gives confidence to another actor (trustee). In general, in the psychology and literature on knowledge sharing, a distinction has been made between affective- and cognitive-based trust. Affective trust in employees is about caring for each other. When actors act (work) together over time, tacit and empathic trust can arise, that is, an affective-based trust based on relational ties, such as empathy and identification between actors. Cognitive trust is a rational expectation of the trustor in

the trustee's competence, reliability and integrity (Høyer et al., 2016, p. 123).

In addition to the distinction between affective and cognitive trust, a time aspect and a quality aspect of trust can be distinguished. Trust that has been built up over time is referred to as "gradual," whereas the quality of trust can be referred to as "resilient" or "deep" (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015, p. 231). In the present study, we examine the resilience of affective and cognitive trust that has been built up in the employment relationship over time.

Theoretical Perspectives

Different Forms of Proximity

Nilsson (2019) makes a distinction between different proximity dimensions: spatial-, cognitive- and social proximity. Spatial or geographical proximity can be defined as the physical distance that exists between different actors. Cognitive proximity indicates how actors perceive, interpret and evaluate the world through their mental models and categories. Social proximity refers to the degree to which actors share personal relationships, often created through previous collaborations.

The Role of Types of Proximity in Building and Maintaining Affective and Cognitive Trust

In their study on trust, Nilsson and Mattes (2015) addressed the concept of geographical proximity. More specifically, they considered face-to-face communication as being more effective in creating and repairing cognitive trust than technological communication platforms (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015, p. 232). In line with this, Naquin and Paulson (2003) indicated that virtual teams spend up to four times longer to share information compared to groups working physically co-located. Based on the media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) that classifies communication channels according to their ability to transfer social presence or

"richness of information," the effectiveness of face-to-face communication may be particularly true when the knowledge shared is complex and involves a large degree of tacit knowledge. Daft and Lengel (1986) proposed the following ranking from a rich medium to a lean medium: face-to-face, telephone conversations, personal documents, impersonal written documents and numerical documents. The communication channel should be chosen and adapted to the information to be disseminated; complicated tasks should be conducted via rich channels, such as face-to face communication, whereas routine jobs could be communicated via e-mail.

However, although geographical proximity may not be a prerequisite for maintaining trust in all cases, it may affect the frequency and form of the planned and unplanned social interaction among parties. When social and cognitive proximity have been built up, it is possible to retain resilient trust, also without geographical proximity (i.e. co-location), as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, maintaining gained trust requires a greater investment in time and effort when one is not co-located (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015, p. 242).

Bernela et al. (2019, p. 2) introduces a concept in addition to geographical proximity, which is perceived proximity. This forms a subjective picture of reality that shakes the theories of Nilsson and Mattes (2015) and many other researchers. Bernela et al. (2019) believe that physical proximity only explains a small part of a person's perception of subjective distance: "Researchers have found that physical proximity explains no more than half of a person's feeling of subjective distance." When it comes to whether information and communication technologies (ICT) can replace face-to-face communication, the conclusion of Bernela et al. (2019) that it cannot. One of the biggest problems that is still unresolved is that technological communication channels cannot transmit tacit knowledge (Bernela et al., 2019, p. 6). The same problem with the transfer of tacit and complex knowledge is Nilsson and Mattes (2015, p. 232) and Høyer et al. (2016, p. 125) concerned with. This means that Bernela et al. (2019), Høyer et al. (2016) and Nilsson and Mattes (2015) believe that geographical proximity continues to be important when it comes to sharing complex knowledge.

Challenges for Virtual Leaders

Many of the factors that affect trust building and maintenance are different in virtual work contexts. Hacker and Thayer (2019, p. 2) addressed different types of challenges for virtual (team) leaders. First, virtual managers may be challenged by virtual communication issues, such as the choice of meeting frequency, dealing with different time zones and not being able to see team members' facial expressions and body language. Second, virtual managers may also be challenged by technology issues, thus ensuring that employees have technological skills and share knowledge about technology. Bergum (2009) focused on communication and feedback as key challenges.

Methodological Choices

To help answer our research problem, we took as our starting point an interpretivist view of research. This means that the social scientist attempts to grasp the subjective opinion of social actions (Bryman, 2016, p. 692). We were concerned with how managers maintained trust at a distance and the role of communication herein. A case study at the Oslo Municipality was used to explore "maintaining trust" and leadership.

Selection of Respondents

Our participants were employees and managers at the service location that is a part of the Department of Culture, where during the COVID-19 pandemic, most employees worked from home. Their work tasks related to the use of digital systems, which can easily be performed from home, and are not dependent on being physically present in the office premises. There are 28 permanent employees and 14 temporary positions. The informants selected were three employees and one manager from two sections, that is, six employees and two managers in total (Table 5.1).

The employees' tenure in this organization ranged from 11 months to 9 years. The managers' tenure ranged from 4.4 years to 14 years. As we

Table 5.1 Description of the informants

Position	Number of years in this organization	Number of years as manager/with manager	Education
Manager section one	4.4 years	3.9 years	Archivist
– Employee one	9 years	3.9 years	Bachelor of visual art
– Employee two	11 months	11 months	Master of cultural history
– Employee three	2 years	2 years	Master of arts
Manager section two	14 years	1.3 years	Master of history
– Employee one	7.6 years	1.3 years (7.5 as colleagues)	Master of cultural history
– Employee two	7.4 years	1.3 years (7.5 as colleague).	Master of cultural history
– Employee three	7.5 years	1.3 years (7.5 as colleague)	Bachelor with specialization in history and archive science

see from the table, most of the informants had a master's degree, such as in cultural history and visual arts. The interviews took place virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Conducting the Interviews

We chose semi-structured interviews with a standardized interview guide to get as many comparable findings as possible to ensure reliability. Two interview templates were developed, one for the employee and one for the manager. We asked employees how long they were supervised by their leader; important factors that could affect how employees experienced the home office situation were whether they were used to a home office in the pre-COVID-19 pandemic, and their level of managerial digital competence. We included a couple of questions that revolved around predictability and feedback, which are important factors that can affect

trust. We asked about how the communication has been before and after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it had affected trust in the employment relationship.

Analysis Process

The data were broken down into components based on what we thought were interesting topics in theory, and around which the semi-structured interview guide was built. Our interpretation of the data created the codes we used in our analysis. After coding, we worked with a thematic analysis, which was about thematizing the data to find patterns (Bryman, 2016, p. 586).

Reliability

In qualitative research, the word dependability is also used, and refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings, thereby allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit and critique the research process (Sandelowski, 1986). Reliability is also closely linked to the procedure for selecting informants and the research process. The COVID-19 pandemic situation affects the possibility of reproducing a similar study. We documented the procedure of selecting informants and the entire research process. We selected sections with good scores on factors relevant to trust. We transcribed all the interviews, and it is possible to go back to find the quotes in the transcribed material.

Validity

One positive aspect about the internal validity was that the main author of this chapter knew the place of employment, the agency and the Municipality of Oslo well. At the same time, the main author was conscious of not interviewing anyone with whom she had direct colleagues. When it comes to external validity, we believe the transfer value will be

for other office companies with knowledgeable staff in both the public and private sectors.

Results

Changes in Communication

The primary finding regarding changes in the qualitative communication after 12 March 2020 was related to the switch to digital communication platforms. Before the closure, much of the communication took place orally in the office and was characterized as informal. After 12 March, written communication, such as e-mail or chat, becomes dominant. The meetings were mostly mediated via Teams and were of a formal nature. The new way of communicating was perceived as less effective. For example, it took longer for both managers and employees to get clarifications, and to engage in training and knowledge sharing. Another major change was that informal communication, which was considered to be the relational glue of the organization, had been greatly reduced.

The employees interviewed mentioned that it required more for them to be active in digital meetings. More specifically, several said that they experienced that there was only a small degree of interaction, particularly at large meetings, and that it was always the same people who spoke. In many meetings, there was more monologue than dialogue, which led to less exchange of opinions. When communication went from informal to formal and from oral to written, it became more task-oriented and less relational.

In a similar vein, the managers in our study noted that some employees had almost become invisible during the transition to digital meetings. One of the leaders described:

> It is difficult, maybe a couple of people are taking the floor, and it is usually, a couple, the same every time.

They felt that it would be easier for the more introverted employees to speak in meetings with fewer people. Both managers and employees

described that they felt that the informal communication had disappeared in the home office. For example, one of the managers missed stopping by someone's office for a quick clarification. He had tried to set aside time for that, but the barrier to do so was higher than in the office. In the organizational unit, where informal oral communication was most common, one of the managers stated that he had switched to several telephone conversations with the employees. The manager thought that in a telephone conversation, it was easier to talk about more things than just the task-oriented ones, because it could make communication more personal. However, none of the employees said that they thought that telephone calls had replaced some of the informal talks that took place in the office.

There were different experiences among the employees related to feedback from managers at a distance. Three out of six said they received less feedback since they shifted to homeworking, while the others said the feedback frequency had remained the same. The feedback employees received from their manager was now more often written. One of the employees considered this as being nice. However, most of them missed the spontaneous oral feedback. One of the managers thought it was easier to provide digital feedback. He described that it could be given more thoughtfully and less spontaneously. The other leader, however, felt that it was easier to give informal feedback in random meetings when they were co-located.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is about belonging to the same community and sharing a knowledge base. One of the managers found it practically easier to share knowledge digitally. And he thought that it had worked very well. Yet, he acknowledged that losing all informal questions that often come after a presentation to be one of the downsides of digital knowledge sharing. The other manager even said he spent more time sharing knowledge since working from home, because it took him more time to write down the knowledge he wanted to share. It had to be more prepared and thoughtful than shoulder-to-shoulder training. They experienced the

professional meetings as lectures and one-way communication, but not as knowledge sharing, while those who had attended meetings with fewer colleagues had experienced it as positive.

Social Exchange

Social proximity is important for building both cognitive and affective trust. Managers and employees were asked how this worked during the transition from the central office to the home office. One manager described that his organizational unit attempted to establish some channels for social exchange. However, most of the participants described that social exchange was much easier when everyone was co-located. They had digital coffee meetings once a week on a regular basis, but there were often only three or four people who participated in these meetings. In the second organizational unit, the manager said that they had no fixed social meeting points. They had impulsively arranged digital coffee a few times, but the manager had no time to continue with this.

Trust-Based Management and Leadership

Were there special measures the managers had taken towards the employee group to maintain trust-based management through distance management? One manager said that he had continued the same measures as before, only now in digital form. The other manager viewed 12 March 2020 as an important turning point when it came to the relationship with colleagues:

> It was so obvious that now we are in a completely different situation, which requires completely different things, a completely different attention to this with a follow-up of the employees.

This manager described the change towards distance management as requiring more individual and systematic communication and support of the employees. Both managers were more aware of planning and keeping in touch with their employees. A lot of communication that previously

took place informally, when the employees were present in the central office, had been replaced by formal and planned communication. This makes leadership at a distance more demanding for managers.

Managers were asked to describe the trust they had in employees, and the trust they believed that employees had towards them: "How do you show that you are concerned about how employees feel at work?" The manager in department one said that he showed it by asking how the employees were doing, and not just asking about professional duties. The manager had regular conversations with some of the employees, when he felt that there was a need for close support, whereas with others he had less frequent conversations.

> I show it to them when I have a conversation with people. I ask how they are, and we talk about such things in addition to the professional talk.

The employees confirmed that the manager was good at responding to personal things quickly. In contrast, however, the other manager felt that asking how his employees feel at work should be a point in the "performance appraisal interview" once a year. Then, they are specifically asked whether there is any type of individual support they missed.

Discussion

This section focuses on discussions of the research questions related to: How has trust developed during the pandemic, and how do leaders adjust to the new distance context?

Still the Same Degree of Resilient Trust?

All employees described that they had trust in their manager before 12 March 2020. What happened to these forms of trust between manager and employee during the pandemic? Was it as resilient, as claimed in Nilsson and Mattes (2015, p. 241): "Once resilient trust has been created, our cases show that it can be maintained for long periods of time

relatively independently from further face-to-face exchange." According to Nilsson and Mattes (2015, p. 235), proximity is not a prerequisite for maintaining trust in what it has formed. Their theory states that resilient trust is possible to maintain at a distance, even if geographical distance affects the frequency and quality of social exchange. On the other hand, building trust through distance management is difficult. This theory is confirmed in the respondents' answers: "Yes, at least it is easier to maintain trust that is there, than to build it up." At the same time, our data showed that the changes are different depending on the type of trust experienced.

Cognitive Trust Among Employees

Five out of six employees, who described the trust they had in the manager before 12 March as cognitive, said that their trust had not changed when working in the home office. They thought it was easy to have contact with the leader via information and communication technology, such as Microsoft Teams and Workplace, and they perceived that their feeling of trust had not changed to any significant degree. They described their manager as clear and as someone who gets things done and wants the best for the department, and that had not changed. This is well-summarized in one of the employees' statements:

> I feel that we had very good trust and communication and understanding before 12 March. And in a way, it has not changed. But I think it has been very important, because it is difficult to build it, but when it is already there, it has not changed or gotten worse.

To use the argument by Nilsson and Mattes (2015) in this analysis, our findings show that the acquired resilient trust had not been indefinitely affected by the enhanced geographical distance. This can be explained by the frequency of communication between the manager and the employees not or hardly being changed. Both managers and employees said that communication had become increasingly formal, written and more task-oriented. The shift away from informal, oral and relational

communication had affected the employees' experience of social proximity. Interestingly, however, the indefinite geographical distance had not affected the degree of cognitive trust that had gradually been built in the relationship between the manager and the employees before the COVID-19 pandemic, even though the pandemic situation provided more extreme conditions for communication than was the case in the research of Nilsson (2019) and Nilsson and Mattes (2015).

Affective Trust Among Employees

One of the employees who said that she experienced affective trust in the manager before 12 March described that her affective trust had changed since she had started working from home. She justified this by saying that there are limitations to communicate informally with a virtual leader: "Yes, it is a bit limited how easy it is to communicate with NN, with a little more informal talk." Her department was in the middle of a restructuring process, and she thought it was difficult for the manager to support so many (new) people working from a distance. She believed that digital and written communication was generally perceived as more formal, and that affective trust suffered as a result. Høyer et al. (2016, p. 127) says something similar, with affective trust taking longer to be developed via digital meeting platforms. The statement by Høyer et al. (2016) concerns the development of affective trust, but our findings confirm that the same challenge applies when it comes to maintaining affective trust. The individual support is more time-consuming, especially with many new employees. Strong affective trust that had been built up declined due to distant working. In other words, affective trust seems to be more fragile, and more like "a fresh product" than cognitive trust. Communication may not be perceived as frequent and good enough to offset the experience of social or emotional distance.

Has the Manager's Trust Changed?

When it came to the leaders, one described that it is easy to maintain trust with those with whom one has built mutual trust before:

> Those you have a good working relationship with, where you in a way understand each other well and trust each other, then it's easy, because the e-mail dialogue is not misunderstood, you do not take things with bad intentions, right? You have a good dialogue then, and it is easy to maintain.

This response indicates that managers believe that they have maintained the same level of trust in employees as they had before the shift towards homeworking. The other manager used the word independence almost synonymously with trust, and said that he trusted that the employees took responsibility for the work tasks. The leader described trust mostly in line with the definition of cognitive trust by Høyer et al. (2016, p. 123) and Nilsson (2019, p. 846) saying that cognitive trust is a rational expectation of the trustor in the trustee's competence, reliability and integrity. The manager replied that trust had been maintained after 12 March 2020. Both managers therefore believed that both types of trust had been maintained during the pandemic. Hence, we see that there are some nuances between the answers of the employees and the managers to the question of the development of mutual trust.

It is a surprising finding that all respondents have answered that cognitive confidence has been maintained and not changed significantly. With the major uncertainties we have had in 2020 and 2021 with COVID-19 which has led to distance management indefinitely, it was reasonable to assume that it would affect the maintenance of cognitive confidence. Thus, it is very interesting to know that it has not changed the employees' cognitive trust in the manager nor vice versa. This shows that the digital communication channels are good enough to maintain cognitive trust at a distance, in line with Bernela et al. (2019)'s belief that ICT can replace face-to-face communication by far. Our findings also showed that there were challenges with knowledge sharing, as Bernela et al., (2019) notes. Despite that, it did not damage cognitive confidence.

Cognitive trust is about trusting the advice the leader and colleagues give you, while affective trust is about being willing to share your own knowledge (Høyer et al., 2016, p. 123). Thus, it is still possible for managers to conduct training with employees at a distance through digital collaboration platforms but getting employees to want to share their knowledge with others can be a greater challenge. In that way our finding shows that it was not possible to maintain affective trust. One finding is too small to conclude that it is not possible, but what we can conclude is that it is a greater challenge to maintain affective confidence than cognitive.

Why Differences in the Answers?

We have discussed and shown that there are differences between employees' perceptions of the development of cognitive and affective (relational) trust. A theoretical way of explaining the difference may be the potential of digital communication media. According to Daft and Lengel (1986), it is easier to exchange professional content in digital media versus more relational content, which to a greater extent requires a richer media, such as face-to-face communication.

How can the differences between managers and employees be explained? For us, it was important to include both the managers' and employees' perspectives building on HR's value chain (Boselie, 2014, p. 64) to analyse whether there are differences that are important for trust-based management. We thought it could say something important if leaders have achieved the intention of trust-based distance management. The areas we found to be particularly demanding, and where managers' responses did not completely agree with the employees, were in the areas of knowledge sharing, group affiliation, care and social exchange. We also saw that there were differences in perceptions about the development in trust. Next, we will show that one of the managers thought he spent more time following up with the employees, but employees did not notice much of this. This shows the importance of having data from both managers and employees.

Distance Management Is Important for Trust, but Variations in Practice

The study by Nilsson and Mattes (2015) does not address how leadership can affect and maintain trust in distance relationships. In our study, we have data on the two managers' adaptation to the new homeworking context, different types of distance and the use of digital communication as the most important channel between manager and employee. The two managers explained how they had taken care of the employees during the pandemic slightly differently. One of them had maintained the individual support he had with the employees before the transition to the home office without doing anything differently. This may be the reason why affective trust was not maintained for this manager. The manager probably should have had more frequent and more individual communication with employees to be able to maintain the affective relationship of trust. However, as the employee indicated, the manager had so many (new) employees to lead that it had not been possible for him to take care of the individual in a good way from a distance, as the span of control was too large.

The other manager had thought that the pandemic situation was very different, and that it required special measures. The manager switched to telephone conversations to follow up individually on the employees. Even so, the employees did not experience that they received any special follow-up with them from the manager, who stated that the request for support took place at the employees' initiative. Hence, the experience for them was not that this was a leader who did something special to take care of them. It is worth noting that the telephone is perceived as a rich medium, almost richer than digital meetings, even though telephone conversation focuses on voice and not image, and according to the theory of Daft and Lengel (1986), can be considered a leaner medium. This theory also has another weakness in that it does not look at the number of communication partners, and that the telephone can also be very rich if the parties know each other well from before.

What Can We Learn from This When It Comes to Trust-Based Distance Management?

Several findings in theory and research conclude that being close and leading face-to-face is the best tool for maintaining trust-based leadership (Bentzen, 2018, p. 40). The relational communication that is important for particularly affective trust has proven difficult to maintain in virtual work. In the areas where there were divergent responses between managers and employees, we believe that there are several things that could have been done differently, which might have contributed to managers' intention to maintain a good relationship had things been clearer. Managers must emphasize the relational aspects and must understand that the new working situation requires an increased awareness of how employees need to be taken care of individually. Our findings support the need for managers to consider distance management as something special and more demanding, and where, among other things, more planning, more use of digital services, a clarification of expectations and more individual support are required. This is especially important when the scope of work in the home office becomes extensive and long-lasting (Bergum, 2015), and where new employees, the self-employed and those with unsuitable jobs must also work from a distance. Situational virtual management that Bergum (2015, p. 53) launched is an important concept in difficult and different situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where adjustments to communication with individuals are required. We see in our study that virtual management during the pandemic requires much more adjustment to individual needs than reported in earlier studies, such as Bergum (2009) and Nilles (1998).

Conclusion

It is a surprising finding that all respondents have answered that cognitive trust has been maintained, and not changed significantly during the pandemic. Still, we found that it is a greater challenge to maintain affective-compared to cognitive trust. Affective trust is more of a fresh and fragile

product in line with Glomseth's (2020) claim of trust. The empirical evidence that it was not possible to maintain affective trust is consistent with Høyer et al. (2016, p. 125) research on competence networks which, even after seven to eight years in competence networks based on telephone meetings with screen sharing, did not develop affective trust to a specific degree.

Another important finding in the study is that it requires more from managers in terms of a conscious individual support of the employees in the home office. Our findings confirm Bergum's (2009) findings that employees who are managed remotely need more frequent feedback and recognition than those who are managed in a co-located manner. In general, feedback, knowledge sharing and follow-up interviews with employees require more time from the manager, which confirms that distance management requires more from the leader.

Our findings also confirm that communication under distance management is often task-oriented and formal, as it is the informal, relational communication that is lost. Leaders need to take seriously the importance of social exchange, but digital channels are not very suitable for that. More time should have been set aside for training leaders in the Microsoft Teams system, especially with all the new collaboration functionalities they need to master, but also training in how to use Microsoft Teams as a strategic management tool. Managers' digital competence is important for maintaining cognitive trust. In all our findings, cognitive trust was maintained, and several stated that it was closely linked to the leaders having a good digital competence. They trusted that the leader had insight and knowledge in the use of the digital platforms, and that it was important to them. This is also important for taking advantage of the new opportunities that are constantly being developed in Teams and other digital communication platforms. There are new opportunities that will increase the degree of interaction and facilitate knowledge sharing, which is very important for both cognitive and affective trust.

The results from this study have practical implications for managers who have different types of employees at a distance. It shows the need for individual adjustments, and that virtual management must be adjusted to different context factors, such as the competence, but also the total life situation, of the employee. This is different from much of previous

research, which treats virtual management as best practice. Our results also show that virtual management is different from co-located management. And through managerial activities, such as setting clear expectations, good planning and individual support, it is possible for virtual managers to maintain trust also at a distance. There is a need for further studies on the resilience of trust in virtual management applied on a larger sample. One interesting question could be about the role of the digital competence necessary for building and maintaining trust.

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6

Exploring Virtual Management and HRM in Thin Organizational Places During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mikael Ring

Introduction

Interest in studies on work from home (WFH) has been growing since the COVID-19 caused many organizations to shut their offices. Previous research on teleworking which can be helpful to understand organizational consequences and ways of reasoning concerning virtual management. This study is focused on the geographical dislocation of workers from the workplace to the home (or elsewhere), where some use new technology and others continue with more traditional paperwork. Technology may have been an important and crucial component when focusing on teleworking. Still, the new challenge is to attune and adjust different virtual and physical environments to fit working from a distance during longer periods of WFH (e.g. through assessments, codes of conduct, and control; Bhattacharjee, 2020; Derix, 2003; Kingma, 2019; Ramalingam et al., 2020; Veldhoen, 2005).

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As we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which WFH has been implemented on a large global scale, technology may not be the determining factor in either a return to the office or fast and further development of dislocated working. The process is rather characterized by an organizational adaption towards the forces from the surrounding world, which requires scattered organizations to be collaborative, creative, communicative, transparent, trusting, and learning at the onset (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Kingma, 2019). These characteristics often rely on what has been called 'thick' places and physical interactions characterized by a particular set of enactments produced by a working place populated with a density of workers (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011). The idea of thinness and thickness are traditionally used in economic geographical theory as ways of explaining the dynamics between place, humans, and companies as being dependent on densities of activities and relations in terms of cluster, agglomeration, and location (Bathelt et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2020). Thin places are thus defined as places where workers are dislocated and not in physical contact with each other, but they use technologies as substitutes or complements for physical interaction. The difference between earlier fields of inquiry and this study is, firstly that the dynamics is investigated at an organizational scale, rather than a regional geographical scale, and secondly that the focus is on the dynamics depending on a geographical density within an organization in terms of presence at a workplace, rather than on the relation between densely or thinly localized organizations. The question of WFH is thus not about unifying or integrating virtual and physical environments or merely integrating digital tools to facilitate new ways of working to develop an aligned organizational culture (cf. Derix, 2003; Veldhoen, 2005).

In thick geographical places, a strong organizational culture can be expected to keep organizational and team goals fresh and to create values through face-to-face interactions (Chatfield et al., 2014; Shachaf, 2008). However, in thin places, WFH can be expected not to allow for spontaneous interaction and idea-sharing among employees, stifling opportunities for development and innovation (Amabile et al., 2005; Crandall & Gao, 2005; Eurofond, 2018; Cain Miller & Rampell, 2013; Jonasson, 2017; Keller, 2013; Lavey-Heaton, 2014; Moses, 2013; Swisher, 2013).

It is suggested here that the concept of geographical thin places connected to WFH may be helpful to understand what happens when an organization has to find other ways to keep the culture and spirit of their workers alive; where virtual meetings replace physical social interactions; where control and care of workers need to be managed at a distance; where HR has to reconfigure and redefine its roles and tasks that aim at keeping strategic goals (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020); and when communication needs to be clearly oriented towards purposes as it turns out in this study.

The aim of this study is to investigate some of the consequences of a shift from working at a central workplace to WFH on socio-spatial aspects of thickness and thinness in the work environment. The research questions are "How do managers in public and private organizations describe how aspects of thickness, in terms of physical proximity and social relations changed when their staff worked from home during the pandemic"; and "how can organizational thickness and thinness be further developed to understand the detachment of workers from their working places?"

Theoretical Lens

Geographical theory has traditionally focused on how place changes the conditions for companies to succeed or not in environments where they compete and collaborate with other companies on a local or regional scale. Particularly, economic geography has used concepts based on thinness and thickness in terms of cluster, agglomeration, and location as ways for explaining the dynamics between place, humans, and organizations from their dependence on densities of activities and relations (Bathelt et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2020).

What has not been investigated to a large extent is what consequences the agglomeration and clustering of workers present at a workplace during the pandemic have had, and thus, in what ways information and communication technologies (ICT) have played for thickness or thinness in organizations. Relations produced on an 'in-organizational' scale also has a spatial dimension which means that it is possible to use the

conceptual tool of socio-spatial dialectics for investigating the effects of the pandemic- the relations between humans, activities, places, and organizations (Jonasson, 2012, 2017).

With a theoretical lens, it is clear that: 'Places' are not only containers or settings for material and human relations, but also the product of them: humans, material objects, and the relations between them produce places (Ajzen & Taskin, 2019). Information and communication technologies (ICT) impacts the spatio-temporal designs and practices of organizations, bringing about organizational and cultural changes. The transformation resulting from the implementation of ICT encompasses the flexible use of home workspaces and the flexibilization of work (Afradi & Nourian, 2020; Kingma, 2019). A geographical view on thin and thick places also involves a non-representational theoretical perspective, which orients the understanding of organizational spaces, including homes, towards its material, embodied, affective, and other socio-relational configurations (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011).

In organizational studies (Arrow et al., 2004; Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Watkins, 2005), the seemingly ubiquitous concept of place has been battered along a continuum of issues regarding everything ranging from bounded places, containing facilities (Dale & Burrell, 2008), to philosophical perspectives, including socially and materially produced spaces (Lefebvre, 1991). It has even been said that organizational theory often avoids localizing the problems of change or solutions in time and space (Czarniawska, 2004; Law, 1994; Watkins, 2005). In short, organizational theory may have to pay more attention to geographical theory concerning geographical place to develop tools for understanding contemporary problems that have a spatial dimension, such as WFH.

One way to investigate the effects of spatial detachment is to view how work relates to embodied enactments of organizational geographies in terms of 'thick' and 'thin' places (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; Jonasson, 2012, 2017). The thickness of a place can be defined by examining the effects of the quality of enactments on places characterized as thick (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011). Material, corporeal, and physical aspects of an organization may create feelings of intensity and of being part of a context that cannot be reduced to routines, material things, habits, meanings, or behaviours. Thick places depend on both the quantity and the quality of co-workers

sharing physical and intellectual proximity. However, it is not yet fully understood what happens with this thickness when workers work from home during longer periods. Thickness implies both material and immaterial aspects of the workplace. It involves the "imbrications of affect, habit, and meaning, inviting the self's 'concernful absorption' in place while presenting opportunities for 'personal enrichment' and a deepening of affective experience" (Casey, 2001, pp. 684–685; Duff, 2010). Thickness involves the physical presence in a place of people who produce the 'intensities' whereby "a body affects other bodies or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity of affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 123). In this context, thickness also refers to the physical thickness of many people present in an ordinary working place are surrounded by gadgets that enable them to do their job and keep reminding them of the organization they belong to (Jonasson, 2012, 2017).

Thin places can be defined by the absence of thickness in the aspects mentioned above resulting from working away from the central workplace. However, although thinness means detachment and the loss of bodies interacting, it also includes using technology, as compensation for, and a replacement of, the lost bodily, immaterial, and material interactions that create intensities and feelings of being part of a context. Some of the effects of the loss of thickness are mentioned in the management literature, where thinness and detachment from the central work place undermine the moral and actual authority accompanying co-presence at the office (Perin, 1998), that co-workers' engagement in teams is negatively affected by teleworking (Van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2019), and that the thin connections between workers and working places can lead to social and professional isolation that hampers knowledge sharing (Crandall & Gao, 2005).

Technologies also have the capacity, without physical contact, to pace and order everyday work activities in ways that expand work-related and organizational relations, routines, habits, space rhythms, meaning construction, and feelings of belonging to a context (see Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2019). Hence, thin places can support workers by creating and fostering social and organizational environments, commitment, and collective task performance, perhaps lasting even over long periods, such as the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic (Collins et al., 2016; Kaushik & Guleria, 2020; Windeler et al., 2017). This study intends to fill a small theoretical

gap in the relationship between WFH and workplaces by examining the dimensions of thinness and thickness in workplaces during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

This qualitative study uses interviews and snowballing inclusion selection among larger or telework-dependent organizations that allocate simple tasks to distance working. The study is based on semi-structured interviews, in which the same questions were asked to all participants in almost the same order, but in which the particular interest from the interview has been extended in relation to some of these questions (Longhurst, 2010; Mishler, 1986). In total, 12 interviews were conducted with middle and top management in three larger public-sector and two private organizations. The selection can be viewed as small in relation to the many thousands of workers working within some of these public organizations. However, the goal was to find interviewees on a level where they had the mandate to enable or restrict WFH, rather than representing the organizations in quantitative terms. Data were also collected more informally from three additional interviewees: one from a larger public-sector organization and two from private companies. Interviews were video recorded through Zoom using a mobile phone and were fully transcribed. One interview was conducted as a focus group interview with two interviewees from the same organization. The transcripts were anonymized, with no personal or organizational information retained.

The study concentrated mainly on three large Swedish public organizations that have a tradition of teleworking, but not within the scale or time that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of the larger organizations employed more than 10,000 employees. These organizations shared a similar view of teleworking and collaborated on policies and strategies in different forums. To obtain another point of reference from a source not involved in such collaboration, an international software and high-tech company with a strong emphasis on teleworking was also included.

It was considered crucial to find key representatives from these organizations who had experience in enabling, allowing, or restricting WFH

Table 6.1 Interviewees

Organization	Anonymized name(s)
Public organization 1	Pub 1a, 1b
Public organization 2.	Pub 2a, b, c, d
Public organization 3.	Pub 3a, 3b, 3c
Private company 1.	Priv 1
Respondent public organization 1.	Inf pub 1
Respondent private company 2.	Inf priv 2

during normal circumstances. It was believed that these functions could reflect on the organizational effects of detachment from working places and that they would be sensitive towards directions from the top level of the organization or would be at the top level in one case, thus being able to reflect on an overall level of the problem.

Ten interviews were recorded on mobile phone and one using Zoom. Two additional respondents, one from a private company and one from a large public organization, complemented the primary interviews. The transcribed material was analysed by searching for themes related to the aim and questions. These themes were then reduced and refined into the chapters presented here as virtual Fika; challenges for HR; and leadership in thin organizations. The study applies an etic approach where analytical concepts are transformed from the words of the studied to theoretical interpretations and concepts (Macnamara, 2021). These were not recorded. All 12 interviewees signed a letter of consent describing the project and were promised every effort to protect their anonymity, although no guarantees were given. Five of the interviewees were women and seven were men. The 12 interviewees were assigned the following names (Table 6.1):

Results

Managing Virtual Organizational Places

Due to the COVID-19 situation governmental regulations made organizations order staff to work from home. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, WFH needed to be negotiated. WFH requires different

organizational strategies to manage intensities, control, communication, engagement, leadership, social cohesion, and keeping staff healthy and well, thus creating effective thin places by simulating or copying behaviours from thick places. The interviewees reported problems with WFH and agreed distance working. More specifically, they felt that it puts ideas of place involving detachment, inclusion, and exclusion, located- and dislocated engagement in a different perspective. In a normal situation, staff who work from home or at a distance are dislocated from their ordinary working places. Now, staff members that are still working at the central office are dislocated from the WFH staff (who sometimes had to stay in quarantine). Thick places seem to be constructed when people are present in the *here and now*, not when they are at home: "I went into the office a few days ago, but no one was there, so I decided to go back home again," said a middle manager (Inf pub 1). Therefore, the organizations used technology to create, mimic, or replace the thickness no longer found in offices. However, the public organizations indicated to have few opportunities to alternate between physically and materially thin and thick places, as in the example of the private company. Apart from a few members, staff members of the public organizations are at the workplace almost all the time for various reasons (Pub 2a, b, d; Pub 3b, 3c).

The interviewees' reflections regarding future office spaces indicated a reduced need for space due to use of home offices They were thus preparing for a future of alternating between thin and thick places. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, office spaces echo with emptiness as workers do their tasks at home: "We are hoping to introduce a more activity-based way of working… New working spaces are expected to be cost-effective. There are large spaces not used today. Everyone needs to have a working space, but not all are here simultaneously" (Pub 1b). The arguments for alternating between thin and thick places hence appear to be costs- and effectivity-driven, and the realization by some public organizations that they have too much office space in places that are too expensive (Pub 1b).

Virtual *Fika*

The future may involve organizing work alternately in thin and thick places, which would require creativity from managers and HRM. The expressed benefits of thick places included managers and staff easily checking in with each other to see if they are doing well or need anything and the opportunity to resolve issues at the *Fika*. One respondent referred to a deeply rooted *Fika* culture in the organization. The Swedish term *Fika* is both a verb and a noun. It means taking a break with something to eat or drink, alone or with someone else, with the main idea of slowing things down. *Fika* places, however, are filled with more complex activities than just drinking coffee and chatting. "Fika can be seen as an in-between-activity of working activities. Fika also helps us organize time and create routines during the day through for example ritualization, temporalization, and sequencing by stating that it is: 'Fika time!'" (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; Brones & Kindvall, 2015; Jonasson, 2017, p. 8; Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007; Wegener, 2014). *Fika* socializes members and co-workers at a working place through what Casey (2001) and Duff (2010) call "the imbrications of affect, habit, and meaning" by sharing experiences at the same place and time during the day and thus also creates thick places. *Fika* is not meant to be used for talking about work at some places. It may even be outside the norm to talk about work. However, the *Fika* consists of a space and place for practices that are performed in between doing and thinking, allowing staff to discuss matters of concern and resolve issues.

The temporalization and sequencing of work in thin places when tele-working from home is not unlike those in the thickness of the workplace. Some respondents made their co-workers check in each morning by Skype or other means and ritualized ticking off an agenda and monitoring workers' logged-in time. They also created 'Skype corridors' for social interaction where events from thick places were replaced by technology in thin places (Pub 1b). They also measured production by how many cases or clients passed through the system. HR provided tips and suggestions for activities for enabling managers to continue engaging with staff although the managers were able to keep up this contact (Pub 1b).

When the situation requires more intense collaboration, and it is necessary to produce exceptionally good outcomes, face-to-face relations and the extraordinary intensities are considered irreplaceable. One interviewee with vast telework experience explained how a face-to-face meeting with staff members with diverse competencies unfolded in the company. The discussion at the meeting was described as the synchronization of input on a particular theme augmented by a non-verbal dimension:

> …and boom! You could almost physically touch it. And this is not possible to achieve without [everyone] being in [the same] place…. We usually say that eighty percent of all communication is non-verbal…. We use teams a lot, and that makes it possible to achieve some of these results, but it is still far from the situation where all the little where all the little chemical substances begin to act … and there are so many things going on. (Priv. 1)

Social cohesion and relations in thin places when staff members doing WFH are produced by mimicking relations in thick places using technologies and known methods for ritualizing everyday practices.

Challenges for Human Resources in Thin Places

The role of HR during and before the COVID-19 pandemic is not clear from the interviews. While some interviewees feared that WFH would negatively affect staff teamwork (Van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2019) and that social and professional isolation would hamper knowledge sharing (Crandall & Gao, 2005). Others could see that HR activities were disrupting the work pace and the challenges that come from the pandemic (Bennett & McWhorter, 2021). Strikingly, the negative outcomes regarding isolation were not reported by the interviewees. On the contrary, one interviewee said:

> Productivity and efficiency have increased… commuters who spend hours every day have saved time by working at home…. The engagement has, I would say, increased. But when it comes to the more holistic view of the work and organization, it may be the opposite. (Pub 1, with similar comments from Pub 2c)

Thin places where co-workers are not co-located do not seem automatically to lead to disengagement and a lack of a work ethos. One explanation could be that workers are reflexive and self-monitoring subjects who may increase their efforts when no one physically monitors their performance. It has been an engagement on a different level in the company, and in the future it may be different.

One of the challenges of WFH is assumed to be difficulty collaborating (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020). However, workers and managers on different levels have proven to be creative in using technology for chatting, sharing work, collaborating, and even maintaining social activities (Pub 2b). The pandemic has also allowed new ways of viewing HR. Kaushik and Guleria (2020) argue that COVID-19 has forced organizations to rethink their HR operations to continue to develop employees to be more innovative, proactive, and committed to their employer by having HR inspire managers to stay in contact and invent social activities at a distance.

What seems to be evolving as part of WFH is a new way of thinking that questions the intensive work of making workers committed and dedicated to their employer, which may not be as effective as formerly thought. However, it is not a clear picture, one consequence of WFH is that some activities usually created by HR have been put on hold, while others directed towards supporting managers have been more intensified (Pub. 1b). One of the interviewees even identified those 'normal activities' as disruptive: "Now we are doing what we are supposed to do, without HR finding ways to disrupt our work" (Inf pub 1b).

The period of WFH has also been reported as boring, with interviewees saying that their workers miss their peers (Pub 2c). Managers have perhaps assumed that the role of HR is to be inspiring, developmental, and to create a supportive organizational culture, keeping staff focused on goals, and supporting management in organizational change.

One task for managers and HR is that of monitoring and supporting the staff's health and wellbeing. At the same time, the social cohesion and control of thick places that benefit some people could also threaten the flexibility and integrity of others (Gil Solá & Vilhelmson, 2012; Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016). Many organizations have now clearly had extensive experience of teleworking and WFH due to the COVID-19

pandemic, during which staff members have been ordered to work from their homes to help protect and improve human health. In one sense, the interviewees associate thick places with social cohesion and wellbeing, especially of those workers that are particularly vulnerable to alcohol- and drug misuse when working from home: "Some persons cannot cope with working from home for several reasons, so they have an agreement on coming in certain days of the week to work at the office" (Pub 3c). The decision on whether a person is vulnerable or not depends on the organization's knowledge of the person's embodied disposition and history. This implies that the middle manager needs to monitor staff doing WFH with at-risk workers with concern and diplomacy. Handling these cases are also most often supported by HR activities.

The period of WFH also raises questions about activities that aim to both feed and nudge organizations in different directions. Such activities may work better in thick places. Still, there are also examples where HR has managed to transform activities around WFH by feeding managers' ideas about how to encourage the WFH staff, for instance, by inspiring and inviting them to a virtual *Fika*. The role of HR varies in different contexts. However, this study involving the COVID-19 pandemic may open new critical discussions about what was described as the perhaps overly intense role of HR since their work-tools seem to work better in thick than thin places (Bennett & McWhorter, 2021). The interviewees perceive that work has revealed itself to continue almost as usual, and sometimes even better in terms of performance when it is conducted at home or from a distance, whilst HR activities still depend upon and require thick places and face-to-face relations to conduct activities that are not at the core of day-to-day tasks.

Performing tasks from home raises new questions, ranging from whether it is possible to WFH to how to replicate accustomed routines and manage leadership at a distance over a long period. Even if organizations lose the social thickness evoked by feelings of 'we' and teamwork when co-workers telework, they are creative by for instance forming 'feel-well-groups' and organizing a 'remote battle' over assignments that could be completed at home, and a 'remote bingo', in which co-workers were encouraged to "jump around the house on one leg or call a colleague and ask how things are going" (Pub 2b).

Leadership and Control in Thin Places

A challenge regarding thin places and WFH is leadership. Many ideas concerning leadership are firmly based on face-to-face relations, and trust is believed to be part of such relations. During the WFH period, the interviewees say that they have exchanged the usual short and brief meetings in corridors with more intense, structured, and frequent meetings via Skype, Zoom, or phone. Control of staff also needs to be handled differently during WFH. Before the pandemic, middle managers had to balance between allowing people to telework so they could manage their work and private lives by being able to visit the doctor or attend to other obligations during regular working hours. Still, when teleworking lasted too long, it meant "…losing the feeling of 'we' and belonging. And this [belonging] is an incredible gain when we struggle together" (Pub. 2b). However, being in proximity does not mean that staff is always comfortable. According to the interviewees, thick places also create frictions, make power relations visible, impinge on individual freedoms, and produce negative intensities. For example, one interviewee mentioned that in physical meetings, he experienced occasional obstruction and challenges to his leadership from some workers who undermined the importance of the meeting by constantly looking at their watches or making disruptive noises. These demonstrations were neutralized and suddenly disappeared when meetings became digital (Inf Pri 2).

One dimension of leadership in thick places often involves formal or informal physical face-to-face meetings between managers and staff in the presence of larger groups. During the period of WFH, however, more meetings were conducted on a one-to-one basis via Skype. One interviewee reported that one worker said: "…when it is just me and you talking on Skype, I feel that you see me as a person and that feels good" (Pub org 2c). Instead of feeling distant and disturbed by the technology between them, the meeting in a thin place felt intense and focused; opposite to expectations, Skype created a thickness in an otherwise thin space.

Despite these moments, effective leadership requires trust between leaders and staff. One interviewee said that WFH made him aware of how rarely he usually sees his superiors: "We hardly meet at all [now], but

it works fine. He has trust in me" (Inf pub 1). It seems, then, that thick-
ness may be independent of technology, distance, or frequency.

Trust and control are two sides of the same leadership coin insofar as
the social contract between two parts needs to be in place or developed
through external or internal (self) monitoring. What is believed neces-
sary for an organization is likely to vary. For example, Perin (1998, p. 41)
said that teleworking could undermine the moral and actual authority of
co-presence in the office, indicating a firm belief in external monitoring,
co-presence, and face-to-face relations to monitor the staff physically.
However, control can also manifest itself in production measures that can
establish every worker's performed share of the planned production, for
instance, the number of cases made within a week or month. When such
output measures were emphasized, production in all the investigated thin
WFH organizations was high and sick leave was low.

Monitoring in thin places can also be a subtle and sophisticated task
expressed as: "a great concern for each other" (Pub 1b). Control is thus
built into everyday monitoring by caring for and confirming co-workers
in thin places. One respondent described how he checked to see whether
everyone was well and to look after the workers now during the pandemic:

> "It is more convenient for managers to pass by and ask how things are….
> We do not know how things are now during Corona. Managers call work-
> ers and try to capture how they are, if they are well, but of course, this is
> done completely differently when people are in place" at work. (Pub 2b)

Concern for the staff is a legitimate way to open a virtual door to
someone who is doing WFH in order also to monitor and control
the staff.

Conclusion

It has often been taken for granted that WFH in thin places lacks the
necessary components for embodied intensities, creativity, innovation,
and fostering a sense of belonging in organizations that are used to daily
face-to-face contacts, such as the *Fika* (Casey, 2001; Deleuze, 1988, Duff,

2010; Jonasson, 2012, 2017; Mulcahy, 2012; Paterson, 2005; Van der Meulen et al., 2019; Watkins, 2006). However, the results of this study showed the complexity when thick and thin places are added as theoretical components of work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thin places depend on the trust created with the help of frequent, planned, and structured events (Dale & Burrell, 2008). Although the organizations in this study reported that the best energies are created in thick places, they seemed able to cope with keeping control, encouraging employees, and handling security issues in the thin places created through WFH. At the same time, the benefits of alternating between thin and thick places can be learned from the private company that knows how to keep the organization together with frequency, intensity, and different ways of controlling, communicating, and creating social spaces beyond the physical and immaterial places of work and home.

The results show that cultural and organizational beliefs can influence leadership's scope and available ways to handle challenges. For example, an organization that strongly believes that physical interaction is necessary to control staff and execute authority will be challenged during extensive periods of WFH (Perin, 1998, p. 41). The study shows that there are other ways to monitor in a thin organization, including subtle methods, such as showing care and consideration for the staff and implementing measurable goals.

More studies are warranted on the role of HR in thin places. The COVID-19 pandemic may open new arenas for discussions on the roles of HR and general activities that could work both in thick as well as in thin places. The results show that work is going on almost as usual and sometimes even better through WFH. The most critical question to be answered in future research is who (in terms of roles) is most dependent on thick places and who continues to demand face-to-face relations to create corporate values and keep a solid organizational culture consistent and alive (Chatfield et al., 2014; Shachaf, 2008).

The results show that technology may reduce some of the tensions of face-to-face communication, and its use may also require more preparation if sensitive matters are involved. WFH requires different strategies for maintaining intensity, control, communication, engagement, leadership, social cohesion, and healthy and happy staff, thus creating effective

thin places by simulating or copying what is done in thick places by using technology.

This study shows that the theoretical consideration of thick and thin places can aid in understanding the role of physical presence in relation to strategies for WFH during the COVID-19 pandemic. This consideration can also be used to help understand the consequences of future teleworking or extensive periods of WFH beyond individual needs of physical presence, for instance, its effects on the market for office spaces, the sustainability of transport and commuting, the recruitment of competencies in wider regional contexts, the development of policies and routines, and the further development of technologies for working at a distance. The study shows that the COVID-19 pandemic may have future consequences in terms of how work is organized, for instance, in terms of how large office spaces are needed and where these offices should be located, and in what ways thin places can be created for sustaining a sustainable organizational culture without being dependent on the staff working on-site all the time.

Thick and thin places are created where the staff is. If the staff works from home or elsewhere, managers and workers will need to find ways to create thickness by using technologies. Thickness relies not only on physical interactions but also on senses of belonging, identity, and commitment, which can be fostered by using technologies to maintain communication, close leadership, and new and different ways of engagement and interaction.

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Part II

Reflections on How to Manage Hybrid Working: HRM and Leadership

7

The Employment Relationship Amidst and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of (Responsible) Inclusive Leadership in Managing Psychological Contracts

Melanie De Ruiter and Rene Schalk

Introduction

In the popular press, it is suggested that forced homeworking and quick adaptation to information technology brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has changed employees' expectations regarding how, when and where they perform their work (e.g., Caprino, 2020; Edwards, 2021; Kachaner et al., 2020). While homeworking and virtual work are not new to Western organizations, the implementation and use of work-from-home policies before the global pandemic were relatively limited

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(Van Veldhoven & Van Gelder, 2020). During the pandemic, some employees were negatively affected by homeworking due to a lack of social interaction with colleagues (Van den Eerenbeemt, 2020) or added stress (e.g., Van Ruysseveldt et al., 2021). Yet, preliminary research also shows that for others, perceptions of homeworking became more positive while the pandemic progressed, and a considerable number of employees would like to continue to work from home at least partly in the post-pandemic era (Kimnet, 2020). The difference in the experience of home-working begs the question whether employees expect homeworking and virtual work to become a (larger) part of their employment relationship with the organization and how such perceptions play a role now that government regulations for enforced homeworking have been lifted.

If organizations provide employees (increased) opportunity for home-working and virtual work post-pandemic, other key elements of the employment relationship such as communication with managers and colleagues, autonomy, and feelings of inclusiveness may be affected. Several studies suggest that perceptions of autonomy changed during the pandemic (e.g., Van den Heuvel et al., 2021; Zoomer et al., 2021). Anecdotal evidence also points to a potential increase in micro-managing and control by managers (Van der Heijden & Sterk, 2021). Moreover, aspects of inclusion which were less visible pre-COVID-19, such as "personality, abilities, thinking style, values, experiences" (Ferdman, 2018, 2021, p. 6), have become increasingly important during the pandemic. For example, employees who may have been actively involved in face-to-face settings but who are less technologically adept, may feel passed over or excluded in an online setting where they struggle to keep up with technology. Additional questions therefore arise, namely, do employees perceive changes regarding how they communicate with colleagues and managers, the level of autonomy they have, the amount of control imposed by managers and the extent to which they feel included? If so, how do these changing perceptions play a role in their employment relationship?

The popular press also emphasizes that due to the pandemic, individuals have become much more aware of social issues (Kachaner et al., 2020) including diversity and the environment. Due to this increased aware-ness, individuals expect companies to "integrate environmental concerns

into their products, services, and operations to a greater extent than they have in the past" (Kachaner et al., 2020, para 4). Moreover, one in four individuals strongly agreed that they would no longer remain loyal to organizations that they perceived to have acted out of self-interest (Edwards, 2021). Although such social issues may fall outside of the personal entitlements related to being able to work from home, having autonomy, and feeling included, attending to these broader societal concerns is likely to play a key role in post-COVID-19 employment relationships.

The notion of the psychological contract can be used to capture the employment relationship between an individual employee and his or her organization (e.g., Rousseau, 1995). A psychological contract can be defined as "a cognitive schema, or system of beliefs, representing an individual's perceptions of his or her own and another's obligations, defined as the duties or responsibilities one feels bound to perform" (Rousseau et al., 2018, p. 1081). Obligations relating to flexibility and autonomy encompass organizational obligations that, when fulfilled, benefit the employee. Obligations to valued causes that reach beyond personal entitlements such as diversity and environmental causes which "are implicitly exchanged at the nexus of the individual-organization relationship" (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003, p. 574) are captured by what scholars refer to as *ideological* psychological contract obligations (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003).

Albeit limited, a few studies have reflected on implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the content and evaluation of the psychological contract (e.g., Lopez & Fuiks, 2021; Peterey et al., 2021; Veldsman & van Aarde, 2021). The evaluation of the psychological contract is often captured by the notion of psychological contract breach, which occurs when the employee perceives that while (s)he has upheld his or her part of the deal, the organization has not fulfilled its obligations vis-a-vis the employee (e.g., Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The lack of research is surprising since forced homeworking and self-isolation have had a fundamental impact on how the organization of work is viewed (e.g., Veldsman & van Aarde, 2021). Moreover, despite the increased importance of information technology, knowledge on the role technology plays in the nature and evaluation of the psychological contract is limited. Yet,

following the pandemic, we particularly expect that for many organizations worldwide, the further implementation of remote working and virtual work, fostering inclusiveness and contributing to social causes and how this affects the employment relationship provides an urgent challenge. In other words, as indicated by Veldsman and van Aarde (2021),

> This period will see dynamic shifts in how organizations think about traditional workplaces, with a rise in "hot desking" (desks assigned to employees as needed) and 'co-working spaces' (organizations sharing office space and equipment) (…) Always-connected employees will become the norm, and this period could spell the end of the traditional nine-to-five workplace. (p. 76)

Moreover, we expect that employees will value ideological currency more in psychological contracts post-COVID-19. In fact, prior to the pandemic, Dixon-Fowler et al. (2020) already proposed that fulfillment of ideological obligations will become increasingly important for attracting, retaining and motivating employees.

In this chapter, which is conceptual in nature, we consider the role of leadership behaviour in managing post-COVID-19 psychological contracts. Although previous studies have considered the role of transactional and transformational leadership (McDermott et al., 2013), and leader-member exchange (e.g., Dulac et al., 2008), we propose that these leadership behaviours are less able to manage inclusion, and ideology-infused psychological contract obligations. In this chapter, we specifically focus on inclusive leadership (e.g., Shore et al., 2011) and *responsible* inclusive leadership (Booysen, 2021). Inclusive leadership refers to leader behaviour that focuses on fostering uniqueness of employees, strengthening belongingness to the team, showing appreciation, and promoting inclusion in the organization (Veli et al., 2022). This type of leadership focuses on internal organizational processes, while *responsible* inclusive leadership has a wider focus, "emphasizing a broader base of inclusion, by focusing on collaboration between organizations and the communities they serve" (Booysen, 2021, p. 198). In discussing how (responsible) inclusive leadership plays a role in managing post-COVID-19 psychological contracts, we consider the challenges of managing such contracts remotely. We conclude with recommendations for future research and implications for practice.

Psychological Contracts

In existing work on psychological contracts, a distinction between transactional and relational elements has generally been made (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019). Drawing from Blau's (1964) original work on social exchange theory, which includes economic (i.e., transactional), social (i.e., relational) and ideological exchanges, Thompson and Bunderson (2003) proposed to add ideological obligations as a third type of obligations to the psychological contract framework. Transactional obligations encompass economic terms such as the organization offering training relevant for the job. In return, the employee may offer to be flexible (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019). Examples of relational obligations include employee commitment and loyalty in exchange for promotion opportunities (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019). According to Thompson and Bunderson (2003), ideological obligations refer to those obligations that aim to fulfil a valued cause that surpasses self-interest. Examples include acting as an advocate for the cause and dedicating both financial and non-financial resources to the cause. From the employee's side, such obligations encompass addressing the needs of a valued tangible or intangible cause and dedicating personal time to pursuing the cause. In contrast to economic and transactional obligations, fulfilment of ideological obligations affects beneficiaries beyond the dyadic employee-organization relationship (Scheel & Mohr, 2013), whereas fulfilment of obligations in transactional and relational psychological contracts affect the employee (e.g., through promotion and benefits) and the organization (e.g., through increased proactivity and work engagement).

It is also important to note the difference in the theoretical mechanisms underlying transactional and relational psychological contracts and the ideological psychological contract (cf. Dixon-Fowler et al., 2020; Yeung & Shen, 2020). While the former are grounded in social exchange theory and particularly the norm of reciprocity, social identity theory is used to explain the underlying mechanisms of ideological aspects of the psychological contract (e.g., Dixon-Fowler et al., 2020; Yeung & Shen, 2020). According to social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity, if employees perceive that the organization fails to

fulfil its obligations, employees respond in kind by reducing their effort or loyalty to the organization (e.g., Conway & Briner, 2005). Ideological obligations on the other hand are grounded in social identity theory (Dixon-Fowler et al., 2020; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). This entails that employees are likely to "choose activities congruent with salient aspects of their identities, and they support the institutions embodying those identities" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 25). Hence an employee may particularly value and be attracted to an organization's reputation for corporate social responsibility or diversity management. If the employee perceives that the organization does not live up to its reputation and fails to provide the employee with the opportunity to contribute to valued social causes or does not treat employees from minority groups equally, he or she may feel that his or her self-concept (i.e., being party to a meaningful cause) is threatened (Dixon-Fowler et al., 2020; Yeung & Shen, 2020), which, in turn, will guide his or her response to breach. In a recent study, Yeung and Shen (2020) showed that breach of diversity obligations had a stronger effect on outcomes for majority employees, providing support that even when employees are not personally affected, they may react negatively when the organization fails to fulfil commitments to valued causes, thereby negatively affecting third parties (e.g., internal minority stakeholders). Moreover, breach of ideological diversity obligations affected organization-targeted outcomes above and beyond the effects of transactional and relational breach (Yeung & Shen, 2020).

It is important to note that albeit transactional, relational, and ideological elements are distinct, these elements can occur simultaneously within an employee's psychological contract (e.g., Dixon-Fowler et al., 2020). Yet, as pointed out by Dixon-Fowler et al. (2020), employees may respond differently depending on what type of obligation is perceived to be broken. For example, some employees may remain strongly committed to the organization when the organization fails to provide promised transactional and relational obligations if it upholds its ideological obligations.

Psychological Contracts Amidst and the Post COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Veldsman and van Aarde (2021), global trends including the COVID-19 pandemic will "impact the psychological contract by extending the definition of what employment entails" (p. 81). They propose that what they refer to as "inherent hygiene characteristics" will become trivial. According to Veldsman and van Aarde (2021), such characteristics include offices, benefits, and safe workspaces. Specifically, in the period following the pandemic, these scholars propose that rather than being a privilege, the ability to work remotely will become a 'basic right.' Moreover, they propose that organizational obligations related to wellbeing, a sense of belongingness, diversity, the environment, and the involvement of organizations in the public domain will become essential psychological contract terms in the coming years. Some of these suggestions are echoed by Lopez and Fuiks (2021) who also point to the importance of employee wellbeing and inclusiveness (which Veldsman and Van Aarde (2021) refer to as a sense of belongingness). However, Lopez and Fuiks (2021) and Petery et al. (2021) as opposed to Veldsman and van Aarde (2021) point to the critical role of safe working environments. While Veldsman and van Aarde (2021) suggest a safe working environment to be a hygiene aspect of the psychological contract that may become obsolete, Lopez and Fuiks (2021) and Petery et al. (2021) propose that a safe working environment was particularly pertinent during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., offering protective gear for those working in healthcare; face mask regulations for students and faculty on campus). The difference in perspective may be a result of the definition of a safe working environment or the context in which the propositions were suggested.

Veldsman and van Aarde (2021) mention the importance of diversity (internal stakeholders), the environment and taking part in the public domain (external stakeholders). Although these scholars do not refer to it as such, such contract terms are related to ideological currency in the psychological contract (e.g., Yeung & Shen, 2020). On the other hand, while Lopez and Fuiks (2021) explicitly refer to ideological contract terms, the examples they provide focus on organization obligations

vis-a-vis the employee (e.g., taking care of the employee if one becomes infected; listening to the employee's concerns) as opposed to obligations related to something outside the dyadic employer–employee exchange such as the wellbeing of minority employees within the organization or outside stakeholders.

Based on the review of the limited literature on psychological contract terms post-COVID-19, we propose that the main elements of psychological contracts, that is, transactional, relational, and ideological dimensions, will likely not change or be extended; however, the specific types of obligations that are offered within each of these dimensions will likely change. For example, within the transactional dimension, obligations related to providing equipment for home offices will become more pertinent. For relational obligations, safe working environments were previously mainly part of psychological contracts of employees working in organizations where dangerous situations are common. Yet, during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, safe work environments will likely become a more prominent part of psychological contracts in other occupations as well (cf. Petery et al., 2021). Moreover, we will likely see a shift in the *importance* that is attributed to specific contract terms. While flexibility and remote working were part of some existing relational psychological contracts, more employees will likely place emphasis on these contract terms after having worked from home due to government regulations. Moreover, due to social distancing and the willingness to work from home when new variants of the Coronavirus appear, employees will likely place more emphasis on feeling included (cf. Lopez & Fuiks, 2021). Hence, inclusion—"the degree to which employees perceive that he or she is an esteemed member of a work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265)—will become a more important contract term (e.g., Lopez & Fuiks, 2021; Veldsman & van Aarde, 2021). Furthermore, we propose that ideological currency (including diversity and environmental causes), a psychological contract dimension previously identified but generally only considered in relation to volunteer work or employees in the public sector (Yeung & Shen, 2020), will become more important to employees in other sectors and job functions as well (cf. Veldsman & van Aarde, 2021).

(Responsible) Inclusive Leadership

Veli et al. (2022) developed a consolidated conceptualization of inclusive leadership based on an extensive review of the literature, which captured 50 themes underlying four main dimensions of inclusive leadership. The first two dimensions (fostering individuals' uniqueness and strengthening belongingness in the team) are in line with earlier work (see Shore et al., 2011). The two other dimensions encompass 'showing appreciation' and 'supporting organizational efforts.'

Leadership behaviour focused on fostering uniqueness includes behaviours such as supporting employees as individuals, which is about managers giving attention to employees' feelings, expectations, and interests, and offering guidance or emotional support (Veli et al., 2022). This dimension of inclusive leadership also includes promoting diversity, which implies that managers recognize individual differences, show openness, value people's unique characteristics, help individuals to contribute, and listen to individuals' ideas (Veli et al., 2022). Other behaviours associated with this dimension are empowering employees, enabling individuals to take actions on their own, and fostering employees' learning and development, which gives employees the opportunity to further develop. Managers employing inclusive leadership are open to individuals' needs for growth and help employees to create synergy between their own goals and work goals (Veli et al., 2022).

The dimension 'strengthening belongingness in a team' refers to behaviours mainly on the team level such as ensuring equity, which can be achieved by showing integrity behaviour, ensuring justice and fairness (Veli et al., 2022). Building relationships is also crucial to strengthening belongingness and requires managers to work on the relationship with the team as a whole and facilitate positive relationships within the team. In addition, sharing decision-making, which entails making decisions collectively with employees to ensure their opinions are included, and building consensus within the team is a part of the dimension strengthening belongingness (Veli et al., 2022).

The third dimension, showing appreciation, refers to managers' reaction to achievements and efforts and includes behaviours associated with recognizing employees' efforts and contribution. To do so, managers notice the efforts of employees, show admiration for others' contributions, and praise achievements (Veli et al., 2022).

The fourth dimension, supporting organizational efforts, includes behaviours that target the organizational level and are related to changing the organizational strategy to be more focused on inclusion, such as being open to organizational change. Managers should be responsive to change, pay attention to new opportunities, contribute to organizational development, and show understanding towards resistance in times of change (Veli et al., 2022). Also a part of this dimension is promoting the organizational mission on inclusion, which is associated with communication on how inclusion is related to the mission and vision of the organization, and aligning organizational initiatives with inclusion, such as HR practices, and creating a more diverse workforce (Veli et al., 2022).

Booysen (2021) proposes that contemporary work environments characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), call for a blend of inclusive and responsible leadership. Inclusive leadership behaviour focuses on processes in the organization, namely behaviours focused at the individual employee, team, and organizational levels. Although inclusive leadership may focus on external stakeholders (e.g., community) through the dimension supporting organizational efforts, the behaviour is largely targeted at those operating within the organization's boundaries. Responsible leadership on the other hand is largely focused on practices and behaviours targeted at external stakeholders (e.g., Miska & Mendenhall, 2018; Voegtlin et al., 2012). Responsible inclusive leadership is considered to equally stress "the internal organizational and the external macro levels of inclusion on the one hand, and relational, ethical and sustainable practices on the other hand" (Booysen, 2021, p. 208).

Challenges in Employing (Responsible) Inclusive Leadership in Managing Post-COVID-19 Psychological Contracts

It is particularly important that employees, even when working at a distance and not engaging in face-to-face interactions, feel that their unique perspectives and contributions are still acknowledged and that they have the opportunity to contribute while working from their home location. Moreover, it is important that employees feel appreciated and recognized while homeworking. Although managers may have the intention to achieve this goal while employing the two dimensions of inclusive leader behaviour focused on the individual employee (i.e., fostering uniqueness and showing appreciation), several of their behaviours may interfere in their goal to include employees who work remotely. For example, due to a manager's concern for running a department successfully and being valued oneself, a manager may resort to micromanaging behaviour (cf. Wasserman, 2021) which can reduce perceptions of autonomy. As a result, an employee may feel that while (s)he is allowed to work from home, working remotely will not have a positive outcome for her/him. Inclusion encompasses "interpersonal practices that result in a sense of safety, full belonging, participation and voice" (Ferdman, 2021, p. 7). Yet, when one's manager is focused too much on controlling and checking one's work rather than giving an employee the opportunity and ability to be creative in one's work tasks, an employee may not feel (s)he is equally participating and able to express one's opinions. In addition to a manager's assumptions and concerns about one's own performance and standing in the organization, a manager's difficulty in trusting employees may also play a role in the manager's failure to uphold the organization's end of the psychological contract regarding homeworking (e.g., Kaplan et al., 2018; Wasserman, 2021). If managers do not trust that employees can perform well, or employees first need to prove themselves, managers may be reluctant to allow employees to work from home post-COVID-19 or managers may distinguish between who they allow to work from home or how often employees may work from home. Such decisions will likely

negatively affect feelings of inclusion among some employees within the department or team.

Managers may also find it challenging to strengthen belongingness in one's team while team members work remotely at least part of their work-week. This challenge may particularly arise due to differences between team members in their use of technology and communication skills. When employees work remotely, it might be more difficult to strengthen belongingness within the team as differences between team members such as different beliefs and perceptions towards information technology tools and face-to-face meetings may be less aligned. For example, research has shown that generation Z, also referred to as digital natives, born between 1995 and 2012, are able to consume information more rapidly than previous generations (Deas, 2021). Yet, it has been suggested that this generation lacks critical thinking abilities and face-to-face communication skills (Deas, 2021), which may pose a challenge for managers to strengthen belongingness among employees from different generations and encourage collective decision-making. Moreover, different views and expectations regarding flexibility and leisure time (e.g., Deas, 2021) may hamper the development of a cohesive team. In terms of fulfilling ideological obligations, differences between generations may also pose a challenge. It has been suggested that generation Z employees are particularly concerned with environmental issues (Deas, 2021). Consequently, it is likely they find it particularly important that the organization and their department or team contribute to ideological obligations. Yet, other employees within the team may have different priorities, which can hamper feelings of inclusion and cohesiveness.

The dimension 'supporting organizational efforts' also posed a managerial challenge during the pandemic, particularly regarding fulfilling ideological obligations. Based on personal communication between the second author and executive members of different organizations, in the first phase of the pandemic, when the COVID-19-crisis hit organizational functioning, and remote work suddenly became the main way of working and cooperating, many organizations focused on their main goals in providing services or products, while several strategic policy projects (focused on ideological obligations) were put on hold. Since the focus was more on making sure that production or provision of services

could continue, managers were particularly challenged in upholding ideological obligations. Yet, since employees find it increasingly important that organizations contribute to environmental and social causes, managers must ensure that post-COVID-19, the organization fulfils such obligations and offers employees the opportunity to contribute to valued causes. We propose responsible inclusive leadership is also particularly pertinent in fulfilling ideological psychological contract obligations. Similar to employing inclusive leadership, managers attempting to employ responsible inclusive leadership may experience challenges related to being in control, having the belief that they need to know the answers, and doing things on one's own (Booysen, 2021).

Recommendations for Future Research

An important limitation of our chapter is that it is conceptual in nature. We therefore recommend scholars to conduct qualitative research to gain a better understanding of how employees experienced their employment relationship with the organization during and after the pandemic. We propose such qualitative efforts should not only be conducted from the employee's perspective, but it is also important to gain a better understanding of how organizational representatives perceive the psychological contract with employees and changes or shifts they may expect in the near future.

In the present conceptual chapter, we focused on the role of (responsible) inclusive leadership in managing psychological contracts. We propose that scholars further investigate the role of this type of leadership in shaping the content of psychological contracts. We particularly stress the importance of focusing on how relatively under-researched theoretical perspectives in the psychological contract framework such as social identity theory help explain how employees respond to breaches of ideological psychological contract obligations and what role inclusive leadership plays in the relationship between breach and employee outcomes. Will the use of inclusive leadership be able to reduce negative effects of the organization's failure to fulfil ideological obligations or might employees

perceive betrayal by their managers (cf. Restubog et al., 2010) who aim to foster belongingness yet fail to contribute to key ideological obligations?

We considered inclusiveness obligations as part of an employee's relational psychological contract, while diversity obligations were considered part of ideological psychological contracts. However, inclusion obligations may also be part of the ideological psychological contract depending on how broadly it is defined, for example, safeguarding "equality among different social identities in the same workplace" (Mousa, 2020, p. 128), while diversity obligations could also be considered as part of the psychological contract between minority employees and their organization, since a breach of such obligations explicitly disregards an employee's ethnic identity (e.g., Tufan et al., 2019) as opposed to affecting a third party. We encourage scholars to consider these differences in future research on psychological contracts and to further disentangle minority and majority employee responses to breaches of diversity (Yeung & Shen, 2020) and inclusion obligations.

Finally, we urge scholars to further explore how supervisors and human resource managers can foster psychological contracts across generations. Based on previous research, it can be suggested that there are differences in what employees find important in their psychological contract. It is important to explore how such differences may affect belongingness in teams. Moreover, while the present chapter was limited to psychological contracts between an employee and the organization, team-level psychological contracts (e.g., Laulié & Tekleab, 2016) may become increasingly important while employees continue to work remotely at least for a part of their workweek. We therefore encourage more qualitative research to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in team psychological contracts and the role inclusive leadership plays herein.

Recommendations for Practice

Following Wasserman (2021), we propose managers identify key challenges and opportunities for employing inclusive leadership behaviours. Challenges experienced by managers may be a result of underlying assumptions of traditional leadership theories (e.g., Nurcan & Riggio, 2021). As

a result, human resource managers could consider redeveloping their leadership and management development programmes to emphasize an inclusive approach (cf. Nurcan & Riggio, 2021). Moreover, while *formal* programmes and inclusive practices can be helpful, some have proposed that explicitly labelling outcomes for specific groups can further divide social groups within organizations (Atewologun & Harman, 2021). Scholars posit that inclusiveness can be particularly fostered through *informal* behaviours. In accordance, we propose human resource managers "go beyond a traditional focus on addressing individual stereotypes and assumptions to highlighting and training managers on the differential impact of their everyday actions" (e.g., Atewologun & Harman, 2021, p. 106). This entails facilitating managers in understanding how their behaviours come across to employees. Although formal practices may turn a manager's attention to inclusiveness, it is important that managers do not (unintentionally) emphasize differences between groups of employees. Instead, managers benefit from informal approaches which show that inclusive behaviour is lived throughout the organization.

An important part of inclusive leadership is creating a sense of belongingness among team members. According to research, there are important differences between generation Z and other generations in the workplace. We propose this may hinder a manager's ability to create an inclusive team. Managers may want to try interventions such as reverse mentoring (e.g., Gadomska-Lila, 2020) to increase mutual understanding for differences in perspectives and increase employees' willingness to learn from other generations.

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Human Resource Management in Times of the Pandemic: Clustering HR Managers' Use of High-Performance Work Systems

Ann-Kristina Løkke and Marie Freia Wunderlich

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused high uncertainty and disruption for many organizations, challenging HR managers' accustomed use of human resource management (HRM) practices (Minbaeva, 2021). Although there is no standard procedure for the HR function to handle crises (Farndale et al., 2019), the HRM literature agrees that the focus should be on implementing HR systems, rather than individual HR practices, because when practices fit into a coherent system, they reinforce one another and create synergistic effects (Boon et al., 2019). While multiple conceptualizations of HR systems exist, the most researched and prominent HR system is the set of high-performance work system (HPWS) practices (Boon et al., 2019). Empirical evidence confirms that HPWS practices contribute to firm competitiveness and performance (Datta et al., 2005; Huselid, 1995), and

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meta-analyses support the positive linkage between HPWS and financial performance (Combs et al., 2006; Jiang et al., 2012). Since the challenging nature of the COVID-19 crisis is associated with significant strategic HRM concerns and the pandemic has stressed the need for HR practices that help to maintain performance in times of disruptions, questions about the usage and utility of HPWS practices arise.

However, knowledge and empirical insights are scarce about the use of HPWS and the landscape of HR practices in times of a crisis. Although the theoretical idea of horizontal fit exists, it remains unclear if and how HR managers combine practices into synergistic HR systems during a crisis. HR managers may adapt HR practices to their internal and external environments and focus more on some practices than others, or even skip certain practices (Jackson et al., 2014).

This study aims to explore HR managers' use of HPWS practices during the pandemic. Generally, HR managers play a significant role in the design and implementation of HRM policies and practices (Galang & Osman, 2016) and particularly in times of disruptions and economic downturns, they contribute to firm recovery and survival (Kim & Ployhart, 2014; Teague & Roche, 2014). By exploring their use of HPWS practices with a cluster analysis, we aim to unveil prevalent patterns of HRM system use and to follow up on the congruence between theory and practice in times of a crisis.

The second objective of this study is to explore and compare the found clusters with respect to individual and organizational characteristics, as well as HR managers' underlying perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing a snapshot of significant differences between the found clusters, we aim to shed light on potential factors that are associated with the use of HPWS practices in times of a crisis.

Overall, this study contributes to theory and practice in several ways. Firstly, empirical research on HR systems has generally ignored the internal and external environment of these systems, as well as the dynamic relationship between the environment and HR systems (Jackson et al., 2014). In this study, attention is directed toward the configuration of HR systems embedded and contextualized in the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing this gap in the literature increases our understanding of how HR managers adapt HR systems in times of a crisis.

Second, by taking the perspective of HR managers, we make up for the fact that they have been largely missing in strategic HRM research (Jackson et al., 2014). Considering HR managers' essential role, for example, for employees' commitment (Gilbert et al., 2011) or organizational recovery during a crisis (Kim & Ployhart, 2014; Teague & Roche, 2014), the voice of the HR managers is important to develop theory and guide practice.

Theoretical Framework

Dramatic changes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, lead to interruptions on the organizational, work, and individual levels (Morgan & Zeffane, 2003). At the organizational level, the pandemic resulted in different scenarios. While some organizations were hit financially and some firms even had to close down, others entered an experimental space in which organizational features were transformed and novel ideas tried out (Hwang & Höllerer, 2020). At the work level, work changed in technical, physical, and socio-psychological ways (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Many employees, including HR managers, experienced changes in the type of their work, routines and tasks, for example, due to working from home arrangements (Critzer & Koster, 2020; Hwang & Höllerer, 2020). Managers were leading remote teams for the first time (Caligiuri et al., 2020) and practices such as training or recruitment were immediately transitioned into virtual forms, replacing face-to-face interaction. At the individual level, many employees faced job loss and insecurity or stress, affecting their mental health (World Health Organization, 2020), as well as work-life conflict, making it harder to work effectively (Caligiuri et al., 2020).

HR professionals are responsible for designing HRM policies and systems in response to the external and internal environment of the organizations (Jackson et al., 2014). Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, HR managers face a dual burden. They are required to cope with a range of tensions arising from contradictory tasks, such as providing safety to employees while being involved in cost reduction and downsizing activities (Roche & Teague, 2012; Ulrich, 2020). Additionally, the

COVID-19 crisis required that they adjusted existing HR systems to the new challenges and changes in the work environment. An HR system can be defined as a combination of HR practices that are internally consistent and reinforcing to achieve some overarching goals (Lepak et al., 2006).

High-Performance Work Systems

One common HR system that has received the most attention from previous research is the HPWS (Boon et al., 2019). An HPWS is a bundle of HRM practices comprising recruitment and selection, incentive compensation and performance management systems, as well as extensive employee involvement and training (Huselid, 1995). HPWS are positively associated with individual and firm performance (Combs et al., 2006; Datta et al., 2005; Subramony, 2009). To explain the link to performance, many scholars have categorized the HPWS practices into the three dimensions of Appelbaum's (2000) ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) framework (Fu et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2012; Subramony, 2009). Accordingly, HPWS practices fall into the following categories: ability-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing HR practices. Ability-enhancing HR practices ensure that employees have the ability to perform their jobs. Examples are recruitment, selection, and training. Motivation-enhancing practices intend to increase and maintain motivation. Exemplary practices are developmental performance management, competitive compensation, and linking pay to performance. Lastly, opportunity-enhancing practices 'are designed to empower employees to use their skills and motivation to achieve organizational objectives' (Jiang et al., 2012, p. 1267). Examples of such practices are employee involvement in influencing work processes and information sharing practices (Subramony, 2009).

High-Performance Work Systems in Times of a Crisis

During a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, HR managers gain influence in formulating and implementing sets of HR measures (Roche

& Teague, 2012). Considering appropriate practices and their degree of focus is a pressing concern during a crisis for many HR managers (Teague & Roche, 2014). Surprisingly, HR managers tend to use bundles of HR practices less systematically and in alignment with the external conditions than expected (Teague & Roche, 2014), which raises questions about how managers configure HR systems in times of uncertainty.

From previous crises, we know that the various HPWS practices can follow different directions in their adjustment and usage in times of financial or economic uncertainty. For instance, when looking at skill-enhancing practices, namely recruitment and training, the downsizing literature outlines that a crisis leads to freezes in recruitment and cost reductions in HR, which might also impair budgets for training and development (Cameron, 1994; Gunnigle et al., 2019; Teague & Roche, 2014). However, in light of the pandemic and its peculiarities, things may look differently. Caligiuri et al. (2020) stress that employees lack professional stimulation during the COVID-19 crisis, leading to a rise in self-directed knowledge seeking. Accordingly, companies could respond to the heightened need for learning by offering more training. In terms of opportunity-enhancing HPWS practices, for example, fostering employee involvement in influencing work processes or involving them in meetings about the firm's strategy, expectations might be clearer. The COVID-19 pandemic has disconnected numerous employees physically from their workplace and colleagues, leading to lowered job satisfaction and poor health outcomes, such as depression or burnout (Putnik et al., 2020). Consequently, the usage of opportunity-enhancing HPWS practices that bring employees (virtually) together might increase in times of the crisis. However, at the same time organizations and their HR managers might be preoccupied with keeping the business running, leaving no time for employees to connect, collaborate, and participate. With respect to motivation-enhancing practices, similar dynamics might be at play. Previous research shows that keeping employees motivated, increasing employee morale and commitment are essential in times of a crisis (Teague & Roche, 2014). Meta-analytic evidence confirms that motivation-enhancing practices are positively associated with employee motivation and more distal financial outcomes (Jiang et al., 2012)—two desirable outcomes for organizations that find themselves in a crisis.

Furthermore, the availability of various inducements, such as performance-related pay, can lead employees to perceive their organizations as valuing their contribution (Eisenberger et al., 2001), which is particularly vital when direct feedback and support from managers and colleagues are lacking, due to working from home. However, in contrast, performance-related bonuses and promotions are known as approaches to financial labour flexibility that help organizations to adjust labour costs to the situation of the organization and economic changes (Wilton, 2019). The global financial markets came close to a collapse in March 2020 (Pak et al., 2020), which makes it likely that most companies might hesitate to pay bonuses or make extensive use of monetary incentive systems during the pandemic.

In sum, the above shows that the usage of HPWS bundles, or even singular practices, may take different shapes and directions in times of the pandemic, depending on the organizations' external and internal environments, which represent the dynamic context for the development and design of HRM systems (Jackson et al., 2014).

Methods

Data Collection

To understand HR managers' use of HR systems during the COVID-19 pandemic, we targeted HR practitioners working in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Most cluster analyses on work-related attitudes group the chosen Scandinavian countries together (Ronen & Shenkar, 2013). At the time of the data collection (April–June 2020), all three countries were fully exposed to the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Norway with 5.3 million inhabitants reported 3770 coronavirus cases. Similarly, Denmark with a population of 5.6 million had 2200 cases and Sweden with 10.1 million people reported more than 3060 cases (The New York Times, 2020).

To approach HR practitioners, we randomly sampled a list of 3000 HR managers from LinkedIn, identified their email addresses (N = 1238)

and send out a web-based survey with a reminder after one week. Following statistics from LinkedIn, 35%–39% of the population in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway are using LinkedIn, and HR managers might be overrepresented on the platform for reasons of e-recruitment. We thus considered LinkedIn as a suitable platform to get access to our target group. Additionally, we used three professional HR networks to distribute the survey link. Overall, we received 287 complete responses of which 77% indicated that they had been contacted via email, leading to a response rate of 20% for the email invitations. After filtering the data for irrelevant country codes and duplicates, 269 complete answers remained.

Sample Characteristics

Respondents were on average 47 years old (SD = 9.09), had an average tenure of 5.5 years (SD = 5.58), and identified mainly as female (76.3%). Half of the HR practitioners worked at large firms (47.3%), while the remainder worked at medium-sized (41%) and small organizations (11.7%). The majority of HR managers came from Demark (51.2%), followed by Sweden (25.4%), and Norway (23.4%). Concerning their job roles, more than half of the participants were part of the executive board or reported to the chief executive officer (CEO) (57.4%).

Measures

High-Performance Work System Practices. The HPWS scale by Gardner et al. (2011) includes distinct items for each AMO dimension with a dichotomous yes/no scale. Due to the limitations of the latter, we used the adapted version by Beltrán-Martín et al. (2017), who measured HPWS with nine items on a scale ranging from 1 to 7, with anchors varying to the question. To focus on the crisis context, each item received a short addition. An exemplary item for skill-enhancing practices was 'In times of the COVID-19 pandemic, on average how many hours of

Table 8.1 Descriptive results for High-Performance Work System items

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness
Motivation-enhancing practices				
HPWS$_1$ Performance evaluation practices	4.595	1.666	−0.395	−0.344
HPWS$_2$ Performance appraisal systems	4.454	2.566	−1.656	−0.273
HPWS$_3$ Performance-related promotions	3.825	1.838	−0.925	−0.062
HPWS$_4$ Performance-related pay	3.052	2.150	−0.982	0.686
Skill-enhancing practices				
HPWS$_5$ Recruitment practices	3.639	2.355	−1.604	0.091
HPWS$_6$ Training practices	2.680	1.339	0.805	0.936
Opportunity-enhancing practices				
HPWS$_7$ Employee participation	3.684	2.107	−1.393	0.172
HPWS$_8$ Employee involvement	5.465	1.952	−0.243	−1.058
HPWS$_9$ Employee collaboration	5.517	1.315	1.624	−1.245

formal training does an employee receive per week?' Table 8.1 provides an overview of the descriptive results for the HPWS items.

Factors of the Internal and External Environment

1. To capture the impact of the *COVID-19 pandemic*, we used three different measures to access the magnitude of the crisis concerning the organization and its handling of it. Items were 'Overall, my organization is negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic'; 'The executive board has communicated clearly and adequately about the COVID-19 pandemic'; and 'Overall, I am pleased with how my workplace has handled the COVID-19 pandemic'. We used a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

2. *Work changes* were measured by four items from Morgan and Zeffane (2003). Sample items are 'Since the COVID-19 pandemic, I experience a change in the type of my work'; 'Since the COVID-19 pandemic, I experience a change in how I do my job'; 'Since the COVID-19 pandemic, I am consulted about any changes', and 'Since the COVID-19 pandemic, I experience changes in the way my workplace

is managed or organized'. The response option was a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Finally, we included several other variables in the analysis, concerning the HR practitioners' tenure, age, gender, hierarchical position, country, company size, and degree of remote work.

Statistical Procedure

We analyse managers' use of HR practices by using cluster analysis. Cluster analysis is a technique that determines whether the data can be summarized in smaller groups of observations that resemble each other within a cluster, but are distinct from other clusters (Everitt et al., 2011). Thus, a cluster analysis is a convenient method for classifying and organizing large quantities of multivariate information into more meaningful entities (Clatworthy et al., 2005). Despite cluster analysis not being common analytical practice within HRM research, recent examples exist in the literature (e.g. Meyers et al., 2019; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2018).

We followed a two-step approach, as recommended by Clatworthy et al. (2005). To determine the number of clusters, we started with hierarchical cluster analysis, applying Ward's method and using squared Euclidean distance for measuring similarity (Clatworthy et al., 2005). Based on the dendrogram and agglomeration schedule, we obtained the number of clusters. Next, we conducted k-means clustering, which is an iterative partitioning method where the number of clusters is decided a priori and where cases can move between clusters during the process to find the optimal solution (Clatworthy et al., 2005). Finally, we examined the identified clusters and explored group-specific differences with respect to the items relating to the internal and external environment, as well as HR managers' characteristics.

Results

Results from the cluster analysis reveal that there are two clusters of HR managers concerning the use of HPWS practices. As shown in Table 8.2, the first cluster (Cluster 1; N=150) encompasses HR managers, who score high on HPWS use, whereas the second cluster (Cluster 2; N=119) comprises HR managers who report lower levels of HPWS practice utilization. Tests of differences between clusters mean yield significant results for all HPWS practices (HPWS$_5$ only at a 10%-significance level). It confirms that Cluster 1 is characterized by significantly higher use of all HPWS practices, compared to Cluster 2, which implies that firms in Cluster 1 have a more developed approach in most aspects of HPWS practices. Moreover, results reported in Table 8.2 show interesting parallels in the variation of singular HPWS practices, which hint at some general tendencies of HPWS practice utilization in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, both clusters reveal low levels of performance-related pay, recruitment, and training, compared to the other practices, which links to anticipated fluctuations in HR practice use, described in the theory section.

Table 8.2 HPWS practice utilization reported by HR managers during the COVID-19 pandemic

HPWS practices items		Cluster 1 mean (SD)	Cluster 2 Mean (SD)	Mean difference (p-value)
Motivation-enhancing practices				
HPWS$_1$	Performance evaluation practices	4.91 (1.547)	4.20 (1.740)	0.71 (< 0.001)
HPWS$_2$	Performance appraisal systems	6.15 (1.453)	2.32 (2.025)	3.83 (< 0.001)
HPWS$_3$	Performance-related promotions	4.63 (1.656)	2.81 (1.536)	1.83 (< 0.001)
HPWS$_4$	Performance-related pay	3.84 (2.108)	2.06 (1.772)	1.78 (< 0.001)
Skill-enhancing practices				
HPWS$_5$	Recruitment practices	3.87 (2.421)	3.35 (2.257)	0.51 (0.076)
HPWS$_6$	Training practices	2.97 (1.308)	2.32 (1.301)	0.65 (< 0.001)
Opportunity-enhancing practices				
HPWS$_7$	Employee participation	4.40 (2.003)	2.78 (1.892)	1.62 (< 0.001)
HPWS$_8$	Employee information	6.34 (1.231)	4.36 (2.138)	1.98 (< 0.001)
HPWS$_9$	Cross-department communication	5.89 (0.946)	5.04 (1.548)	0.85 (< 0.001)

Besides comparing clusters along the HPWS dimensions, we assessed if different HR system utilizations can be associated with group differences in terms of organizational, work-related, and individual characteristics, as well as the HR managers' perception of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results in Table 8.3 show that the two groups differ significantly in their perception of the pandemic. First, HR managers from Cluster 1, who are reporting higher levels of HWPS practice utilization, seem to be significantly more satisfied with their organizational communication and handling of the pandemic. In other words, firms that employ HPWS practices to a higher degree during the pandemic are characterized by notably more satisfied HR managers.

Second, HR managers from Cluster 1 seem to experience a significantly higher degree of changes in their work, for example, in the type of work, the way work is carried out and how the workplace is managed or organized. Furthermore, managers in Cluster 1 also experience significantly higher degrees of consultation about work changes. Although cross-sectional data prevents us from making any causal claims, it is interesting to see that especially individuals in highly interrupted contexts report higher levels of HPWS utilization.

In contrast to the above, the two clusters seem similar in terms of individual and organizational characteristics, as we do not find any significant differences except for the country. Cluster 2 includes significantly fewer representatives from Sweden compared to Cluster 1, implying that HR managers from Sweden tend to report higher levels of HPWS utilization in times of the crisis.

The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic enforced remote work for many employees. Although it seems that the HR managers in Cluster 1 are working remotely to a larger extent than those in Cluster 2, the differences are not significant. Thus, working from distance does not seem to be associated with the use of HPWS.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to shed light on patterns in HR managers' utilization of HPWS practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Generating insight into the work of HR managers during a crisis is a first step in

Table 8.3 Characteristics of the two clusters

Item	Cluster 1 Mean (SD)	Cluster 2 Mean (SD)	Mean difference (p-value)
COVID-19 pandemic			
The organization was negatively impacted	4.82 (1.754)	4.49 (1.948)	0.333 (p = ns)
The executive board communicated clearly and adequately	6.19 (0.915)	5.66 (1.445)	0.523 (< 0.001)
The workplace handled the pandemic well	6.41 (0.770)	5.97 (1.288)	0.447 (< 0.001)
Organizational characteristics			
Company size (%)			X^2 (5) = 6.664
1–9 employees	2.0	2.0	(p = ns)
10–49 employees	7.0	12.0	
50–249 employees	40.0	43.0	
250–999 employees	28.0	32.0	
1000–4999 employees	13.0	6.0	
+5000 employees	10.0	5.0	
Country of the workplace (%)			X^2 (2) = 10.349
Denmark	46.0	58.0	(p < 0.01)
Norway	23.0	28.0	
Sweden	31.0	14.0	
Job characteristics			
Reduction in working hours	2.60 (1.861)	2.81 (2.132)	-0.207 (p = ns)
Working remotely (%)			X^2 (3) = 5.395
Yes, completely	44.0	35.0	(p = ns)
Yes, more than 50%	27.0	24.0	
Yes, but less than 50%	22.0	27.0	
No, not at all	7.0	14.0	
Board membership (%)			X^2 (1) = 1.53
Executive	54.0	62.0	(p = ns)
Non-executive	46.0	38.0	
Work changes			
Experience of change in the type of my work	5.13 (1.579)	4.67 (1.832)	0.461 (p < 0.05)
Experience of change in how I do my job	5.29 (1.251)	4.91 (1.672)	0.386 (p < 0.05)
I am consulted about any changes	5.01 (1.541)	4.39 (1.688)	0.627 (p < 0.01)
Experience of changes in the way the workplace is managed or organized	5.44 (1.378)	5.08 (1.547)	0.364 (p < 0.05)
Individual characteristics			
Gender (%)			X^2 (2) = 1.30
Female	74.0	79.0	(p = ns)
Male	26.0	21.0	
Age (years)	46.45 (8.895)	47.39 (9.441)	-0.937 (p = ns)
Tenure (years)	5.35 (5.617)	5.51 (5.540)	-0.156 (p = ns)

understanding different modes of HR system utilization during a crisis. Our chapter unveils two distinct patterns among HPWS among Scandinavian HR managers: one group of managers engages in higher levels of HPWS practices, and one group indicates a significantly inferior use of HPWS practices. Finding two distinct ways of using HPWS practices underlines the observation by Farndale et al. (2019) that there is no standard procedure for HR managers to handle a crisis, yet, at the same time, we show that there are certain patterns for HPWS practices in terms of usage intensity and configuration. Consequently, our findings support the claim made previously by Teague and Roche (2014) that HRM theory must recognize different strategic approaches for HR system utilization during a crisis.

In terms of group distinctiveness, we find significant differences in HR managers' perceptions of how the crisis affects their work and how their companies handle and communicate about the crisis. Although our data does not allow any causal interferences, it seems plausible and supported in the literature (e.g. Jackson et al., 2014) that those HR managers being highly exposed to the crisis, and thus experiencing high degrees of changes in their work, use higher levels of HPWS practices as a means to overcome the crisis.

Interestingly, the profiles of HR managers are similar with respect to organizational and individual characteristics. From our study, it seems to be rather factors associated with the crisis that may shape HR systems use or HR choices in general than stable external contextual (e.g. organization size) or individual factors (e.g. HR managers' tenure, age). Accordingly, severe events appear to outweigh the influence of other factors that prior studies found to shape HR systems. It underlines the difficulty to apply existing theoretical and empirical knowledge one-on-one to a crisis context that is characterized by completely different dynamics. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that our observation is limited to the variables included in our study and that other confirmed influences, such as the HR managers' emotional intelligence (Cuéllar-Molina et al., 2019), stakeholder relationships, and commitment and awareness of owners to human resource management (Qiao et al., 2015) were not part of this study.

Recently, criticism has risen that established HRM systems run the risk of being obsolete by failing to incorporate novel and contemporary HR practices, resulting in the situation that 'high-performance work

systems require modification in the context of COVID-19' (Collings et al., 2021, p. 2). Although we see from the HR managers' answers that some HPWS practices are of lesser relevance during a crisis (e.g. performance-related pay or extensive selection and recruitment), we would attribute it to the circumstances of the pandemic and not to the fact that these practices have been replaced by more novel, contemporary HR approaches. However, the cluster characterized by low HPWS use hints that there is indeed a significant amount of organizations (44%) that either engage in other HR practices or—in the worst case—completely neglect HR practices in times of a crisis. On the other hand, the fact that 56% of the surveyed HR managers belong to the cluster characterized by high HPWS use speaks against the irrelevance or obsoleteness of HPWS practices. Particularly studies conducted in a post-crisis context may provide valuable insight into the future of this HR system.

Implications

Learning about different modes of HPWS usage during the COVID-19 crisis provides valuable insights and implications for theory and practice. As we find significant differences among clusters in factors not mentioned prior in the literature (e.g. change of work), our chapter highlights the context-dependence, as well as the variability of factors associated with HR system configurations. On that basis, we call for more crisis-related research in the future to gain a better understanding of the potential factors that shape HR design choices. This knowledge will guide decision-makers on how to adjust HR systems in light of specific contextual disruptions and thereby contributes to their preparedness during a future crisis.

Second, although HPWS is considered a best-practice approach, this research shows that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Yet prevalent patterns in times of a crisis. We show that HR managers take distinct routes in utilizing established HR systems. Specifically, seeing parallels between the cluster's utilization of singular practices (e.g. low recruitment) implies that there exists a shared underlying configuration of HPWS practices during a crisis. Our study contributes to the literature

by visualizing these shared tendencies and thereby provides a unique glimpse into an imprinting and major event that holds the potential of having a lasting impact on the HRM landscape.

Limitations and Future Research

This study does not come without limitations. First, data results solely from Scandinavian HR managers, which limits the study's external validity and transferability to highly different contexts. It would be interesting to replicate the study in other countries to draw conclusions about cultural influences on the HPWS in times of high disruptions and to assess the generalizability of our findings. Second, insights are based on self-reported data which increases the risk of common source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Although it is common practice to collect information about implemented practices from HR managers in HRM research (cf. Arthur & Boyles, 2007), future research drawing on data from other sources and actors (e.g. line managers, employees) could add to our findings, as employee views about HR practices may heavily differ from HR managers' reports.

Additionally, it is important to consider the fact that our study takes only one HR system configuration per organization into account, but companies may actually use different HR system designs for different groups of employees (Jackson et al., 2014). We do not capture those nuances in this study. Last, we have to bear in mind that the data of this study results from a specific time of the pandemic, namely its beginning. Literature indicates that some HR practices might be more beneficial or useful in some periods of a crisis, that is, before, during, or post-crisis (Kim & Ployhart, 2014). As this study relies on cross-sectional data, we do not process information on levels of HPWS utilization before the crisis, and we cannot rule out that the use of HPWS practices has changed over the time of the crisis. Our data is only a snapshot of the pandemic, and we have to refrain from proving causality. Repeated data collection would allow to draw conclusions if the crisis has translated into changes at work and subsequently into higher levels of HPWS practices, or if a higher use of HPWS practices results in more changes at work during the

crisis. Consequently, this study is best seen as a glimpse into the potential of using HPWS as an immediate response to contingency factors, namely disruptive and novel external events.

Conclusion

In the introduction, we highlighted that little knowledge exists concerning if and how HR managers combine HR practices into synergistic systems during a crisis. With the study at hand, we aimed to shed light on this question by drawing on the example of HPWS use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In our study, we identified two distinct groups of HR managers engaging in, respectively, high and low levels of HPWS practices during the crisis. Managers who use a high level of HPWS practices were characterized by perceiving more changes in their work context than those using low levels of HPWS practices. The two groups of HR managers did not differ in respect to individual demographics and organizational characteristics, which illustrate how external contingencies translate into the work of HR managers' during the COVID-19 crisis.

We conducted this study with the awareness that we will not be able to find a universalistic answer for the myriads of configurations of HRM systems that exist nowadays. However, we are convinced that this study identifies interesting trends and patterns which contribute to a better understanding of HR systems in times of a crisis.

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9

Changes in Learning Tensions Among Geographically Distributed HR Advisors During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Svein Bergum and Ole Andreas Skogsrud Haukåsen

Introduction

Background

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in studies on tensions in human resource management (HRM) (Aust et al., 2015; Gerpott, 2015; Keegan et al., 2019). Previous research has shown that HRM professionals face role ambiguity and paradoxical tensions (Legge, 1978; Legge & Exley, 1975; Caldwell, 2008). Paradoxes are defined by Smith and Lewis (2011, p. 382) as "contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time". Among the issues raised in these studies are tensions between HR and line managers (Link & Müller, 2015), for example related to priorities of strategic versus operational activities. The same type of tension has also been in focus within the HR-function, what Smith and Lewis (2011) call "performing tensions".

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Another category is "learning tension", which is about when HRM should gain new knowledge: the tension between stability and change. The learning tension within HR is our focus.

This chapter includes a case study of a geographically distributed HR function, which means that HR partners, in this case called HR advisors, are at various locations. Before the pandemic, there was limited communication between the geographically dispersed HR advisors, while the use of digital services was rather marginal. There was a tension between the HR advisors, who were located centrally together in the headquarters of their organization, and the decentralized HR advisors located together with their remote organizational units. Both types of HR advisors argue for the need of proximity to: (a) other HR colleagues (the centralized ones), or (b) proximity to the users of HR services, who are line managers in the remote organizational units (the decentralized HR advisors). Both groups argue for their solution, but it was difficult to understand the explanations for their arguments. The purpose of this chapter is to find reasons and explanations for such tensions, and to describe how tensions developed and changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This chapter contributes to the debate on the centralization versus decentralization of HR advisors: Should HR advisors be located in proximity to line management or in proximity to HR colleagues? It will also contribute to the debate on communication and knowledge sharing among HR advisors, both face-to-face and virtual. As this pandemic forced HR advisors to work in new virtual ways and provide new innovative solutions for the organization, this chapter also contributes to the question of whether geographical distance is an enabler or barrier to innovation. Our focus on learning tension is because communication and knowledge flows are important for innovations (Vera & Crossan, 2004). Smith and Lewis (2011) explain learning tension as the contradictions between allocating resources for new ideas versus investing in the exploitation of established activities, this means a conflict between existing practices and changing HR practices. Hence, our main research question is: *How do tensions related to learning among geographically dispersed HR advisors in a healthcare sector organization change during the COVID-19 pandemic?*

This question is further divided into the following sub-questions, focusing on changes in digitalization, knowledge flows and the effects of distance on work innovations.

- How is learning tension related to the digitalization of the work of HR advisors changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are changes in learning tensions among HR advisors related to knowledge flows and management support?
- Are geographical distance and technology enablers or barriers to innovation?

Theoretical Framework

HR Service Delivery

One recognized way of organizing the HR work of an organization is Ulrich's so-called three-leg chair model (Ulrich et al., 2009; Ulrich, 1995). This model divides HR work into three parts: (a) "Expert Centre" (Centre of Expertise); (b) Strategic HR Advisors (also called Strategic Business Partners), abbreviated as HRBP, and (c) Shared Service Centre. In this study, the focus is on the strategic HR partner, which in our case is called the HR advisor.

Characteristics and Tensions in the Work of HR Advisors

Boglind et al. (2021, p. 64) described a challenging work situation for HR advisors with several tensions. They observed that HR advisors should be sensible to user needs but should also be proactively able to support top management and provide new solutions. According to Gerpott (2015), HR advisors must often deal with conflicting claims and tensions, such as tensions related to identify, performance, learning and organization.

Learning tension: For HR to be a relevant strategic support in organizational change and innovation processes, individual HR managers or

HR advisors must adapt to the requirements and expectations placed on them (Legge, 1978). However, these expectations may be in conflict with each other because there could be tensions between allocating resources for new ideas versus investing in the exploitation of established activities (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Legge (1978) calls this "conformist and deviant innovations". Conformist innovators who go along with their organization's ends adjust their means to achieve them. Deviant innovators who attempt to change this means/ends relationship by gaining acceptance for a different set of criteria for the evaluation of organizational success and their contribution to it.

In an organization where these expectations are different, this will create tensions that affect the learning capacity in the organization. Ulrich (1995) pointed out that HR can be a strategic partner by utilizing the tension that exists in the organization to bring out different impulses, ideas and knowledge. We can also refer to Lovric and Chamorro-Premuzic (2018), who argue that "creativity and innovation can be enhanced by some task conflicts, expressing disagreements, negotiating between different views and working under a certain amount of tensions". They argue that "too much team harmony can kill creativity". At the same time, however, it is pointed out that high a level of tension within the organization can contribute to communication challenges that go beyond collaboration and knowledge transfer. Francis and Keegan (2006) and Jamrog and Overholt (2004) all say that a high level of tension reduces the learning capacity and HR's strategic position of power. Gerpott (2015) also illustrates learning tensions in HRM by giving an example that is relevant for our case; she compares HRM innovations, such as virtual instead of the face-to-face service delivery of HRM procedures. She does not explain more on this learning tension, but we intend to do that.

Distance and Proximity in the Work of HR, Types of Distance and Proximity

Contrary to the expert centre and the shared service centre, which are both considered centralized organizational units, HR advisors often used

to be thought of as decentralized with a geographical proximity to their users (line management and employees), with face-to-face communication being preferred over computer-mediated communication.

Nilsson (2019) describes geographic proximity as the physical distance that exists between different actors. Only a few scholars have discussed geographical proximity or distance as one of the paradoxes in organizing HR. Being some of the exceptions, Thilander and Skøld (2020) acknowledge that HR is urged to take the perspective of the entire organization on the one hand, but also needs to have a clear understanding of the individual business units on the other. According to Boglind et al. (2021), too much geographical proximity to the line causes HR to be more inclined to support the interests of line management and employees at the individual business unit level at the expense of the interests of the organization as a whole. Both Thilander and Skøld (2020) and Boglind et al. (2021), therefore, agree that HR needs both proximity and distance. Cognitive proximity can also be considered relevant and is defined by Nilsson (2019) as people sharing the same knowledge base and expertise, which enables mutual learning.

Technology, Distance, and Innovation

One central theory of technology in communication is the media richness theory or media choice theory by Daft and Lengel (1986). According to this theory, information media differ in their capability of dealing with rich information. In order of decreasing richness, Daft and Lengel (1986) suggest the following classification: (1) Face-to Face, (2) Telephone, (3) Personal Documents, (4) Impersonal written documents, and (5) Numeric Documents. The media choice theory therefore argues that the content of a communicated message determines the media choice. This theory is also applied to argue that distance is a barrier to innovation. Complicated information transfers such as innovation activities require a rich communication media, such as face-to-face communication. The common argument is therefore that innovation requires collocation. There are opposing arguments: Thompson (2021) argues that shifting to remote work can help groups generate better ideas, and more of them,

because it is easier to connect remote collaborators. Transaction costs for virtual collaboration are low because of digital communication services. Thompson (2021) also argues that collocated teams are in danger of group thinking, and that individuals are as creative as groups.

Methodological Choices

Empirical Context

The empirical context is a geographically distributed public organization within the healthcare sector in Norway, called the Inland Hospital Trust. The hospital has services in 40 locations, and there are approximately 10,000 employees distributed among these locations. The key informants will be two groups of HR advisors and their manager, in which some HR advisors are centrally co-located at the headquarters, while other HR advisors are de-centrally co-located with the line managers and operating units at geographically remote locations. We collected data over a period of three years (from 2018 to 2020). We started with interviews in 2018, and later the same year, we organized group discussions to discuss findings from the interviews. During these stages, we discovered significant disagreements and learning tensions between the two groups of HR advisors. In 2019, we conducted observations of various HR meetings. In the processing of this data material came the COVID-19 pandemic, and we saw that we had a unique opportunity to see how this crisis situation affected the tensions and knowledge sharing among the two groups of HR advisors. Thus, we conducted a new round of interviews, with subsequent group discussions and observations throughout 2020. The main source of data is through the interviews, but this is supplemented by the other data, as described below. A methodological challenge with longitudinal study is that it focuses on the informants' work over a long period of time, where we as researchers can influence the informants' working methods. We solved this by being aware of our own presence, so that we did not get too involved in their everyday lives. We used semi-structured *interviews*, as this is a flexible design that can be used almost anywhere

and allows for detailed descriptions (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Some of the main questions in the interviews were related to the goals, priorities, work tasks, and challenges of the informants. We interviewed 17 informants in 2018 with different backgrounds in the hospital, comprised of four men and 13 women. We asked the same questions in 2020, along with some new questions on the experiences of working from home, to some selected informants from the first round of interviews. The interviews lasted between 70 and 90 minutes each.

Focus groups were carried out in joint meetings with participants from the entire HR department. The group discussions were first arranged in 2018, before we conducted a new round at the end of 2020 to see the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Focus groups discussions were important to help clarify explanations and reasons for the tensions and strengthened the validity of our results.

Observational data supplemented interviews by adding a contextual richness. We observed 30 collaboration meetings in the HR department over two years. Factors that were of particular interest in the observations were: Who participated, when are HR advisors active or passive, how do HR advisors communicate and how is the culture for cooperation. In March 2020, the meeting structure changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regular Skype meetings were set up three times a week. We therefore attended all relevant meetings to gain a better understanding of how the tension between the HR advisors affected the collaboration that had been initiated through these new meetings. As mentioned above, we had a focus on the same variables, but were open for new patterns.

Pershing (2002) pointed out that *document analysis* can help to nuance and sometimes clarify the phenomena studied. Therefore, we used document analysis to gain a deeper insight into the processes and decisions that we considered to be influencing factors on the tensions between HR advisors. We categorized the documents into three parts: (1) strategy documents, (2) crisis plans for COVID-19, and (3) contextual documents, such as financial reports, leadership development programmes, and employee presentations.

Empirical Findings

In the presentation of our results from our empirical findings, we concentrate on some selected themes related to changes in geographical distance and learning tensions.

Changes in Geographic Distance

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a geographic distance between the centralized HR advisors and the decentralized HR advisors, which could vary between 20 kilometres and approximately 230 kilometres. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when all HR advisors had to work from home, all of them worked "alone", and no co-location existed between any of the HR advisors. In general, the geographic distance among all HR advisors increased because of the pandemic.

Changes in Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing Among HR Advisors Before and During the Pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the decentralized HR advisors emphasized the importance of geographical proximity to the line managers (and employees) they served, because this gave them insight into what requirements, expectations, and needs the line had for them. An informant elaborated:

> *We must be close to the line to be relevant. We cannot sit together in an HR environment, shielded from reality, and pursue strategic development that will not be relevant to the line manager. We must develop with the organization, and we must be close to where the development takes place and learn in collaboration with the line.* (decentralized HR advisor)

This quote shows that the decentralized HR advisors have an opinion that their most important source of learning and development takes place in collaboration with the line. This operational focus was pointed out by the decentralized HR advisors/chiefs as an important prerequisite for

being a relevant support in change and development processes. In this way, one can see that geographical proximity leads to more power to the line. An informant said:

> *It may seem that the division (line) wants HR to support the managers in personnel administration and thus to a lesser extent consider HR to be a strategic assistant.* (decentralized HR advisor)

This impression was reinforced through the focus groups/group discussions, in which it emerged that the decentralized HR advisors believed that geographical proximity was necessary to be a relevant support. The centralized HR advisors/chiefs had a different perspective. They believed that the most important source of learning takes place internally within HR. If the HR advisors managed to learn from each other, one would deliver the services more equally, which, in turn, would create more efficiency and predictability. With a centralized HR staff, it would also be possible to detach oneself somewhat more from the operational tasks, which would allow for strategic positioning and development. Then they believed that HR would find new and better solutions.

> *I think that the co-locating of the HR advisors will lead to a larger competence environment, where we can learn from each other and benefit from each other's expertise.* (centralized HR advisor)

An example that emerged during an observation of a joint meeting with the HR advisors was an internal survey of the line managers' satisfaction with the HR deliveries in the divisions. Strikingly, it turned out that the centralized HR advisors were perceived as more accessible than the decentralized ones. The centralized HR advisors were contacted by email and telephone, and often received answers shortly thereafter. The line managers who were geographically close to the HR advisors stopped by the office, but were often were met with a closed door as the advisors sat in at the meetings. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a learning tension therefore developed between the HR advisors, which hampered learning and internal knowledge sharing in the HR department.

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, and a lot changed. In March 2020, the Innlandet Hospital Trust stopped all elective treatments, and was placed in the second highest level of preparedness to respond to the increased infection pressure. The document analysis reveals that they had to quickly undergo major restructuring. Lives were at stake, and there was no time to lose. HR had to assist from the home office, geographically separated from the line management and HR colleagues. An HR advisors' group with a high degree of learning tension now had to work together to find fast and efficient solutions to take care of operations and employees in the best possible way. One informant said:

> *Everything was in emergency preparedness. I was given additional tasks, including recruiting people. On March 12, there was an abrupt stop. I sat in my home office but had a lot of dialogue electronically. For my own part, I thought it worked pretty well. Everyone had to step in and contribute with expertise and learn from each other.* (Head of HR advisors)

The quotes above show that the HR advisors were able to assist the leaders in a difficult situation, even though they had a geographical distance to the line. Subsequently, the learning tension within the advisory group before the pandemic may be one of the reasons why the HR advisors were able to assist with complex restructuring processes from a geographical distance during the COVID-19 crisis. The centralized HR advisors had a good competence in how to assist the leaders from a distance, something that was taught to the rest of the advisory group. At the same time, the decentralized HR advisors had good knowledge about operational procedures, which were important areas of expertise in these restructuring processes that were shared the other way around. The COVID-19 pandemic had forced the HR advisors to work together.

As the head of HR advisors said:

> *We had a lot of good professional discussions, and I actually experienced that I got much closer to some of the colleagues that I have not worked so closely with before. Even though it was from the home office and connected on Skype, I felt it was a good solution.* (Head of HR advisors)

The meetings were shorter than normal, but more frequent. HR discussed how to deliver their services from the home office in the best possible way. Gradually, the meetings were expanded to deal with information exchange between HR advisors. The meetings were also used to train technological aids, as well as how the advisors would cope with the new daily life in a home office. There were other tensions that the HR advisors had to deal with. The HR advisors had to assist managers in a confusing and demanding situation from a geographical distance. As a result, the advisors had to learn from each other to deal with the crisis they faced. One informant said:

> I have experienced that I have become acquainted with colleagues in a completely different way, by asking how they are doing, and perhaps it is the nature of the crisis that binds us together. I have gained a better overview of what people are good at so that I can direct my questions directly to the experts. This has strengthened the learning between us.

The pandemic led to an increased acceptance of each other's preferences and choices. The HR advisors became aware of each other's strengths and were able to work to a greater extent across areas of responsibility. HR advisors managed to utilize the tension that existed between them by utilizing each other's specialties. Their different approaches to learning and innovation were crucial for HR to be able to deliver their services in the way they did during the COVID-19 pandemic. We observed that the HR advisers were more open to cooperation across the centralized/decentralized groups. Throughout the pandemic, the meetings became more concrete and systematized, and experiences and knowledge were shared across these groups. Because of the changes mentioned above, the cognitive proximity within HR increased significantly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas the geographic distance was enhanced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cognitive distance between the two groups of HR advisors was reduced.

Discussions

In this section, we discuss two sub-questions to be able to answer the primary research question. We start by discussing the reasons for the learning tensions.

Changes in Learning Tensions Related to the Digitalization of the Work of HR Advisors

Gerpott (2015) illustrates one type of learning tension in HRM, as she compares HRM innovations such as virtual instead of the face-to-face service delivery of HRM procedures. We also saw this tension in our case, as one reason for learning tension before the pandemic was the assessment of the potential for the digitalization of services from HR advisors. Those who argued for decentralization and geographical proximity between users and HR advisors claimed that there is a lot of tacit knowledge in relevant processes, which to a limited extent can be transmitted and discovered via digital channels. This argument is in accordance with the theory of media richness (Daft & Lengel, 1986), which says that a complicated information transfer requires a rich communication media, such as face-to-face communication. Experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic period are that technology and digital services played a larger role in the work of all HR advisors. They were able to conduct their job, even at a distance. Some interesting or surprising findings are that even some complicated work tasks involving external partners could be done digitally. Internal digital meetings created more knowledge sharing and created more of a common ground for cooperation and innovation. Digital meetings and the use of digital services make transitions from the local to the regional more efficient, in addition to reducing barriers and tensions. The decentralized HR advisors discovered that it was possible to serve users to a larger degree through telephone, e-mail, and Skype. The distance forced the users to be more independent, structured, do tasks themselves and plan their contacts and requests to HR. These are findings in line with earlier telework research (Bergum, 2009). Technology was

therefore a facilitator rather than a barrier for the work of HR advisors during the pandemic.

What Are Changes in Learning Tensions Among HR Advisors Related to Knowledge Flows and Management Support?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the centralized and decentralized HR advisors disagreed as to what provided the best management support, as well as in how they best acquired learning, which led to tension between them. Such a level of tension challenges the organizational balance between change and stability (Smith & Lewis, 2011). The HR advisors from our study had built up a high level of tension when it came to their views of operational and strategic management support. When the level of tension becomes as high as in this case, this prevents the parties from listening to each other and absorbing the new impulses and ideas necessary to change in line with the expectations placed on HR (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the HR department had to restructure and assist managers with complex challenges and tasks from a geographical distance. HR advisors were given a more similar context framework consisting of more frequent meetings, which at the same time created a sense of community during the crisis. This reduction in learning tension, as well as reduction in cognitive distance, between HR advisors was crucial for them to learn from each other, in order to deal with the crisis they were facing. As learning increased among the HR advisors, they were given a greater leeway to assist on a larger and more complex level, which gave HR a central position during the crisis. This shows that a high level of tension reduces the learning capacity and HR's strategic position of power (Francis & Keegan, 2006; Jamrog & Overholt, 2004).

The learning tensions before the COVID-19 pandemic had created a distinction between the centralized and decentralized HR advisors, which resulted in different specialist expertise. This different specialist competence was crucial for the HR advisors to provide the support the organization needed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This shows that the

tension that existed between the HR advisors contributed to different approaches to different subject areas and an increased knowledge base, which is the most important element for learning, change and innovation (Vera & Crossan, 2004; Gerpott, 2015; Zupan & Kaše, 2007). These are important elements to be a high-performing support in change and innovation processes (Hauff et al., 2018). Therefore, it was useful that the HR advisors as a whole possessed the competence necessary to assist the managers in the change processes they had to go through. The learning tension within the HR advisor group before the COVID-19 pandemic helped the HR advisors to master the challenges they faced during the pandemic. Figure 9.1 illustrates that the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the learning tension between the decentralized and centralized HR advisors, which has resulted in a better knowledge flow and collaboration across these groupings.
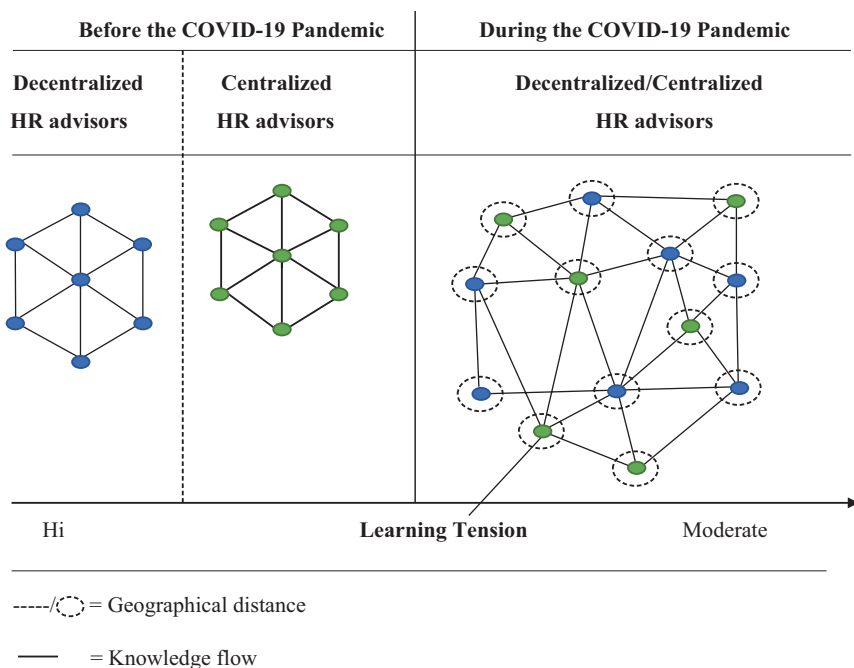

Fig. 9.1 Changes in knowledge flows between HR advisors because of the pandemic

Geographical Distance and Technology: Enabler or Barrier to Innovation?

Most studies argue that distance is a barrier to innovation. Their arguments are based on the study of Daft and Lengel (1986), who say that complicated information transfers such as innovation activities require a rich communication media, such as face-to-face communication. Figure 9.1 illustrated that HR advisors in common activities from different geographical locations were able to innovate to meet the need requirements because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We see that during the pandemic communication and knowledge sharing are across distances. Crisis might be one reason why this is possible, but also the findings by Thompson (2021) saying that shifting to remote work can help groups generate better ideas, and more of them, because it is easier to connect remote collaborators. Our findings support this. Transaction costs for virtual collaboration are low because of digital communication services, as it is easier to organize digital meetings, and travel time is reduced. Our findings also indicate that before the crisis the collocated teams practised group thinking, and this was a barrier to innovation. Another reason why innovation was possible across distances, also called distributed innovation, was that a lowered cognitive distance among the HR advisors made cooperation at a distance easier. This is in accordance with findings from Bergum (2009) saying that cognitive proximity can reduce the barrier for virtual collaboration, such as innovation. Our findings are however different from many other studies of network structures during the pandemic, where this often say that the number of networks and connections for employees have been reduced during the pandemic (Gratton, 2022, pp. 28–33), making innovations harder. Gratton (2022, p. 30) says that many studies show that strong ties were maintained, while the so-called weaker ties were reduced during the pandemic. Our findings are different, showing that it is also possible to develop networks and connections over digital media and transform these from weak ties to strong.

Geographical distance, the need for urgent actions because of the crisis, good virtual leadership, and a reduction of cognitive distance, are all

factors which contributed to a virtual collaboration among geographically dispersed HR advisors. Distance and technology enabled cooperation and innovation during the pandemic. Our findings also support Thilander and Skøld (2020), and Boglind et al. (2021), saying that HR needs both proximity and distance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we researched how learning tension affects the learning capabilities of HR advisors in a geographically distributed public HR function. We found that the different views with respect to the digital provision of the services of HR advisors, as well as learning and development, created a tension between the centralized and decentralized HR advisors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the preconditions for collaboration across the centralized and decentralized HR advisors were changed. Everyone had to work from home offices with a geographical distance to colleagues and users, combined with more frequent meetings in a crisis situation, which created a sense of unity and belonging. This led to a reduction in learning tensions and cognitive distance and changed the view of learning and development. This reduction in tension was an important element for the HR advisors to be able to learn across the specialist environments. The combination of a high tension before COVID-19, and a lower tension during COVID-19, was the balancing act that led to the HR advisors being able to learn from each other and be a relevant support in the innovation process. This study contributes to the field by showing how tension in a public geographically distributed organization can create a good learning environment, even across geographical distance by the use of digital services. This chapter also shows that distance and technology can be an enabler of innovation at a distance, and that also weak ties were applied for distributed innovation during the pandemic, different from many other studies.

Strengths and Weaknesses

One strength of this study is the different sources of data, and that data has been collected several times both before and after the pandemic. It also adds knowledge on how HR advisors/partners operate in virtual ways, and how a crisis can improve change and innovative capabilities, even at a distance. One weakness of this study is that the interviews during the pandemic are only with the HR managers, and not their users. This could mean that some challenges for remote users during the pandemic have been ignored.

Practical and Theoretical Implications, the Need for More Research

Earlier studies have mostly focused on individual HR advisors, while our study focuses on HR advisors as a group. It also adds knowledge on the potential of HR advisors to deliver their services at a distance, to use digital services and to collaborate at a distance. There is a need to further explore explanations, content, and the implications of tensions in the work of HR advisors related to learning, knowledge development, distance, and digitalization. One area for further research is mentioned by Gratton (2022, p. 33) and is to explore how more advanced technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) and internet of things (IoT) can support and improve innovations across distance among weak ties.

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10

Old Normal, New Normal, or Renewed Normal: How COVID-19 Changed Human Resource Development

Eduardo Tomé and Diana Costa

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Introduction

At the time of writing (January 2022), December 2019 seems one age ago. The name of the age, for the purpose of this chapter, is the 'New Normal' or the COVID-19 situation.| Before 2020, no one paid real attention when some scientists predicted the possibility of an 'asymptomatic virus'—those ideas were considered as 'science-fiction,' or even exposed in novels. However, as it many times happens, 'life is stranger than fiction,' and suddenly, in February and March of 2020, the way most of the people of the world lived changed considerably.

In this context, from a point of view of HRD, the COVID-19 pandemic poses at least four very big challenges because it creates four very big problems and raises four very big questions. Namely:

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(a) How is the new work environment composed?
(b) What are the individual competences that are needed in this 'new' work environment?
(c) Because these competences must be acquired, how may organizations, be them companies and other types, such as the public sector or the non-governmental sector, prepare and train the population for these new competences?
(d) Finally, and because the institutionalization of competences is an important aspect of the working life, how can organizations translate the new competences into skills?

These questions are still open nowadays. In this chapter, we want to compare the three 'phases' (Old Normal, New Normal, and Renewed Normal) in terms of work environment, competences, training, and skills.

The chapter will have the following structure: Concepts, Methodology, Findings, Discussion, and Conclusions.

Concepts

Normal

First, there was the Old Normal which lasted until February 2020 and in which face-to-face meetings were the rule and virtual contacts were only the exception and sometimes an elitist one. Second, in March 2020 with lockdowns and other forms of social distancing, the New Normal became to exist, in which remote work was the norm and in which face-to-face meetings and work mainly took only place among the low skilled workers and in low skilled jobs, with increased health risk or in very crucial sectors, such as the health sector. This situation began in March 2020 and has been existing in some harder or milder forms ever since. Thirdly, since October 2021, and in some countries, and despite the Omicron variant, governments and citizens have been trying to mitigate the damage that the COVID-19 pandemic does to everyday life, and some 'hybrid' solutions have been put in place. In this third situation, presence meetings exist when possible and necessary, but quite crucially, online meetings

exist if needed and if judged more efficient or safe. The big difference between this Renewed Normal and the New Normal is that remote work is not obliged anymore, but it is a possibility. And also, the big difference between the Renewed Normal and the Old Normal is that in the Renewed Normal, remote work is seen as much more Normal and useful and doable because, in first place, people experienced and learn how to do it during the New Normal phase. We must note that due to Omicron, some countries that had entered Renewed Normal had to go back to the New Normal during some weeks. But it seems that as soon the Omicron restrictions will be lifted, those societies will re-enter the Renewed Normal phase.

HRD

HRD has been defined as any activity enacted by organizations to enhance the situation of the workforce. In organizational theory, HRD is usually defined as "the organizing term for discussion and analysis of workplace learning" (Gibb, 2008, p. 4) or as "a process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organizational development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance" (Swanson & Holton, 2008, p. 8). Also, HRD has been analysed as having the following four interrelated functions: (1) organizational development (OD); (2) career development (CD); (3) training and development (T&D); and (4) performance improvement (PI) (Abdullah, 2009; McGuire & Cseh, 2006; Wang & McLean, 2007).

Our analysis will focus on the work environment, competences, training, and skills, respectively. Our conceptual model is the following: (1) the work environment changed because of COVID-19; (2) in this new environment, new competences are needed; (3) those competences implied the need for new training situations; and finally, (4) the new training generated new recognized skills. In the context of this paper, virtual development relations (VDRs) are forms of HRD that are made virtually. These relations existed in lesser forms before COVID-19, became extensive with COVID-19, and are becoming routine in the hybrid world of 'the post-COVID-19.'

Methodology

The research, conducted in January 2022, used papers from the SCOPUS database published in 2020, 2021, and 2022, or in print. The papers were selected using the following combination of keywords: (a) 'work environment' and 'COVID-19,' (b) 'competences' and 'COVID-19,' (c) 'training' and 'COVID-19,' and finally (d) 'skills' and 'COVID-19,' respectively. We ended up with a very significant number of papers in all the four formats: 548, 969, 3058, and 830. What we present next is a summary of the main messages we came across using the four combinations of keywords mentioned above, based on more recent work and 'saturation.' We believe that by exposing what we found, we may contribute to understand HRD and VDR after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings

Work Environment and COVID-19

Parts 1 and 2 in Tables 10.1 and 10.2 present studies conducted on the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the work environment. We did not include (with one exception) work related to hospitals, which in fact was the major part of the pieces we found, because we consider that hospitals are a very particular type of work in a particular type of organization particularly in times of a pandemic—these people were feeling the strain like no other and could not run away—and we wanted to find studies that could relate to a broader setting.

Based on Table 10.1, we can see that the studies we refer to were done in a multiplicity of countries and settings, and for a very large group of people. In general, the studies indicated that anxiety, stress, and isolation increased during The New Normal and mentioned opportunity and flexibility as characteristics of hybrid working, The Renewed Normal. The two situations were completely different from The Old Normal in which presence was the norm. These findings mean that the work environment

Table 10.1 Description on studies on work environment and the COVID-19 pandemic

Phase	Author	Method	Sample	Organization	Country
New Normal					
	Bryan et al. (2021)	Survey, occupational risk indicator	Disabled people	Employed	UK
	Malinowska-Lipień et al. (2021)	Courtauld emotional control scale (CECS), trait anxiety scale (polish: SL-C) and the authors' survey questionnaire	158 nurses	Hospitals	Poland
	Latorre et al. (2021)	Survey	386 and 281 teleworkers	Telework	Brazil
	Rao et al. (2021)	Self-administered survey	106 Respondents	Homeless shelter	USA
	Patjas et al. (2021)	Survey	121 primary and secondary school teachers across	Primary and secondary schools	Finland
	Tsui (2021)	Survey		Hospitality	Taiwan
Post-COVID					
	Babapour Chafi et al. (2021)	Qualitative	53 employees, staff managers, and service/facility providers	Public service organizations (primarily healthcare and infrastructure administration).	Sweden
	Crizzle et al. (2021)	Quantitative online questionnaire August 2020 and March 2021	146 drivers	Long-haul truck drivers (LHTD)	Canada

Table 10.2 Relevant content of the mentioned studies

Text	Conclusions	Implications
Bryan et al. (2021)	Disabled people in employment in the UK were significantly more likely to be going out to work during the pandemic rather than working from home and were working in occupations that were more exposed to COVID-19 than the occupations of non-disabled workers.	Are there sufficient safeguards for disabled people in the workplace? Are there long-term implications for a labour market where COVID-19 is a persistent health issue?
Malinowska-Lipień et al. (2021)	Infection with COVID-19 results in a higher level of anxiety and depression, as well as a feeling of increased work load.	
Latorre et al. (2021)	Recovery experiences moderated the relationship between i-deals and patterns of sustainable wellbeing at work.	Employee behaviours must deal with stress.
Rao et al. (2021)	Homeless shelter workers may be at risk of being exposed to individuals with COVID-19 during the course of their work. Frequent close contact with clients was associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection.	Protecting critical essential workers by implementing mitigation measures and prioritizing for COVID-19 vaccination is imperative during the pandemic.
Patjas et al. (2021)	Distance teaching has affected teachers' voices in a positive way compared with regular teaching.	This difference is likely to be due to better acoustics and indoor air quality in distance teaching conditions.

Matisāne et al. (2021)	Work from home has shown how different working conditions can be for the same type of work (office work). Therefore, the promotion of personalized workplace risk assessment should be encouraged.	Even if virtual workplace visits using photos and videos are not the traditional way of behaviour, the workplace risk assessment should be done, and is effective. Workers who report that their employers assessed their working conditions report fewer health effects. The experience of workers in participation in workplace risk assessment for telework might change the level and role of worker participation in the management of health and safety hazards at work in general.
Tsui (2021)	Significant relationship between organizational-climate job stress with wellness. Personal background factors, organizational climate, and job stress would affect the wellness of employees.	Reference for hospitality business owners to design better organizational environments for their employees, plan human-resource-related strategies, and provide training for their employees during a pandemic.
Babapour Chafi et al. (2021)	Main benefits of remote work: Increased flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance and individual performance; major challenges: Social aspects such as lost comradery and isolation. Hybrid work provides the best of both worlds of remote and office work, given that employees and managers develop new skills and competencies to adjust to new ways of working.	Employers are expected to provide support and flexibility and re-design the physical and digital workplaces to fit the new and diverse needs of employee.
Crizzle et al. (2021)	LHTD worked significantly more hours and consumed more caffeine; and more than 50% reported being fatigued	Improving the working condition of LHTD is critical to support their health and wellbeing, both during and after the pandemic.

effectively changed, and, as a consequence, new competences, training modes, and skills are required. This is what we are going to analyse in the remaining part of the paper.

Competences and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has been seen as an accelerator of changes which were already occurring due to the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its digital features (Ivaldi et al. 2021). Ivaldi et al. (2021) described ambivalences regarding the competences required in post-COVID-19 times, and the need for more articulated and complex view changes generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Quite decisively, Staniec et al. (2022) compared digital natives (who had experience working remotely before the pandemic) and digital immigrants (who started working remotely during the pandemic) and did not find that the profession, age, gender, and length of experience from previous work with remote work explained differences in the experience of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. This implies that both groups had to deal with the same emotions. Crucially, the same authors found that the growth of competence in employees is determined by having to work remotely. As a consequence of forced remote working, the new and difficult working conditions compelled employees to cooperate, even across company boundaries, and increase each other's competencies. Finally, according to the mentioned authors, in such situations, management is required to be emotionally involved and needs to be 'closer' to the employee, cognitively and emotionally rather than physically.

Within this context, Bejar and Vera (2022) found that in universities, the COVID-19 pandemic generated the need to improve the digital competence of teachers and students. De la Calle et al. (2021) confirmed this idea and placed it in the context of social sustainability, underlining the importance of social elements such as access to resources, heritage culture, intergenerational transmission, employability, or gender equality. This generic idea was described more into detail by Sharata et al. (2022) who hypothesized that the following competences were developed using student thematic online debates: readiness to work in a team;

ability to generalize, analyse, and adequately perceive information; ability to communicate according to language norms; and, finally, reasoned and clearly build oral and written speech. This hypothesis was validated when an experimental group had an increase in the value-orientation, cognition, and communicative-activity. Also related with academics, and probably with many other professions that had to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and who perhaps began working remotely as a possibility in the post-COVID-19 pandemic, Mousa and Samara (2022) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, employees were more interested in their level of relatedness (sense of belongingness) and their level of competence (sense of competence), than in their level of autonomy (ability to choose and/or participate in decision-making processes) in the workplace, as defined by the Self Determination Theory. Moreover, quite crucially, those people that developed a 'sense of purpose' for their duties in a time of crisis had less mental health disorders. Therefore, according to Mousa and Samara (2022), it can be expected that also in the post COVID-19 pandemic period, people need to feel a continuous sense of relatedness and find ongoing opportunities to work and learn to have a better mental health. In the same order of ideas, competence was found be one of the predictors of job satisfaction, with motivation, coping, and conflict resolution (Szabó et al., 2022). More specifically, experience in online teaching methods was found to enhance self-efficacy, which contributes to higher job satisfaction.

Bierema (2022) compared basically remote VDRs with traditional developmental relationships (TDRs) based on in-person interaction. VDRs imply both technological and human or social considerations. On the technological side, it is important to set priorities for the relationship, manage technical logistics, develop telepresence, and use emerging technologies, such as bug-in-ear tools and artificial intelligence. On the human and social side, it is important to build sensitivity and capacity to address justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion issues, and to navigate diverse situations where misunderstanding and distrust may challenge mutuality in the mentoring or coaching action. Crucially, Bierema (2022) considers that technology must serve the VDR to ensure that mentors and coaches facilitate and support optimal development of mentees and coaches.

In a quite different setting (i.e., construction operations), Kukoyi et al. (2021) found that stakeholders should be able to develop policies and strategies to promote risk control and foster compliance to COVID-19 safety measures. Also, in the health sector, safety training and the safe teaching of this competence have been proposed (Llamas et al., 2021).

The studies we just mentioned allow us to say that the COVID-19 pandemic increased the change to more digital settings. This led to new competences, which were consolidated through collaboration between workers. In this context, the 'sense of purpose,' the 'sense of belongingness,' and the 'sense of capability,' seemed to become more important than the 'sense of autonomy.' Given the risk inherent to the COVID-19 virus, safety, risk, and control measures became to matter of course. And, all this was summarized in a nutshell by Bierema (2022), which used a rather socio-technical setting to describe the technological and social issues of the competence model in the post COVID-19 era, and within a VDR setting.

Training and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Many training initiatives were developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chanana (2021) found that organizations promoted a vast number of training activities based in work-from-home regimes and remote settings during the pandemic, such as online family engagement practices, virtual learning and development, online team building activities, webinars with industry experts, online conduct weekly alignment sessions, team meet-ups over video conference for lunch, short online game sessions, virtual challenges and competitions, online courses, appreciation sessions, communication exercises, live sessions for new-skill training, online counselling sessions, recognition and acknowledgment session, webinars dealing with anxiety and stress, providing online guidance for exercise and meditation, social interactions in a virtual office, classrooms training modules digitally, e-learning modules, and many more creative learning sessions. Moreover, these activities were found to have a positive impact on the engagement and commitment of workers, and to be fruitful for both employees and organizations.

However, it is undisputable that the COVID-19 pandemic put serious problems to training. Eickemeyer et al. (2021), for example, found that training for individuals and groups is important to manage digitization efficiently: the most important fact was that older individuals tend to have negative attitudes toward digital transformation, and, as a consequence, appropriate counter measures were needed to help them become more tech-savvy. Moreover, Yarnykh (2021) found that for generations Y and Z in the labour market, there is a problem with the ability to think critically across multiple modalities of media, which makes it necessary to develop a corporate model of media education based on activities of micro-learning, mobile education, and development of project management skills. Therefore, corporate education needs to be both inclusive and reflexive. In this context, Arora and Patro (2021) explained how the PRISM methodology (i.e., Projects Integrating Sustainable Methods) may foster the agility and flexibility needed by companies to pivot from providing face-to-face training and advice to online courses, webinars, and wellness programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Chaves et al. (2021) stated that learning the main theoretical concepts is facilitated by the adoption of the so-called inductive training methods, which would be centred on the student. Furthermore, they presented a remote, low cost, open-source network platform to be used in training. That model would be capable of reproducing the behaviour of non-guided, low-power links under different configurations. Anyway, Roseley et al. (2021) found that the COVID-19 pandemic did not have a severe impact on the effectiveness of industrial trainings in the perspective of the students. In addition, comparing the self-evaluation of performance before and after industrial training, they found a significant increase in generic skills, especially regarding workers' personal attitude and professionalism aspects, a fact that is in itself very important in organizational terms. Regarding effectiveness, Bartnicka et al. (2021) found that in Polish manufacturing companies, doing Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) trainings, using the platform Moodle, gave organizations the possibility to conduct training at a distance, maintaining workers' effectiveness. The mentioned authors also found that mandatory feedback of the trainees ensured the possibility of continuous improvement and quality enhancement of both the program and the form of training. All these

detailed results made it possible to perform a precise adaptation of the training that was provided to other plants and even industries.

The socio-technical aspect already described by Bierema (2022) surfaces again regarding training. In this context, Mora-Ochomog et al. (2021) found that successful projects are based in transgression—meaning, in mixing of school and workspaces, and more precisely, in the students' social interactions with the company's training partner and with the teacher in the conceptual and procedural development of a specific disciplinary content.

Summing up, the studies we mentioned led us to the conclusion that successful training in remote settings depends largely on how to maintain intense and deep social relations. This result may place the COVID-19 crisis in the context of the 'Socio-Technical School' of the mid-twentieth century. Hence, times may change but important ideas remain actual.

Skills and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Crucially, the so-called soft skills have become even more important in the Industry 4.0 era, where the foundation of the whole system is based on an intelligent use and interpretation of data (Markowski et al., 2021). As an example of that need of use and interpretation of data, and to self-assess the decisive level of commitment of the top leaders in the process of safety management, Markowski et al. (2021) proposed a checklist approach, combined with a quantitative, weighted evaluation based on the relative efficiency indicator (REI). In the analysis, a positive value of REI may ensure the effectiveness of process safety management in major hazard industries and their appropriate adaptation to the corporation community.

Due to the new competences that the COVID-19 pandemic required, the pandemic generated many skills shortages; the fact was that all of a sudden, persons with qualifications adjusted to remote or hybrid work were needed, and what existed (basically), were people that new how to work in presence; so, quite surprisingly, the unexpected crisis created a gap between demand and supply of skills: and for societies and economies to survive, supply had to increase and adapt; in a way the crisis

created opportunities. Due to the implementation of remote work and the new costs with safety and health, it also generated an increase in costs and a reduction of productivity in some sectors. Regarding the construction sector, for example, Olanrewaju et al. (2021) found that compliance costs of health and safety regulations to prevent the COVID-19 virus to spread likely increased project costs by more than 20%, while the site productivity was reduced by up to 50%. Moreover, a 40% increase in skill shortages would occur because of the COVID-19 pandemic; this shortage happened because the demand of skills changed and therefore for a moment much shortage in supply existed, until supply adapted.

Chigbu and Nekhwevha (2021) considered that more than before the COVID-19 pandemic, in the automobile sector, workers have to treat their careers as if they were businesses, for which basic economic calculations and reasoning apply. Consequently, workers have to invest in skills under the umbrella of non-automatable technical and non-technical job families. These authors considered that retraining and reskilling may increase the workers' readiness to face and deal with job automation. However, retraining and reskilling do not lead to job security. Therefore, the tension over job security was increased by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much in line and adding to this, Peña-Jimenez et al. (2021) found that, due to the challenges faced by ongoing digitalization, cognitive, functional business, strategic, and managing people skills are considered important resources for the Industry 4.0. That is, all those four types of skills are more needed post-COVID-19, given the accrued importance of digitalization post-COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, Anholon et al. (2022) suggested that for the management of innovation and employee skills, the International Organization for Standardization standards are an important knowledge base for developing an information management system that is provides high credible information that can be debated by experts.

Summing up, the changes in work environment which produced the need for new competences and new training needs led to an increase in new skills, which were linked with hybrid or remote form of work and with the need for the successful implementation of digital solutions. So, a big change happened in the skills market, and the 'renewed normal' seems to be an acceleration and deepening of the tendencies that were emerging in the 'old normal.'

Summary of Key Findings

It is said that 'one cannot take a bath twice in the same river.' This phrase used to be mentioned refereeing to change. The COVID-19 pandemic was a massive change in our lives. We have been hearing discussions about 'how big' and 'how deep' that change was. However, sometimes, people and analysts tend to forget that our reaction to that change and the nature of the change itself will be related to the 'bath' we took. In other words, 'the renewed normal' will be mostly linked with the experiences we had during The New Normal. In what relates to the topics addressed in this chapter, this means during the COVID-19 pandemic, the work environment changed completely and abruptly for most of the services sector, and only disadvantaged people and sectors had to continue working in basic face-to-face work mode, with big safety and health risks. 'The Renewed Normal' will offer a mixed working environment in which digitalization will be fostered. However, the implementation of that new work environment as a remote one is limited by the need for presence and face-to-face meetings people feel. Having said that, the changed new work environments required new competences—mostly related with working and commuting at a distance. These new competences, in turn, required new training moods, which were put together through new and more developed and intense VDRs. Again, the existence of those new VDRs is not questioned. However, its efficiency and extended use is. Finally, the change in the work environment produced a change in the skills that were used and demanded, and again, the extent of the change depends on the way in which 'the renewed normal' will differ from the 'old normal.' Although the technological dimension of 'the renewed normal' would imply more distance, and although distance could provide workers with more wellbeing and job opportunities, the human basic need for presence and belonging may limit the use of new skills; on the one hand, people may not be interested, whereas, on the other hand, organizations may find that, in the end, the old way of working are more efficient than the new ones, and therefore the old skills are preferred to the new ones.

Discussion

The findings presented in this chapter must be discussed in a larger and deeper setting. In this context, some concluding remarks are very relevant:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic generated fears of a new long-lasting recession and financial collapse (Nicola et al., 2020). This ensured the need for resilient and strong leadership in healthcare, business, government, and wider society. Immediate relief measures had to be implemented. After that, medium- and longer-term planning was needed to re-balance and re-energize the economy following this crisis. Broad socioeconomic development plans, including sector-by-sector plans, and an ecosystem that encourages entrepreneurship were developed, so that robust and sustainable business models could flourish. Governments and financial institutions had to constantly re-assess and re-evaluate the state of play in order to mitigate the recession. The fact that the unemployment rate in 2021 came back to low levels after a rise in 2020, and that only inflation rose, seemed to point out that the government actions were rather successful. However, in the beginning of 2022, the war in Ukraine put a new stress in the world economy.

2. When analysing the fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0) through a theoretical and practical perspective, Ivaldi et al. (2021) found that the agile approach to work is the more suitable way to place humans at the centre of technological progress. This finding fits very well with the findings of the previous section, which indicates that the new working environment, in which VDR will exist, and its efficiency, will depend of the centrality of humans in the technological process and organizations.

3. Corporate social responsibility also became more important. More specifically, companies had to support workers during the COVID-19 pandemic as this had increased the pressure on organizations' accountability regarding workers' health and well-being (Chen, 2021).

4. Worker health was analysed as a modifiable spectrum (Brigham et al., 2021). Non-occupational factors (including age, race/ethnicity, sex, education, health care access) are associated with disparities in health

outcomes. Occupation is related to these factors, but it may also independently affect and further expand the spectrum of outcomes through exposure and income disparities. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic compounded pre-existing workplace hazards, shifting the spectrum of outcomes to harm in the absence of compensatory worker protections. Shifting the spectrum away from poor outcomes in worker health requires population-level interventions that reduce health disparities and improve workplace conditions and protections.

5. The analysis presented in this chapter were essentially based on data from private companies. Concerning public administrations, however, D'Avanzo (2021) found that public administrations have now to manage a new way of working. However, they do not have an adequate organization, because they are not 'smart' enough; within this context and given that work itself is in a phase of full transformation, opting for flexible and intelligent forms of work is crucial. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink its traditional forms.

6. Finally, it should be mentioned that, mostly, the analyses presented in this chapter are adapted to the Northern and more developed and affluent countries of the world, in which a knowledge-based and service-led economy exists. Even so, in these countries, many disparities and inequalities exist, which COVID-19 pandemic only reinforced and underlined.

The findings of the chapter may be of interest for practitioners because we put together some information that usually is dispersed. The findings may also be of interest to scholars because within the socio-technic reality, we describe there is space for a lot of applied research on the topics we addressed.

Conclusion

Humans tend to forget quickly. Before the pandemic, the world was balancing between digitalization and climate catastrophe. Then came COVID-19. COVID-19 was the first big shock the 'New Economy' had to endure. It was so big because it was exogenous (a virus) and it was

unexpected. And it was so general and abrupt that people began to compare with World Wars I and II. Two years on, when we were entering 'the renewed normal,' a new and very complicated started, in Ukraine.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was the question about the power relations in organizations between artificial intelligence and humans. Quite extraordinary, the COVID-19 pandemic increased the importance and the use of technology but also showed its limits more than ever—it is nowadays more evident than before that people are and should stay being the central element of organizations. Also, there was the question about sustainability—and the COVID-19 pandemic increased the urgency of sustainability, not only in environmental grounds, but also in economic, social, and political ones.

It is within this context that VDRs were developed, as a way to provide new forms of training, which refer to new competences, whose need was created by the instalment of new work environments, and that require new skills. All this change is ongoing and will not stop. And quite crucially, the biggest and defining element in that change will be the way people will relate to technology. Life changed, and will remain different, given that presence will become hybrid after having been remote. In this context, this chapter analysed changes in the work environment, competences, training and skills, according to academic research published in the past two years. The general idea is of a big and complex flow, which will lead humanity to a better even if unexpected future.

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11

How Can Organizations Improve Virtual Onboarding? Key Learnings from the Pandemic

Marcello Russo, Gabriele Morandin, and Claudia Manca

Introduction

> Andrea was ready for his first day. He had difficulty sleeping because of the excitement, so it was easy to arrive on time at the reception in the slot he had booked the week before on the company's app. Once there, Andrea found Sandra, who gave him the welcome kit and the laptop with the new email account already set up. "Thanks, Sandra!"—Andrea said—"I'm running home to start an online meeting with the new team at 9:30 a.m. I hope to see you soon!" Sandra replied with a smile and an enthusiastic "good luck" that set Andrea in a good mood on his way back. Once there, Andrea prepared a coffee in his Neapolitan coffee machine, put his sweatpants on, and turned on the new computer where the video conference app was already configured. It was 9:29 a.m., and Andrea was ready to start this new adventure.[1]

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[1] This example is courtesy of Luca Aldrovandi, IT and digital innovation recruitment manager at Generali, Italy.

Starting to work remotely for a new organization, as Andrea did, was a rare condition until 2020. Then, COVID-19—requiring social distancing to reduce the virus diffusion—forced companies to think of alternative ways of introducing recently hired employees (*hereinafter newcomers*). For this and many other reasons, we elaborate upon in the chapter, onboarding—which is the process through which newcomers become insiders of the new organization—is getting increasingly scholarly and managerial attention.

Scholars have found that onboarding is a critical moment that sets the basis for a long-lasting employment relationship (Bauer et al., 2021; Morandin et al., 2021). Indeed, newcomers cannot express their full capabilities if not adequately onboarded, even if highly talented and with prior experience. Besides, companies face considerable costs when the onboarding is not properly managed, especially when they have to replace several employees who decided to quit prematurely. In a study involving more than 114,000 Americans (Hom et al., 2008) found that the utmost desire to leave the organization usually occurs within the first 12 months of the new employment. After this milestone, holding a symbolic value, the possibility that a new employee would leave the organization drops. Hamori et al. (2012) confirmed this trend. They found that, during the first year, there is a very common behaviour among newcomers labelled "shopping around". This behaviour implies the continuous and spasmodic search for new job opportunities, often performed during working hours, undermining productivity.

Considering this premise, the purpose of this chapter is threefold. It aims to (1) explore the main goals associated with the onboarding process, (2) analyse the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brought about the onboarding of employees working remotely and (3) present some possible solutions to address them. To do this, this chapter develops

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a conceptual analysis that draws upon the literature on onboarding, along with contributions on remote and hybrid work. This chapter also provides some examples that are only intended as empirical illustrations of the conceptual insights. The authors had the chance to closely observe the experiences of business school students starting their internships amid the pandemic. Although these observations were not carried out within a formal piece of research, they have been used to exemplify the conceptual arguments. Indeed, students expressed legitimate doubts concerning their remote injection into the new context. *How can I successfully integrate into the new team while working from home? Would I be able to master my new role without interacting spontaneously and face-to-face with my peers and without directly observing their work? How can I cope with this condition of forced isolation?* These questions will be addressed in this chapter, organized as follows. First, the chapter summarizes the objectives of the onboarding process for newcomers and organizations. Then, it discusses some challenges and solutions for managing the onboarding process remotely to help newcomers and organizations fulfil their respective objectives. It concludes with some final reflections on onboarding in the post-pandemic scenario.

What Are the Objectives of the Onboarding Process?

Organizational socialization is a fundamental part of the onboarding process. While companies usually spend a significant amount of time training the employees, newcomers also devote time to engage in the socialization process. While doing this, they pursue three main goals (Bauer et al., 2021): (1) understanding the tasks and the priorities of the new role (*role clarity*); (2) learning the needed skills and how to perform the role (*task mastery*); and (3) understanding the relational dynamics of the new environment (*social acceptance*).

Differently, the main goal that an organization pursues—or should pursue—with the onboarding process is perfectly summarized by the title of the article by Rollag et al. (2005), "Getting New Hires Up to Speed Quickly". The primary goal for an organization is to create those contextual conditions that allow newcomers to quickly reach high levels of

productivity to create value for the organization and its stakeholders, reducing the *time for productivity*. Prior research suggests that the first months are also essential to develop feelings of identification with the new company and ensure that newcomers would learn the main values laying the foundations of the organizational culture (Bauer et al., 2021). This learning develops through a complex process often subject to slowdowns and road accidents. In some cases, newcomers' cognitive schemas and previous work experiences might create barriers preventing the quick assimilation of the new culture. It is also possible that newcomers would question consolidated organizational assumptions, struggle to understand some internal rituals and practices or hold divergent views concerning corporate culture. In a classic article on the topic, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggested that when these situations occur, it is necessary a formal organizational intervention, consisting of a gentle push or "nudge" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). The nudge usually entails formal socialization tactics or mentorship programmes that can prevent broader crises, possibly leading to newcomers' withdrawal or operational slowdowns—especially when they occupy managerial positions and publicly criticize internal problems and fundamental assumptions of the organizational culture.

What Are the Main Challenges Experienced by Newcomers Through Virtual Onboarding During the Pandemic?

The pandemic has fostered new ways of working that provide workers with greater flexibility and control over their work schedules. However, even before the pandemic, several multinational companies had already welcomed geographically dispersed employees virtually. Virtual onboarding was mainly used to develop mutual knowledge among distributed newcomers and sustain specific phases of the socialization process. These include virtual meetings with senior managers, training courses and introductory seminars on the company culture. This is the case of Microsoft,[2]

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[2] This example is courtesy of Maria Noguer, HR Manager at Microsoft, Portugal.

which has always organized introductory virtual sessions to present the company and its history, culture and values, regardless of the pandemic.

But what are the specificities associated with virtual onboarding?

The objectives of the onboarding process, regardless of its format, revolve around the reduction of initial uncertainty and time for productivity. However, some stages of the virtual process require additional attention due to the lack of physical contact between newcomers and peers and the newcomers' inability to visit the office premises in which some social structures and dynamics materialize and become more intelligible. Laura, an alumna who started her internship in September 2020, revealed her excitement to finally visit the company headquarters two months after the beginning of her employment. This visit allowed her to finally develop context sensitivity and get a clearer picture of her place at the new company. Laura's experience speaks of those of thousands of employees who got hired during the pandemic and had limited opportunities to socialize with their colleagues within a physical place that organizes social relations, facilitating coaching and interaction. Her reflections suggest that the virtual environment brings additional challenges to developing some relational and emotional mechanisms that support newcomers' socialization in co-located settings. In the following pages, we describe three recurrent challenges suggested by literature.

The Increased Risk of Social Isolation

The lack of spontaneous and informal interactions with colleagues represents an obstacle to disclosing personal information and developing close relationships in virtual environments (McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003; Tietze & Musson, 2010; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001). This may result in a drop in affection and interpersonal cohesion among employees, including newcomers, with possible repercussions on physical and mental health (Hesse et al., 2021). The enhanced risk of social isolation is also supported by pre-pandemic studies revolving around the experiences of those employees engaging with intense modalities of remote working, several days per week. These studies have shown that working remotely full time may increase the feeling of social isolation, favouring the onset

of negative emotions and the perception of not being able to fully understand some important social dynamics of the work context (Fay & Kline, 2011; Mark & Su, 2010).

In the context of virtual onboarding, these feelings of social isolation may negatively affect job satisfaction and identification with the new company, increasing the likelihood that the newcomers decide to leave prematurely. Social isolation is one of the main motives that prompted the strong desire in many people, every time the pandemic granted a pause, to go back to the office to interact with colleagues daily. In the second part of this chapter, we discuss some practices that may help people and organizations to reduce the perceived distance and keep nurturing those expressive ties that are emotionally satisfying and sustain the sense of belongingness.

The Slower Learning Processes

Distance learning allowed students worldwide to attend lessons regularly during the pandemic. It had numerous advantages and a significant drawback that all teachers regularly mentioned: learning is slower than its proximate counterpart. While teaching online, educators often report they must invest additional time to cover all the topics planned in a session. Similarly, for those newcomers starting their employments online, it is necessary to consider a longer time for grasping the social and cultural dynamics of the new work environment, achieving full productivity and understanding the characteristics and expectations of their roles.

The additional time is needed due to the reduced opportunities to learn by observing others and through informal conversations that are essential due to the tacit nature of the knowledge exchanged in the socialization process (Nonaka et al., 2000). Tacit knowledge, such as task-related experiences, resides in individuals and, sometimes, in the connections among them. It is highly personal, hard to formalize and can only be exchanged by spending time together in a shared environment (Nonaka et al., 2000). This means that people need a place to share experiences, feelings and mental models; a context for socializing that must be built on face-to-face interactions since these allow the capture of a broader

array of psycho-emotional reactions and physical senses that are essential to tacit learning (Nonaka et al., 2000). Obviously, it is still possible to organize video calls and use various corporate systems enabling continuous interaction among colleagues. Yet, the absence of physical contact and spontaneous exchanges, a typical feature of office life, hampers learning and cultural assimilation. Accordingly, we see companies extending the duration of the virtual onboarding period to avoid concentrating too many meetings and training sessions in the very first days, broadening the time horizon of the entire socialization process. By doing so, companies signal to newcomers they will have enough time to learn the specifics of the new job and become part of the new organizational context at their own pace.

The Hampered Development of Trust

"I'm sure that while we're here working hard in the office, he's at home on the sofa watching TV during paid working hours! I want to work remotely as well!" How many times have we heard, perhaps even uttered, such phrases before the pandemic outbreak? At that time, remote working was a privilege reserved to a few. Nonetheless, it was already conveying additional struggles to those employees who benefited from such arrangements, such as reduced fairness perception and stigmatization from managers and colleagues (Leslie et al., 2012). The inability to control employees while walking around the office and the reduced opportunity to quickly gather them for urgent meetings has always created apprehension for some managers (cf. Brown & O'Hara, 2003). This apprehension could be reduced by developing trust between managers and employees. However, how can we foster trust between managers and newcomers who have barely met each other online? Those who spend time together in a physical office might exchange not only task-related information but also personal and confidential talks that create the foundation of trust (Bechky, 2003). This condition does not immediately apply to virtual settings where the communication tends to be more pragmatic and task-oriented, partly explaining why it may be harder to achieve deep trust there (cf. Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). This echoes with the idea that "trust needs

touch" (Handy, 1995, p. 46). And yet, trust is way more important when working remotely, as managers and colleagues cannot exert direct control over people's behaviours and outcomes.

The business case for smart working[3] suggests that managers can use flexibility to delegate more responsibilities to their employees, nurturing their work engagement through autonomy (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021). However, we talked with managers who, during the pandemic, tried to cope with the lack of trust by convening frequent and unplanned online meetings; these worked as daily check-ins, aimed at exercising control rather than reproducing a sense of closeness and responding to organizational needs. Besides fuelling the so-called Zoom fatigue (Bailenson, 2021), these frequent check-ins endangered individuals' autonomy and trust relationships (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). This situation may have reduced self-esteem, particularly for those younger employees who have limited or no professional experience upon which they can judge their self-efficacy. Another factor to consider when analysing the dynamics that affect self-efficacy is the Pygmalion effect (Livingston, 2003) or self-fulfilling prophecy. This occurs when the perceived lack of trust from supervisors negatively affects the performance of individuals who, due to low levels of self-esteem and confidence, are more likely to make mistakes frequently, confirming the supervisors' perceptions and fuelling a counterproductive spiral.

Sustainable Solutions for Improving Remote Onboarding

Drawing upon academic and managerial literature and the insights from informal discussions with managers in our professional networks, we now illustrate some practices that can help organizations cope with the presented challenges. These practices identify sustainable solutions that help the organization create an environment in which newcomers can succeed and express their potential.

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[3] https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/about-ict/smart-working-at-imperial/smart-working-toolkit/smart-working-for-managers/business-case-for-smart-working/

Setting Up the Right Technological Ecosystem

A first successful practice in virtual onboarding consists of providing newcomers with the technology ecosystem to work effectively at home or elsewhere from the very first day. By technology ecosystem, we mean the collection of those technological tools, systems and applications that allow a company to run its business, along with their connections. The starting point is to provide newcomers with a personal computer with the already installed and pre-configured productivity software. Many companies nowadays do not solely supply a laptop; they also invest in ergonomic solutions that can favour the creation of a comfortable workstation at home. In 2020, ING, for example, granted 1500 euros for each employee to create the most functional workstation at home.[4] For their home offices, newcomers were thus provided with an additional screen to connect their laptops, an ergonomic chair to prevent back pains, a mobile standing desk to facilitate an active work style and a corporate sim-data to guarantee connectivity. Although providing people with these solutions might seem trivial and detached from the relational and emotional mechanisms discussed before, it is not. Our working environment influences not only our productivity but also our commitment to the organization. Research has shown how the romanticized trends towards flexible work often trigger feelings of de-humanization and abandonment that undermine organizational commitment fostering turnover intentions (Taskin et al., 2019). In such a context, the company's investment to provide employees with the proper working conditions may partly counteract these negative feelings. The *Human Relations school* (cf. Mayo, 1949) suggests that individuals interpret such investment as a signal that the organization cares about employees, their potential and wellbeing. Yet, many companies underestimate this aspect, wrongly assuming that newcomers are already equipped with a proper workstation and productivity tools at home. Yet, this assumption is not always met. For instance, during the pandemic, many professionals were forced to share their laptops with the rest of the family, including children doing distance learning.

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[4] This example is courtesy of Luigi Maria Fierro, Global Head HR Strategy and Analytics, ING.

Providing the right technological ecosystem is crucial in socializing newcomers working from home. However, the ecosystem provision alone is not enough. Organizations also need to share some guidelines ruling its use. These include the basic behaviours to be displayed during virtual meetings and calls. For example, it is important to emphasize the "camera-on" rule while taking into account the precautions for reducing the "Zoom fatigue", such as leaving the possibility to the employees to switch off the camera periodically or prefer traditional calls with no camera (Bailenson, 2021). By doing so, employees can take some calls while having a walk that can foster positive mood and energy. Finally, we should not forget that, as for all behavioural rules, the attitude taken in the first meetings and the example set by seniors play a decisive role in encouraging newcomers to follow these guidelines.

Practising Social Onboarding

We mentioned that social isolation is one of the main criticalities of remote working, also reflected in the onboarding process. This issue may prompt the newcomer to wonder: *Will I ever be able to deliver a good impression to my colleagues and really get to know them? How can we collaborate on an informal basis? How can I learn from my boss and more experienced staff?*

These legitimate questions can be addressed by presenting newcomers with a detailed plan of their onboarding process. This plan should go beyond the mere "Let's make an introductory call a few days before your start" that, unfortunately, is still broadly used to welcome newcomers in many companies. Besides a formal introductory meeting, the plan should include various occasions in which newcomers can share experiences and grasp who is working with what while sympathizing and empathizing with the new colleagues. This is a crucial aspect of the onboarding process that, if not properly managed, may exacerbate the anxiety and negative emotions that stem from the prolonged isolation experienced by many workers, particularly during the pandemic. According to a recent study (Fica, 2018), 17% of those who left the company within a few weeks from the beginning of their assignment claimed that a "simple smile" or

some "friendly support" from a colleague would have made the difference in their choice of leaving or staying.

Companies should therefore adopt creative solutions to prevent new-comers from feeling socially isolated. For instance, recent literature suggests that an effective practice to sustain social relationships in virtual and hybrid environments consists of organizing new rituals as a form of para-sociality (Boyns & Loprieno, 2013; Manca, 2021). From March 2020, we—the authors—developed the habit of organizing a quick FaceTime almost every morning. During these 15–20-minute regular meetings, we had coffee together and talked about movies, sport, family and (a bit) of work. It was an everyday moment that significantly reduced the perceived distance and kept morale high.

If properly used and designed, these virtual modes of interaction can also augment social experiences. Seabra (2020), an entrepreneur in fin-tech, explained how online social activities enabled her to strengthen the bonds with many collaborators. She discovered new things about them while virtually visiting their apartments or doing sports together from the respective living rooms. In a similar vein, some companies created perma-nent Zoom rooms where employees can chit-chat with colleagues and have lunches together, albeit in front of a screen. All these initiatives should be participated voluntarily. Yet, some noses may turn up while reading about them; indeed, employees are already obliged to spend long hours in front of a screen with the risk of incurring in additional fatigue and a sense of alienation. However, we must not forget that many off-site workers live alone, away from their families; these people have spent many months in lockdown with limited opportunities for social interac-tions. Interestingly, in a message sent in spring 2021 to all its managers, Microsoft reasserted the importance of reinforcing the relational "basics" for setting up a good working environment. The company stressed that informal and recreational events are beneficial only when the team is already cohesive and its members clearly understand each other's tasks, roles and cognitive framework. These are critical aspects highlighted by internal research conducted by Microsoft during the pandemic, involv-ing 25,000 employees worldwide. According to this research, to get the most out of these activities, the team should be able to identify and set its internal priorities. Also, supervisors should devote attention to their

collaborators' work-life balance. This research also confirmed an important aspect emphasized by prior studies (Ellis et al., 2017): The boss is the most crucial actor in the onboarding process. Hence, supervisors need to be attentive to the social integration of the newcomers who work remotely. If virtual socialization is not effective—since employees might experience difficulties having personal conversations with participants, beyond trivial matters—other options can be leveraged. For instance, research on hybrid settings suggests that managers place more emphasis on arranging regular one-to-one meetings to follow up on employees' working conditions and get early signs of eventual difficulties (Halford, 2005). In the context of onboarding, these meetings might be even more important as they can serve as follow-ups on newcomers' experiences, allowing managers to quickly grasp their eventual difficulties and support their integration in the hybrid team.

Gamifying

Learning can be slower in virtual settings. With this regard, an interesting venue for enhancing the onboarding process employing technologies is represented by gamification. Gamification refers to the application of the game design elements to real-life contexts, including organizational change and talent management (Robson et al., 2015). These elements encompass points, performance graphs, badges, leaderboards, avatars and teamwork that, if wisely combined, can fulfil individual needs for competence, autonomy and social relatedness, unleashing motivation and learning (Sailer et al., 2017).

Companies can use gamification to create a more engaging onboarding and learning experience. For instance, when combined with virtual reality, gamified applications can embed newcomers in virtual work samples: Simulations of real-life situations that can be used to develop critical skills for their jobs. Through gamification, it is also possible to organize challenges among newcomers to accelerate learning and encourage opportunities for collaboration with their buddies and other team members. An example of this is the onboarding process designed by Accenture. The new consultants, helped by a buddy, complete a set of challenges on

the main aspects constituting the pillars of corporate culture, HR policies and internal security procedures. Besides facilitating learning, when involving team activities, gamification creates moments of fun to recharge and help newcomers break the ice with their new colleagues.

Creating Collaborative Virtual Spaces for Newcomers

Research suggests the importance of rapidly integrating newcomers in collective projects to work in close contact with the rest of the team (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). Collaborative work on projects should be supported by sharing technologies integrated into everyday workflows and other software designed explicitly for group project management. Several companies have introduced collaborative spaces as a critical part of virtual onboarding to cope with the exacerbated risk of social isolation. Google, for instance, has transformed and centred its entire onboarding process on belongingness[5] as this emerged as a fundamental need that the newcomers wish to satisfy in the early stages of the new employment. Possible strategies include staffing newcomers in projects that require collaboration and continuous exchanges with other team members. Another practice that has proved effective during the lockdown—which could also be extended to a post-pandemic scenario—consists of arranging group video calls where employees work together on individual tasks (see also Zakaria et al., 2004).

These calls recreate typical office situations by encouraging jokes, quick messages and spontaneous interactions between connected colleagues. This also allows coping with another criticality reported by many during the pandemic: The prevalence of pragmatism during online meetings and other forms of communication mediated by videos. The video calls tend to be short, concise and goal oriented. In contrast, the lightness typical of face-to-face interactions, together with its non-verbal dimension often carrying deeper meanings, gets lost.

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[5] https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/connections-onboarding-and-the-need-to-belong/

Preventing Information Overload

Information overload is a frequent risk for newcomers who, in a limited period, must absorb a large amount of information while dealing with the pressure of delivering a good first impression. This is the case of Claudio, another student at our school, who felt a sense of bewilderment at the end of his first week of work. In an informal conversation with the authors, Claudio admitted that he felt overwhelmed with the information load made of procedures, systems, rules, colleagues' names, roles and projects. This is an issue characterizing both virtual and physical onboarding. Yet, research on virtual teams suggests that the former context may require greater attention due to the simultaneity of the inputs, the communication overload and the lower quality of the information exchanged (Ellwart et al., 2015).

To cope with this situation, some companies have developed applications aiding information seeking. These applications can have different degrees of sophistication, from apps simply reproducing the internal organizational structure in which employees can search for colleagues by typing their surnames or areas to those that process natural language, such as the one developed by Generali, an Italian Insurance company. Instead of searching for people's names, newcomers at Generali can write entire sentences in the search field. "Who can I contact to open a ticket related to a hardware problem?", "Who should I contact to request meal vouchers?", or "Who is an expert in coding and SQL?"; the app provides the needed information on demand.

Another effective strategy preventing newcomers' information overload is to include short training sessions modelled on webinars for approximately 60–90 minutes. For instance, from 2020, Microsoft provides newcomers with a precise and detailed plan of all the online meetings they must attend in the first few weeks of their employment. The HR Department implemented specific processes and rules to ensure a light pace of meetings. The main rule is that you can never schedule more than two information sessions per day to leave enough time for the new employees to work with their teammates. The training is organized in pills, called internally as "snack training" so that newcomers can learn

gradually the several important components of their new roles.[6] Finally, to manage the stress and psychological difficulties experienced in the first weeks of remote work, Microsoft offers newcomers psychological counselling services and deliver the message, "that people can proceed at their own pace". This approach seems coherent with early institutional tactics, characterized by shared learning experiences, aimed to shape a common understanding of the new context. In addition, recent contributions shed new light on the value of sharing the onboarding phase with peer newcomers of the same cohort. Noteworthy, Zhou et al. (2022, p. 385) showed how newcomers' relationships with peers in the same work unit, characterized by moderate number of intra-unit ties and moderate frequency of interactions, facilitate their adjustment over time. These findings confirm that developing a clique of colleagues may be healthful and desirable in the early socialization stages.

Conclusion: Onboarding in a Post-pandemic Scenario

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many people to work from home, letting them experience the hassles and advantages of flexible work. Today, as people have started going back to the main offices regularly, many express a strong desire to retain the flexibility option, at least to some extent.[7] This data has prompted many companies to conceive flexibility as a motivational driver that can be leveraged to attract and retain talents and succeed in a scenario profoundly marked by the Great Resignation trend.

However, this motivational boost does not come without any effort. Indeed, our recent experience has proved that flexibility can deeply alter the way we perform tasks, learn, interact and enact our social lives at work. This may come at the expense of some social dynamics that used to

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[6] This example is courtesy of Maria Noguer, HR manager at Microsoft.

[7] https://www.mckinsey.de/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours

be supported by co-located and "stable" settings, presenting newcomers with additional challenges.

In this chapter, we provided an overview of these challenges, connecting them with the emotional, relational and cognitive components of the newcomers' work experience. We also outlined practices to help organizations and their managers deal with these challenges. If effectively combined, we believe these practices can help companies configure a socialization environment in which both newcomers and organizations can achieve their respective goals. Interestingly, these practices seem to require managers and peers to get more involved in newcomers' onboarding. The increased involvement implies additional efforts to engage newcomers, introduce them to the company, set the example and proactively make sure that they would have all the social and material resources they might need to perform.

Of course, more research is needed to better understand dynamics at play in today's work environments. First, remote working is much more than a tool, including in the employee work experience a domain, whose relevance was considered marginal before the pandemic in the socialization literature. The interaction among domains (i.e. workplace, home and different work settings) and its stakeholders calls for a greater scholarly attention. Second, the onboarding phase starts with a discovery process shaped in formal meetings and conversation, as well as in unplanned and informal experiences, representing for many companies both a coordination mechanism and a glue for group cohesion. With the growing role of remote working, relevant cues might be undetected or underdeveloped. Which are the implications for newcomers, teams and the organization as a whole? Finally, the retention challenges organizations are coping, along with their echo in the media in the collective imagination, might influence job seekers and newcomers' attitudes and intentions. Also in this regard, a clearer understanding of how bonds and expectations are changing is desirable both for research and the practice.

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12

Onboarding and Socialization Under COVID-19 Crisis: A Knowledge Management Perspective

Hanne Haave, Aristidis Kaloudis, and Tone Vold

Introduction

The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has been a global health crisis. In order to reduce the spread of the virus, national governments issued a non-pharmaceutical intervention (NPI) that for many organizations implied work from home (WFH), which was enabled by digital tools for communication. Historically, "telecommuting" and "telework" in the 1970s and 1980s, and its benefits for humanity, have been described by Jack Nilles and Allan Toffler (Nilles, 1996; Toffler, 1980). In the 1970s, the focus was on reducing commuting costs, both for the workforce and for the environment (Nilles, 1997; Pratt, 1984). Nilles' (1997)

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investigations showed that by working from home one to two days a week, productivity increased, employee morale and retention increased, less parking spaces were necessary, traffic jams were reduced and employees saved quite a bit of money. These results were to predict a vast adoption of telework within numerous organizations. However, this appeared not to be the case, which Nilles (1997) explained by pointing out the leadership challenges. Remote leadership may require approaches that are neither taught to potential leaders nor practiced to a certain extent when leaders are within the organizations.

The COVID-19 pandemic represented a crisis, which as it persisted, mostly followed the pattern of a long-term crisis. The organization we chose to study is a large governmental organization providing services to other public organizations in Norway. The organization was on the verge of entering a planned digital transformation, but had to abandon the long-term introduction and start using the system (Microsoft Teams) chosen for their business purposes overnight (Haave & Vold, 2021).

Onboarding programmes may prevent newcomers from leaving early (within a year) (Bauer et al., 2021), as these programmes generally support organizational socialization processes by offering insights into, for example, culture and support job satisfaction. It is important to support the newcomers in such a way that their expectations meet the requirements, and vice versa (Feldman, 1981).

Our aim was to investigate how the pandemic affected the organization regarding knowledge management issues related to onboarding, and organizational socialization routines as perceived by the newcomers in the case organization. We also wanted to learn about how they envisioned their future workday, whether they wanted to continue working from home, or if they wanted to be at the office.

In order to investigate this, we answered the following research questions:

How have the newcomers who had to work remotely experienced their onboarding processes during the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the newcomers' thoughts on future work from home versus working in the office?

In order to help answer this, we investigated how the onboarding was done by the organization, and what it consisted of. We also examined how the newcomers experienced onboarding and their reflections on this process**.**

First, we present our theoretical foundation for the research. Next, we present our methodological approach to both collect and analyse the data. Lastly, we discuss our findings and conclude.

Theoretical Foundation

To help enlighten our study, we have chosen theory on onboarding and organization socialization. Firstly, we introduce theory on Knowledge Management, as this has been our perspective throughout the study. Secondly, we elaborate on organizational socialization and onboarding theory.

Knowledge Management (KM) is connected with productivity and flexibility in both private and public organizations (Mårtensson, 2000). It is important to retain and utilize, but also develop and organize employee competencies, in order to make the most out of the organizations' advantages to serve a market (Grønhaug & Nordhaug, 1992). An organization needs to organize and utilize "value-generating activities" (Grønhaug & Nordhaug, 1992). These activities may include what Roos et al. (1997) call intellectual capital, which is "knowledge, applied experience, organizational technology, customer relationships and professional skills" (Mårtensson, 2000, p. 205). Knowledge needs to be transferred, that is, it needs to be set in a context, interpreted, reflected upon and put in a perspective to provide insight that is meaningful in that context (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Polanyi (1967) divides knowledge into tacit and explicit knowledge, while Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) have further developed this into the SECI model. This model refers to the four stages of "transforming" tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, and also internalizes the knowledge into the worker's socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization. Other ways of knowledge sharing are generally described through stories of face-to-face attendance

in, for example, Communities of Practices (CoPs), teams and work groups (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The process of "transferring" and reflecting on knowledge may also be a part of an onboarding process, as it involves taking part in and acquiring knowledge from other more experienced staff, and also because this may be a part of a mentoring process. Organizational socialization is about making newcomers to an organization become organizational "insiders" who master the procedures and norms, and who will be part of the culture of an organization (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). Van Maanen and Schein (1977), p. 1) claim that it is "the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role", and to enhance newcomers' organizational commitment to reduce their intentions to leave. Turnover is costly, and the costs are identified as the cost of recruiting and hiring, the period of time where one is short of staff, and the time to get newcomers up to a productive level (O'Connell & Kung, 2007).

Onboarding is a part of organizational socialization, but the socialization process does not necessarily include an onboarding process, as onboarding generally follows a specific programme and guidelines. When the onboarding occurs during a period in which staff members must work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be important to look at previous experiences with work from home (WFH). The technological advances of digitalization at work, such as, for example, internet-accessed databases, remote access on work systems and digital communication systems, have enabled remote work and the onboarding process. The advantages of telework are the possibilities of job autonomy, flexibility and less commuting time, while the disadvantages are isolation from colleagues and disturbances in the work-private life balance (Peters et al., 2016). WFH requires a leadership that allows communication via digital tools, such as e-mail and Zoom/Teams, which may then have different implications for communication among staff than face-to-face communication. According to Amundsen and Martinsen (2015), knowledge workers may be subjected to two approaches to empowerment, that is, sociostructural and psychological. The former is about what the organization and its leaders will do to empower employees, whereas the latter is about the perceptions of employees' work role, meaning, competence,

self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 2008; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Empowerment can also be defined as "a set of cognitions or states influenced by the work environment that helps create an active-orientation to one's job" (Spreitzer, 2008, p. 57; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). This, in turn, may support the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1978, 1986, 1991).

For newcomers, it is important to be properly introduced to the organization. This is also a part of the organizational socialization (Haaland, 2019; Wanous, 1992; Wanous et al., 1992), with three major phases having been identified (Filstad, 2016): the getting-in-phase, the breaking-in-phase and the settling-in-phase (see Table 12.1):

Feldman (1981, p. 309) has described the changes that occur during the socialization process as follows:

- Acquisition of a set of appropriate role behaviours
- The development of work skills and abilities
- Adjustments to the work group's norms and values

However, when working remotely, rather than being in a shared physical space with co-workers, the socialization process may be hard to achieve. More specifically, in online settings, newcomers can only observe the desired role behaviours via the behaviours of others in the online

Table 12.1 The different phases for the newcomer (Filstad, 2016, p. 198)

Phase	Time	Description
Getting-in-phase	Learning and adaption prior to the date of employment	Expectations from ad (from applicant), interview (from applicant and employer) and pre-courses (from applicant and employer)
Breaking-in-phase	The first period after date of employment	Insecurity and uncertainty (both employee and employer)
		Work on establishing place in an organization
		Onboarding process important tool for preparing the settling-in-phase
Settling-in-phase	Established member of the organization	Differences based on different personalities, rather than length of employment

meetings, both one-on-one and in team meetings. Moreover, work skills and abilities may be trained by online courses and supervision from peers and supervisors. Hence, newcomers need to interpret the organization's norms and values by how they perceive their co-workers to behave and contribute online, as well as what is presented in an onboarding programme. According to Fay and Kline (2011), co-worker relationship and informal communication will support job satisfaction and the sense of belonging.

Bauer et al. (2021) pointed to the possibility that having different access to resources leads to different newcomers' adjustments and coping with starting a new employment. Resources can facilitate a newcomer's possibility of meeting the demands at work, as well as supporting the newcomer's sense of identity and self-efficacy regarding their new employment. The resources can be divided into four types: Material (e.g. tools, computer), Personal (e.g. previous work experience, personality, organizational knowledge, self-efficacy), Social (e.g. relationships within the organization, peers, managers) and Status (job level) (Bauer et al., 2021). Bauer (2010, p. 2) claims that onboarding has four different levels: Compliance, Clarification, Culture and Connection. Compliance is about being taught basic rules and regulations within the organization. Clarification is about making the employee understand the content and scope of their job. Culture is about conveying the formal and informal organizational norms and values, while Connection is about establishing interpersonal relationships and networks. Bauer also refers to different "onboarding strategy levels" within these "4 C's": Passive, where only a few of the C's are paid attention to; High Potential, where more of the C's are integrated, and Proactive, where all the levels are taken care of (see Table 12.2).

Our view is from a KM perspective, and we find that the 4 C's share several common features. Compliance, as in "being taught and

Table 12.2 Overview of the use of the 4 C's in different levels of onboarding strategies—from Bauer (2010, p. 3)—reprinted with permission from T. Bauer

Onboarding strategy level	Compliance	Clarification	Culture	Connection
Passive	Yes	Some	Little/none	Little/none
High potential	Yes	Yes	Some	Some
Proactive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 12.3 The 4 C's and KM—what is shared

The 4 C's	Knowledge Management
Compliance:	SECI model, mentoring, CoPs:
Being taught and understanding the basic rules	Take part in tacit and explicit knowledge
Clarification:	SECI model, mentoring
Making the employee understand the content and scope of their job	On the job training/developing core competences
Culture:	CoPs
Conveying the formal and informal organizational cultures	Teams
	Social networks
	Developing org. cultures
Connection:	CoPs
Establishing interpersonal relationships and networks	Teams
	Social networks

understanding the basic rules" (Bauer, 2010), can be done through mentoring (Davenport & Prusak, 1998), working in Communities of Practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and sharing both tacit and explicit knowledge as described in the SECI model (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Regarding Clarification, we find much of the same and can add "on the job training" and developing core competencies (Filstad, 2016). Culture, as in "conveying the formal and informal organizational cultures" can be done by working in Teams, developing social networks and in developing organizational cultures. Connection is about "establishing interpersonal relationships and networks", which is also about the development of social networks and taking part in and engaging in social networking in the organization. In Table 12.3, we have made a combination of the 4 C's and KM approaches:

This will aid us to understand and interpret our findings and contribute towards answering our research questions.

Method of Inquiry

This study has a longitudinal case-study approach. According to Yin (2003, 2014), case studies are empirical enquiries investigating a social phenomenon in a real-life context. According to Geertz (1973), the use of

a case design approach provides us with the possibility to acquire a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question, whether it is organizations, events or people. Initially, the current study started as a pilot study, in which our aim was to investigate how management was performed in organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. We wanted to explore how this long-term crisis was handled in organizations. Our case organization, a governmental service organization, was chosen because we discovered that although they also produced services through digital systems before the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff was used to working at the office, and did not use digital systems for administration and meetings. We found it intriguing to look into how the rapid reorganizing/change to a digital system for administration and meetings had worked for employees.

We contacted the top manager, who agreed to let us conduct interviews with employees in the organization during the COVID-19 pandemic. We interviewed a total of nine employees (see Table 12.4), all selected by the top manager. The data were collected at two different times. Consequently, we had two different groups of informants, as three informants were employed before the pandemic, and six were newcomers recruited and onboarded during the pandemic. To help maintain the anonymity of the informants, we did not systematically register their age or formal civil status. But from the interviews, we got the impression that most of our informants were single/or living in a partnership, as only one respondent had children.

The data of the study was collected by doing semi-structured individual interviews, each lasting approximately one hour, using a digital programme (Zoom). Our aim was to investigate the informants' experiences regarding the onboarding process, and their understanding of the work situation, in addition to the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on their work-life. We experienced that the conversations were interesting and sincere, as the informants were open and responsive to our questions and were used to communicating digitally. The interviews were recorded with the informants' written approval, and transcribed verbatim. Assuming an inductive approach, we started the data analysis by reading through all the transcribed text, to acquire an overall impression of the material and identify central themes and categories. The next step was coding the interviews by highlighting sentences with relevance to these

issues and themes identified in the first step, and sorting them accordingly. Examples of categories are "onboarding experience" and the "experience with WFH", with these categories seeming to have an impact on how the informants prefer working in the office to WFH. The results will be presented in the following chapter and discussed against relevant theories. The results from our case may have an external validity, as we can argue that our findings are transferrable to other similar institutions in Norway and Nordic countries.

In Table 12.4, we show an overview of the informants and the timeline of the data collection:

The Case

We studied a governmental service organization in Norway with approximately 200 employees, which offers fiscal services to other governmental organizations, and has a high level of digitalization in their working processes. Before the pandemic, the employees worked at the office. At the start of the lockdown, the administrational work needed to be digitalized with an immediate effect. In one of the departments, a digital system (Microsoft Teams) was in use as a pilot and was implemented into the entire organization during the first week of the pandemic. A planned organizational change had been implemented before the pandemic, which comprised the implementation of a new middle-management level into the organizational structure, thereby resulting in each department

Table 12.4 Overview of the informants

Respondents	Gender	Time of interview
Employee 1	Male	March 2021
Employee 2	Female	March 2021
Employee 3	Female	March 2021
Employee 4	Female	Nov 2021
Employee 5	Female	Nov 2021
Employee 6	Female	Nov 2021
Employee 7	Female	Nov 2021
Employee 8	Female	Nov 2021
Employee 9	Male	Nov 2021

being divided into two to three smaller sections. Every leader now had the responsibility for 12–15 employees and was therefore able to pay more attention to each of them. This allowed a closer follow-up of the employees by the management, particularly during the lockdown.

During the pandemic, the case organization recruited approximately 50 new employees, with most of the recruiting and onboarding processes being digitally implemented. The onboarding programme during the pandemic can be described as follows: On the first day at work, the newcomers physically met at the central office with the nearest leader, the head of the department, and an assigned mentor. In some cases, there were other newcomers starting in their job on the same day. After an introduction of a few hours, the newcomers picked up their PC equipment and returned to work from home. The first weeks of training consisted of standard e-learning courses, contact with a mentor and the nearest leader, via Microsoft Teams. They were then gradually introduced to the job, taking part in Teams meetings and utilizing the various systems. Because our informants started at different times, their period of WFH has differed. Some worked remotely for only a few weeks, and some for months.

Results and Discussion

Here, we have chosen to present our results and discuss them based on the findings from our qualitative study. From our material, there are some major issues that stand out regarding answering our research question. In particular, KM issues regarding *onboarding* seem to have an important role. Moreover, findings regarding *organizational socialization aspects* provide us with significant clues that allow us to suggest predictions about the "new normal".

Experiences from Digital Onboarding

I felt I was thrown into the job. (4) (5) (6) (8)

The organization's standard training programme connects newcomers with mentors from the start, and according to our informants this seems

to overall be an arrangement that works well. The level of experience of the mentor seems important, as well as his/her availability. One of the respondents pointed out that the mentor did not have sufficient experience, and that she had to turn to her nearest leader to solve some of the problems (5). Another informant reports that it was up to her to make contact with her mentor: *"It was I as an apprentice that had to contact the mentor to have some sort of training"* (7). Equally, this does not support the knowledge sharing that Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) refer to in the SECI model, nor does it facilitate for the situated learning that Lave and Wenger (1991) describe, as it will be somewhat limited as to what the newcomers are able to assimilate, maybe regarding tacit knowledge in particular (Polanyi, 1967).

In our informants' view, when it is impossible to arrange physical training the e-learning courses can be seen as an acceptable replacement. Regarding the onboarding of new employees, knowledge about the firm in general, and insights of the overall organizational structure is conveyed in videos, which were considered to be sufficient by the informants. This refers to the Compliance as it touches upon the basic rules, and Culture, as this is where the structure is presented (Bauer, 2010). Nonetheless, the possibility of socializing, creating an informal network and becoming a part of the culture within the organization was felt to be missing. One of the employees provided this reflection:

> I think training in a physical setting is better than e-learning for newcomers, as with e-learning they lose the opportunity to have contact with fellow newcomers, as small talk doesn't come naturally over Teams, but actually to sit in the same room and see everyone, and not turn off the camera. This is also a loss for the organization. During the pandemic, we hired many new people, and I think they have not been received in a good enough manner. (1)

This excerpt shows that digital onboarding limits the network newcomers from becoming involved within the organization. When onboarding takes place in a physical setting, it is easier to develop a network in the organization with the other newcomers, and not just with the mentor and the nearest leader/colleagues (Navrbjerg & Minbaeva, 2020). *"The*

first month, I was doing e-learning online courses and got tasks from my colleagues to get to know the organization. I felt I was thrown into doing the job" (4). This same notion is shared by others (5) (6) (8).

The feeling of uncertainty about the content of the job also implies that the newcomers are in the "breaking-in-phase" (Haaland, 2019; Wanous, 1992), as the informants somewhat express insecurity in relation to what they are supposed to do and their "place" within the organization.

However, at the same time, the advantages with digital onboarding and WFH allowed some of the newcomers to develop more self-confidence, as they had to discover and learn a lot independently instead of asking someone for help. The following statement confirms this:

> Because it wasn't always just to ask 'the neighbour', so I probably spent some extra time to learn things on my own, look into, and check out thoroughly before I call a colleague. On my part, I think it has been positive growing more independent. I was getting more self-confident when I realized I could find out things myself, without having to ask anyone else. So I think this was of importance to me. (4)

To a certain extent, this statement, points to an assumed autonomy and a sense of empowerment (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Spreitzer, 1995).

Organizational Socialization

> It takes some time to become part of the group. (4).

The socialization processes that take place digitally (using Microsoft Teams) appeared to be less adequate regarding taking care of the organizational socialization process. The informants stated that they are missing the social informal situations where the details are important, and where one can ask questions, solve problems and share knowledge:

> We had these get-to-know-each-other Teams meetings, but it is limited as to how well you get to know others in these short meetings. So, when I felt in need of help, it was mainly the same person I asked for help. (5)

The encouragement to socialize with their peers was not something the informants picked up on. It also seems that the newcomers were unable to form Communities of Practices (Lave, 2009), which hindered the process of knowledge sharing between the newcomers. It also points to a lack of *connection,* as they seem not to be able to form any network with each other (Bauer, 2010):

> Because, then it's like you talk to the ones you already know, on Teams and stuff… So, then… you miss that… yes that upstart period where you supposed to get to know the new organization and new colleagues and all. So, you lose this when you're working from home. (6)

Despite the fact that knowledge sharing online (via Teams) was not as easy as when being able to meet face-to-face, it seems that the digital meetings provided the newcomers with some openings that helped them to get into social groups when they met offline:

> It certainly takes some time to become part of the social group. Nevertheless, I was surprised to experience how fast I got into the social group when we were back at the office again. I imagined that it would be like meeting the colleagues for the first time, since we just had seen each other in Teams meetings. But it took very little time, maybe 5 minutes, and then… So I was surprised that this happened so fast. (4)

This was an unexpected finding. Meeting colleagues online seems to shorten the time it takes to get to know each other when meeting face-to-face. It may seem as if the technology has been a mediator for forming social networks when they could meet in person. Not only will this have an impact for organizations, but also for other areas, for example, academia and online and campus students.

How Do the Newcomers View Their "New Normal" Workday?

> … it is much better to meet people physically. (5).

The newcomers were somewhat sceptical regarding WFH. A statement that confirms this:

> In the beginning, I was skeptical of WFH, but that was because I hadn't tried it before. This was my first job and I came straight from studies. But I soon got used to it. After only a few weeks, I felt it was okay. (4)

This shows Clarification (Bauer, 2010), as the respondent understood what to do after a relatively short amount of time. Most of our informants claimed that they got used to WFH, but were reluctant to return to WFH after having worked in the office. Firstly, working in the office made it possible to be social with colleagues and establish informal networks. More specifically, the informants stressed the importance of having direct contact when one needs to ask a colleague for help or discuss a problem. This also points towards a shortcoming they experienced regarding the technology, which we did not take into consideration when embarking on the project. Secondly, one of the shortcomings the informants stressed was the informal talks with the colleagues, often referred to as the "watercooler talks" ("coffee machine talks" in a Norwegian context). These informal discussions are what sometimes leads to forming CoPs (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Navrbjerg & Minbaeva, 2020), and thus knowledge sharing. Thirdly, the newcomers would reach the "settling-in-phase" sooner, as by getting acquainted with their colleagues and having an adequate work performance, they would now be recognized for who they are, rather than for being a newcomer (Haaland, 2019; Wanous, 1992).

Statements to confirm this are: *But having been back in the office for a while, I would not like to go back to WFH. Because you lose that near contact with colleagues, the talk by the coffee machine, and … yes you don't get that over Teams" (4), and*

> No, I just like to be social, and I like to meet people, and think it is easier to ask when I just can walk over to (the neighbour). Having lunch together, that is nice. Yes, all of that… it is much better to meet people physically. You have conversations, grab a coffee, …. I think it is important when being new in my job. And I am not the kind that is good at talking in a

Teams meeting, so it is easier when you are in the same room. To ask questions and ask for help is easier, and also much nicer. (5)

These statements also point to the shortcomings of the technology, as it does not seem to allow what Fay and Kline (2011) refer to as informal communication.

Regarding the use of Teams as a digital tool, it works well for both internal meetings and administration and external contact with customers:

> I think Teams meetings work very well. There are some colleagues that work from home, and there also are many meetings with customers. As parts of our organization are also located around the country, it is a great advantage for us to use Teams. (4)

The newcomers had to cope with working from home. But having had that experience, they preferred to work at the office. Yet, they also expressed that they wanted the flexibility to work from home during sickness or when travelling.

The findings presented above imply a turn towards a change from "the old normal". Hence, the newcomers indicated that they wish that the organization would not return to the old regime entirely, although they mainly prefer to meet in person at the office. The change and "new normal" are more about flexibility, and the extensive use of the digital tool, both at home and at the office. According to this, it is important to pursue both virtual and in-person solutions as a powerful complement (versus a substitute).

Still, our results show that even if the newcomers are provided with a mentor and a digital learning programme, and that the leaders have time to supervise each newcomer, the onboarding strategy is perceived as a more passive approach regarding "compliance" and "clarification" (cf. Bauer, 2013). This may be due to *digital* onboarding. Although the newcomers did not meet physically face-to-face during WFH, working together on the digital platform supported a faster socialization process when they could meet in person at the office. We propose a table in which Bauer's 4 C's are presented, and where we have added the column of "type of onboarding" (Table 12.5).

Table 12.5 Adapted from Bauer (2013), including type of onboarding: digital or physical

Onboarding strategy level	Compliance	Clarification	Culture	Connection	Type of onboarding
Passive	Yes	Some	Little/none	Little/none	Digital onboarding
High potential	Yes	Yes	Some	Some	"Physical" onboarding
Proactive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	"Physical" and digital onboarding

Knowledge sharing is enabled using the digital tool, but is mostly from leader to newcomer, from mentor to newcomer, and also to a certain extent within working teams. However, the intercollegial knowledge sharing enabled by physical proximity is difficult to achieve.

The newcomers experience the "breaking-in-phase" to be challenging, and even more challenging during a digital onboarding than an onboarding at the office, as they seem to have less people to reach out to for help. They still feel personal mastery when entering the "settling-in phase", as most of the respondents experience self-efficacy when they perform as expected. Even so, the *sense of belonging* in the organization seems not to have been obtained. This is similar to what the Work Research Institute (AFI) (2022, p. 100) have found regarding (regular) employees in home offices where it has been registered a reduction of the feeling of being *connected*. The "settling-in phase", in which the newcomer is established as a member of the organization (Filstad, 2016), seems to be delayed. They are unable to establish the interpersonal relationships and networks that Bauer (2013) refers to regarding the connection level.

Our findings point towards an expectation of a more hybrid work organization and possibilities for flexible arrangements as digitalization has enabled work from anywhere. Also, the onboarding could start face-to-face in the office, then be supplied with the e-learning (technology), as this "mix" may facilitate for a better organizational socialization at the workplace.

Conclusion

The planned digitalization that the organization started before the pandemic has proven to be of vital importance in mitigating some of the most adverse consequences of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of the digital system they had chosen, which allowed the employees to continue working from home during the pandemic. The platform has also digitally enabled onboarding newcomers by providing digital courses and mentoring. This allows the newcomers to understand the scope of their work tasks they are satisfied with. Yet, our results show that the process of connecting with the organization and interacting with others is hindered, meaning that the newcomers lack interpersonal relationships and a network. Hence, they lack a sense of belonging to the organization. Although the newcomers did not physically meet face-to-face during WFH, we found that working together on a digital platform supported a faster socialization process back at their offices.

Regarding onboarding processes, the digital onboarding should not replace the "ordinary (physical) onboarding", but the digital learning programmes, *together* with the "ordinary" onboarding, will provide a substantial and *proactive* way of onboarding newcomers post-COVID-19 pandemic.

Their wishes for a "new normal" work mode are being at the office and socializing with co-workers, but at the same time having the flexibility of digital meetings and WFH when needed (one's own illness or family and when travelling), which is something enabled by digitalization.

Due to the nature of the case, the findings from our research could be transferrable to similar organizations, both in Norway and in Nordic countries. In particular, when it comes to our findings on the proactivity of using both digital and "physical" onboarding, the results may even be of interest to organizations, both public and private beyond the Nordic countries.

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13

Leadership in Hybrid Workplaces: A Win-Win for Work-Innovation and Work-Family Balance Through Work-Related Flow?

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations and their employees to shift to substantial, oftentimes full-time, tele(home)working, broadly defined as performing work activities remotely, for example at home, with the use of IT, either part-time or full-time (Taskin &

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Bridoux, 2010). The previous telework literature reports both positive and negative employee and organizational outcomes, before the COVID-19 pandemic, usually reflecting part-time telework contexts (Allen et al., 2015; Bailey & Kurland, 2002). On the one hand, teleworkers may experience more role ambiguity and reduced support and feedback (Golden & Raghuram, 2010; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012), possibly affecting social cohesion, knowledge sharing, and, consequently, innovative work-behaviour. Especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, employees' innovative work-behaviour, that is, their ability to generate new ideas, promote these ideas within their teams and organization, and realize these ideas by embedding them into the existing organizational structures and processes (Janssen, 2000), has been considered key to ensure both organizations' short-term survival and long-term positioning (Montani & Staglianò, 2021). On the other hand, the enhanced job autonomy and time-spatial flexibility associated with telework (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012) may allow for a better work-family balance, defined as "an overall appraisal regarding one's effectiveness and satisfaction with work and family life" (Allen & Kiburz, 2012, p. 373; Greenhaus et al., 2012). However, in view of work-family boundaries becoming more blurred in telework contexts, work activities can more easily interfere negatively with home demands (Delanoeije et al., 2019; Pluut & Wonders, 2020), which may affect work-family balance.

In view of these potential ambiguous outcomes, it would be interesting to test the mutual-gains hypothesis in the current *intensified telework contexts* that have often been characterized as "high-performance work systems" that can enhance employee well-being, such as work-related flow (i.e., absorption, intrinsic motivation, and work enjoyment) (Peters et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2014). The "mutual-gains perspective" suggests that integrated sets or clusters of human resource management (HRM) practices and principles can be designed such that they have positive effects on both workplace well-being and performance (Guest, 2017; Peccei, 2004; Van de Voorde et al., 2011).

Focusing on intensified telework contexts only, it would be interesting to also consider leadership behaviours that characterize the employee-leader relationship, being an important contingent factor that can shape employees' perceptions of the intensified telework practice (cf. Leroy

et al., 2018; Nishii & Wright, 2008), possibly fostering mutual gains (well-being [e.g., work-related flow] and individual performance [e.g., innovation and work-family balance]).

More specifically, during the initial phase of the COVID-19 lockdowns in which telework practices were intensified, not all leaders may have pursued the same leadership behaviours to deal with strategic and operational challenges associated with substantial telework, such as maintaining and enhancing individuals' innovative work-behaviour and work-family balance. Some leaders may have responded to the lockdowns by adopting empowering leadership behaviours, in which they provide teleworkers with job autonomy from bureaucratic constraints, enhance their participation in decision-making, explain the meaningfulness of their work, and express confidence in their high performance (Ahearne et al., 2005), characterizing high-performance work systems. By enhancing job autonomy, decision latitude, and, consequently, work motivation, reflected in work-related flow, both innovative work-behaviour (Jada et al., 2019) and work-family balance (Demerouti et al., 2019) may be fostered.

Contrarily, however, other leaders may have engaged in directive leadership behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain or regain control in view of ambiguity and uncertainty, by issuing instructions, commands, and reprimands to teleworkers, while clearly defining the goals they must achieve (Pearce & Sims, 2002). This reaction may be understandable in the face of a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Stoker et al., 2019), but can potentially hamper work-related flow, and hence, innovative work-behaviour in telework contexts, as this leadership behaviour provides little opportunity for employees to explore novel ideas and solutions (Somech, 2005). Moreover, structuring work and centralizing decision-making may provide employees with little job autonomy and time-spatial flexibility (Greenhaus et al., 2012; Lorinkova et al., 2013; Stoker et al., 2019), with repercussion for work-related flow, and ultimately, work-family balance.

Our contribution is threefold: first, previous telework studies have examined either well-being or performance, both at work and beyond the workplace (Allen et al., 2015), but not simultaneously. To test the mutual-gains hypothesis, we focus on two proximal performance outcomes that can be fostered via well-being at work and that have gained importance in

intensified tele(home)work contexts. On the one hand, we focus on innovative work-behaviour in substantial tele(home)work contexts, as this has been key to ensure both organizations' short-term survival and long-term positioning (Montani & Staglianò, 2021). On the other hand, we focus on work-family balance which has gained importance in substantial tele(home)work contexts, since well-being at work may spill over to affect well-being and performance beyond work (Demerouti et al., 2012).

Second, the HRM and leadership literatures have oftentimes been separated (Leroy et al., 2018), with HRM being more focused on organizational systems and processes and leadership being more closely related to the leader-employee relationship. We build on and go beyond the mutual-gains perspective by focusing on two types of leadership, empowering and directive, as these can be viewed contingent factors in high-performance work systems (Nishii & Wright, 2008), influencing employees' perceptions of substantial telework practices, potentially affecting performance outcomes via well-being at work.

Third, the mutual-gains perspective focuses on well-being at work as a mediator in the relationship between (employee perceptions of) HRM practices and performance outcomes, comprising "happiness" (e.g., job satisfaction and engagement), "health" (strain, such as stress and burnout), and "social" well-being (collaboration, organizational support, and trust) (Guest, 2017; Van de Voorde et al., 2011). In this study, we include a related happiness concept, that is, work-related flow, as a mediator in the relationship between leadership and performance outcomes.

Theory and Hypotheses

The Mutual-Gains Perspective

The "mutual-gains hypothesis" states that fostering positive affective employee reactions and reducing negative employee functioning at work, for example, by implementing a motivating job design (e.g., combining flexible work with autonomy, empowerment, and employee participation) (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019), can lead to better performance (Peccei, 2004). Building on the exchange theory, the mutual-gains perspective assumes that employees are willing to reciprocate positive work experiences by working

harder, meanwhile using their skills and knowledge, investing in professional development, and enacting organizational citizenship behaviour. This effort can foster operational (proximal) performance, ultimately leading to more distal outcomes, such as financial outcomes (Guest, 2017; Van de Voorde et al., 2011). This way, HRM practices, such as tele(home)working, or in short, telework, can benefit both the organization and the employee. In contrast to this, however, the "conflicting outcomes perspective" assumes that high-performance work systems only lead to positive organizational outcomes, but not to positive employee work-related outcomes (Peccei, 2004; Van de Voorde et al., 2011). Whether the telework practice can generate mutual gains, however, demands more input, especially in the light of current substantial and enduring telework practices reflecting the "new normal" during and perhaps after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building on the mutual-gains perspective (Guest, 2017; Van de Voorde et al., 2011), the proposed relationships between leadership and innovative work-behaviour and work-family balance, respectively, may be explained by pointing to the mediating role of work-related flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), defined as a short-term peak experience that can be conceptualized by three dimensions: (1) absorption, (2) work enjoyment, and (3) intrinsic work motivation (Bakker, 2008). Absorption refers to a state of total concentration (i.e., a state in which employees are totally immersed in their work). Work enjoyment refers to employees' evaluation regarding the quality of their working life. Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to perform an activity to experience satisfaction due to the inherent pleasure of the work activity itself. Work-related flow can energize teleworkers for their work (cf. Peters et al., 2014), leading to better work performance. This energy may spill over into the home domain (Demerouti et al., 2012; Staines, 1980), leading to better family performance. In view of the account above, the following mediation hypotheses can be developed.

Hypotheses

Work-Related Flow Mediating the Relationships Between Empowering Leadership and Innovative Work-Behaviour and Work-Family Balance

Empowering leaders share power, autonomy, and responsibility with their employees to encourage them to participate in decision-making by expressing their ideas and share those within the organization (Ahearne et al., 2005; Lorinkova et al., 2013; Pearce & Sims, 2002). Therefore, empowering leadership can have a positive, enduring influence on workplace performance, as it allows the development of competencies over time (Lorinkova et al., 2013).

In a similar vein, empowering leadership can fuel increased work-related flow experience among teleworkers (Peters et al., 2014). Scott and Bruce (1994) propose that when leaders grant employees more decision latitude and support are necessary perquisites for the employees' innovative work-behaviour. When employees feel empowered in the telework-context by experiencing more job autonomy and coaching from their supervisor, this enhances their intrinsic work motivation, characterizing work-related flow (Bakker, 2008). Zhang and Bartol (2010) demonstrated that the enhanced intrinsic motivation resulting from empowering leadership enhances employees' ability to create novel ideas. Therefore, we propose the following:

H1: Empowering leadership (T1) has a positive relationship with innovative work-behaviour (T3) via *work-related flow (T2).*

Employees who experience empowering leadership in the beginning of the pandemic could have taken more opportunity to shape a new way of working according to their own preferences, thereby enhancing work-related flow (Bakker & Van Woerkom, 2017; Coun et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2014). Particularly the enjoyment component can spill over into the home domain, which can help employees feel vigorous when detaching from work (Demerouti et al., 2012). It can be argued that offsetting

the interference of work activities with home demands can also help creating better work-family balance (Delanoeije et al., 2019). In a similar vein, Kim and Beehr (2022) found that empowering leadership can indirectly increase employees' experience of a positive spill-over effect of their work experiences to their family life, via employees' engagement and positive reflection about their work. It may be that work-related flow offers a similar mediating effect between empowering leadership and work-family balance, as enhanced motivation, absorption and enjoyment in their work activities (Peters et al., 2014) may lead empowered employees to also experience a more positive work-family balance. Therefore, we propose the following:

H2: Empowering leadership (T1) has a positive relationship with work-family balance (T3) via *work-related flow (T2).*

Work-Related Flow Mediating the Relationships Between Directive Leadership and Innovative Work-Behaviour and Work-Family Balance

Also, directive leadership may aim to enhance workplace performance but follows a vastly different approach. Instead of granting the employee with more job autonomy and decision latitude, directive leadership is enacted to offset ambiguity by structuring employees' work, by defining clear goals to work towards and reprimanding them when work is not up to standards (Pearce et al., 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2002). While directive leadership can be effective in securing short-term task performance, it is shown to be less effective in fostering long-term performance when compared to empowering leadership, since employees are given less opportunity to develop confidence in their competencies and responsibilities (Lorinkova et al., 2013). Whilst providing clear goals may initially support work-related flow, issuing of instructions on how to approach one's work may in fact decrease employees' job autonomy in the longer-term and, hence, their intrinsic motivation to seek new innovative solutions in their work (Pearce & Sims, 2002; Scott & Bruce, 1994). When employees are not given job autonomy or decision latitude to develop their own

work approach to teleworking, they may experience less intrinsic work motivation, being an important dimension of work-related flow (Bakker & Van Woerkom, 2017). These arguments chime with the earlier work of Somech (2005) who asserts that directive leadership provides few opportunities for employees to explore new ideas and, therefore, can detrimentally affect their innovative work-behaviour. Hence, we propose the following:

H3: Directive leadership (T1) has a negative relationship with innovative work-behaviour (T3) via *work-related flow (T2).*

When leaders decide to engage in directive leadership in the wake of the outbreak of a crisis, employees are given less autonomy in their response and approach to work activities (Stoker et al., 2019). Consequently, employees may develop less confidence in their ability to handle additional responsibilities as time passes when compared to empowered employees (Lorinkova et al., 2013). In a similar vein, employees may have less autonomy and opportunity to shape their own work role, reducing work-related flow (Bakker & Van Woerkom, 2017; Peters et al., 2014). Consequently, employees may also struggle more to detach from work and experience more exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2012), which may negatively impact their ability to manage blurring boundaries between work and family life during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pluut & Wonders, 2020). Therefore, we conjecture the following:

H4: Directive leadership (T1) has a negative relationship with work-family balance (T3) via *work-related flow (T2).*

Methodology

Sample

Multi-wave data was collected from workers in five public organizations and one private sector organization situated in the Netherlands and Belgium that had to tele homework during the COVID-19 pandemic. A

Table 13.1 Descriptive overview of the sample

	N	%	Innovation Work Behaviour (T3)		Work Family Balance (T3)	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Gender						
Male	78	45.30	3.30	0.60	3.33	.51
Female	93	54.10	3.05	0.66	3.41	.56
Unknown/Missing	1	0.60				
Age categories						
<31	7	4.10	3.86	0.67	3.71	0.76
31-40	28	16.30	3.28	0.57	3.52	0.67
41-60	119	69.20	3.10	0.61	3.33	0.49
above 60	16	9.30	3.31	0.78	3.37	0.45
Unknown/Missing	2	1.20				
Domestic situation						
Live-in partner/no live-in children	49	28.50	3.37	0.68	3.55	0.58
Live-in Partner/live-in children	81	47.10	3.13	0.61	3.29	0.52
Single parent/live-in children	17	9.90	3.39	0.55	3.30	0.60
Single parent/no live-in children	25	14.50	3.20	0.69	3.38	0.40
Partner						
No	42	24.40	3.28	0.64	3.35	0.49
Yes	130	75.60	3.12	0.64	3.39	0.55
Industry						
Municipal City	8	4.70	3.39	0.51	3.13	0.52
Government	38	22.10	3.35	0.82	3.39	0.46
Food industry	84	48.80	3.03	0.52	3.38	0.57
University	12	7.00	3.37	0.74	3.56	0.41
Housing cooperative	19	11.00	3.16	0.67	3.29	0.64
Other industries	11	6.40	3.09	0.61	3.46	0.47

descriptive overview of the sample can be seen in Table 13.1. The data was gathered via an online questionnaire on three separate moments in time, with the help of a virtual work agency and consultancy bureau and via the researchers' personal networks. T1-data was gathered from 417

Table 13.2 Construct descriptive statistics

	N	Theoretical range	Actual range	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alfa	AVE
Innovative work-behaviour (T3)	172	1.00–5.00	1.22–5.00	3.15	0.65	0.94	0.63
Work-family balance (T3)	171	1.00–5.00	2.00–5.00	3.38	0.54	0.74	0.73
Empowering leadership (T1)	169	1.00–5.00	1.25–5.00	3.69	0.56	0.89	0.50
Directive leadership (T1)	172	1.00–5.00	1.00–5.00	3.10	0.78	0.85	0.66
Work-related flow (T2)	172	1.00–7.00	1.77–6.46	4.13	0.82	0.92	0.53

Table 13.3 Correlations second wave and the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (in bold)

	Innovative WB T3	Work-family balance T3	EL T1	DL T1	WR flow T2
Innovative work-behaviour (T3)	**0.79**				
Work-family balance (T3)	−0.04	**0.85**			
Empowerment leadership (T1)	0.12	−0.05	**0.71**		
Directive leadership (T1)	−0.23**	−0.01	0.33**	**0.81**	
WR flow (T2)	0.39**	0.15	0.31**	−0.12	**0.73**

Significance correlations: $**p < 0.01$, $*p < 0.05$

respondents in the period July–August 2020. These respondents were asked to also complete a survey in the period November-December 2020 (T2-data) and in March–April 2021 (T3-data). The sample used in this study consisted of tele-homeworkers who consistently participated in all three waves (N=172). From all respondents, 117 workers (67.4%) worked regularly from home before the COVID period. Pre-pandemic, the respondents worked on an average of 11.2 hours at home, which increased to 30.2 (T10), 33.6 (T2) and 32.6 (T3). As depicted in Tables 13.1, 13.2, and 13.3, some respondents did not fill out all items of the survey. After a first inspection, we replaced all missing data points with the mean

value of all remaining data points per column (i.e., indicator or variable). We chose for this as mean replacement has the benefit not to alter the sample size and the mean value of variables in the sample (cf. Hair et al., 2014).

Measures

Innovative work-behaviour was measured using the three-dimensional scale by Janssen (2000), comprising nine items, measuring: idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization. We used a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "never" and 5 represented "always." An example item for idea generation is: "I create new ideas for difficult issues."

Work-family balance was measured using the four-item scale developed by Greenhaus et al. (2012), using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "never" and 5 = "always"). An example item we used: "My work and family are highly balanced."

We used the validated questionnaire by Ahearne et al. (2005) to measure empowering leadership. The questionnaire consists of four multi-item subscales: enhancing the meaningfulness of work, fostering participation in decision-making, expressing confidence in high performance, and providing autonomy. We used a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree." An example item for autonomy we used: "My manager allows me to do my job my way."

Directive leadership was measured using Pearce et al.'s (2003) dimensions for directive leadership behaviour: assign goals, instruction and command, and reprimand. We selected one item for each of the subscales, using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree." An example item for instruction and command we used: "My team leader gives me instructions about how to do my work."

To measure work-related flow, we used the three-dimensional scale developed by Bakker (2008), measuring absorption, intrinsic motivation, and work enjoyment. In line with Bakker (2008), we used a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "never" and 7 represented "always." An

example item for the dimension of work enjoyment is: "I work because I enjoy it."

Procedure

To gain insight into the sample's characteristics, we first conducted descriptive and frequency analyses using SPSS version 27. Then we used PLS-SEM (version 3.3.3 Smart PLS) to check the validity, reliability, and factor loadings of the data (Ringle et al., 2015). Although, the sample of 172 respondents was shown to be normally distributed, a bootstrapping method in PLS-SEM was utilized to increase the predictive power of the sample (Hair et al., 2014).

Results

Model Characteristics

We first examined the reliability of the outer model for each of the three waves. As shown in Table 13.2, the reliability scores were all deemed acceptable. The scales for all the constructs are shown to be reliable in terms of indicator validity since the Cronbach's Alphas passed the threshold value of 0.70 as given by Hair et al. (2014). After verifying the composite validity of the constructs, these were checked for convergent validity. To have enough convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) needs to exceed the value of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Directive leadership T1, empowering leadership T1, and work-related flow T2 demonstrated insufficient convergent validity according to the Fornell and Larcker criterion. Therefore, we increased convergent validity by deleting items. The items with the lowest factor loadings were removed first, whilst checking whether the remaining items still provided a proper representation of the overall construct. Analyses with the PLS-algorithm were step by step repeated to increase sufficient reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (cf. Ringle et al., 2015). Henceforth, one item was deleted from the directive leadership T1-scale

to have adequate reliability and convergent validity. Furthermore, two items were deleted from the work-related flow T2-scale. Finally, four items were deleted from the empowered leadership T1-scale. No items were deleted from the innovative work-behaviour T3-scale and work-family balance T3-scale, as these variables demonstrated enough reliability and convergent validity.

The final examination was focused on assessing the discriminant validity of the constructs for each of the three waves, by examining and comparing the AVEs of each respective construct with the inter-construct correlations in the model. Thereby, determining for each latent variable shared greater variance with its own measurement items or with the other constructs (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). When comparing the square roots of the AVE's for each respective construct with the correlations between the constructs in the model, it can be seen in Table 13.3a and b that none of the correlations exceeds the value of the square root of the AVE. Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs can be considered sufficient in terms of both reliability and validity.

Model Estimations

This subsection covers the inner model evaluation and estimates for each wave. Bootstrap t-statistics were used for testing the significance of the path-coefficients (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). This bootstrapping was performed with 5000 subsamples, with a bias-corrected bootstrap, utilizing a 95% significance at a two-tailed test. First, an estimation of the direct effects of directive leadership and empowering leadership (T1) directly and via work-related flow (T2) on innovative work-behaviour (T3) showed that the model explained a variance (R^2) of 0.19 for innovative work-behaviour (T3), a variance (R^2) of 0.15 for work-related flow (T2), and a variance (R^2) of 0.03 for work-family balance (T3).

Furthermore, an estimation of model fit was made with a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) which is the commonly used model fit indicator in PLS-SEM analysis (cf. Hair et al., 2014; Ringle et al., 2015), showing a value of 0.08, which is in accordance with the criterion

Table 13.4 Indirect effects

	Coefficient (γ)	Standard deviation	T-statistics	P values	Hypotheses
Empowerment leadership (T1) → work-related flow (T2) → innovative work-behaviour (T3)	0.14	0.04	3.18	0.00	H1
Empowerment leadership (T1) → work-related flow (T2) → WF balance (T3)	0.08	0.06	1.31	0.19	H2
Directive leadership (T1) → work-related flow (T2) →innovative work-behaviour (T3)	–0.09	0.05	1.97	0.05	H3
Directive leadership (T1) → work-related flow (T2) → WF balance (T3)	–0.05	0.04	1.21	0.23	H4

set by Hu and Bentler (1998). Henceforth, the model displayed good model fit.

To test for the longitudinal effects, we used Roemer's approach (Roemer, 2016), and more specifically, the A.1 evolution model, as the data was collected cross-sectionally over three waves. We developed different path models integrating work-related flow (T1), innovative work-behaviour (T1, T2) and work-family balance (T1, T2) using Roemer's approach (Roemer, 2016) to see whether the results were differentiating from our basic model consisting of the indirect effects of directive leadership (T1) and empowering leadership (T1) via work-related flow (T2) on innovative work-behaviour (T3) and work-family balance (T3) using the PLS-SEM algorithm (Hair et al., 2014). In the analyses, the basic model remained stable. In Table 13.4, the indirect effects based on our basic model are focused on.

Hypothesis 1 is supported by the data as the indirect effect of Empowerment Leadership (T1) on Innovative Work-Behaviour (T3) via Work-related Flow (T2) showed to be significant ($\gamma=0.14$, $p=0.00$, $R^2=0.19$).

Hypothesis 2 is not supported by the data as the indirect effect of Empowerment Leadership (T1) on Work-Family Balance (T3) via Work-related Flow (T2) showed to be non-significant ($\gamma= 0.08$, $p=0.19$, $R^2=0.17$).

Hypothesis 3 is supported by the data as the indirect effect of Directive Leadership (T1) on Innovative Work-Behaviour (T3) via Work-related Flow (T2) showed to be significant ($\gamma=-0.09$, $p=0.05$, $R^2=0.19$).

Hypothesis 4 is not supported by the data as the indirect effect of Directive Leadership (T1) on Work-Family Balance (T3) via Work-related Flow (T2) showed to be non-significant ($\gamma=-0.05$, $p=0.23$, $R^2=0.17$).

Conclusion and Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The Mediating Role of Work-Related Flow in the Relationships Between Empowering Leadership and Innovative Work-Behaviour and Work-Family Balance

In line with expectations, we found that empowering leadership during the initial phase of the COVID-19 lockdown (T1) positively influenced the experience of teleworkers' work-related flow (T2), which in turn enhanced their perceptions of their innovative work-behaviour in later phases of the pandemic (T3). Leaders who supported the high-performance job design associated with teleworking through empowering leadership, by stimulating flexible work with autonomy, empowerment, and employee participation (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019) at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, provided opportunity for employees to experience more work-related flow, which fuelled teleworkers' innovative

work-behaviour in later phases. From a mutual-gains perspective (Guest, 2017; Peccei, 2004; Peters et al., 2014; Van de Voorde et al., 2011), this finding chimes with the advocacy of having HRM practices (supported by leadership styles) pursue both positive effects on workplace well-being and work performance. These insights also contribute to the discussion on the long-term effects of empowering leadership on long-term employee performance (Lorinkova et al., 2013), particularly innovation (Montani & Staglianò, 2021).

Contrary to our expectations, however, we did not find significant evidence of positive relationships between empowering leadership and work-family balance via work-related flow over time. While our study does show that by focusing on enhancing work-related flow, leaders can foster enduring innovative work-behaviour, it does not provide evidence that increased experiences of work-related flow can also enhance work-family balance. Demerouti et al. (2012) assert that while the positive effects of enhanced work-related flow can spill over into the home situation, this only happens when employees can sufficiently detach from work when they are at home. The ability of employees to detach from their work, however, might be challenged in substantive telework contexts. In a similar vein, a study on the potential negative effects of work-related flow by Ramsey and Lorenz (2019) suggests that employees can become too absorbed in their work which can lead to more problems regarding maintaining work-family balance. These factors might have influenced the employees in our study as they conducted their work during a prolonged period of teleworking due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The Mediating Role of Work-Related Flow in the Relationships Between Directive Leadership and Innovative Work-Behaviour and Work-Family Balance

In line with expectations, we found evidence for a negative relationship between directive leadership and innovative work-behaviour via work-related flow. Directive leadership hampers work-related flow, as it does neither provide autonomy, nor decision latitude to the employee (Scott

& Bruce, 1994). Thereby, employees receive little room to shape their job and work routines according to their preferences. Consequently, they may have developed less work-related flow (Bakker & Van Woerkom, 2017). Subsequently, innovative work-behaviour in later phases of the COVID-19 pandemic may be negatively affected as employees did not experience the freedom to explore new ideas and experiment with these (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). This outcome reinforces the present study's endorsement of leaders creating a job design which leverages the flexibility that telework provides and combining this with employee empowerment (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019). In a similar vein, these insights are an important contribution to the literature on leadership during times of crisis. While leaders might gravitate towards directive leadership behaviour to regain a feeling of control when faced with ambiguity (Stoker et al., 2019), our study shows that decisions on leadership behaviour at the start of a crisis can have important implications for long-term performance outcomes.

Against our expectations, no significant evidence was found for a negative relationship between directive leadership and work-family balance via work-related flow. This result might be explained by Demerouti et al. (2019) who suggest that job autonomy is vital for employees to self-create a job environment which enables work-related flow that can spill over to the home domain as well, enhancing work-family balance. Directive leadership does not provide job autonomy but rather focuses on issuing commands, reprimands and defining goals for the employees (Pearce & Sims, 2002). It could be that due to a lack of provided job autonomy and the challenged ability to detach from work properly due to substantial teleworking (Demerouti et al., 2012, 2019; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), our respondents might not have experienced sufficient ability to transfer work-related flow experiences to the home situation altogether.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, the present study is subject to several limitations. First, while we did not find significant results related to work-family balance, prior research suggests that the ability of individuals to

detach from work plays an important part in the spill-over effect of work-related flow (Demerouti et al., 2012, 2019). Future studies could, therefore, include additional factors, such as detachment from work, into the research design.

Second, while we included three-wave measurements in our sample, the composition of our sample is homogeneous and entails most knowledge workers, which might limit its representability. Future research could include a larger more heterogeneous sample from a greater number of different industries. This will increase the generalizability of future findings.

Third, the present study only focused on measurements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Telework experiences and preferences may have shifted during de pandemic towards a more favourable view (Williamson et al., 2021). Hence, future studies could include data from before the lockdown period, and control for prior telework experiences.

Practical Implications

Besides theoretical implications, the present study has implications for practitioners in the field. As organizations increasingly consider a more hybrid future of work (Williamson et al., 2021), leaders are now faced with the challenge of how to lead a hybrid workforce. The results in the presented study can be used as guidance for leaders to foster enduring innovative work-behaviour by focusing on enhancing employee well-being at work (Guest, 2017; Van de Voorde et al., 2011), in terms of work-related flow. Specifically, this can be achieved by enacting empowering leadership behaviour, such as providing job autonomy, encouragement to take additional responsibilities, and coaching and support (Ahearne et al., 2005), as this enhances the work-related flow experiences of their employees over time (Coun et al., 2021). Conversely, we discourage leaders to engage in directive leadership (cf. Stoker et al., 2019) as this is shown to lower employees' work-related flow experiences and, subsequently, their innovative work-behaviour. While we only found a significant win-win situation for innovative performance and well-being at work fostered by leadership behaviour, we also encourage leaders'

advocacy of practices that help employees successfully detach from work after hours to enhance their work-family balance through flow as well (Demerouti et al., 2019).

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Part III

Reflections on Outcomes of Remote Working

14

Dual Role of Leadership in 'Janus-Faced' Telework from Home

Matti Vartiainen

Introduction

It is obvious that there is no return to the 'old' way of mainly face-to-face working that preceded the COVID-19 pandemic. Lively discussion about types of flexible work arrangements, such as remote and telework, mobile multilocational work, and digital online telework on platforms, is again on the table (Vartiainen, 2021a, 2021b). The pandemic revitalized the debate on remote and telework, which originally date to 'telecommuting' in the 1970s (Nilles et al., 1976). Virtual teams (VT), as a way of organizing scattered remote teleworkers' collaboration, have also been studied for at least 30 years (Gilson et al., 2015). As Costa and her colleagues (2021, p. 619) note, VTs are now a ubiquitous feature of organizations, bringing challenges for vital team processes, including coordination, information exchange, and interpersonal relationships, as

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well as for many other fundamental aspects, such as leadership or emotional exchanges.

The transition to 'forced' telework from home (WFH) during the pandemic was widespread and rapid. WFH appeared to have a positive impact on employees' work-related experiences, which was reflected in their willingness to continue telework after the pandemic. For example, Sostero et al. (2020) estimated that 37% of employment in the EU was teleworkable. The March 2021 round of the *Living, Working and COVID-19* e-survey, which explored workers' preferences, showed that the preference for WFH was strongest among those working *only* from home (73%), but it was also significant among those who were combining working *from home and from the employers' premises* (53%). In the USA, Barrero et al. (2021) found in their survey, which included more than 30,000 responses, that 20% of full workdays would be done from home after the pandemic, compared with just 5% before. They suggested five reasons for this shift: better-than-expected WFH experiences during the pandemic, new investments in physical and human capital that enable WFH, greatly diminished stigma associated with telework, lingering concerns about crowds and contagion risks, and a pandemic-driven surge in technological innovations that support WFH. In all, it is evident that remote and telework is more common after the pandemic than before. Therefore, also a question arises: how to overcome the challenges and make use of the potential benefits of teleworking?

For researchers, the past few years have provided unique natural experimental settings to study adjustment to telework, mainly from home, and its functional collaboration with others and related work and management practices. As the pandemic continued, the debate shifted from the observations of adjustment to reflection; what will hybrid work look like in the future? In this chapter, individual hybrid work is preliminary defined as working alone and/or collaborating, utilizing advanced digital technologies and platforms, both from home and from other places—including the main workplace.

During the first phase of the pandemic, WFH can be characterized both as home-based remote and telework, which was not characterized by flexibility or individual choice but by necessity and organizational or

governmental requirements; workers were often prohibited from going to the main workplace. This shift also enabled the study of leadership challenges, benefits and opportunities in a new situation and context.

The aim of this chapter is to examine what kinds of challenges and rewards/benefits of WFH—and ambivalences between them—there were among teleworkers and teleworking leaders during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Remote Work and Telework Challenge Leadership

The Role of Leadership

Many former studies on remote leadership concern leading virtual teams (VT). In rich research spanning over three decades, researchers have shown that technology-mediated leadership is an important contributor to the success and performance of virtual teams (e.g., Gilson et al., 2015). Reviews on virtual teams have revealed the need for strong leadership, where a formal leader is essential when building trust, commitment, and team identity, and in leading and tracking team progress (Gibbs et al., 2017). The style and context of leadership may have an impact. In a recent meta-analysis, Brown et al. (2021) found that both relationship-focused and task-focused leadership positively relate to virtual team performance. Two structural moderators, that is, team size and task interdependence, also impact performance: relationship-focused leadership is a stronger predictor of performance for larger teams, whereas task-focused leadership is a weaker predictor of team performance in virtual teams with high task interdependence. In terms of the methodological moderators, that is, team type and the operationalization of team performance, Brown et al. (2021) found a stronger effect of task-focused leadership for intact (compared to ad hoc) virtual teams and a stronger effect of relationship-focused leadership on perceived team effectiveness (compared to efficiency/productivity). The quality of the leader-employee relationship and the proportion of an average workweek spent working in a

virtual work mode away from the office may also explain positive outcomes regarding a team's effectiveness.

In an early telework study, Golden and Veiga (2008) already found that those with high-quality relationships, who also extensively worked virtually, demonstrated the highest levels of commitment, job satisfaction, and performance in comparison to those who worked less extensively in this work mode. Those with lower quality relationships who worked extensively in the virtual mode demonstrated lower commitment and job satisfaction but performed somewhat better than those who worked a limited amount in this mode. In a later study, Golden and Fromen (2011) compared three *managerial* work modes (traditional, telework, and virtual work) to investigate differences in employee work experiences and outcomes. Their results suggest that unlike employees with managers in the traditional work mode, work experiences and outcomes are generally less positive for employees with teleworking managers who spend a portion of the week away from the office, and they are lower as well for employees with virtual managers who are away from the office full time.

Based on the account above, the question arises: how can close daily face-to-face connections between a leader and an employee be replaced when employees and their leaders are all forced to work remotely from each other? Based on their observations on leadership practices in virtual teams, Kozlowski et al. (2021) suggested that in team building, technological fluency should be ensured, in addition to establishing ground rules and norms for how the VT should function. In addition, a shared knowledge base is needed to build trust and team cohesion. To accomplish work, they suggested structural support, such as setting clear goals and instituting shared leadership among team members. Leading for the long haul requires maintaining trust and team cohesion, socializing new members, and balancing remote work with life and with face-to-face work.

From the viewpoint of a teleworker, former research on remote and telework shows that the most valued condition is the ability for the employee to work free from the supervisor's immediate commands and surveillance. Several studies consistently show that remote workers and teleworkers enjoy a significant degree of more work time autonomy than do their office-based counterparts (see, e.g., Eurofound & International

Labour Office, 2017). Autonomy seems to have positive impacts: in a meta-analysis by Gajendran and Harrison (2007), perceived autonomy was the most influential and extensive conveyor of telework effects. It fully mediated positive impacts on job satisfaction and partially mediated the impact of supervisors or objective ratings of performance, turnover intent, and role stress.

On the other hand, isolation resulting from geographical distance from colleagues, co-workers, and managers is a challenge to teleworkers (Felstead et al., 2005). According to Halford (2005), the main challenges in telework concerning organizational social relations are the pressures to prove one's availability to others—especially to leaders—and the fact that the home working environment undermines office sociability. For example, social isolation can potentially harm chances of promotion because of the 'out of sight—out of mind' phenomenon (Sewell & Taskin, 2015).

In addition to the challenges of leading remotely in 'forced' WFH, teleworking leaders also have common challenges with their teleworking employees. For example, Golden and Fromen (2011) found that employees with teleworking managers responded less positively than employees of traditional managers when they considered their work experiences, such as feedback and workload, and outcomes, such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Hence, working at home seems to generate some uncertainty and unpredictability concerning employees' and their leaders' relationships. Because of reduced interaction, there is a lack of social contact and isolation from the flow of information, support, and help from management and colleagues. The unpredictability of some of the work causes a particular concern. For example, how would a leader know whether a worker had truly encountered a problem that took longer to resolve than expected, or whether the worker was slacking off? O'Neill et al. (2014) found that leaders also expressed protective concerns for their staff, as they worried that workers may be struggling on a work-related issue or struggling in general with working from home. They were concerned that when working from home, workers may not always receive important information in a timely manner. Overall, it seems that working and leading remotely create additional challenges for leaders.

Leading Remotely During the Pandemic

Recent studies on leadership during the pandemic showed that teleworking is more intensive for leaders than their former face-to-face working style impacting on their employees' actions. A five-day diary study of 84 leaders (Venz & Boettcher, 2021) showed that perceived COVID-19-related work intensification was positively linked to leaders' worktime spent dealing with e-mails as well as appraised e-mail overload, leading to leaders' exhaustion. The frequency of interaction with leaders and the beliefs of employees about a leader's role seem to affect teleworkers' effort, performance, and withdrawal. Using a three-wave survey with 260 adults working remotely, Carsten et al. (2021) found that teleworkers with a coproduction role orientation, who see their role as more collaborative, reported higher levels of effort in work under conditions of high leader interaction. However, teleworkers with passive role orientations reported less effort when leader interaction was high, and the mediational chain predicting job performance and withdrawal was contingent on the frequency of leader interaction.

Moreover, it seems that leaders changed their leadership style in the first phase of the pandemic. For example, Stoker et al. (2021) showed in their online survey study that managers executed significantly less direct control and delegated more to employees. Employees also perceived a significant decrease in control but perceived on average no change in delegation. Employees of lower-level managers even reported a significant decrease in delegation. Overall, their results showed that increased delegation is associated with employees' increased perceived productivity and higher ratings of leadership quality.

Identifying Challenges and Benefits in Teleworking from Home

Examples of studies on leadership during the early phase of the pandemic showed that the swift change in working contexts matters, and that the job demands of both employees and leaders working from home change, thereby also requiring changes in job and personal resources. In this

study, challenges, and rewards/benefits in WFH, and their ambivalences are studied by using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker, 2011; Demerouti et al., 2001) as the framework. In the JD-R model, *job demands* represent characteristics of the job that will potentially evoke strain if they exceed the employee's adaptive resources (Bakker et al., 2007), that is, job and personal resources. Telework from home changes the physical, virtual, social, and organizational aspects of a job and requires adjustment to a new context and a new psychological orientation and ways of coping. Job demands in the JD-R model are often divided into two categories: challenge-related and hindrance-related demands (e.g., Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Challenge demands are work characteristics that stimulate individuals to put effort into the task at hand and help to achieve goals. They create opportunities for personal growth, learning, and achievement. However, changing work demands can also include interruptions, disturbances, and other hurdles resulting from the new context that can hinder work actions. According to recent studies, job demands that employees perceive as hindrances are positively associated with exhaustion and negatively associated with vigour (Van den Broeck et al., 2010) and work engagement (Crawford et al., 2010). This study focuses on challenge demands during the pandemic *by asking what kinds of challenges does telework from home pose for teleworkers and teleworking leaders.*

Teleworkers and teleworking leaders from home need both *job-related and personal resources* to meet these challenging demands and to work optimally. The JD-R model states that the resources to meet the external challenges and hindrances of working from home can also be found in those physical, virtual, social, and organizational aspects of the home context that are functional in achieving work goals. Sometimes they are called 'home resources' (Demerouti et al., 2010).

Job and home resources in WFH are especially those beneficial physical, virtual, and social aspects of working settings that enable teleworking by reducing job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). It can be expected that in home-based telework, the usefulness and functionality of digital tools and good working conditions at home can act as technological and physical resources, whereas family and friends act as social resources.

In addition to these contextual resources, teleworkers can rely on their *personal resources.* These refer to a teleworker's proactivity and an individual's sense of his or her ability to successfully control and have an impact on his or her environment (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Earlier experiences and learned practices in telework before the pandemic can increase personal resources. However, in the 'forced' WFH during the pandemic, this specific resource was missing for many. In this study, the potential telework-related and personal resources at home were studied by asking: *What kinds of rewards/benefits as resources does WFH pose for teleworkers and teleworking leaders*?

Methodology

We collected a large amount of data (qualitative and quantitative) about the first reactions to 'forced' WFH immediately after the lockdown (Blomqvist et al., 2020). The study (Wave 1, N = 5450) was conducted between March 26 and April 15, 2020. Some of the respondents had earlier experiences with telework, but most did not. The average age of the respondents was 45. Approximately 68% of the respondents were female, predominantly from the public sector (64%), private sector (20%) and non-profit organizations (8%). In all, the private sector data consist of all 1322 responses. The survey included two open-ended questions: "What has been the most challenging in your work during the COVID-19 crisis? Think broadly about your individual work as well as your collaboration with your colleagues or balancing work-family issues" and "What has been the most rewarding in your work during the COVID-19 (Corona) crisis? Think broadly about your individual work as well as your collaboration with your colleagues or balancing work-family issues." From the responses to these questions, two independent subsets of data were filtered for studying challenges related to working, rewards/benefits as available resources, and their ambivalences. The analyses of each subset of data were somewhat varied.

The first subset of data consists solely of the ambivalent answers from teleworkers (N=228) working in the private sector. For example, an employee wrote, "*Coordinating work with my wife's work and caring for*

children at home is a challenge. However, there is more time with family because commuting doesn't take time and lunches and breaks can be spent together." This is an ambivalent answer as an employee perceived working at home with a spouse and children both as socially pressing (i.e., a challenge) and satisfying because of closeness to the family (i.e., a reward/benefit). The first subset was analysed inductively following the content analysis method (Weber, 1990). Each individual response was first parsed into challenge and reward/benefit statements. Then their themes were coded content wise, which were then aggregated into higher-level categories showing the main contrasting views.

The second subset of data consists of the responses of teleworking leaders (N=195) who worked in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that had fewer than 50 paid employees. In total, the leaders' responses included 368 quotes concerning challenges (N = 201) *or* rewards/benefits (N = 167) as potential opportunities and resources. The coding process of the second subset of data started deductively by using the following categories from the literature: *work-life interface* (e.g., Felstead & Henseke, 2017), *leadership* (e.g., Thielsch et al., 2020), and *communication* (e.g., Wang et al., 2020). As not all quotes (N=41) could be coded based on prior knowledge, it was necessary to add some codes during the coding process under main category *working conditions*. Therefore, deductive and inductive approaches were combined to find the best possible categorization for the quotes. Some categories were bigger and included a great number of respondents, while some of them were smaller but still linked to several responses. It was also found that some of the respondents found only challenges in remote working and others only rewards/benefits. However, most respondents reported both challenges and rewards/benefits with different themes in WFH. In only 18 answers, the written response included both a challenge and a reward/benefit related to the same issue. For example, a leader wrote, *"Not having random interactions with people, e.g., over coffee. These often create crucial new ideas. However, so many fewer unnecessary meetings! It is a blessing to be able to concentrate on the study backgrounds instead of the everyday office hassle."* This is an ambivalent answer, as a leader misses informal interaction with his or her employees (i.e., a challenge). At the same time, however, the number of unnecessary meetings with them has decreased (i.e., a reward/benefit).

It was expected that the ambivalences would reveal potential tensions in telework arrangements. Moreover, by comparing teleworkers' ambivalences with teleworking leaders' ambivalences, it would be possible to see the potential similarities and differences between these two types of teleworkers. After identifying the ambivalences, the rewards/benefits as potential resources of teleworking were analysed, showing what should be redesigned and improved (challenges) especially in teleworking leaders' work and what characteristics (benefits) could be strengthened as resources. In Tables 14.1 and 14.2, only the themes and higher-level categories are shown.

Results

Teleworkers' Ambivalences in WFH

Most of the ambivalences are related to *challenges of self-leadership and managing work-life boundary*, that is, how to organize one's own work effectively in the midst of family issues at home (Table 14.1). On the other hand, working from home provides flexibility in time and more time with the family as well as more time to concentrate on work because of less commuting. *Relational and task-related communication* on work assignments and informal issues is missed, as were face-to-face meetings with colleagues. This was shown as feelings of loneliness, even though because of fewer interruptions, it was easier to concentrate on work at home. *Changes in work methods and workload* are also controversial issues as for many, learning to use technologies and organize virtual meetings were new and challenging. At the same time, learning these new digital competences was rewarding. Poor *working conditions* and non-functional *technologies* were a nuisance although the home as a peaceful working environment was valued. Rather few ambivalences were related to *management and leadership*. However, some respondents reported a lack of trust from their managers, though possibilities for self-leadership were hailed.

Table 14.1 Within category challenge and benefit ambivalences (N = 228) in tele-workers' experiences in WFH

Challenges	Resources (rewards/benefits)
Self-leadership & work-life boundary (N = 115)	
Children/spouse at home	More time with family
Pausing work/managing breaks is difficult	More flexibility in terms of time management
Inefficiency without social pressure	More time to produce outputs
Managing work-life balance	More time to work & concentrate
Relational communication (N = 35)	
No ad-hoc discussions, exchanging of ideas	More caring and asking about how colleagues are doing
Missing colleagues	Ability to concentrate better, focus without interruption
No ad-hoc issues emerge/are dealt with	People are easier to reach → things move faster
Changes in work methods and workload (N = 34)	
The adoption of new technologies	Learning the use of remote work technologies
Remote facilitation of workshops	Learning how to facilitate workshops remotely
Difficult to get help	Realization that I can manage by myself
Business stalled completely (business implications)	Competitive advantage through the development of new practices
Working conditions (N = 13)	
Poor ergonomics/no workstation	Peaceful working environment at home
In open office setting you keep track of what is going on	
Individual level issues (N = 11)	
Loneliness	Peaceful to work
Uncertainty	Feeling that things will work out
Lack of initiative	Efficiency
Management and leadership (N = 8)	
Lack of trust from manager causes anxiety	Enjoying independence
Task-related communication (N = 8)	
No colleagues around to ask for help	More ownership at work
Difficult to hold remote meetings with less familiar people	Online meetings are faster
Technology (N = 4)	
Difficult to solve problems through teams	Learning to use remote technologies efficiently

Table 14.2 Challenges and benefits of WFH in teleworking leaders' experiences

Challenges (N = 201)	Resources (rewards/benefits) (N = 167)
Work-life interface (N = 168)	
Concentration: Lack of quietness at home, for example, because of family (N = 35)	Ability to concentrate to work (N = 28)
Time management: Lengthened workdays (N = 20)	Time saved in commuting and the ability to spend more time with family etc. (N = 67)
Work-life balance: Challenges in combining work and life (N = 13)	Ability to better balance work- and nonwork life (N = 5)
Leadership (N = 85)	
Fast change: Chaos and uncertainty (N = 21)	Fast adjustment to the situation (N = 24)
Communication with employees: Keeping the communication with employees at a good enough level (N = 13)	
Leading remotely: Leading remotely in general (N = 9)	Success in remote leading in general (N = 5)
Reorganizing work: Need to reorganize everyone's work at a fast pace (N = 8)	
Supervising employees: Challenges in supervising what everyone's doing remotely (N = 5)	
Communications (N = 74)	
Lack of meetings: Lack of social, face-to-face interaction (N = 23)	Togetherness: Everyone working together and supporting each other (N = 26)
Information sharing: Challenges in sharing information (N = 17)	
Lack of ad-hoc meetings: Lack of spontaneous meetings (N = 5)	
Increased number of meetings: More meetings because of no time for transitions needed (N = 3)	
Working conditions (N = 41)	
ICTs: Problems with insufficient ICTs (N = 15)	Taking ICTs into full usage (N = 12)
Ergonomics: Problems with insufficient working facilities (N = 14)	

Teleworking Leaders' Ambivalences in WFH

Overall, teleworking leaders perceived more challenges than rewards/benefits (Table 14.2). It is also seen that some of the respondents find only challenges in remote working and others only rewards/benefits as resources.

Most of the quotes were related to the *work-life interface*. The greatest single challenges were not having the opportunity to concentrate on work at home, lengthened workdays, and combining work and other life. Alternatively, the greatest rewards and benefits acting as time and social resources were the time saved in commuting, the ability to concentrate on work, and the ability to spend more time with family—if there was a family. It showed that the family situation, for example, is a person living alone or with her/his family, explains much about managing work-life balance!

Leadership itself seems to be a real challenge for several reasons. On the one hand, there were many quotes about a quick and slightly chaotic change. Remote leadership practices were still under construction: how to reorganize everyone's work at a fast pace and determining what the daily practices are in supervising everyone's remote work. On the other hand, many quotes talked about fast adjustment to the new leadership role when working from home.

A significant challenge related to leadership lies in *communication and information sharing*: face-to-face ad-hoc meetings were missing and there were too many virtual meetings. However, it seems that the working climate when collaborating online was good, as some leaders underlined *togetherness*: everyone worked together and supported each other.

Inadequate *working conditions*, including challenges in information and communication technologies (ICT) and workplace ergonomics, further weakened communication although taking ICT into full usage was seen as a benefit.

Ambivalences within one person turned out in the categories of work-life interface (N = 14), communication (N = 3), and leadership. While some individual respondents were happy to spend more time with their family when everyone stayed at home, they also felt that it was a challenge for their work since they were not able to concentrate on their work tasks.

Discussion and Conclusions

'Janus-Faced' Telework and the Dual Role of Teleworking Leaders

The ambivalent responses and the perception of rewards/benefits as opportunities and resources to meet challenges showed some core characteristics in 'forced' telework from home. The ambivalent answers of both study groups show the *Janus face' of teleworking*: WFH is simultaneously challenging but also empowering; working in isolation from co-workers in mostly meagre working conditions also provided some autonomy. Teleworkers did not consider the remoteness of their leaders as a challenge, though their own autonomy and self-leadership were seen both as a challenge, and a benefit. This clearly reflects the potential and need for developing self-leadership competencies as personal resources when working from home. As shown in many meta-analysis (e.g., Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), perceived autonomy enabling leading oneself is the most influential and extensive conveyor of telework effects. Instead, teleworking leaders mostly raised up challenges related to their own leadership in WFH as could be expected (Golden & Fromen, 2011). The resources of WFH for them came from their job, that is, time savings, togetherness-building efforts with colleagues, and ICT, in addition to social home resources, that is, support and energy received from their family.

Another common topic among teleworkers and teleworking leaders was how to arrange task- and relation-related interactions in the changed social context with different relations to colleagues and other actors (Brown et al., 2021). Both groups longed for other people which was seen to reflect feelings of loneliness in telework (Felstead et al., 2005). Additionally, the loss of typical working practices created mixed ideas among teleworkers about how to organize their own job and collaboration with others. Ambivalent attitudes towards physical premises as well as the availability of technologies at home resulted in some mixed feelings and showed the need to develop proper working conditions.

The responses of teleworking leaders clearly showed their *dual role*; they found similar challenges and benefits concerning the work-life interface at home as teleworkers. However, remote work also seems to increase leadership-related challenges in their work. The main demand characteristics of teleworking leaders were related to task-related communication, the ability to concentrate on work at home, and functional working conditions. 'Strong' leadership (Gibbs et al., 2017) is more demanding due to the experience of the change as chaotic and fast, as well as due to challenges in communication and supervising employees' actions remotely, while 'best processes' and 'best practices' are missing. Communication challenges appeared as missing social, face-to-face and ad-hoc meetings, as well as the increased number of online meetings. Without face-to-face meetings, communication and knowledge-sharing were considered difficult. It was challenging to maintain high-quality relationships with employees, which can lower their commitment, job satisfaction and performance, as shown by Golden and Veiga (2008). Challenges in organizing work in the home context were seen as work intensification (Venz & Boettcher, 2021). This was shown as difficulty concentrating in a noisy home environment, feelings of chaos, lengthening workdays, and balancing work and other life. There were also problems with insufficient ICTs and working facilities. This could lead to leaders' exhaustion in the long run.

Teleworking leaders have a dual role to play. After the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, they saw themselves as teleworkers, among others. However, they did not forget their leadership roles and responsibilities, as demonstrated by their experience of the challenges. This means that they have adapted to teleworking as well as their employees and learned new skills and practices in teleworking and management.

Design of Hybrid Work

The key principles in terms of future job design are, on the one hand, to remove or change the above-mentioned challenges of job demands and, on the other hand, to utilize and develop the available benefits as opportunities and resources. The type of post-pandemic 'hybrid work' will

determine what resources are needed to address the current situation. It seems evident that hybrid work will be a flexible mixture of using various places—including the home and main office—as digitalized workplaces.

Flexible hybrid work models can have many faces, as their implementation depends on the purpose and goals of the work and the work processes needed. The *place* is important: work is done flexibly in both physical and virtual spaces. Workspace contexts need to provide such working conditions that enable peaceful concentration to practice remote leadership. *Time* is important as well: work is done from 8 to 16 o'clock or 24/7 as solo work asynchronously and synchronously with someone or several people. Leaders should not only manage their own time but also watch that their employees do not overload themselves and can cope with their job demands. *Communication* in hybrid work will occur both face-to-face and in a mediated manner. In this regard, the role of *technology* is crucial as an enabler of collaboration and knowledge seeking and elaboration in solo work. Hybrid work essentially includes collaboration consisting of both task- and relation-related communication (Brown et al., 2021). Members of the same or of different organizations will work interdependently in purely virtual or hybrid contexts, in which individuals communicate via e-mail, videoconferencing, teleconferencing, and several other means of virtual communication.

The implication for leadership is that leaders need to develop their personal resources, which are both face-to-face and mediated communication and interaction skills, to help employees develop their technological, collaborative, and self-leadership skills. Socially, mediated communication can weaken ties between co-workers and management, cause loneliness and tiredness due to constant online meetings and an e-mail flood, and cause addiction to media use. These are just a few of the challenges to meet when adapting to flexible ways of working. Moreover, in contemporary workplaces, it is not simply a question of face-to-face *or* virtual communication but of both: organizational members may work with both types of media simultaneously, or at least often interweave their use. In their diary study, Bakker et al. (2021) showed how employees, by using proactive work strategies, that is, daily self-leadership and crafting their own jobs, could satisfy their basic psychological needs and facilitate job performance.

They suggested that leaders could provide autonomy and feedback to employees to foster this kind of proactivity.

All in all, when implementing hybrid work, leaders and managers need to adjust the organizational structure to be less hierarchical, learn, lead, and communicate from a distance, and create functional working conditions for employees working from anywhere (WFA). Employees need autonomy to take responsibility and self-leadership competencies (e.g., Contreras et al., 2020). As underlined by Lautsch et al. (2009), supervisors should stay in close contact with teleworkers and emphasize sharing of information rather than close monitoring. Second, leaders should encourage telecommuting employees to create work and family boundaries to lower work-family conflict. Third, it is also crucial both for teleworkers and teleworking leaders to learn to benefit from collaboration technologies as they are important enablers of flexible working. To realize this, a trustful relationship, dialogical ways of interacting, and contracts stating the new rules and practices of the game are needed between the actors.

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15

Security Issues at the Time of the Pandemic and Distance Work

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Introduction

This chapter sets out a discussion to understand new security issues in the context of distance work. We will focus on three areas of security threats. Security is a key aspect of all human activity, including paid work. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the world with great surprise. In most global risk assessment rehearsal, this topic was not recognized, also not any global pandemic, even when we have had such in the past, the most recent before COVID-19 being the 1918–19 Flu pandemic, also called Spanish flu, the Great Influence Epidemic or the 1918 Influenza Pandemic. It is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population at that time, became infected with this virus (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). However, the world at that time was extensively different from the current world, most importantly being much less interconnected, and the outcomes of the 1918–19

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flu pandemic were rather different from those of COVID-19. The main difference is that 100 years ago the world was not interconnected and global in the way it is now, and the effects of the 1918–19 flu pandemic remained local. In international risk assessments (Atlas Magazine, 2017) a global pandemic was not foreseen very well. Global severe risks were discussed from the viewpoint of likelihood and impact. In the dimension of likelihood there was no mention of pandemics. In the dimension of impact "Spread of infectious diseases" was anyway identified at the place 8.

The first security risk area is data "security and privacy." The COVID-19 pandemic has permanently changed our relationship with technology, accelerating the drive toward digitization (Véliz, 2021). Information technology devices, however, are generally perceived to be poorly configured compared to work environment IT devices (Fernandes, 2021). Consequently, the work environment at home is almost invariably more prone to data privacy and security risks than the work environment on the employers' premises. Both devices and telecommunication lines might be less protected. Moreover, devices might be used more in a mixed mode between business and privacy issues. Therefore, in a telework setting, controlling physical access to data, devices, and telecommunication infrastructure is nearly impossible.

The second security risk area is "physical safety." Physical safety refers to the absence of harm or injury that any person can experience from a physical object or practice (Your Experiences Matter, 2022). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sudden shift to tele(home)working for an uncertain time period might have caused paying less attention to workplace safety and ergonomics.

The third area of security risk is "mental well-being." Even for those not contracting the COVID-19 infection, several health risks can emerge. COVID-19 has affected different frontiers of life and induced many psychiatric and mental problems, such as panic, anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorders, suspiciousness, infodemia, cacophony, xenophobia, and racism (Jakovljevic et al., 2020). Feelings of isolation and lack of immediate personal support in the case of problems are crucial in distance work arrangements (Toscano & Zappalà, 2020). A major issue that needs focus and management is communication with other

members of the working community. Controlling working time and separating it from free time has become challenging (Allen et al., 2021). Also, productivity measurement may become more difficult, and even when real productivity remains stable or improves, workers may still feel inefficiency in their work duties.

The chapters unfold as follows. After this Introduction, the intellectual history of work from home is introduced. The next section discusses the surprise and impact of COVID-19 on the world in general and on intellectual work in particular. Then, after a short discussion on security in general, we discuss, in turn, our three areas of attention: data security and privacy risks, physical safety risks, and mental security risks. After mapping out the risks, we offer suggestions on the most effective ways to mitigate these risks. The chapter concludes by presenting a summary and conclusions.

Home at Work

Many people around the world have resorted to work from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some have been compelled to do this, while some have taken the change voluntarily. Work from home has its benefits and drawbacks, and individuals react to different issues in diverse ways.

In this chapter, we concentrate on work from home, where the work is mainly intellectual in nature. Physical work, as well as performances containing a physical component, is left outside our discussion, as the risks of security in these types of work activities are very different from risks in purely intellectual work.

Research on work from home with networked computers has emerged under several terms, including practice. A pioneering term was that of telework (Bailey & Kurland, 2002), partly inspired by the mostly American term telecommuting, where the need for physical commuting to work was eliminated. Working from home has several benefits, one of the most important is the elimination of usually risky travel to and from work. This benefit outweighs many, if not all, homework security risks. The telework concept further evolved in the term of distance work. One

of the earliest studies that mentioned telework is by Green (1988). A term close to distance work is remote work, also used by several researchers (Olson, 1983; Staples, 2001). New terms were also introduced, such as multi-site work, which is mainly used in organizational daily practices, but to some extent even in academic research, such as (Damian & Zowghi, 2002; Marttiin et al., 2002). The next development in the terminology was that of nomad work (O'Brien, 2011), referring to people working everywhere: the initial workplace, other premises by the employer or any institution connected to the employer, during work and other traveling, and home, including different additional places, such as summer cottages.

Working from Home: Data Security and Data Privacy

A first view of safety and security is that of data security and data privacy. Identifying, categorizing, analyzing, and counteracting data security and privacy threats and risks is an endless task. We must focus on some limited set of risks that we consider typical and highly relevant for distance work. These include:

- Use of private devices
- Data storage in wrong places
- Use of badly secured communication networks
- Mixing up of private and work life
- Possible unavailability of help desk services
- Social isolation leading to misconduct.

Before entering these detailed topics, a short introduction to data privacy and security is needed. As ever, the important topic has several names. Data security is a core topic untapped a long time ago (Denning, 1982; Denning & Denning, 1979) but by no means obsolete for the networked world (Kaufman, 2009). Data security is taken as the central concept, as in the final analysis, all information system security and privacy problems come down to data being in the wrong place and/or at the wrong time. Information security is a related term, and information is

processed data that is meaningful to someone. Data privacy is a subset and consequence of data security; there is no data privacy without data security. Data privacy is the protection of personal data from those who should not have access to it and the ability of individuals to determine who can access their personal information (Cloudflare, 2021).

Terms such as IT security (Cavusoglu et al., 2004), computer security (Gollmann, 2010), network security (Kaeo, 2004; Marin, 2005) and cybersecurity (Craigen et al., 2014; Singer & Friedman, 2014) are also often used. In general, the terms refer to where the focus of security risks might be management. Nowadays, the term cybersecurity is mostly used.

Somewhat simplified, data security problems can be traced back to three main areas: confidentiality, integrity, and availability. Together, these form the so-called CIA Triad (Fenrich, 2008; Samonas & Coss, 2014) or AIC Triad (Al-Qasrawi, 2016) to avoid confusion with the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States. Of course, these three main areas (confidentiality, integrity, and availability) can be divided into millions of sub-areas, but this broad categorization ensures that none of the basic dimensions of security is forgotten. First, data confidentiality deals with protecting against the disclosure of information by ensuring that the data is limited to those authorized or by representing the data in such a way that its semantics remain accessible only to those who possess some critical (NIST, 1995). Second, data integrity refers to the property that data have not been altered in an unauthorized manner. It covers data in storage, during processing, and while in transit (NIST, 1995). Whereas data can be well protected in terms of confidentiality and integrity, no one has the benefit of the data if it is not available. Therefore, third, data availability concerns the timeliness and reliability of access to and use of data. It includes data accessibility. Hence, availability has to do with the accessibility and continuity of information (University of Delaware, 2021).

The use of private devices was taken under scrutiny with the introduction of the term Bring Your Own Device (BYOD). While the term had its heyday some ten years ago (Miller et al., 2012; Thomson, 2012), the term is still heavily used (Ratchford et al., 2021). Key problems with worker-owned devices are that they are positioned outside complete device maintenance and management of the employer, and that data and activities on it are mixed between the private and work spheres. Use of

own personal devices—which are rightfully easily understood to belong to the personal life sphere more integrally than those acquired by the employer—may also be shared with other family members, further increasing security risks. Problems of electricity supply might also become a problem in home environments, which usually do not have proper uninterrupted power supply (UPS) arrangements. Overheating (or cooling) of home devices is also a risk, as home environments are usually not as professionally air-condition controlled as in organizational facilities.

Data storage tends to become distorted and disintegrated in non-organizational settings. Data is usually safe when it resides just in one place. In general, the more storage places, the more risks. In organizational settings, the danger of keeping "all eggs in one basket" is rather minimal, as keeping security copies of organizational databases is a rather mature discipline.

The home environment is an especially vulnerable place to keep data, as data storage is not professionally managed, and can take various forms. The theft of data storage devices is much easier than in most organizational settings, as access to workplaces is usually strictly controlled, but people naturally invite people to their homes. Printers are always a key risk device group for data privacy, and even much so in home environments: "[Not] many administrators are aware about their security risks. The most representative example is printers, which have traditionally been considered totally harmless devices. At present time, this idea is difficult to defend because too many security incidents related with networked printers have risen in the last years" (Hernandez et al., 2001, p. 190).

The use of poorly secured communication networks is common in home-settings. Again, professional management is missing from local networks. Home Wi-Fi networks remain often unprotected, and everyone can have access to them: "Many users have their home Wi-Fi networks in unsecured mode or use publicly available unsecured Wi-Fi networks" (Potnuru, 2012, p. 89). This is bad in the sense that any telecommunication chain is only as strong as its weakest link. In the absence of proper networks, data transfer can even happen through the transportation of the data storage device, and interactions through the network may easily suffer from poor data integrity. Also unauthorized data

disintegration can occur. Thus, data availability can always be a great problem outside of the work environment.

Mixing up personal and work life is acceptable when working from home. However, this should not be extended to data and information processing activities. Using the same communication platforms (e.g., social media, e-mail, and instant messaging) for both personal and work-related communication can easily lead to data security breaks. Access control to premises is hard to implement, and anyone having free access to the home can have free access to work-related data, if not carefully protected. Openly drifting papers are of course a major security treat, even in the home environment. Possible unavailability of help desk services is also a major threat. However, generally, it is not possible to extend helpdesk and related activities to IT devices that are not owned by the work organization. Automatic monitoring of work-station infrastructure performance is not usually possible in home-settings. This means that software and hardware problems are not always professionally addressed. Software is not updated, malfunctioning hardware might remain unnoticed, found problems, and malfunctions of systems are not reported and taken care of.

In addition to the more technical problems described above, well-being problems easily emerge. Social isolation, even when performing information processing activities, may lead to distorted habits when no social control is available. Private computers are beyond the coverage and analysis of log data. The computers might not be shut down for long periods, inhibiting automatic software updates and cumulating risk-vulnerable data to different intermediate storages and buffers of the IT infrastructure, finally opening a channel to possible intrusion risks. Automatic security copy production of data is most likely not working in the home environment. Constant switching between the work and personal information spheres may easily lead to the mixing up of data storage and processing activities as well. In addition, eating and drinking by the work station is always a major risk to the hardware, and simultaneous data might be lost: "Residue from food and drink attracts vermin which destroy library materials; spillage can ruin a book and do serious damage to a computer terminal" (Soete, 1998, p. 24).

Working from Home: Aspects of Physical Safety

A second view of safety and security is that of physical safety. It is widely agreed that working from home, or flexible work arrangements, are generally beneficial for both the employer and the workers. In some occupations, it is possible to maintain personal choice in the decision about whether to work from home or to come into work. The condition for working from home is often that the worker has an appropriate and well-maintained safe place for performing the duties. However, this is not the case when workers live in space-constrained living conditions, have a family with home-staying children, or live close to a construction site with lot of noise. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, working from home included the assumption that workers were able to work peacefully and have a spare room that could be converted into a home office. Additionally, when the COVID-19 lockdown started, the assumption was that workers have safe seating, desk, and lighting arrangements, ergonomically safe equipment, safe electric supply, and injury-free immediate environment. (Pennington & Stanford, 2020).

The common factor for injuries is that workers lose control of what they intend to do by a sudden action that causes loss of life or health. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic may also have affected the physical condition without any sudden incident. This was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic, as there has been widespread use of information technologies at inadequate ergonomic positions, which could have led to various health conditions. These conditions include illumination, noise, temperature, and furniture (Suárez Monzón et al., 2021).

During the lockdown period and working from home, the search for better spaces for virtual working has led workers—or students—to move to closed places with less illumination or ventilation. Also, it is possible that individuals work with smaller devices, such as the cell phone or tablet. This, in turn, might cause musculoskeletal damage, as bad postural habits may be generated over a longer period of time (Suárez Monzón et al., 2021).

All these issues concern the risk area of physical safety. It must be noted in this regard that there are two separate concepts for being in harm-free

condition without risks. Safety implies a human aspect, freedom from accident or injury, while security implies deliberateness or intent, as well as protection from dangers. The concept of security is used mainly in the context of protection against undesirable threats, whereas safety is frequently used in connection with injuries (water safety, home safety, and fire safety) (Somerkoski & Lillsunde, 2014). In general, however, working is a protective factor for workers, as employers must follow labor legislation. The condition for this is, of course, that the employer complies with the law in these respects. A thorough socialization during onboarding processes of new workers, therefore, is important.

Despite any onboarding and socialization processes being in place, however, injuries—both unintentional and violence-related—currently take the lives of 4.4 million people around the world each year and constitute nearly 8% of all deaths (World Health Organization, 2021). For people aged 5–29 years, injuries are the most common reason for death. A major part of these are home and leisure injuries. For instance, falls, which are an under-recognized public health issue, account for over 684,000 deaths each year for children and youth. Tens of millions more people, however, suffer non-fatal injuries that lead to emergency department and acute care visits. Hospitalization might be both expensive and painful. Research has found several risk factors for injuries, for instance alcohol or substance use, lack of adult supervision of children, poverty, economic and gender inequality issues, unemployment, or a lack of safety in the built environment. Also, some social factors and determinants might affect the frequency of injuries, for instance easy access to alcohol, weak social safety nets, including unsafe housing or schools. In vulnerable communities, where trauma care services are inadequate, the consequences of injuries can be exacerbated (World Health Organization, 2021).

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, many countries, if not all, have implemented physical distancing to limit transmission of the coronavirus. During the pandemic, physical restrictions, such as lockdown periods, affected the workplace, traffic, sport, and leisure activities. Respectively, more people were staying at home. This caused an increasing number of home injuries. For instance, in Australia, the home was the most commonly reported place for injury occurrence, as the injury rate increased by 9.3% compared to the time before the pandemic

(2017–2019). This figure was based on the use of the emergency service health department. (Monash University Accident Research Centre, 2021).

In the US, the pandemic almost doubled the number of injuries in the household. The representative sample of 26% reported having experienced an injury in the household during the pandemic. The comparative figure before the pandemic was 14.3%. Falls were the most common cause of injury, consistent with earlier studies (Gielen et al., 2015). Families with children living at home were significantly associated with a higher likelihood of reporting injury. Households with children reported almost three times more injuries during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to those without children. However, the researchers in this study did not find an overall connection between increased time spent at home and report of injuries (Gielen et al., 2015).

Product safety can be regarded as a part of physical safety issues. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the consumption of products and product-based injuries widely. For instance, in the US, school-related injuries and sport activities dropped sharply 81%. This was the most probably for the suspension of the school and sports-club activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, respectively, skateboard, hoverboard, scooter, and bicycle injuries that were treated in the emergency services increased by almost 40%. Button battery injuries (swallowing or inserting in the nose) increased by 93% in injuries in 5–9-year-old children (United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2021).

Researching and navigating the COVID-19 pandemic environment might help minimize the risk of the future. This was the case when researchers found that unintentional burn injuries among children rose 32.5% during the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic compared with the same period in the previous year. Researchers state that this was due to stay-at-home orders given during the beginning of the pandemic (Family Safety & Health, 2021).

Because of the lack of special arrangements for safety and the constant interplay between private and business issues, human's concentration is limited, leading to larger catastrophes, such as fires or water damages in worst cases. In the case of the simultaneous task of taking care of children, the risk is further accelerated.

Working from Home: Aspects of Mental Well-Being

A third view of safety and security is that of mental well-being. According to the World Health Organization, safety is a condition where factors that are a threat to society are managed so that everyone has the feeling of well-being and prosperity (Welander et al., 2004) Additionally, the concept of well-being is often used when emotions are in question. Mental well-being refers to the stable condition of the mind.

There seems to be global consensus that the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown, physical isolation, and working from home have affected workers in versatile ways. First, some of the findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative effect on the well-being of workers. A present study (Smith et al., 2020) utilizing a sample of 932 UK adults found that the prevalence of poor mental health was 36.8% in contexts where individuals had to isolate themselves or had to obey to social distancing regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Correlates of poor mental health included female sex, a younger age, lower annual income, being a current smoker, and having physical multimorbidity. Supervisor support, however, may protect the mental health and well-being of workers (Evanoff et al., 2020).

Sharing the home with others during the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have an effect on employees' mental well-being as well. Having an infant at home predicted better overall mental well-being. Also, working parents had a better physical and mental well-being status since they were spending more time at home with their kids. Yet, there was a simultaneous increase in new physical and mental issues due to the increased distractions in work life and lack of support from day-care centers or babysitters during the work day (Xiao et al., 2021).

Some researchers state that individual work management skills have a connection with how well the worker thinks he or she can manage when working from home. Autonomy and self-leadership seem to have a positive relationship with productivity and work engagement. Work from home may also play a protective role for workers since they were not asked to go to work and were not exposed to possible COVID-19 contagion by leaving home. This situation sets new challenges for the

employees, as they should provide more support and understanding for family-work conflict—not to forget the need for mental recovery and right to disconnect of each worker. Furthermore, there might be a demand for some organizational changes to support the mental well-being of working-from-home workers (Galanti et al., 2021).

To sum up, policies that promote physical activity, reduce psychological distress, and support balancing childcare while working from home, are important. The employee can address some of these issues, but it is also essential that employers monitor workers' well-being systemically, for instance providing breaks or logistic support. It is essential for the employer to be able to make adjustments in the "new" workplace and in productivity expectations.

Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter discussed the risks caused by COVID-19 beyond the core health risks that are the core of the pandemic. We focused on three types of risk. First, knowledge work has evolved into networks and digital environments even more rapidly than originally expected; this is sure to increase the risks related to data security and privacy. Second, work is increasingly being carried out in nomad environments, even work that is not knowledge work. While working at home surely has some physical safety benefits, such as the elimination of traveling to work and back, the risks emerging are surely many. Home environments can seldom be well secured and equipped as professionally designed office or factory environments. However, at home, peer and employer support will not be available. Third, we discovered that COVID-19 is not only causing classical health risks, but also a great number of mental health problems and risks.

Within data security and privacy, our greatest concern was that activity had shifted away from employer control. Professional data management controls usual, which are common in organizational settings, are difficult to apply to home office control. The increasing mixing of personal and work spheres adds to the risks of data security and privacy. Furthermore, the physical environment at home is also very different from the professional office environment, not to speak of the factory environment.

Again, there is a lack of professional physical environment design and infrastructure. Shortcomings in the working environment can lead to different kinds of health and safety risks. The COVID-19 pandemic poses several risks to mental health. The isolation imposed on individuals can cause a serious mental health risk. Not coping with work demands because of several factors and perpetual over- or underwork can have a deep impact on mental health. Worrying about one's health and that of other people may be easy for most people. Missing peer support or support from employers, family, or family can also be a considerable risk factor.

People are unique and, therefore, they react differently to the COVID-19 pandemic. An issue being of deep concern and discomfort might be totally unimportant to someone else or even a good thing. We have seen how individuals react to different phenomena around the pandemic in many different ways, and this is also true even for countries. Nations have reacted to the COVID-19 virus in very different ways, even within units where one would expect some amount of coordinated action, such as the European Union. Two years of experience have shown that there is not any best or worst reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic yet available. This very much also holds to individuals, and we cannot say what would be the best individual response to COVID-19 and all the phenomena around it. Each individual must adjust to the situation based on his or her needs and capabilities.

COVID-19 has set new challenges for both workers working from home and employers. The condition for bearing the heavy workload and performing effective self-management needs family-work balance, flexibility in working conditions, and support from the environment, such as family, co-workers, customers, and employers. Individuals who live in vulnerable communities have been even more vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ladd & Bortolotti, 2020). Vulnerability can take several forms, such as inadequate living space, many children, no decent infrastructure, no education or work opportunities, alcohol or substance use, lack of adult supervision of children, poverty, economic, gender inequality issues, unemployment, or a lack of safety in the built environment. People living in such conditions are even more vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as more time is consumed at home.

With COVID-19, health and well-being are no longer only a demographic or individual-level issue. Therefore, there is a need to redefine the whole concept of sustainability (Hakovirta & Denuwara, 2020). All sustainability goals set by the United Nations (2015) can be seen in a new light through the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has a direct impact on the goal of good health and well-being. As our chapter shows, the goal of decent work and economic growth is also something that needs to be redefined.

Once the pandemic is over, we will have accumulated a lot of new knowledge on how to master such unusual situations in society. This is the strength of humankind. Before that, we still must devote a lot of energy, time, and concern to the different challenges COVID-19 has brought to us. We must also learn to understand the positive challenges COVID-19 has set to our old, often outdated, ways of living, working, and taking care of our health.

In the end, the COVID-19 pandemic, lasting 2 or 20 years, is a very short period in humankind history. For individuals living now, it surely can deeply affect life, especially in some critical periods of life. We have seen, for example, documentation of students doing all their (university) studies during the COVID-19 pandemic or elderly at nursing homes having no nursing home experience other than that of the COVID-19 effect. Also, those who began their working career within the last two years may not have had any work experience. They have good reason to believe that this is how work-life functions; the "new normal," even in the times of the COVID-19 era, has not yet vanished.

Practical Implications to Mitigating Risks

The risks of telework in the times of COVID-19 discussed above surrender to classical risk management strategies. There are many of those general lists, but we turn to the version of (Glossop, 2021):

- Risk acceptance
- Risk transference
- Risk avoidance
- Risk reduction.

Risk acceptance is a strategy we all employ all the time in almost any human activity: We accept risks to avoid excessive cost and resource ways to avoid them. It is close to impossible to say anything general when this is reasonable, and when not, all is deeply contextual.

The traditional way to transfer risks is insurance. It is always just mending bad things that happened, and is of course very questionable, for example, in the case of mental health: financial compensation for mental health loss would most likely be very hard to get, and money would not make up the losses. In telework agreements, risks can be distributed between workers and employers; it is a general knowledge that long-term telework should be covered with a separate telework agreement (Baltina, 2012; Clavería, 2020; Meadows, 2007; Top & Savu, 2015).

Risk avoidance, in its pure meaning, would mean that there is no risk; that would mean no (tele)work. Every worker can, however, do something to avoid risks. In data privacy and security, working offline would be the answer to most data security problems, but it is hardly any viable option in the long run. Loosely hanging paper documents are always a data security and privacy risk (Kahn & Sheshadri, 2008). Deciding and controlling what kinds of work activities are available to do at home is an option everyone should have. In mental health, there might be issues that are better not to be handled outside work environment settings; keeping even the environments separate might sometimes contribute to the maintenance of mental health (Hall & Richter, 1988; Shen, 2019).

In all risk management work, education, and mapping of risks (getting to know and understand them) are key activities. These strongly support risk reduction. In terms of data privacy and security, there are plenty of commercial technical solutions and services that can be bought to improve security. However, it is important to remember that the biggest risk factor is the user (Lineberry, 2007). In work environments, especially in those where real physical work is done, it is well known that keeping the workplace organized and tidy is a key to safety (Parmar & James, 2021), and this of course is very much true for office and intellectual work.

In mental well-being, being able to integrate and at the same time keep separated work and leisure time are keys to avoiding mental health problems (Gershuny, 1989). There is reason to remember that good solutions can be very personal, and it is next to impossible to give any universal

guidelines (Lobo, 2006). The key things are that workers think and are aware of these issues, and that they are given enough freedom to tailor their working style to their individual needs. No wonder work-life flexibility is a major topic these days (Gashi et al., 2021; Kossek & Lautsch, 2018).

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16

Eroding Boundaries and Creeping Control: "Digital Regulation" as New Normal Work

Ariane Ollier-Malaterre

Introduction

In a 2019 article published in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, Jerry Jacobs, Nancy Rothbard, and I argued that the blurring of the boundaries between work and life was increasingly leading people to conduct what we termed "technology management". We defined technology management as the work that individuals perform to gain control over technology and align it with their values and life goals (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2019).

Three years and a COVID-19 pandemic later, the world of work has evolved dramatically, as work from home became mandatory in many countries during confinements, and then was normalized in a range of jobs and workplaces where previously it was considered unfeasible. While the COVID-19 pandemic may be an opportunity to reinvent work

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organization and make it more flexible in durable ways (Ollier-Malaterre, 2021), it has heightened the blurring of the boundaries (Allen et al., 2021) and accelerated the trend towards the quantification and digitalization of organizational control (Kellogg et al., 2020).

This chapter is an essay in which I build on the remote work, boundary management and organizational control literature to analyse these trends and propose that given the documented detrimental effects of eroding boundaries (Möhring et al., 2020) and quantified control (Martin et al., 2016), workers must, now even more than before the pandemic, actively regulate digital technology and its implications for their professional and personal lives. I first analyse how the pandemic has embedded blurred boundaries and quantified algorithmic control into the "new normal" of work. I then turn to explaining how workers may regain agency and control by engaging in an active regulation of digital technology along the three technology management dimensions identified in our prior work (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2019): (a) constant connectivity (when and where they are connected and available to work); (b) self-presentation (disclosures on video conferences, social media, and other online spaces such as the metaverse); and (c) privacy issues (protecting personal information in the context of employee monitoring software, work trackers, and algorithmic work). I conclude by calling HRM practitioners, top management teams, union representatives, public policymakers, and scholars to meet their collective responsibility towards these challenges, to keep workplaces sustainable.

Blurred Boundaries Have Become the "New Normal" of Work

Boundaries Between Work and Life

Boundaries are cognitions and strategies that separate life domains, such as work and life (Ashforth et al., 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Zerubavel, 1991). Individuals' preferences vary across segmentation to an integration continuum: Some people prefer to establish mental fences to

separate life domains, and have transition rituals, while others prefer to blend work and life. The first are called separators and the second are integrators (Ashforth et al., 2000; Rothbard et al., 2005). The matter is, however, a bit more complex because there are several types of boundaries. For instance, a person may segment work and life temporally yet integrate them spatially and relationally (Languilaire, 2009; Rothbard & Ollier-Malaterre, 2016). The literature has further nuanced the idea of the segmentation to integration continuum by outlining different profiles, such as the "volleyers" who alternate between segmentation and integration (Kossek et al., 2012), or people whose behaviours fluctuate frequently, even within the day (Hecht & Allen, 2009). Moreover, boundaries can be asymmetrical. For instance, someone may protect their family life from work but still take care of family matters during the workday (Kossek et al., 2012).

COVID-19 Has Precipitated Blurred Boundaries as the "New Normal"

Boundaries between work and life were already blurring since the last decades of the twentieth century, in great part due to the internet and new technologies enabling work to be decoupled from the physical locations of the workplace. Technology increased workplace expectations of 24/7 reactivity and thus blurred temporal boundaries, while teleworking and working from home blurred spatial boundaries (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006).

Relational boundaries eroded too, as people tried to keep family members from invading home offices, to get their partner and children off the phone during family dinners (Rothbard & Ollier-Malaterre, 2016), and to keep their bosses off personal social media (Rothbard et al., 2022). As a result, expectations for greater integration between the roles began to rise, making detachment from work more difficult to attain (Sonnentag et al., 2022).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, confinements were mandated in many countries, and work from home became mandatory or highly recommended for all employees whose job could be performed at a distance.

The proportion of teleworkers rose dramatically, to reach, for instance, 63% in the US and 40% in Canada.[1] This massive experiment provided evidence that telework is indeed feasible in a much larger range of jobs than was previously accepted, and the new hybrid forms of work that are presently being invented will include a fair share of telework (Barrero et al., 2020). The normalization of work from home, its extended hours, and frequent video conferences have eroded work-life boundaries at dramatic speed.

Quantified Organizational Control Has Become the "New Normal" of Work

Organizational Control

Organizational control consists in attempts to control employees' work-related behaviours and effort to attain organizational goals (Baron et al., 1988; Flamholtz et al., 1985; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985). At first, organizational control was enforced through direct coercive and utilitarian mechanisms to foster employees' obedience, such as close monitoring by foremen, threats of unemployment, and organizational hierarchy (Baron et al., 1988; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004). Then there was a gradual shift to indirect control, by fostering of a sense of community and dependence on the organization through incentives and internal labour markets—rewarding loyal employees with promotions, wage increases, bonuses, and training (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985).

Also towards the end of the twentieth century, a trend towards the quantification of HRM developed on the back of big data analytics. Just-in-time scheduling software determined employees' schedules based on customer data collected in stores (Henly & Lambert, 2014; Lambert & Henly, 2009); the allocation of work ("gigs") became mediated by gig economy platforms for taxi drivers, care workers, and all sorts of other workers (Ticona & Mateescu, 2018). Low-income work became

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[1] https://news.gallup.com/poll/311375/reviewing-remote-work-covid.aspx; https://www.bls.gov/cps/effects-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic.htm.

surveilled through GPS tracking and Internet of Behaviours (IoB) devices using data to steer behaviours in the desired direction. For instance, Amazon employees are monitored via wristbands, thermal cameras, and AI-enabled cameras in Prime vehicles; wristbands may nudge employees towards shelves through haptics (Akhtar, 2021). Truckers' fatigue became monitored through equipment embarked in trucks such as electronic on-board recorders or worn by truckers such as smart caps scanning brain waves (Levy, 2015). Other examples are bodycams for police officers, sleepiness smart caps in long-haul transportation and construction, and smart jackets monitoring heart rate, temperature, motion, and location for first responders.

Technologies such as microchips reporting employee movements in the workplace or facial recognition monitoring attention and emotions are in early stages of deployment (Steele, 2020).

Knowledge work is also digitally monitored: In 2018, nearly 80% of US companies used some form of monitoring of employee email, phone, or internet use—up from just 35% in 1997 (Noll, 2018). Some employers also use health monitoring applications, such as Castlight, and other wearable technologies that collect biometric data (Tomczak & Behrend, 2019). The premise of such quantified monitoring is that people analytics can make management more efficient than human decisions, which are cast as subjective and biased (Zuboff, 2019). Tireless and predictable algorithms become a "fetish" and a magical solution (Burrell & Fourcade, 2021) to orchestrate to the "6 Rs" of management, that is, restrict, recommend, record, rate, replace, and reward (Kellogg et al., 2020). Such quantification entails serious ethical issues and risks for workers, managers, and organizations (Giermindl et al., 2021; Tursunbayeva et al., 2021).

COVID-19 Has Sped Up the Quantification of Control

The massive and sudden shift to work from home during the first COVID-19 confinements took managers by surprise. The loss of control they experienced at that time was worse than prior to the pandemic, when they could pilot test different telework options. The context of the pandemic was also quite chaotic, and it became harder to supervise

workers. These factors have led to the expansion of quantified algorithmic organizational control.

The sales of several employee monitoring software sometimes called "bossware" exploded during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cyphers & Gullo, 2020). Examples are Hubstaff, ActivTrak, StaffCop, Interguard, Teramind, and FlexiSPY; for some of these companies, sales quadrupled in two months in the second quarter of 2020 (Wood, 2020). A November 2021 report finds that internet queries about employee surveillance software jumped 50% in 2020 during lockdown and have continued to grow since then (Migliano, 2021). "Bossware" may offer to track the use of time by employees, report on their location via an application on their phone, how fast they type on their keyboards, what websites they visit, how many emails they answer per hours, which files they transfer to external devices; in addition, it can take pictures of them every ten minutes via their computer camera and much more (see Cousineau et al., 2022 for a classification). These features are often packaged as an online game with indicators presented as rewards. For instance, on Hubstaff, you can be a "time hero" or an "efficiency pro".

While some software collect employees' consent and may let them exclude screenshots from the data sent to their managers, others are completely covert and can be installed remotely, taking control of computers and turning on a computer's microphone and webcam without the employee knowing (Cyphers & Gullo, 2020). This of course does not comply with the European General Data Protection Regulation, but some countries such as the US lack strong privacy regulations (Bernal, 2020).

In addition, with the onset of COVID-19 and sanitary recommendations, several companies such as Walmart and Amazon began to check their employees' temperature as they entered facilities (Nguyen, 2020); sensors, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags and computer vision monitored whether employees were washing their hands or wearing their masks (Panetta, 2020). This trend is likely to continue rising; according to the grey literature, the US and China are two countries at the forefront of electronic employee monitoring.

Digital Regulation as a Way for Employees to Regain Agency and Control

Pre-pandemic, the literature on boundary management debated whether segmentation or integration was most likely to protect workers' mental health, work-life balance, and well-being. Many scholars argued that rather than segmentation or integration per se, the fit between a person's preferences and their organizational context mattered (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Foucreault et al., 2016). However, the rapidly eroding boundaries and intensifying algorithmic control suggest that maintaining at least a minimal level of segmentation between work and life may be beneficial. A path to benefit from remote work flexibility while keeping intrusions and organizational control at bay may be to actively regulate digital technology at work (and in the family, community, and leisure realms). This entails taking into consideration our own actions, such as what we disclose to our colleagues on video conferences or social media or the data footprint we leave when we shop and entertain ourselves online, as well as other stakeholders' actions, such as data employers, companies and government collect on us, how they store and share it, and what they make of these data. In other words, digital regulation enables workers to make technology work for them instead of passively accepting the loss of boundaries and the weight of organizational control. I will now detail the three dimensions (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2019) along which workers can regulate digital technology.

Regulating Connectivity

Most workers now lack control over when and where they work because organizations expect them to be available during nonwork hours and respond quickly to work emails, texts, Slack, WhatsApp, or WeChat messages, or to gigs for platform-dependent workers. "Constant connectivity" (Wajcman & Rose, 2011) plays out differently for managers and professionals than for low-income workers. For managers and professionals, the possibility to use their mobile devices to work anytime anywhere creates an "autonomy paradox" (Mazmanian et al., 2013) in that they

frame these actions as evidence of their personal autonomy. They think they are free because they can choose when and where to work, yet they end up working everywhere and all the time. As a result, they spend more time and energy at work than prior generations and they are less able to detach from work (Mazmanian et al., 2013).

To low-income workers, constant connectivity is triggered by higher schedule unpredictability because of just-in-time scheduling in retail, fast-food, and other service sectors, and of the algorithmic distribution of work on gig economy platforms. Scheduling software lets supervisors call additional staff only when there are more clients: Instead of a regular eight-hour shift, employees may work some hours in the morning, some during lunch time when there are more clients, and some in the evening (Henly & Lambert, 2014).

Technology also creates higher connectivity expectations for platform workers. Uber taxi drivers, nannies, food delivery workers, and all sorts of other gig workers need to constantly check on their platforms when the next gig is available (Ticona & Mateescu, 2018). Many workers perform invisible work through WhatsApp, Messenger, and other messaging apps to check their schedule, report to their supervisor, trade shifts with co-workers and even train and support co-workers who require immediate assistance on work premises. For some, who have recommended their friends for hiring, such invisible work may not even register as unpaid overtime because of the overlap with their social life.

How, then, may workers regulate their connectivity? Not all workers have a high degree of control over their work-life boundaries: Professionals and managers likely have greater leeway over the regulation of connectivity than low-income workers whose economic survival depends on keeping their job; within the broad category of managers and professionals, there are further inequalities. However, many individuals have some leeway, especially if they become aware of the systemic nature of the connectivity issue and organize with co-workers to resist digital intrusions into their personal time and space. The pandemic has increased workers' perceptions that they are expected to be available for work over a longer window of time each day and it is becoming harder to detach from work (Afota et al., 2021). Therefore, setting temporal boundaries with supervisors, co-workers, and customers may be a way to regain mastery.

This is no easy task and the regulation of our mobile devices requires active decisions and attentive enforcement of these decisions (Russo et al., 2019).

Many workers have some agency over when they allow their smartphones, tablets, computers, smartwatches, and other wearable devices in their immediate reach. This matters because the mere presence of a smartphone reduces people's focus even if they do not check it (Ward et al., 2017). Workers can also regulate how they are notified of solicitations: They may disable sound and visual notifications on WhatsApp, Skype, Teams, Zoom, instant messages, emails inboxes, and social media apps. Thus, they may regain some control over when they check these notifications and act upon them. *They can* also set apart "digital-free times", such as family dinners and times with friends (Morandin et al., 2018). Why not also set "digital-free zones" in one's homes, such as a room in the house where family members come together and choose to be actively present to one another? These are some of the ways in which workers can use time and space to set boundaries and regain agency.

Although individuals are not powerless to regulate connectivity, they are obviously constrained by workplace expectations and cultural norms. That is why employers and governments must also confront constant connectivity as an issue that can impair mental health and well-being, as well as productivity, if it prevents recovery from work.

Employers who care about these issues can combat the view of temporal dedication as a signal of devotion to work (Feldman et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2013). Specifically, they can train managers and lead change management actions to promote healthier boundary management between work and personal life (Kossek, 2016). More specifically still, some companies negotiating remote work agreements have taken steps towards a right to disconnect. For instance, Volkswagen and Porsche turn off email servers outside of work hours; at Daimler, a software called "Mail on Holiday", deletes emails sent to employees on holidays and replies to the sender with the contact information of another employee (Fairbain, 2019). In some workplaces, employees allow themselves and others to turn their camera off during video conferences to decrease "Zoom fatigue" (Shockley et al., 2021).

However, decades of research have shown that ideal worker norms persist despite professed cultural change programmes (Williams et al., 2016). Therefore, governments are stepping in and implementing right to disconnect regulations. For instance, Belgium, France, and Spain have legislated on the right not to be available during rest times and holidays and have issued an obligation for employers to negotiate an agreement with employee representatives and establish a culture that respects the right to disconnect. Other governments such as Argentina, Chile, and South Korea have legislated to protect remote workers and many others are working on such legislation (Union, 2019).

Regulating Self-Presentation

The second avenue that workers can take to regulate digital technologies pertains to self-presentation, particularly online. People increasingly have a lasting online presence, whether they have a personal website or appear on the website of their employer, post and interact on social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, Weibo, and WeChat), offer content on the internet (e.g., YouTube, microblogging platforms), appear on TV or radio shows that are streamlined, or even attend a webinar that is then shared on YouTube. Self-presentation is also an issue for workers hired based on internet and social media screening, such as nannies and other care workers (Ticona & Mateescu, 2018).

Regulating self-presentation online was already complex before the COVID-19 pandemic. People navigate pressures to curate a consistent identity, such as in LinkedIn profiles, amidst risks that others make inferences about our "social and political self" based on our social networks (Sharone, 2017). We do not control all that is shared online about us (Donath & Boyd, 2004). Social media sites are particularly perilous as they collapse several social contexts (Marwick & Boyd, 2011) such as friends and family, co-workers, and community members. Several forms of active regulation of online self-presentation have been documented, in which people choose with whom to connect, sometimes segmenting their audiences into professional and personal

contacts, and what to share, sometimes limiting personal or sensitive disclosures to their personal (vs. professional) contacts (Archer-Brown et al., 2018; Batenburg & Bartels, 2017; Rothbard et al., 2022). This regulation requires awareness of what is at stake if one mismanages connections and disclosures, effort to figure out and implement an efficient social media strategy, and some technical skill (Ollier-Malaterre, 2019; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the challenge of self-presentation in workers' homes, with video conferencing giving their co-workers a window onto their lives. Direct inferences can be made about their lifestyle, values, family life, and sometimes even political, religious, or sexual orientations, based on the cues that home backgrounds and family interruptions offer. This is even more so for women, who during the COVID-19 confinements were less able than men to work in a room to themselves, as opposed to working in a space shared with other family members (Lambert et al., 2020; Waismel-Manor et al., 2021). The literature on workplace norms and homophily at work (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987) suggests that a careful regulation of video conferences would likely help mitigate career risks resulting from personal disclosures. Employees may for instance inspect their home background before Zoom calls, asking themselves if they would display in their physical workplace office the objects and images they see in their backgrounds—or they may use the blurring feature that is now available on most platforms. Or, in a more radical way, they may suggest a phone call instead of a videoconference, thus regulating both the intensity of their connectivity and their online self-presentation.

Another upcoming challenge will be the presentation of self in the metaverse,[2] when workplaces use virtual reality to make virtual meetings closer to real-life experiences. How will we choose our different avatars, and what social norms will emerge regarding work avatars? The metaverse is not the "new normal" yet, but we can already see how the regulation of online self-presentation will become increasingly important in the coming years.

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[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uvufun6xer8.

Regulating Privacy

The third dimension of digital regulation pertains to privacy. Privacy has been under scrutiny with the rise of digital surveillance in societies (Lyon, 2018; Zuboff, 2019).

Privacy is the right of individuals, groups, or institutions to decide what information about themselves to communicate to others and when and how to do so (Westin, 1967). Rather than being the opposite of a "public" domain, privacy is contextual, with people's privacy expectations depending on norms of appropriateness, on the relationships at play, and on their goals as they share information (Nissenbaum, 2004). For instance, a request for information may be seen as appropriate when one registers on a dating application and as intrusive when one fills a company social media profile.

Privacy is directly challenged by the quantification of organizational control and in particular "dataveillance" (Van Dijck, 2013), the collection and processing of large volumes of data. Reviews highlight the detrimental outcomes of employee monitoring software on workers' autonomy, emotions, fairness perceptions, trust, work engagement, work behaviours, and job and life satisfaction (Martin et al., 2016; Parent-Rocheleau & Parker, 2021). Such monitoring is also very intrusive (Tomczak & Behrend, 2019) in that it potentially registers one's home environment, surfing activity and passwords, personal emails, and even social contacts on video conferences.

Many people believe nothing can be done to protect privacy; this attitude is termed privacy apathy (Hargittai & Marwick, 2016), privacy cynicism (Hoffmann et al., 2016), or privacy resignation (Draper & Turow, 2019). However, people may regulate their privacy in many ways; they may refrain from entering personal information online when it is not mandatory, avoid using universal logins such as their Google or Facebook logins and avoid storing personal photos on clouds. Moreover, some workers become "algoactivists" (Kellogg et al., 2020), they alter monitoring equipment and manipulate algorithms (Martin et al., 2016). Recently, two DoorDash drivers figured out that turning down the lowest-paying deliveries raises pay rates; they started the #DeclineNow forum to encourage other drivers to trick the algorithm (Akhtar, 2021).

However, most individual workers do not have the power to reject surveillance software in their workplaces. It is therefore very important that unions and public policymakers actively safeguard workers' privacy by legislating against such electronic monitoring of workers—as Portugal has done recently (Bateman, 2021).

Conclusion

This chapter makes three contributions to theory and practice. First, it raises awareness regarding two trends towards ever more blurred boundaries and ever more quantified algorithmic control that are truly concerning for workers' well-being and autonomy; pointing out the connection between these trends enriches the literature on remote work, work-life boundaries and organizational control and can be an eye opener for workers, union representatives, HRM practitioners, and top management teams. Second, this chapter proposes concrete ways for workers to regulate digital technology and protect themselves from intrusions and control, classifying the proposed actions along three dimensions: connectivity, self-presentation, and privacy regulation. Last, this chapter calls for collective action by employers, unions, public policymakers, and scholars to strike a balance between the benefits and perils of digital technologies by building a floor of rights for workers, such as the right to disconnect and recover from work.

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17

COVID-19 "Passports" and the Safe Return to Work: Consideration for HR Professionals on How to Navigate This New Responsibility

Aizhan Tursunbayeva and Claudia Pagliari

Background

In response to the pandemic, organizations underwent massive changes to ensure their continued operations including working from home, the installation of hand hygiene and air purity measures in workplaces and various types of digital health applications, amongst other approaches (McGann, 2021). With multiple approved vaccine candidates now available in many parts of the world, optimism about the return to normal working surged (McKinsey & Company, 2021), based on their promise

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to lessen the spread of infection and the incidence of serious harms. Organizations worldwide have been racing to create policies, processes, and programmes for verifying COVID-19 test and vaccination status, managing governmental reporting requirements, or complying with legal vaccination mandates (McGann, 2021). As ensuring employees' health, safety and well-being have been part of Human Resource (HR) departments' agenda since the profession emerged, the role of HR professionals in the development of such policies and organizational changes had been crucial. Indeed, the Economist (2020) equated the role of the Chief People Officer in the pandemic to the role played by the Chief Financial Officer in the Global Financial Crisis, while the adequate management of HR was identified as a critical success factor in winning the battle against COVID-19.

Quickly and reliably verifying vaccination status or immunity test results is a critical part of such convoluted programmes. Many countries have created digital certificates referred to as "vaccine" or "immunity" passports,[1] which in addition to supporting international travel may also be used by private organizations or developed specifically by them. These app-based solutions can diffuse quickly in organizations. For example, following a government decision, in May 2021, to require compulsory vaccination for Italian employees, the 7300 organizations that are part of the General Confederation of Italian Industry immediately made efforts to adhere with to this requirement (Conte, 2021). Employers in several countries had already independently announced mandatory vaccination and certification for their employees. This included not only obvious groups such as health care workers but also big private companies like Goldman Sachs or Morgan Stanley (Jack, 2021).

The flip from voluntary to mandatory vaccination raises several ethical and privacy issues, especially when health data is shared between employers, public health services, technology providers, or even further afield—as where an employee has to travel for work. It also places new duties on HR professionals to rigorously "police" adherence, coordinate vaccination

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[1] A range of terms are used to describe domestic vaccine passports (not for international travel) including pass, passport, mandate, or certificate. Many authors use these terms as synonyms. Also in this chapter the terms are used interchangeably.

campaign programmes, integrate new forms of data into their HR information systems (HRIS), and manage infection reporting to public health authorities. This complexity has been magnified by the changing landscape of scientific evidence, governmental policies, and viral strains, leading to public debate around the validity, necessity and value of vaccinations and the potential of vaccine passports to clash with employment and privacy rights (Gostin et al., 2021). In recent months this has escalated, with the support of formal and informal trades unions and self-organized activists. A good example is the recent attempt by the UK Government to mandate vaccinations for all frontline health and care workers, which aimed to protect patient safety and employee resilience. This was overturned after a media campaign predicted mass walkouts of vaccine-hesitant staff, which itself legitimized non-compliance and forced a reversal of the policy (The Independent, 2022). The blockade of the US-Canada road border by lorry drivers protesting vaccine mandates also illustrates what can happen when employees are self-organized, albeit they had multiple employers (Dasgupta, 2022). Arguably both cases could have been mitigated by effective communication, incentives, and leadership, supported in part by HR.

To help HR managers navigate these complex debates, in our chapter we examine some of the sociotechnical challenges presented by their new responsibilities in managing the safe return to work for employees in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes policies, processes and actions related to employee well-being, legal compliance, technology implementation and training. Verifying, collating, and sharing data on COVID-19 test and immunization status has been a key part of this, including the use of vaccine passports.

To aid this analysis we draw on an adapted version of the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework (DePietro et al., 1990; Tursunbayeva, 2018), which considers environmental, organizational, technology, and task/process dimensions relevant for the rollout of COVID-19 mandates.

The chapter is organized as follows: the next section briefly describes the dimensions of the enriched TOE framework (DePietro et al., 1990; Tursunbayeva, 2018). The chapter then describes the research methodology, followed by a description of the findings. The chapter

closes with a discussion of the findings and conclusions offering some final comments and suggesting future areas of research.

Conceptual Framework

One of the most comprehensive frameworks for analysing the adoption of innovations in organizations is the Technology (T), Organization (O), and Environment (E) framework or TOE proposed by DePietro et al. (1990). This framework originates in organizational level theory that differentiates between three factors or dimensions that should be considered when adopting innovations (DePietro et al., 1990). Environment considers characteristics of the macro-level at which the innovation is adopted including the regulatory environment. Organizational context considers the characteristics, nature, and resources of the firm to be considered when adopting innovation. Technological context includes all the technologies or technical aspects that are relevant to the firm to launch innovation.

This framework has been employed in previous research to analyse the adoption of technological innovations in organizations from numerous sectors (e.g. Tursunbayeva, 2018), to analyse the adoption of generic innovations such as inter-organizational systems (Mishra et al., 2007), and specifically HR management (HRM) or e-HRM innovations (Bondarouk et al., 2017). The latter research recommended extending the dimensions of this framework by adding, for example, the tasks and processes affected by the innovation (e.g. Tursunbayeva, 2018).

In each of the empirical studies conducted using the TOE framework, the researchers have used slightly different considerations for the TOE dimensions guided by the belief that different types of innovations have different factors that influence their adoption (DePietro et al., 1990; Tursunbayeva, 2018). We adopted a similar approach in this study. Thus, for the environmental dimension, we also considered ethical considerations that could emerge because of evolving regulations and differing work contexts, while for the organizational dimension we also considered performance-related issues, given that returning to "normal" operational activity is the key aim of introducing vaccine passports.

We therefore employ this enriched TOE + T framework to discover the environment, organizational, technology and task/processes dimensions that emerged around the implementation of COVID-19 vaccination mandates and digital certification within organizations' HR response strategies. In doing so we focus specifically on how these dimensions are relevant or represent the perspectives of HR professionals faced with expanded roles and responsibilities, in a constantly evolving public debate around vaccine passports, employment rights, privacy, and ethical issues. This research will contribute to the ongoing legal, human rights (Guidi et al., 2021), health (Jecker, 2021), and strategic HRM responses to COVID-19 (Levin-Scherz & Orszag, 2021) related discussions by providing a theoretically-informed attempt to demystify the adoption of digital vaccine passports in organizations with particular reference to HR professionals' experiences.

Methods

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis (Atkinson et al., 2000) is an umbrella term describing approaches to study texts or language as a form of social practice. This type of analysis is commonly associated with the evaluation of social or political disruptions, such as the introduction of COVID-19 mandates. In critical discourse analysis (Atkinson et al., 2000) the researcher takes a critical look at a text of interest and analyses it to uncover the experiences, perspectives and interpretations of individuals or professional groups on a specific topic (Van Dijk, 1993).

This particular study focuses on discourse about HR's role in implementing vaccination mandates and digital certification at the organization level, rather than the behaviour of individual employees.

Data Collection and Analysis

The LinkedIn publishing platform, the world's major professional network with more than 700 million international users (LinkedIn, 2021), was used to locate relevant grey literature in the form of LinkedIn Pulse articles, echoing other research using social media data (e.g. Tsitsi Chikandiwa et al., 2013). As an increasing number of professionals are embracing this established platform rather than setting up (or maintaining) their own independent online presence (e.g. blog) (Samuel, 2015), LinkedIn Pulse is commonly used by professionals to share their knowledge and expertise (Sprout Social, 2021) in the form of short articles. It was therefore considered a legitimate and representative source of HR practitioners' opinions about COVID-19 passports. Google Advanced Search engine was used to interrogate LinkedIn Pulse in November 2021 with the help of the combination of the following keywords: (Covid AND vaccine) AND (passport OR mandate) AND (workplace OR human resource* OR employee). The search was conducted with a signed-out Google account to attain the most relevant results and not those personalized and customized by Google. Considering the aim of this research, the Pulse articles written by HR professionals were included for the analysis. We considered as HR professionals as being those with titles including any of the HR-related keywords such as HR, Human Resource, People, Workforce, Employee, Human Capital, Manpower, Staff, Personnel, and Talent (Tursunbayeva et al., 2018).

In total, our search query identified 190 Pulse articles. Screening each of these to identify the ones written by HR professionals revealed three relevant articles. As "social media are all about sharing and interaction" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) comments to all articles identified were also screened, to detect the ones written by other HR professionals. These relevant comments (n = 4) were also included in the analysis.

Given this low number of relevant Pulse articles and comments, we decided to strengthen the sensitivity of our search strategy (Afroze, 2010), by inputting the same query into the Google search engine. The results were restricted to the first 30 organic hits (Ratliff & Rubinfeld, 2014) in English, thus excluding advertisements (i.e. paid content). Further results

were not considered, as only 0.78 of users searching Google click on something from the second page (Dean, 2019). Among these 30 results, three additional relevant articles were included in the analysis.

All aforementioned textual returns were analysed by drawing on the categories of the TOE (DePietro et al., 1990) + T (Tursunbayeva, 2018) model.

Findings and Discussion

After "charting" information from the qualifying returns, we present in this section our findings based on the TOE+T framework dimensions (see Table 17.1 for a brief synthesis).

To aid contextualization and interpretation, we discuss these categories alongside other relevant literature and real-world examples in the following section. Eligible returns identified with our search strategy are marked with an asterisk to differentiate them from other sources.

Environment Considerations

Diverse international critics worry that vaccine passports might exacerbate inequality and undermine civil liberties or privacy (e.g. Japan Times, 2021). The main question for organizations here is can businesses require employees to provide proof—digital or otherwise—that they have been vaccinated when the coronavirus vaccine is ostensibly voluntary in many contexts? Indeed, legal experts continue debating the legality of such solutions (Stolberg & Liptak, 2021). Meanwhile, the governments of many countries continue to introduce measures for "motivating" vaccinations. For example, in November 2021 Austria introduced compulsory vaccination for all adults as an action to enable the easing of COVID-19 restrictions (Druml & Czech, 2022). Italy had already mandated the use of the COVID-19 health pass for specific high-risk sectors such as healthcare (from October 15th, 2021) to "make workplaces safer and to make vaccination campaign even stronger" (Euronews, 2021). In the US the mandates were suggested for organizations of a certain size (e.g. >100

Table 17.1 Issues to consider for HR professionals in relation to COVID-19 vaccination certificatation mandates

TOE+T dimensions	Environment	Organization	Technology	Task
Issues to consider for HR professionals	– Legal aspects (e.g. in relation to a specific sector and company size) – Ethical aspects (e.g. human rights and employee surveillance) – Recommendations from appropriate (international) bodies and their alignment with each other	– Company-level vaccine mandates – Other company-level policies related to vaccine mandates (upon agreement with unions) – Lobbying for larger-scale vaccine mandates/policies	– National apps for monitoring vaccine mandates versus those developed by private organizations – Standards for such technology (and their data) – Privacy around such technology – Organizational readiness for automated monitoring of the mandates	– New responsibilities or shifts in priorities – Many uncertainties to navigate through

employees) (Di Meglio, 2021). This former approach was later duplicated in other international contexts such as Egypt and Latvia (Meedweek staff, 2021), where employers suspend unvaccinated workers without pay if they refuse to get a COVID-19 shot or transfer to remote work. New York's vaccine mandate, introduced by the city Mayor for municipal employees, resulted in about 9,000 non-compliant workers who were placed on unpaid leave and hundreds of firefighters calling in sick, although this is not thought to have caused major disruption for city services (Goldstein & Otterman, 2021). In many contexts, unvaccinated employees can still come to the workplace after presenting a negative rapid or PCR test twice weekly—at their own cost (Papadopoulos, 2021).

Some national public health authorities (e.g. CDC) also provide recommendations that can be followed by employers and employees (The National Law Review, 2021), although this sometimes cannot be fully aligned with other legal requirements (Smith & Nagele-Piazza, 2021*; Taylor, 2021*) thus potentially creating confusion among those (i.e. HR professionals) who need to make sense of or act upon them (Hasday, 2021*). Moreover, HR professionals overlooking business operations in diverse contexts must also consider international, intercultural, or interregional differences.

The main ethical debates around the COVID-19 vaccine passport cluster around human rights and employment law concepts, such as the Right to Work; the Right to Freedom of movement; and the Right to freedom from discrimination. Moreover, they also generate discussions around potential overreach from necessary usage of COVID-19 mandates to excessive surveillance of employees (i.e. proportionality principle) (Tursunbayeva et al., 2021).

Organizational Considerations

COVID-19 lockdowns and related social-distancing restrictions facilitated remote-, smart-, or hybrid-working worldwide (Fairlie, 2020). Meanwhile, organizations that continued operating, such as health organizations, pharmacies, and supermarkets, had to protect the physical and mental well-being of their employees, also addressing workforce shortages

and ensuring business continuity. As such, many company leaders and managers anticipated that the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine would bring "normality" back to the functioning and performance of their organizations. When the vaccine finally arrived companies worldwide adopted different approaches for "motivating" their staff to attend for vaccination, monitor their vaccination status, and retain these records. Initially, this started softly and included flexible schedules, paid time off to be vaccinated, modest financial incentives, and onsite vaccinations (Levin-Scherz & Orszag, 2021) to protect higher-risk employees, including those who frequently travel for business. However, the emergence and spread of the Delta variant and low vaccination rates resulted in a stepping-up of efforts to increase vaccination rates at a broader organizational level, in addition to the introduction of the environmental guidance. Such efforts could be classified as follows:

- *Company-level vaccine mandates.* The results of a 2021 survey among 961 employers in the USA revealed that 21% of these already had a vaccine mandate in place and that these were also favoured by employees (Kuehn, 2021*). Some of the first organizations requiring mandatory COVID-19 vaccination included the Disney theme park; Chevron and Hess (oil platforms workers); Walmart and Walgreens' (corporate workers, excluding store and warehouse workers); Uber and Lyft (office staff but not drivers interacting with the public); Australian airline Qantas (frontline workers) (BBC, 2021); Hungarian drug maker Richter Gedeon (workers) and Danish shipping giant Maersk (the first Danish major employer to introduce such as rule). Bloomberg's "Get the shot or get out" approach also attracted media attention, as did Delta Airlines' $200 monthly surcharge for unvaccinated employees (The Week Staff, 2021), although it has since been claimed that such financial (dis)incentive approaches (Volpp et al., 2020) are burdensome, costly, and not very effective (Thirumurthy et al., 2021). Finally, vaccine passports were described as being only "worth the risk of legal battles in the future" in high value sectors, and not for small and medium-sized companies (Bater, 2021*).
- *Companies lobbying for larger-scale vaccine mandates.* There have been cases where employers (e.g. in Germany or in the Netherlands)

have gone beyond introducing company-level mandates to petitioning the governments to gain the right to restrict access to workplaces to vaccinated, recovered, or negatively tested employees (e.g. The Local, 2021).

- *Other company-level policies.* Some employers have introduced compromise measures to protect the health of those who are vaccinated and who are not whilst also enabling operational activity. This includes Volkswagen-owned Spanish car maker SEAT, which reached an agreement with the unions that unvaccinated and vaccinated workers sit separately in its factory canteen. This approach was also considered by some major German employers including pharmaceuticals giant Bayer and energy company Eon (Jones et al., 2021).

It is important to recognize that such organizational policies are also taking place alongside wider corporate, community, and state/local responsibilities, making it hard to establish their effectiveness (Kuehn, 2021*).

As already noted in the reference to the UK's NHS, opponents of organizational level vaccination mandates or other related company-level policies often argue that, rather than securing the workforce, these measures may lead to resignations by staff who object (Paychex, 2021*). On the flip side, employees favouring vaccination mandates might prefer employers who mandate vaccinations. So far there has been insufficient empirical research to disentangle these effects.

Technology Considerations

Employers with vaccination mandates, or operating in countries with such mandates, were projected to face administrative burdens and costs related to vaccination status tracking, and in safeguarding the privacy of employees' personal health information. Digital systems have an integral role in quickly and reliably verifying vaccination or immunity test results. Alongside existing IT systems, various countries are creating national digital documentation and verification tools referred to as "vaccine" or "immunity" passports, as are private organizations. As of March 2021,

the Biden administration showed at least 17 different vaccine passport initiatives being developed in the USA alone (Diamond et al., 2021). Many of these seem to have been developed as add-ins by major providers of information systems for recording, storing, or reporting HR data, known commonly as HRIS or electronic Human Resource Management systems (e-HRM) systems. For example, in 2020 Workday, a leader in digital workforce management or talent management applications (Harris, 2020) announced the launch of their vaccine management solution that can combine organizational real-time HR data with vaccination information (Workday, 2021). This includes helping organizations to ensure employees are vaccinated against COVID-19, or even to facilitate those vaccinations. This is seen as a way of enabling organizations to ensure the health and safety of their virtual and on-site workers (McGann, 2021). Throughout these developments, however, there were persistent concerns about whether all organizations would be technologically ready for setting up the required infrastructure and automating continuous monitoring of COVID-19 vaccine certificates (e.g. sending automatic notifiers about boosters). Moreover, there have been fears that such integration could potentially lead to excessive surveillance of employees by organizations; for example, when the data from the system is to combined wtih Wi-Fi geolocation data or facial recognition data collected from web cameras (Tursunbayeva et al., 2021), thus, raising additional objections to technological interventions, in the already highly controversial topic of COVID-19 mandates.

Another concern around such technologies relates to the lack of one common standard format for vaccine mandates apps developed by different vendors and/or produced in diverse parts of the world. To address such limitations, the World Health Organization (WHO) released a digital vaccine passport plan, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Kuwait Government (White, 2021). In August 2021 the WHO (2021) released a technical specification and implementation guide to COVID-19 vaccination status certificates.

Finally, such technologies or apps developed by private companies themselves might create additional fears over privacy, rights, and freedom raising questions around their transparency or "dual uses" (e.g. Engagemedia, 2021).

Task/Process Considerations

Ensuring occupational health and safety in organizations (Bater, 2021*) has historically been the responsibility of HR professionals, who are also responsible for managing social dimensions of organizations, including institutional culture and employee motivation. To serve these functions, along with other workforce management responsibilities, HR departments also collect, store, and report on employee-related data.

"HR certainly has its hands full" (Kuehn, 2021*) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, given its need to ensure a safe work environment and agile staffing for business continuity. Initially, they had to reconsider, revisit, and adapt standard working practices and policies to ensure business continuity, including new remote, hybrid, or in-person approaches. With the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines, depending on the country or organizational level strategies, they also started to monitor vaccination attestations from employees or implement workplace COVID-19 vaccination programmes (Griffin, 2021). In both of these cases, they have also had to deal with employees' health-related information far more than usual, as well as guiding and supporting them with evidence-based information about COVID-19, vaccines and safety measures. HR professionals were also reported to adjust their HRM practices in relation to COVID-19 mandates, such as through adjusting compensation as part of mandates, while ensuring fairness (Kuehn, 2021*). These measures have also led to new conversations with trade unions—who on the one hand consider the introduction of mandatory vaccinations heavy-handed, while on the other hand have a duty to ensure that employees are safe at work (Calvert, 2021). Moreover, it brings additional cost burdens (i.e. for COVID-19 tests or vaccinations), which do not yet seem to be diminishing (Kuehn, 2021*). HR professionals are also having to prepare for potential COVID-19 vaccine-related liability concerns or disputes with employees (Levin-Scherz & Orszag, 2021). All these are taking place in an environment of disruption and uncertainty (LinkedIn comment 3).

Conclusions

The concept of mandatory vaccines for employees has been discussed at various times over the last century; for example, in 1905 in relation to smallpox in the USA (Howard, 2021), yet more than 100 years later, there is no defined playbook, beyond guidelines such as the one proposed by the Confederation of British Industry on COVID-status certification. Indeed, a recent systematic literature review of HRM in the context of uncertainty and crisis identified only four publications focused on natural disasters and public health emergencies between 2000 and 2018 (Ererdi et al., 2021). Most of these discuss the effects on employees (e.g. psychological well-being) and focus on Africa (i.e. HIV/AIDS), thus, not providing many directions for organizations dealing with COVID-19. As such, most organizations are working on their own programmes or strategies with little guidance, while many organizations are actively rolling out vaccination programmes or digital vaccination certificates and others wait to see what happens.

HR professionals have been crucial since the start of the pandemic in guiding employees through the change, leading with empathy, and communicating with employees (Ererdi et al., 2021; Forbes Human Resources Council, 2020). A feature of this crisis that has been largely overlooked, however, is the role HR professionals have acquired in the public health response to COVID-19, acting as key agents in the implementation of preventive and mitigating measures and policies. Thus now, more than ever, HR professionals are finding their role blurring with that of the "company nurse" yet without any prior specific training (Goldberg, 2022) or necessary guidance.

While managing employee burnout has been a dominant concern in the HRM community during the pandemic, particularly in healthcare organizations (CIPD, 2022; Shale, 2020), burnout in HR professionals themselves has been largely overlooked. In addition to the pressures caused by their increased responsibilities, enforcing mandates in workers that are fearful of vaccines may be creating new forms of moral injury (Shale, 2020), while burnout as a consequence of implementing digital

technology has also been reported in other professional groups (Yan et al., 2021).

To support organizations and specifically HR professionals considering the debates around vaccination passports we drew on the TOE+T (DePietro et al., 1990; Tursunbayeva, 2018) categories. Our analysis revealed that although the topic of vaccine mandates has been extensively discussed from diverse angles and points of view of interdisciplinary experts, HR professionals' own perspectives have not had the same attention. Indeed, a recent call for papers on Human Resource Management in Times of Crisis by the International Journal of HRM focused primarily on the impact of COVID-19 on employees, organizations, and the broader societal level (Newman et al., 2021). This is despite the important role HR professionals are playing, and the major changes COVID-19 mandates are bringing to their work. This phenomenon brings a logical question of why HR professionals are not raising their voices and many unanswered questions around how HR professionals are actually navigating changes in the environmental, organizational, technological, or process issues related to COVID-19 mandates. The reasons for this reticence could include uncertainty over the rules of engagement, lack power in their organizations, or a preference not to draw attention to this issue, to avoid highlighting tensions with other HR duties and laws (e.g. around disability and anti-discrimination). On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided HR managers with a chance to demonstrate their real strategic importance for organizational resilience and sustainability (e.g. Lepak et al., 2006).

Despite the considerable effort and resources invested in developing and introducing COVID-19 vaccine passports, their future as part of the HR landscape is currently uncertain. While some governments move towards mandating them, others are pulling back on this requirement, due to political and economic concerns and evidence that vaccination may be less effective in preventing transmission of the Omicron variant. Nonetheless, the (HR) capabilities that have been established will be useful if we find ourselves in another pandemic and wish to keep the economy flowing. The experiences and challenges that HR professionals have experienced during COVID-19 pandemic should therefore be carefully studied, firstly, to contribute to the lack of knowledge and evidence on

HRM in times of crisis (Newman et al., 2021, Ererdi et al., 2021) and secondly, to help HR professionals with their challenging and evolving role which, as already noted, is blurring into aspects of public health and might require a new consensus on the remit of and standards for the profession. Different types of research are needed to look at soft issues around user resistance and its impacts, professional issues around codes of practice, legal issues around workers' rights and obligations, technical issues such as how to utilize apps or records, and organizational research to look at the value of apps in workflow management, as well technological and training issues. Practical recommendations arising from such research might involve not only obvious actions during public health emergencies, such as utilizing technology and introducing new processes, but also the need for empathy and communication, as well as education for employees to tackle the effects of misinformation, manage stress-related illness, and support hybrid work for employees unable to tolerate vaccines for medical reasons.

Analysing "language as a social practice" (Wodak & Fairclough, 1997) often raises context-related issues with social media data. Unlike short postings on Twitter, which is the most heavily researched online social network, Pulse articles consist of relatively long textual data and were therefore considered sufficient for analysis. Nevertheless, to address the limitations we complemented the data collected with additional Google searches, as well as our own observations and knowledge from background readings. Such triangulation of data sources, a clearly defined search strategy, and data inclusion and exclusion criteria, contributed to the validity and reliability of the research method used, respectively (Afroze, 2010). Overall, the aim of this exploratory research was not to test a hypothesis or develop generalizable theories but, following the traditions of qualitative research, to provide insights and explanations about the phenomenon of interest (Carminati, 2018). Since COVID-19 is a global pandemic, we did not limit our analysis to any specific country, and therefore believe our findings may be of interest to international HR professionals and scholars.

Perhaps the key message arising from our research for this chapter is that HR professionals' perspectives on the topic of vaccine mandates and digital certification have been unfairly neglected, despite the attention paid to this topic by social, legal, political, and computational scientists. We hope that some of the observations, insights, and recommendations provided can assist HR managers in facilitating employees' safe return to work while minimizing any potential negative impact on their safety, well-being, performance, engagement, or trust. It also provides stakeholder insights that may be useful to vendors of HRIS/e-HRM systems integrating vaccine certification modules, as well as governments creating policies for organizational compliance with national policies, regulations, and strategies. The chapter also suggests a broader agenda for research, including in-depth analysis of changes in HR responsibilities (particularly around health data and policy implementation), legal tensions between employment, privacy and public health laws, the preservation of employee trust where health tools are required in a public health emergency, and the prevention and management of burnout in HR professionals when implementing such interventions during major crises.

Appendix 1: List of Qualifying Pulse Articles, Comments and Articles Identified Via Google

Qualifying LinkedIn Pulse articles

Article title	Article date	Author	Author's LinkedIn headline	Author's affiliation
Will being vaccinated against COVID-19 become a requirement of employment?	May 14, 2021	Kelly Bater	HR Consultant Specializing in People Strategy and People Management in SME's	K Bater Consultancy Ltd
HR & COVID-19 Vaccination: The Carrots Seem to Have It Over the Sticks	January 31, 2021	Jake Kuehn	HR and Employee Benefits Professional	JAK Consulting
Can My Employer Mandate COVID-19 Vaccines?	January 26, 2021	Johnny C. Taylor, Jr.	President & CEO, SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management), Board Director	Society for Human Resource Management

Qualifying LinkedIn comments

#	Comment	Author's LinkedIn headline	Pulse article date
1	"Thank you for this article. It provides clarity and legal precedent on the mandatory vaccination debate, an issue that is fractioning many sectors of society and has pitted employer against employee, citizen against state and family members against siblings"	Human Resource Consultant	August 19, 2021
2	"It was only a matter of time. There are many businesses who no doubt panicked and made similar decisions early on. I know that we worked hard with clients to ensure that they were fully informed and seeking advice from experts such as yourself before making rash decisions. Let's hope we don't hear about too many of these. Thanks for sharing"	Director—People, Culture and Operations	May 10, 2020

(continued)

#	Comment	Author's LinkedIn headline	Pulse article date
3	"Love these predictions, especially the ones that took into account COVID's influence on the industries and people. But I guess we can never be sure of what's to come, this year was the biggest example of the uncertainties we're dealing with and the infinite 'might be's'"	Well-being Advocator | HR Operations Expert | HRBP | Culture Writer	December 09, 2020
4	"Thank you for a great read. As an HR professional this article totally resonates with me. CSR is so important in forming the foundation on which company values are built, and I certainly consider these when selecting a future employer or product to purchase"	Open to New opportunities in Human Resources, Senior HRBP, HRBP, Human Resources Director, Head of People	September 21, 2020

Qualifying articles identified via Google

Title	Link	Author	Date	Source
HRE's number of the day: Growing vaccine mandates	https://hrexecutive. com/ hres-number-of- the-day-growing- vaccine-mandates/	Kathryn Mayer	October 6, 2021	Human Resource Executive
Employers React to Workers Who Refuse a COVID-19 Vaccination	https://www.shrm. org/ resourcesandtools/ legal-and- compliance/ employment-law/ pages/if-workers- refuse-a-covid-19- vaccination.aspx	Allen Smith, J.D., Lisa Nagele-Piazza, J.D., SHRM-SCP	December 9, 2021	SHRM
COVID-19 Vaccination Mandates: What Employees Are Thinking About a Return to the Workplace	https://www. paychex.com/ articles/covid-19/ covid-19-vaccine- mandate-return- to-work	N/A	May 11, 2021	Paychex Work

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18

Perceived Lockdown Intensity, Work-Family Conflict and Work Engagement: The Importance of Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour During the COVID-19 Crisis

Marloes van Engen, Pascale Peters, and Frederike van de Water

Introduction

Since the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, many national governments and organizations have enforced some form of "lockdown" that urges people to work from home by using information and communication technologies (IT), often referred to as telework.

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In fact, a survey from Eurofound found that in April 2020 about 40% of those working in the European Union began to telework full-time because of the pandemic (Eurofound, 2021). Across the world, also schools closed or transitioned to online teaching to prevent the virus from spreading (World Bank, 2020), which made many parents responsible for "home schooling" their children. The disruptive regulations have altered many temporal and spatial aspects of employees' work and family lives (Gigauri, 2020; Vaziri et al., 2020). More specifically, it is likely that this enforced telework may result in less beneficial outcomes for employees and organizations than telework that is not enforced (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020).

Generally, transitioning to substantial telework can reduce opportunities for professional, social, and emotional interactions between supervisors, colleagues, and clients (Kurland & Bailey, 1999), which may lead to negative feelings and experiences, such as feeling to be out-of-sight and missing out on career and other opportunities (Allen et al., 2015; Golden et al., 2008). In this study, employees' negative feelings and experiences resulting from national and organizational COVID-19 regulations, hindering their perceived ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) (Appelbaum et al., 2000) to perform their work, are referred to as "perceived lockdown intensity". We expect that intense experiences associated with the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic may have lasting consequences for employees' engagement at work. Previous studies on the psychological and cognitive alterations associated with substantial telework have pointed out to impact employees' work engagement (in short: engagement) (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012), a cognitive state characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, 2013). This can be attributed to the lack of physical cues, such as buildings, office décor, and symbols linked to the organization or normal working environment, pursuing fewer reminders of their belongingness to the organization (Gigauri, 2020; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001). Indeed, a recent study on the consequences of teleworking because of lockdown measures showed that this negatively affected engagement (Galanti et al., 2021).

Engagement is often explained by the job demand-resources (JD-R) model, which states that the absence of job resources, such as supervisory and collegial support, evokes negative attitudes towards work and the job itself, reducing engagement (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The negative

work attitude can be exacerbated by stressors, such as workload (Demerouti et al., 2001). Stress particularly arises when job demands are high and job resources are limited, reducing engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). Reversely, high engagement and positive work experiences can be achieved when job resources are sufficient, and job demands appropriate (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Following the JD-R model, we expect that "perceived lockdown intensity", resulting in a lack of perceived job resources and higher stress levels due to the COVID-19 regulations, reduces engagement.

One of the mechanisms through which increased perceived lockdown intensity (PLI) may reduce engagement is through the intensification of work-family conflict. Work-family conflict refers to the inter-role conflict that occurs when functioning in one domain (e.g. work) negatively impacts one's functioning in other domains (e.g. family) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Haslam et al., 2015). As COVID-19 regulations have enforced telework, regardless of employees' work and home situations and their ability, motivation, and opportunity to self-manage working from home, the ongoing process of blurring work-family boundaries is likely to be exacerbated, leading to more work-family conflict and associated stress levels, coming at the expense of engagement (Galanti et al., 2021; Vaziri et al., 2020).

For organizations, leadership offering employees support to reduce work-family conflict is an important job resource, particularly in times of uncertainty and isolation, as leadership can support employees in their ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform (cf. Appelbaum et al., 2000). More specifically, supervisors can play an important role in helping employees to make sense of the COVID-19 pandemic, providing guidance, and soothing the distress of the confusing times (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2021; Petriglieri, 2020). In addition, supervisors may provide support in effectively managing responsibilities in the work and family domains to better use their energy and enhance engagement, particularly in the transition to teleworking following the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (Lamprinou et al., 2021).

In view of the account above, this study aims to contribute to the scholarly and management conversations on telework and employee well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic by examining the following research question: *To what extent is the relationship between perceived lockdown intensity during the COVID-19 pandemic and work engagement mediated by work-family conflict, and to what extent does perceived family supportive supervisor behaviour moderate this relationship?*

This study contributes to the scholarly and management conversations in several ways. First, it is the first to examine how perceived lockdown intensity, indicating employees' perceived ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform their work (Appelbaum et al., 2000) during the COVID-19 pandemic, relates to work-family conflict and engagement. So far, studies have mainly focused on mental health and anxiety problems resulting from the associated lockdown (Amerio et al., 2020; Pieh et al., 2020), yet perceived work ability, motivation and opportunity is important to examine.

Second, this study contributes by examining the role supervisors can play in reducing the negative effects of work-family conflict during the COVID-19 regulations. We argue that a family supportive work environment, in which leaders demonstrate vision and attention for employees' needs regarding work and family (Hammer et al., 2013) and give guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2021; Lamprinou et al., 2021; Petriglieri, 2020) can support employees facing work-family disbalance to enhance engagement.

Our study contributes to the management practice by enhancing organizations', supervisors', and employees' understanding of factors in engagement. More specifically, it provides insights into how organizations, supervisors, and employees can deal with stressors related to substantial telework that will be more likely in the present and post-COVID-19 pandemic (hybrid) work settings in relation to work-family conflict, engagement, and family supportive supervisor behaviour.

Theoretical Framework

The Relationship Between Perceived Lockdown Intensity and Work Engagement

During the COVID-19 pandemic, enforced telework may have been perceived as less beneficial compared to working from home through personal choice (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). Due to the lack of physical cues and resources (e.g. information and support), enduring and intensive telework can lead to a more substantial loss of self-confidence and identification with the organization (Golden et al., 2008; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001), especially when this is enforced. However, the perceived "severity" of telework due to the COVID-19 lockdown may vary across individuals.

The variation in how enforced telework is perceived during the COVID-19 pandemic led us to introduce a new concept, referred to as *perceived lockdown intensity* (PLI). This concept refers to employees' perceived tensions associated with professional and social isolation experienced during a partial or complete lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic and, hence, the extent to which individuals experience that their daily work routines are affected by the lockdown. More specifically, we argue that the indicators of employees' perceived lockdown intensity are related to their perceived ability, motivation, and opportunity to enact their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the AMO model (Appelbaum et al., 2000), individual work performance is a function of three essential (interrelated) components: (1) whether individuals *can* do their work (ability), that is, have the necessary competencies; (2) whether they are *willing to do* their work (motivation), that is, are motivated to do their work, and (3) whether they are *able* to do their work (opportunity, that is, have the structure, means, and resources to execute their work). Pak et al. (2019) argued that detached employees with limited resources, such as professional and social contacts and support, might face challenges regarding their ability, motivation, and opportunity to continue work. The experiences of professional and social

isolation resulting from the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic can be expected to affect all three AMO-components.

Previous studies have already illustrated the possible negative impact of employee isolation on engagement (i.e. vigour, absorption, and dedication) (Davis & Cates, 2013; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001), which can be attributed to a loss of perceived abilities, motivation and opportunity linked to professional and social isolation. A recent study by Galanti et al. (2021) among Italian public and private professional workers during the COVID-19 pandemic indeed showed that social isolation was related to reduced engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived lockdown intensity is negatively related to work engagement.

The Mediating Role of Work-Family Conflict in the Relationship Between Perceived Lockdown Intensity and Work Engagement

The enforced telework practices, the co-presence of (working) spouses, children and other dependents in the household, and for many, the need to start home schooling during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, may have exacerbated the blurring of work-nonwork boundaries. Consequently, it may be more difficult for employees to develop the ability, motivation, and opportunity to separate work and nonwork roles, which may have enhanced work-family conflict (i.e. work-to-family and family-to-work conflict). Work-family conflict refers to a form of inter-role conflict that occurs when functioning in one domain negatively impacts the other domain, therefore hindering the person from engaging in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Haslam et al., 2015). It can arise when: (1) the amount of time and energy that can be devoted to one role is limited due to the high demands associated with the other role (i.e. time-based and energy-based conflict); (2) stress from one role is transferred to the other role, causing strain symptoms (i.e. strain-based conflict), and/or (3) behaviours that are effective in one role are

inappropriately enacted in the other role (i.e. behaviour-based conflict) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Studies appearing around the consequences of the COVID-19 lockdown measures suggested work-family conflict to have increased (Eurofound, 2021; Gigauri, 2020; Lamprinou et al., 2021). Therefore, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived lockdown intensity is positively related to work-family conflict.

Several studies have identified the relationship between work-family conflict and engagement (Coetzee & De Villiers, 2010; Halbesleben, 2010; Huang et al., 2004; Karatepe & Karadas, 2016). In line with the J D-R model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011), Halbesleben (2010) characterized work-family conflict as job demands, negatively influencing engagement (cf. Burke et al., 2013; Coetzee & De Villiers, 2010), which was also found by Galianti and colleagues in a study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the account above, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: Work-family conflict (i.e. work-to-family and family-to-work conflict) is negatively related to work engagement.

Above, we argued that teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic can result into more work-family conflict, and that work-family conflict can harm engagement. Based on this, the following mediation hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 4: The assumed negative relationship between perceived lockdown intensity and work engagement is mediated by work-family conflict (i.e. work-to-family and family-to-work conflict).

The Moderating Role of Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour in Times of Crisis

Particularly in times of uncertainty and isolation, employees may feel that they do not have the right abilities, are less motivated, and see less

opportunity to perform (Davis & Cates, 2013). Therefore, leadership is an important job resource (Matthews et al., 2014), as it can support employees in their work (Petriglieri, 2020) by influencing their ability, motivation, and opportunity (cf. Appelbaum et al., 2000). In times of crisis, leaders should, therefore, develop a vision on the organization's future to make sense of the crisis, which can be referred to as "holding." Holding allows employees to move purposefully and to alleviate concerns that might lead to disengagement from the organization, thus providing employees with comfort and courage (Petriglieri, 2020) to deal with work-family conflict.

An example of an informal management form that can prevent a loss of engagement for those who may suffer work-family conflict is family supportive supervisor behaviour (FSSB; Shi et al., 2019). Hammer et al. (2013) distinguished four different constructs: (1) emotional support; (2) role modelling; (3) instrumental support, and (4) creative work-family management. FSSB facilitates employees in developing and obtaining new resources, skills, and abilities (Nahrgang et al., 2011). According to Qing and Zhou (2017), FSSB also facilitates employees with higher levels of energy, effectiveness, and positive emotion, enhancing life satisfaction and, therefore, enabling employees to effectively manage resources in both domains and better deal with work-family conflict. Regarding work, FSSB can lead to positive work attitudes and job satisfaction (Hammer et al., 2013; Shi et al., 2019) and high engagement (Straub, 2012).

In view of COVID-19, however, the type of support provided to employees via FSSB might need to be extended by elements of crisis management (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2021; Petriglieri, 2020). Particularly in the transition to telework following the COVID-19 pandemic, supervisors may need to provide support in effectively managing responsibilities in the work-family domains (Lamprinou et al., 2021). The extended FSSB concept, including the notion of control during crisis (C), will be referred to in this study as FSSBC. Early studies during the COVID-19 pandemic examining the role of supervisor support as one of the possible mitigators in the relationship between work-family conflict and engagement indeed showed that supervisor support is an important resource for employees to deal with the crisis (Lamprinou et al., 2021; Vaziri et al., 2020). Therefore, we propose the following moderation hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Family supportive supervisor behaviour in times of crisis (FSSBC) weakens the assumed negative relationship between work-family conflict and work engagement.

Methods

Research Design and Respondent Characteristics

This cross-sectional study focuses on testing the potential relationships between its core concepts: perceived lockdown intensity, engagement, work-family conflict, and family supportive supervisory behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 18.1 represents the conceptual model of this study. To obtain an international sample, a questionnaire in Dutch, English, and Spanish was developed and distributed through social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook), e-mail, snowballing, and the word-of-mouth technique. In December 2020, in the midst of increasing infection rates and tightening of lockdown measures across Europe, data from over 25 industries was collected.

Procedure Inclusion criteria for participation were a minimum age of 18 and having a full-time, part-time, or voluntary work, or doing an internship. Participants were invited and informed about the goal of the research via e-mail. They had the opportunity to withdraw their consent to participate in the study at any time.
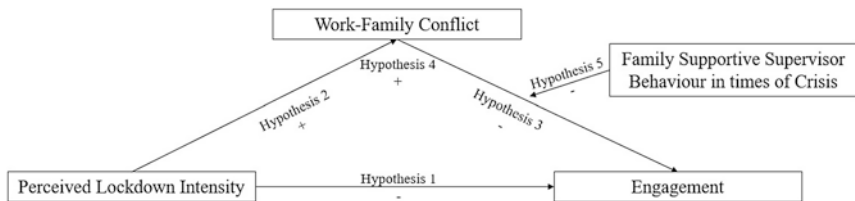
Fig. 18.1 Conceptual model

Sample Of a total of 254 responses, 48 were deleted since respondents had either incomplete or missing responses. The remaining sample was 206. 170 participants had a superior/supervisor. 51.9% were men and 48.1% were women. The average age was 41.7 years old (range 18–70 years, standard deviation = 12.20). The educational background varied: less than high school (2.9%), high school (11.7%), some college degree (37.6%), two-year associate's degree (6.8%), four-year bachelor's degree (30.7%), master's degree (9.3%), and a PhD (1%). A total of 75.7% were married/cohabiting, 23.3% were single/separated, and 1% did not wish to disclose this information. Of the 75.5% participants who were married/cohabiting, in 47.1% of the cases, the partner worked full-time, 23.3% worked part-time, and, in 6.8% of the cases, the partner did not have a job. The average number of children per household was 1, with a range of 0–4, where 94 households had children. The average number of other care-dependent persons within a household was 0.13 (range 0–3), where 22 households had adult dependents. 95.1% of the participants indicated to be employed, while others identified themselves as students with a side job, or volunteers. The sectors in which the participants worked varied: Accountancy/Finance (14.8%), Business Management/Consulting (4.4%), Education (6.9%), Engineering/Manufacturing (2.5%), Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG; 2%), Government (6.4%), Healthcare (8.9%), Hospitality (6.4%), HR & Recruitment (3%), Information Technology (6.9%), Logistics/Transport (3.4%), Marketing/Digital Media (1.5%), Public Sector/Services (7.4%), Real Estate & Development (1.5%), Retail (2.5%), Sales (7.4%), or Other (14.3%). The nationality of the respondents and the country of citizenship during the COVID-19 pandemic was mostly Dutch (81.3%) or Belgian (13.8%).

Operationalization

Work engagement was measured through 18 items of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, 2002). The full-scale measures vigour, dedication, and absorption with work. An example item is "When I am working, I forget everything else around me." A 5-point-Likert-scale was used, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). After

conducting an exploratory factor analysis, three items were removed from the full scale, due to their scores being below 0.30 and one item was removed due to a cross-loading, leaving 15 items to measure engagement (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88).

For *perceived lockdown intensity* (PLI), a new scale was developed adapted from Van der Heijden's (2012) items on perceived employability, building on the AMO model (Appelbaum et al., 2000). More specifically, we measured the respondent's perceived ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform work during COVID-19 in view of uncertainty and isolation. An example item is: "The lockdown affected my [ability/opportunity/motivation] to do my work." Initially, we had six scale items, measured on a 5-point-Likert-scale (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree). Based on factor analysis, however, two items were removed, leaving four items (Cronbach's alpha = 0.80).

To measure *work-family conflict,* we used the Work-Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) (Haslam et al., 2015). Ten scale items were used. An example item is "My work prevents me spending sufficient quality time with my family." Respondents were asked to answer the questions based on their experiences during the last month to suitably measure the effect of the conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we were interested in the overarching concept of work-family conflict, all items were used to calculate WFC. The scores on the 5-point-Likert-scale were reversed for interpretation purposes (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). No items had to be removed (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87).

Family supportive supervisor behaviour in times of crisis (FSSBC) was measured using a combined construct of both FSSB and crisis management (C). The FSSB part was measured following Hammer et al. (2013), based on 18 items measuring its four dimensions: emotional support, role modelling, instrumental support, and creative work-family management. An example item is "Your supervisor makes you feel comfortable talking to him/her about your conflicts between work and non-work." All 18 items were adapted to suit the COVID-19 pandemic situation, meaning that all participants were asked to answer the questions based on the past month, to indicate their superior's supportive behaviour during a partial or complete lockdown. In addition, to capture crisis management based on the past month, five items from Petriglieri (2020) were added to indicate their supervisor's supportive behaviour during partial or complete lockdown. An

example item is "My supervisor is able to both contain and interpret what is happening while reaching out to its employees during this time of crisis." FSSBC was measured on a five-point-Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (=strongly agree) to 5 (=strongly disagree). Two items of the FSSBC scale had to be removed due to cross-loadings (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94).

Analyses

Hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression analysis and the macro developed by Hayes (2015) to test moderated mediation regression analysis in SPSS. Gender and age were used as control variables (Cinamon & Rich, 2002).

Results

The correlation table (Table 18.1) shows that engagement was negatively correlated to PLI (r = −0.32, p ≤ 0.01). Work engagement positively correlated to FSSBC (r = 0.26, p ≤ 0.01). PLI was positively correlated to work-family conflict (r = 0.28, p ≤ 0.01) and negatively correlated to FSSBC (r = −0.22, p ≤ 0.01) and to age (r = −0.19, p ≤ 0.05). Work-family

Table 18.1 Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities amongst variables

Variable	x̄	Σ	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. ENG	3.87	0.51	(0.88)					
2. PLI	2.65	0.71	−0.32**	(0.80)				
3. WFC	2.43	0.85	−0.07	0.28**	(0.87)			
4. FSSBC	3.59	0.58	0.26**	−0.22**	−0.36**	(0.94)		
5. Gender	0.47	50	−0.11	−0.03	0.2	−0.12	1	
6. Age	41.7	11.82	0.12	−0.19*	0.8	−0.16*	0.53	1

Note. N = 170. ENG engagement, PLI perceived lockdown intensity, WFC work-family conflict, FSSBC family supportive supervisor behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic, x̄ = mean, σ = standard deviation

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), thus p ≤ 0.01; * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), thus p ≤ 0.05. (X) = Cronbach's alpha

conflict was negatively correlated to FSSBC ($r = -0.36$, $p \leq 0.01$). Finally, FSSBC was negatively correlated to age ($r = 0.16$, $p \leq 0.05$).

Explaining Work Engagement

Table 18.2 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis of engagement as predicted by PLI, WFC, and FSSBC with as control variables age and gender. Both Model 2 ($F = 8.803$, $p \leq 0.01$) and Model 3 ($F = 5.409$, $p \leq 0.01$) were significant. Since the interaction effect was not significant, we interpreted Model 2.

In line with Hypothesis 1, Model 2 showed that PLI and engagement were negatively related ($\beta = -.287$, $p \leq 0.01$). However, WFC and engagement did not have a significant relationship. Hence, no support was found for Hypothesis 3.

Model 2 reveals a positive direct relationship between FSSBC and engagement ($\beta = .232$, $p \leq 0.01$). However, the interaction term (WFC x FSSBC) in Model 3 was not significant. In contrast to our moderation

Table 18.2 Hierarchical regression analysis: work engagement

Explanatory variables	Model 1 B-value	t-value	Model 2 B-value	t-value	Model 3 B-value	t-value
Control variables						
Gender	−0.12	−1.54	−0.10	−1.37	−0.10	−1.37
Age	0.01	1.67	0.00	1.39	0.01	1.39
Predictor variables						
PLI			−0.16	−3.51**	−0.166	−0.36**
WFC			0.06	1.06	0.058	1.03
FSSBC			0.20	2.94*	0.207	2.99**
Interaction						
WFC x FSSBC					0.06	0.74
R-squared	0.029		0.16		0.17	
Adjusted R-squared	0.017		0.14		0.23	
F-statistic	2.45		8.80**		5.41**	
DF (df1, df2)	2.17		3.16		3.16	

Note. N = 170. ENG engagement, PLI perceived lockdown intensity, WFC work-family conflict, FSSBC family supportive supervisor behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. ***p* < 0.01, **p* < 0.05

hypothesis (Hypothesis 5), we did not find that FSSBC weakens the presumed negative relationship between WFC and engagement.

Explaining Work-Family Conflict

Table 18.3 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis with WFC as a dependent variable, with predictor variable PLI and control variables gender and age. Model 2 was significant ($F = 5.984$, $p ≤ 0.01$). PLI and WFC were significantly positively related ($β = 0.317$, $p < 0.01$), supporting Hypothesis 2.

Even though no significant direct effect of the mediator WFC on engagement was found (Table 18.2), an indirect moderation effect could still be possible. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was tested through moderated mediated regression analysis (Hayes, 2015). The moderating effect of FSSBC could be examined in three different levels (low, moderate, and high). In total, 5000 bootstrapping samples were used to conduct the analyses. Table 18.4 shows that there was no indirect effect of WFC on low, moderate, or high levels of FSSBC. Hence, no support was found for Hypothesis 5.

Table 18.3 Hierarchical regression analysis: work-family conflict

	Control variables		Control variables + predictor variables	
	Model 1		Model 2	
Explanatory variables	B-value	t-value	B-value	t-value
Control variables				
Gender	0.022	0.20	0.029	0.28
Age	0.01	1.03	0.01	1.85
Predictor variables				
PLI			0.26	4.09**
R-squared		0.01		0.10
Adjusted R-squared		−0.01		0.08
F-statistic		0.56		5.98**
DF (df1, df2)		167		166

Note. N = 170. PLI perceived lockdown intensity during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 **$p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$

Table 18.4   Moderated mediation model

W	X	M	Y	Indirect effect (β)	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low						
FSSBC	PLI	WFC	Engagement	0.01	–0.02	0.05
Moderate						
FSSBC	PLI	WFC	Engagement	0.02	–0.01	0.05
High						
FSSBC	PLI	WFC	Engagement	0.02	–0.02	0.07

Note. N = 170. BootLLCI = the lower limit of the confidence interval; BootULCI = the upper limit of the confidence interval. The lower and upper limit should not cross zero while using the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles

Additional Analyses

Additional analyses were conducted to examine the separate effects of the mediators work-to-family-conflict (WtoF) and family-to-work-conflict (FtoW) (Haslam et al., 2015). Table 18.5 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis of engagement, with predictor variables PLI, WtoC, and FSSBC and control variables gender and age. Both Model 2 ($F = 8.803$, $p ≤ 0.01$) and Model 3 ($F = 5.409$, $p ≤ 0.01$) were significant. In contrast to expectations, however, WtoF had a significant positive relationship with engagement. In Model 3, WtoF remained significantly and positively related to engagement, but the interaction term was non-significant.

We also examined the indirect effect. Again, the conceptual model was tested with use of the moderated mediated regression analysis (Hayes, 2015). However, still all levels crossed the line of zero. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was no indirect mediation (table not presented).

All analyses above were also conducted for FtoW, but the outcomes were non-significant.

Table 18.5 Hierarchical regression analysis: engagement

Explanatory variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B-value	t-value	B-value	t-value	B-value	t-value
Control variables						
Gender	−0.12	−1.54	−0.12	−1.63	−0.12	−1.62
Age	0.01	1.67	0.00	0.98	0.01	0.97
PLI			−0.18	−3.95**	−0.18	−3.89**
WtoF			0.14	3.37**	0.14	3.36**
FSSBC			0.23	3.49**	0.23	3.48**
Interaction						
WtoF x FSSBC					0.00	−0.00
R-square		0.03		0.21		0.21
Adjusted R-square		0.02		0.19		0.21
F-statistic		2.45		8.83**		7.31
DF (df1, df2)		2167		3164		6163

Note. N = 170. ENG engagement, PLI perceived lockdown intensity, WtoF work-to-family conflict, FSSBC family supportive supervisor behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

Discussion and Conclusion

Below, we discuss the study's main findings and their research and management implications.

Perceived Lockdown Intensity and Work Engagement

In line with expectations, we found a negative relationship between perceived lockdown intensity and engagement. Building on the JD-R model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011), this negative relationship was considered to indicate that extensive teleworking can lead to both psychological and cognitive alterations (Galanti et al., 2021; Gigauri, 2020), which can impact engagement (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). In intensified telework situations, employees can less identify with their organization, due to fewer reminders of their belongingness (Wiesenfeld et al., 2001).

The Mediating Role of Work-Family Conflict

Altogether, no support was found for the mediating role of work-family conflict in the relationship between perceived lockdown intensity and engagement. However, in line with expectations, perceived lockdown intensity was found to be positively related to work-family conflict, meaning that people who experience teleworking in the lockdown as "intense" when it comes to their ability, motivation, and opportunity to continue their performance at work experienced more work-family conflict (Galanti et al., 2021; Vaziri et al., 2020). This is in line with recent research on employee isolation that points out that the lockdown resulted in a blurred distinction between employees' professional and personal routines (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2021). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), the unclear work-family boundary enables more negative work-family conflict.

However, in contrast to expectations, we did not find a significant relationship between work-family conflict and engagement. Based on Coetzee and De Villiers (2010), we expected that stressful and demanding work-family situations would erode engagement. When looking at the work-family conflict dimensions separately (Haslam et al., 2015), however, we found a significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and engagement, but not between family-to-work conflict and engagement. Strikingly, however, the relationship between work-to-family conflict and engagement was positive. An explanation might be given by Halbesleben et al. (2009), who studied the negative consequences of engagement and indicated that too much engagement might enhance both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict, indicating a reversed causal relationship between engagement and work-to-family conflict.

The Moderating Role of Family Supportive Supervision Behaviour in Times of COVID-19 in the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Work Engagement

In contrast to expectations, we did not find family supportive supervisor behaviour in times of COVID-19 (FSSBC) to weaken the relationship between work-family conflict and engagement. However, FSSBC

demonstrated a positive relationship with engagement. Obviously, FSSBC is an important factor in all employees' engagement, regardless of them experiencing work-life conflict. In times of lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, perceived FSSBC can contribute to people's attitudes by reducing uncertainty (Amerio et al., 2020; Pieh et al., 2020). In other words, informal support and control can create a better understanding of their needs for belongingness, amongst other needs. The family supportive work environment created by supervisors (emotional support, role modelling, instrumental support, and creative work-family management) (Hammer et al., 2013) and the clear vision stimulating purposeful behaviours (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2021; Lamprinou et al., 2021; Petriglieri, 2020) can foster engagement.

Limitations and Future Research

First, our cross-sectional study does not allow the drawing of causal inferences between PLI, work-family conflict, engagement, and FSSBC. It could well be, however, that employees who experience more engagement (i.e. vigour, dedication, and absorption) might find intensified (enforced) telework practices less problematic and their supervisors more supportive. To see how these study variables might be experienced by employees with different telework conditions and changes herein in post-pandemic work settings, which will likely be more hybrid, future research could for instance use diary studies.

Second, our measurement of perceived lockdown intensity (PLI) relied on a newly developed scale, based on Van der Heijden (2012) and Pieh et al. (2020). To gain a deeper understanding of the concept of PLI, the used scale could be further developed. In the current conceptualization, our focus was on the intensity to which the lockdown affected people's overall perceptions of their ability, opportunity, and motivation to work, without specifying the link with the experience they had with teleworking. Future research in hybrid settings could examine relational aspects, for instance isolation from colleagues, resulting from limited informal communication channels as potential telework aspects and the role of telework experience herein.

Third, future research could focus on the role of the organization, for instance the role of policies and practices of the organization (e.g. family-friendly HR policies, or a family-friendly culture). The signalizing function that these policies and practices provide may be an important facilitator to mitigate the negative effects of PLI, also in hybrid settings that employees might not always self-control. In our study, we did not find a moderation effect of supervisor support; instead, FSSBC functioned as an antecedent of engagement. The role of the supervisor in future hybrid workplaces might be even facilitated with a more supportive organizational culture or supportive policies and practices.

Fourth, this study involved employees from different national and organizational contexts but could not consider all specific policies and practices, gender regimes, and cultural characteristics. Future research could adopt a multilevel model, in which context-specific characteristics at the national and organizational levels can be included, particularly to explain the relationships between informal management support, work-life balance, and engagement in hybrid workplaces.

Practical Recommendations

First, this study suggests that when employees experience high levels of PLI, they will experience less engagement. Based on this, practitioners should focus on the ability, motivation, and opportunity to continue working in intensified hybrid workplaces (characterized by professional and social isolation) to promote engagement.

Second, even though work-family balance was not found to mediate the relationship between PLI and engagement, PLI did affect work-family balance, an important factor for practitioners, employees, and other stakeholders to consider in hybrid workplaces.

Third, Appelbaum et al. (2000) indicated that not only HR practices but also leadership can influence engagement. Our findings showed that employees in intensified telework settings flourished by more informal supervisor attention, both by providing vision and purpose and by giving various types of support.

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Sustainable Leadership and Work-Nonwork Boundary Management and in a Changing World of Work

Christin Mellner

Introduction

Profound changes have taken place in working life as global competition has increased along with the need to react quickly to changing markets. Especially the rapid development of information- and communication technologies (ICTs) has changed the way work is organized, where an increasing number of employees can perform their work flexibly, regardless of space and time, set their own work schedules, and self-manage how they organize work (Allvin et al., 2011, 2013; Fenner & Renn, 2010). This is supported by estimates showing that in 2017, 17% of employees within the EU worked at a distance through the use of ICT, that is, telework (Garrett & Danziger, 2007), in some form and to varying degrees (Eurofound, 2017).

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The telework development marks a fundamental shift regarding individuals' work-nonwork boundaries, carrying both opportunities and challenges (Allvin et al., 2013; Peters et al., 2009; Wajcman et al., 2008). Flexible work arrangements empower employees by providing them enhanced autonomy to organize their work as to accommodate the demands of work-nonwork in accordance with their own preferences and needs. However, self-organizing of one's work may also put increased demands on managing the increasingly blurred boundaries between work and nonwork. Indeed, in connection to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, where many employees globally started working from home for the first time (Kramer & Kramer, 2020), a loss of control over work-nonwork boundaries has been frequently reported (Fisher et al., 2020).

The blurred boundaries between the domains of work-nonwork associated with telework (Messenger et al., 2017) can affect individuals' work-life balance either positively or negatively (Brown & Palvia, 2015; Wright et al., 2014), since telework can be both related to increased work autonomy and job satisfaction (Brown & Palvia, 2015; Wright et al., 2014), and longer working hours, work intensification, and increased stress (Chesley, 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Messenger et al., 2017). Recent studies on telework during the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that it is associated with increased productivity, even though the longer working hours decrease this effect (Kazekami, 2020), as does family disruptions (Campo et al., 2021). Moreover, these studies have shown that employees tend to work without limits which is associated with increased stress, overwork, and, occasionally, burnout (Vayre, 2019). In addition, telework during the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with increased autonomy, which enables a better coordination of work-nonwork (Gálvez et al., 2020); increased work-nonwork enrichment among employees who report having compassionate supervisors, but also enhanced work-nonwork conflict among employees with a preference for keeping work-nonwork separated (Vaziri et al., 2020).

Taken together, the outcomes presented above raise questions on well-functioning work-nonwork boundary management, which can be considered crucial for both individual and organizational sustainability. Sustainability in a work context can be defined as being able to meet work demands without putting one's future health and participation in

working life at risk (Carayon, 2006). Within the emerging field of the psychology of sustainability and sustainable development (Di Fabio, 2017), a focus has been placed upon how organizations can work in more healthy ways by nurturing the health and motivation of their employees (Manuti & Giancaspro, 2019). In particular leadership, commonly defined as "influence exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate relationships in a group" (Yukl, 2013), has been associated with employee well-being (Arnold, 2017), work engagement and performance (Choudhary et al., 2013).

In relation to the development of ICT in recent decades and how it has changed the way work is organized, a change in the way leadership is practiced—which mainly concerns employment relationships—is needed (Torre & Sarti, 2020). In connection to this, there has been a call for more in-depth analysis of the role of leadership practices, that is, behaviours leaders use to engage employees in actions for achieving organizational objectives and goals (Dunst et al., 2018), in telework practices within various organizations (Liu et al., 2018).

Although the present study was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, it aimed to contribute to the ongoing debate on working life in the "New Normal" in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic by investigating managers' perceptions on leadership in telework, and experiences of their own and their employees' work-nonwork boundary management.

Theoretical Background

Boundary Theory

Boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000; Campbell Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996) offers a fruitful framework for understanding the interplay between factors in work and nonwork, which can be expected to have implications for psychological sustainability in the context of telework. According to boundary theory, individuals' strategies for managing work-nonwork boundaries can be presented along a segmentation-integration continuum. At one end of the continuum is segmentation, which

characterizes individuals who enact and prefer, respectively, relatively strong work-nonwork boundaries, thus keeping various aspects of work-nonwork separated from one another. At the other end of the continuum is integration, which characterizes individuals who enact and prefer, respectively, relatively weak work-nonwork boundaries, that is, merging or blending (cognitively, behaviourally, and/or physically) various aspects of work-nonwork (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kossek et al., 2012; Kreiner, 2006; Kreiner et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996).

Both segmentation and integration have been found to bring about costs and benefits. Segmentation can be beneficial when it comes to fulfilling work and nonwork roles (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015) and reducing work-life conflict (Powell & Greenhouse, 2010). Work-life conflict is conceptualized as a form of inter-role conflict (Frone et al., 1997) that occurs when demands in work and nonwork, respectively, are mutually incompatible (Geurts et al., 2005; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), hindering individuals' work and nonwork role enactment and performance (Michel et al., 2011), either due to a lack of time or to strain built up in work spilling over into nonwork (Geurts et al., 2005). However, segmentation can also lead to more work-life conflict, since integration, although more difficult, may be necessary to combine work and nonwork activities (Ashforth et al., 2000). More often, however, integration has been associated with negative outcomes, such as longer weekly work hours, poorer work-life balance (Mellner et al., 2014), more cross-role interruptions (Ashforth et al., 2000), work-life conflict (Derks et al., 2016; Kossek et al., 2006; Matthews et al., 2014; Mellner et al., 2021), inter-role conflict (Bulger et al., 2007; Hecht & Allen, 2009), and poorer psychological detachment (Mellner, 2016), that is, being able to let go of work-related thoughts and emotions during non-working time (Kompier et al., 2012).

In particular, individuals' psychological interpretations or perceptions of the control they have over their boundary environment (Kossek et al., 2012), that is, that they can control the timing, frequency, and direction of boundary crossings between work-nonwork to fit their preferences and needs, has been associated with less work-life conflict (Chen et al., 2009; Kossek et al., 2006, 2012; Mellner et al., 2021), improved work-life balance (Mellner et al., 2014), that is, a balance between the demands of work-nonwork (Haar, 2013), and psychological detachment (Mellner,

2016). This in turn is vital to recovery (Sonnentag, 2018; Wendsche & Lohmann-Haislah, 2017), which is necessary to prevent prolonged stress and poor health (McEwen, 1998).

Authentic Leadership

The role of authentic leadership in terms of a positive relational-leadership approach has been argued to be vital (Iqbal et al., 2020) in the context of psychological sustainability and sustainable development (Di Fabio, 2017). Authentic leadership refers to a leadership style characterized of being aware of how one thinks and behaves, as well as being perceived by others as being aware of one's own and others' values, knowledge and strengths, awareness of the context in which one operates, and being confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and having a character of high moral (Gardner et al., 2011). Authentic leadership was in a recent meta-analysis shown to be positively related to emotional intelligence (Miao et al., 2018), referred to as multiple capabilities, including both intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence in terms of knowing and handling one's own, but also others' emotions (Rezvani & Khosravi, 2019). Specifically, emotional intelligence has been proposed to be characterized by four domains: (1) self-awareness; (2) self-management; (3) social awareness; (4) and social skills that are adopted at appropriate times and in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation at hand (ibid.).

Empirical evidence has revealed that authentic leadership is associated with employees' basic psychological need satisfaction in terms of competence, that is, feeling capable for work-related tasks; relatedness, that is, feeling supported by ones' colleagues; and autonomy, that is, feeling that one is the initiator of work-related actions (Leroy et al., 2015). Moreover, authentic leadership has been shown to enhance employees' organizational commitment (Ausar et al., 2016), and work engagement (Bamford et al., 2013), and to foster hope, positive emotions, and trust (Gardner et al., 2011). In a recent study on telework during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was found that authentic leadership increased the quality of social exchange relationships and trust between managers and their employees (Chen & Sriphon, 2022). This was supported by a recent

literature review study on virtual management in telework which underscored the importance of managers establishing relationships based on trust with employees, including a genuine concern for their well-being, while maintaining organizational competitiveness (Contreras et al., 2020).

Method

Participants and Procedure

This study, approved by the regional ethics committee in Stockholm (dnr 2014/337-31), included managers who were recruited through their union membership, and belonged to three labour unions representing: (1) health and welfare; (2) civil servant organizations; and (3) different occupations and organizations within the private sector. In Sweden, a majority (72%) of all professionals, including managers, are unionized (Kjellberg, 2019). In a first step, participants were approached through the unions' networks. Next, snowball sampling (Yingling & McClain, 2015), that is, asking participants for referral, was applied to recruit potential participants.

Between November 2015 and February 2016, face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 managers (50% males; age 32–64). One of the inclusion criteria was that the participants' organizations offered flexible work arrangements in terms of telework, although the degree of teleworking could vary between participants' organizations. The study group was heterogeneous regarding managerial position, representing top-level, middle-; and first-line managers, for how long they had been a manager (2–30 years), number of subordinates (12–750), sector, organization size, as well as business (for instance, transportation, marketing, staffing, telecom, social services, government agency, health and wellness, and real estate). A majority (18) of the participants' organizations had their headquarters in Stockholm, and nine also had operations elsewhere in Sweden, where two of these also had operations outside Sweden. The participants in this study, however, only had managerial responsibility for employees in Sweden.

The interviews took place at the participants' workplace in a closed room, or at another location of their choice, for example, a public place. Verbal consent was taken before starting the interviews. At the end of each interview, a summary of its content was confirmed by participants, that is, respondent validation (Busetto et al., 2020). The interviews lasted 90 minutes on average, were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim, and then erased. The interviews were based on a semi-structured guide which explored questions regarding the ways in which managers perceived leadership in telework, and their experiences of their own and their employees' management of work-nonwork boundaries.

Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was chosen as the method of analysis which aims to identify and analyse themes and patterns in a given data set (Braun & Clarke, 2019). A combination of an inductive and a deductive approach was adopted, which is common, although one approach tends to dominate over the other (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2019). Analysis was conducted through open coding of data and emphasis on data/respondent-based meanings. Sensitizing concepts (Bowen, 2006) were used such that the participants' language and expressions guided the researcher in approaching possible lines of inquiry.

For the inductive analysis, the choice of literature and previous research, primarily regarding leadership in telework, was made after the analysis was performed to bring an understanding of the results. Deductive analysis was employed to a smaller degree to ensure that the open coding would produce meaningful themes with regard to the research aim, primarily related to work-nonwork management based on boundary theory.

The six steps of the analytical process included: (1) getting familiar with the data through reading and re-reading the transcripts; (2) generate initial codes through coding of each segment of the data that was relevant to the research aim, and (3) search for themes in terms of organizing codes into broader themes that said something specific about the research question; (4) review potential themes by modifying and developing the preliminary themes identified in step 3 and re-reading t data associated

with each theme and considering whether the data supported it; (5) define and name themes in terms of a final refinement of the themes by answering questions such as what the themes are saying, if there are sub-themes, how the themes relate to each other; and (6) write-up, although this final step to a high degree is interwoven into the process of analysis as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Results

The analysis produced three main themes: (1) Work situation; (2) Leading oneself and others, including two sub-themes: Communication; Trust, and (3) Boundaries and balance.

Work Situation

The interviewed managers were found to supervise employees within varying degrees of telework. There were no fixed agreements on how many, or which, days during the working week employees and managers had to be at the workplace or could be working from elsewhere. As such, there were differences with regard to how often the interviewed managers met with their employees face-to-face. Some of the interviewees described that this was the case only a couple of times a year, even though this low frequency was exceptional. More common was to meet with one's employees face-to-face on a weekly basis, or at least once a month.

Moreover, the interviewed managers were found to supervise heterogeneous groups of employees with different boundary preferences, needs, strategies, and demands in both the work- and nonwork domains. This was for many of the interviewees experienced as that, as a manager, one has to consider individual employees' preferences, needs, and overall circumstances. To be able to do this, the interviewed managers perceived it as helpful to have both shorter check-ins and meetings, either face-to-face or through ICT, with employees on a regular basis, sometimes once a week, depending on the work assignment, and also when the need arises,

to go through work assignments and tasks, as well as get an understanding of employees' conditions in both work and nonwork.

In summary, a majority of the interviewed managers expressed an awareness of that they needed to be responsive in a way that is adapted to both the individual employee and their specific situations in both work and nonwork. This can be interpreted as that, within the framework of the organizations' needs, it is important for managers in telework to have an understanding and concern for individual employees' work and nonwork contexts and prerequisites as well as being able to lead employees with different work-nonwork preferences and needs.

Leading Oneself and Others

A majority of the interviewees perceived that their function as a manager was to take on an active role in creating a culture that supports clear agreements regarding work assignments as well as work-nonwork boundaries and that provides conditions that enable these agreements for employees. Leadership was perceived as important for creating norms around work-nonwork boundaries through serving as a role model in terms of one's behaviour as a manager. This was described as requiring self-awareness of how managers act and live and how they meet employees' work-nonwork preferences and needs. A first step, in the managers' view, therefore, is to become aware of one's own boundary preferences and tactics as a manager, as this constitutes the basis for understanding how to support both one's own and one's employees' work-nonwork boundary management and boundary control.

Communication

The interviewed managers described that through open communication with their employees, clear agreements around work assignments as well as around employees' work-nonwork boundaries can be reached. However, these agreements need to be congruent with employees' work-nonwork boundary management preferences (integration versus

segmentation). This does not mean, however, that boundary congruence, that is, being able to enact one's preferred work-nonwork boundaries (Mellner et al., 2021), is always positive. That is, which type of workplace norms applies also appeared to matter. For instance, workplace norms on being available for work-related issues outside regular work hours were experienced by the interviewed managers as causing long working days and a fragmented working pattern for employees, which in turn, could pose a risk for their work-life balance and health. Workplace norms that instead supported segmentation were perceived to increase employees' possibilities to create boundaries around work-related technology-use during nonwork time, which was described by the managers as enabling recovery.

Open communication and clear agreements with employees around work-nonwork preferences and needs as well as around work assignments were furthermore perceived by the interviewees as laying a foundation for trust.

Trust

Creating a culture of trust where employees feel that they can reach out to and inform managers about their work situation, and where managers have confidence in employees' knowledge and ability to carry out their work, was regarded by the interviewed managers as particularly important when one doesn't meet with employees on a daily basis.

A trust-based relationship between managers and employees was also perceived by the managers as less hierarchical and described to generate increased employee autonomy. This, however, also entails increased demands on employees to take more responsibility for their own work performance. This can involve, for instance, that employees need to be able to decide for themselves when a task is completed (i.e. when a job has sufficient quality), to organize one's day and work efficiently and to know when and where one performs a job most effectively. Related to this, many of the interviewed managers expressed to be aware that they have the main responsibility to provide employees with both the emotional and practical support needed to be able to fulfil work duties. Thus,

managers served the role of striking a balance between employee freedom and responsibility.

Boundaries and Balance

The interviewed managers' experience of work-life balance, recovery opportunities, and health can be seen in the light of their boundary management preferences as well as demands in both the work and nonwork domains, which to a high degree determine which boundary strategies and tactics are both suitable and possible in their case.

Managers described their boundary management tactics as behavioural, physical, and psychological, and gave various examples of tactics used to achieve their boundary management strategic goals. Those with a preference for segmentation applied tactics such as not reading work-related emails outside regular work hours or being able to mentally let go of work during non-working time, and instead devote oneself and be mentally present with family, friends, or oneself. Behaviour typical for those with a preference for integration was to utilize and develop the possibilities for coordinating the domains of work-nonwork according to their own needs, which ideally creates less conflict between the two domains. However, some of the interviewees experienced integration to pose challenges to work-life balance as integration tends to include more permeable boundaries around work-related technology-use during non-working time.

Common tactics for managers' boundary creation were related to traditional divisions of time and space, that is, certain times or places are set aside for either work or nonwork activities. For example, avoiding working during evenings or weekends, turning off the work mobile during certain times, having a special place or room at home that is only used for work, or having work-free spaces, such as the kitchen or the bedroom. The boundary between these times and places thus becomes the boundary between work-nonwork. Technology itself was also used for demarcating different domains. For instance, the laptop was used to mark working hours and working places. Additional examples were to check work-related emails during leisure time only in exceptional cases, such as

at important deadlines, or having separate mobile phones for work and nonwork. However, technology was also perceived to be losing power as a demarcation strategy, as work-nonwork was often integrated in the smartphone. Hence, the domains of work-nonwork can be physically separated, but may still only be apart by the push of a button.

Interviewees who perceived difficulties with letting go of work-related thoughts during nonwork time used contrasting activities to deal with this unwanted mental spill-over. They described how they engage in other activities to disrupt work-related thoughts, for instance going to the gym or working in the garden, singing in a choir, or doing relaxation exercises, such as yoga or mindfulness. An additional tactic for mentally freeing oneself from work was to engage in social activities that force one to take a break. For example, scheduling dinner with friends or going to the movies a specific day of the week, regardless of whether one does not have the time or is too tired.

By adopting various demarcation tactics, managers' perceived control over their own work-nonwork boundaries was thus achieved, which in turn, contributed to the experience of psychological detachment, recovery, and work-life balance. In the case of problems with boundary demarcation, due to demands and commitments in both work- and nonwork, the interviewees described that their sense of boundary control was negatively affected.

Discussion

This study investigated managers' perceptions on leadership in telework, and experiences of their own as well as their employees' management of the boundaries between work-nonwork. Although this study was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic and that there were differences both among the interviewed managers and their employees regarding the degree of teleworking, the findings largely supported earlier studies on telework conducted both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the findings are in line with previous research which have shown that telework is associated with: a loss of control over work-nonwork boundaries (Fisher et al., 2020; Messenger et al., 2017); either

positive or negative effects on work-life balance (Brown & Palvia, 2015; Gálvez et al., 2020; Vaziri et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2014); increased work autonomy (Brown & Palvia, 2015; Gálvez et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2014); but also longer working hours, work intensification, and increased stress (Chesley, 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Messenger et al., 2017; Vayre, 2019).

Novel findings that have implications for the post-pandemic "new normal" regards the role of leadership for managers' own as well as their employees' work-nonwork boundary management in telework, and subsequent psychological sustainability in terms of work-life balance, psychological detachment, recovery, and health. In particular, authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2011), referred to as a positive relational-leadership approach (Iqbal et al., 2020), enabled open communication and created trust (Contreras et al., 2020) with employees, which supported clear agreements around work assignments as well as around preferences and needs regarding the employees' and managers' own work-nonwork boundaries.

Strengths and Limitations

This study included managers representing different sectors, and organizations, and was carried out within the work context of their day-to-day activities. This provided a broad perspective on the phenomena under study, as well as ensured that the findings can be transferred to various settings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Moreover, saturation was achieved as no new information emerged in the final interviews (Busetto et al., 2020).

Potential limitations concern that the analysis was performed by one person only, the PI and author of this study, something which may have impacted reliability. However, it is not expected within RTA that codes and themes interpreted by one researcher are necessarily the same as that of another researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019). It may, however, have been beneficial with multiple researchers that in a reflexive way, in terms of sense-checking of ideas or exploring multiple interpretations of the data, could have contributed to a richer interpretation of meaning (ibid.).

Conclusion and Practical Implication

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that organizations, to enhance employees' and managers' own psychological sustainability in telework, would benefit from implementing authentic leadership practices that foster manager-employee relationships based on open communication and trust.FundingAFA (grant number 74809).

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Epilogue: The Future of Work and How to Organize and Manage It

Svein Bergum, Pascale Peters, and Tone Vold

This final chapter speculates on the future of work and the place of remote working herein after the COVID-19 pandemic. The future of work pictured is based on the valuable insights gained from the respective chapters of this book, each of which considered different aspects of the organization and organizing of work, work relationships, and work and/or family outcomes, from different theoretical perspectives, in different national

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contexts, in different industries, before, during, and/or after the COVID-19 pandemic.

This epilogue focuses on three important questions. First, what can we predict based on what we learned from the chapters about what will be the "new normal," if there is such a thing as the "new normal"? Second, what does the "new normal" imply for Human Resource Management (HRM) and leadership in organizations? Third, what does the "new normal" imply for HRM and leadership in organizations to be sustainable? To help answer the third question, in this final chapter, the lessons learned from the chapters are placed in the emerging frame of Sustainable HRM incorporating a paradox perspective, which adheres to the call for purpose, corporate responsibility, inclusiveness, and sustainability in societal and academic debates (Aust et al., 2020; Booysen, 2021; De Prins et al., 2015; Van Ingen et al., 2021), also when it comes to remote working (Contreras et al., 2020; Gratton, 2021; Lund et al., 2020).

A Helicopter View of the Chapters

In the first part of the book, entitled "Reflections on Remote Working in the Past and Future and the Impact on the Organizational Level," five chapters were included. In Chap. 2, "Organizational Perspectives on the Adoption of Telework," Pedersen and Bergum analysed the situation before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic from multiple theoretical perspectives within organizational research: the technological, the performance gap, and the institutional perspective. Their chapter illustrated and discussed these three organizational perspectives on the adoption of—and changes related to—telework and virtual leadership. The chapter concluded that factors or expectations drawn from the three perspectives can be useful lenses to understanding changes in the lockdown period as well as the emergence of a new norm or the "new normal." For example, it can be expected that a "new normal" within a sector may be affected by factors that were referred to as perceived advantage of the technology, performance gaps and institutional (coercive, normative, and mimetic) pressures.

In Chap. 3, "Shaping Hybrid Collaborating Organizations," Van der Velden and Lekanne Deprez focused on hybrid collaboration. They referred to the importance of balancing between face-to-face and remote collaboration to optimize organizational performance, employee involvement, and innovativeness. They distinguished different levels of aggregation and proposed that different balances of hybrid collaboration are needed at the level of teams, the internal organization, and the organization in relation to its external stakeholders (ecosystem). Such a hybrid collaborating organization requires a multidisciplinary understanding and effort, in which (top) management, employees, and other internal and external stakeholders share knowledge, interact, and work together to generate sustainable value. Some tensions that most organizations must deal with during their journey towards shaping hybrid collaboration organizations are also discussed.

In Chap. 4, "Constructing New Organizational Identities in a Post-Pandemic Return: Managerial Dilemmas in Balancing the Spatial Redesign of Telework with Workplace Dynamics and the External Imperative for Flexibility," Yde Aksnes, Underthun, and Bonde Hansen described managerial dilemmas where managers seem to be torn between embracing the advantages of telework and proving the organizations' capacity for and willingness to be flexible, on the one hand, while retaining the physical workplace as a vital container for social dynamics and organizational identity formation, on the other. The pandemic has sparked discussions and new strategies for spatial flexibility, but the depth of potential transformation varies. In some of the case organizations in their chapter, such as the IT company and the insurance company, managers argued that they will adopt spatial redesigns to facilitate substantial flexibility. Managers from the social welfare agency or the manufacturing company concluded with rejecting telework as a permanent option. The remaining organizations were either undecided or opted for a middle-of-the-road solution of allowing some spatial flexibility.

In Chap. 6, "Exploring Virtual Management and HRM in Thin Organizational Places During the COVID-19 pandemic," Ring showed that the organizations studied had been innovative by adjusting and developing strategies for coping with long periods of absence from offices. Moreover, he showed that thick places can be created with the help of

technology. He also argued that the pandemic may have future consequences in terms of how work is organized and how technology can be used to complement or substitute for work at offices, but also how large office spaces need to be, and where these spaces should be located. In his view, home working requires different strategies for maintaining intensity, control, communication, engagement, leadership, social cohesion, and healthy and happy staff, thereby creating effective thin places by simulating or copying what is done in thick places by using technology.

In Chap. 5, "How Resilient Trust Between Manager and Employee Is Affected by Working Remotely for an Indefinite Period of Time," Alvestad Skogseth and Bergum explored how trust between manager and employee was affected by working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, and whether it would be possible for remote working managers to find ways of communicating to maintain cognitive and affective trust despite a geographic distance. Surprisingly, all respondents answered that cognitive trust was maintained during the pandemic. However, there was a greater challenge to maintain affective trust. Managers' digital competence was shown to be key for maintaining cognitive trust. The study also showed that managers must be conscious about the need to support and keep in touch with people in their home offices. These findings imply that employees who are managed remotely need more frequent feedback and recognition than those who are managed co-located, especially since communication under distance management is often more task-oriented and formal.

In the second part of the book, "Reflections on How to Manage Remote Working: HRM and Leadership," seven chapters were presented. In Chap. 8, "Human Resource Management in Times of the Pandemic: Clustering HR managers' Use of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)," Løkke and Wunderlich identified two distinct groups of Human Resource (HR) managers, engaging either in high or low levels of High-Performance Work System (HPWS) practices during the crisis. HR managers being highly exposed to the crisis, and thus experiencing high degrees of changes in their work, used higher levels of HPWS practices to overcome the crisis. However, the two groups of HR managers did not differ in respect to their individual demographics and organizational characteristics. This illustrates how external contingencies, that is, being

exposed to the crisis, translate into the work of HR managers during the COVID-19 crisis. This contributes to the HR literature, as it shows how the HRM system can be used in times of a crisis.

In Chap. 7, "The Employment Relationship Amidst and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of (Responsible) Inclusive Leadership in Managing Psychological Contracts," De Ruiter and Schalk proposed that the three main dimensions of the psychological contract, that is, transactional, relational, and ideological, were upheld in post-COVID-19 psychological contracts. Even so, they expected that, generally, ideological obligations will become more important across industries and job types. Furthermore, they posited that the type of obligations underlying the three dimensions of the psychological contract will likely change. That is, they expected that more importance will be placed on dimensions such as a safe working environment, inclusion, and diversity. In the light of this, they discussed the important role of (responsible) inclusive leadership in fulfilling psychological contracts. Additionally, they presented key challenges that managers may face in employing (responsible) inclusive leadership in managing psychological contracts remotely, also beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Chap. 9, "Changes in Learning Tensions Among Geographically Distributed HR Advisors during the COVID-19 Pandemic," Bergum and Haukåsen found that before the pandemic the different views with respect to the digital provision of HR services, as well as learning and development, created a tension between the centralized and decentralized HR advisors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the preconditions for collaboration across the centralized and decentralized HR advisors had changed. More specifically, everyone had to work from their home offices, creating a geographical distance among colleagues and users. Strikingly, combined with the need for more frequent meetings due to the crisis situation, this created a sense of unity and belonging, which, in turn, led to a reduction in learning tensions and cognitive distance, and changed the view of learning and enabled innovations, even at a geographical distance.

In Chap. 10, "Old Normal, New Normal or Renewed Normal: How COVID-19 Changed Human Resource Development," based on academic research published in the last two years, Tomè and Costas analysed

changes in the work environment, competencies, training and skills. Virtual development relations have been developed as a way to provide new forms for training. New requirements created by new work environments have required the development of new skills. According to Tomè and Costas, the biggest and defining element in that change will be the way people will relate to technology. The published academic research predicts a complex flow, but with a promise of a better, yet unexpected future.

In Chap. 11, "How Can Organizations Improve Virtual Onboarding? Key Learnings from the Pandemic," Russo and Manca first summarized the general objectives of the digital onboarding process for newcomers and organizations. They then discussed the challenges and sustainable solutions for managing remote onboarding and helping newcomers and organizations to attain their respective objectives. They argue that these practices may require managers and peers to become more involved in newcomers' onboarding, which demands additional efforts to engage newcomers, introduce them to the company, set the example, and proactively make sure that they would have all the social and material resources they might need to perform. Russo and Manca concluded with a reflection on the post-pandemic scenario, focused on the interplay between remote and in-presence working domains.

In Chap. 12, "Onboarding and Socialization Under the COVID-19 Crisis: A Knowledge Management Perspective," Haave, Kaloudis, and Vold found that digital tools have enabled the digital onboarding of newcomers during the COVID-19 pandemic, both via offering a communication platform and providing e-learning courses. The management in their study's case organization tried to facilitate "connectivity" between the newcomers and their mentors and managers. Despite that, the newcomers lacked a sense of belonging. Even if many of them seemed to be able to work autonomously, they preferred to return to the office to be a part of the organizational culture, and to better connect with their organization. However, they recognized that hybrid working offers possibilities for flexibility, which they also appreciated.

In Chap. 13, "Leadership in Hybrid Workplaces: A Win-Win for Work-Innovation and Work-Family Balance Through Work-Related Flow?," a longitudinal survey study by Edelbroek, Coun, Peters, and

Blomme showed that work-related flow has the capacity to mediate the positive relationship between empowering leadership and employees' innovative work-behaviour over time. However, the long-term negative relationship between directive leadership and innovative behaviour was also mediated by work-related flow. Both outcomes plea for leaders creating job designs which leverage the flexibility that telework provides, combined with employee empowerment, enhancing work-related flow, and innovative work-behaviour in the longer run. No significant evidence was found for the mediating role of work-related flow in the relationships between the two leadership behaviours and work-family balance. Possibly, due to home working, employees may be too absorbed in their work which prevents flow to spill-over into the home domain.

In the third part, entitled "Reflections on Outcomes of Remote Working," six chapters discussed the outcomes of remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic for managers and employees, focussing in particular on issues such as safety, general well-being, work-life balance, and work-family boundary management. In Chap. 14, entitled "The Dual Role of Leadership in 'Janus-Faced' Telework from Home," Vartiainen showed that telework from home is "Janus-faced," as working from home is simultaneously rewarding and challenging in several respects. The chapter acknowledged the dual role of remotely working leaders; on the one hand, they must adapt to home working as teleworkers themselves, whereas on the other hand, they have (extra) challenging tasks and responsibilities as leaders of remote workers. These findings can be used for designing, organizing, performing, and leading remote work modes. In this evolving "new normal," leaders need to adapt to their dual role, learn new leadership competencies and encourage their employees to lead themselves in a proactive manner.

In Chap. 15, "Security Issues at the Time of Pandemic at Distance Work," Suomi and Somerkoski discussed the new boom of remote working from the viewpoints of data privacy and security, physical safety and mental well-being. They argued that the COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the security landscape of work. More specifically, in data privacy and security, the home office environment causes several risks, in addition to the mixed use of devices and facilities in both work and leisure use causing difficulties. Physical safety is also compromised in several

ways in the home environment, which is partly confounding, as the very core of work at home and social distancing is the search for physical security from the COVID-19 virus. In conclusion, mental well-being problems are considered a key product of social distancing. However, these problems typically do not emerge immediately, but first after a long period, which enhances the risk even more.

In Chap. 16, "Eroding Boundaries and Creeping Control: 'Digital Regulation' as New Normal Work," Ollier-Malaterre advocates for the "new normal of work" to routinely include devising and adapting rules and behaviours around three major challenges: (a) constant connectivity (when and where workers are connected and available to work); (b) self-presentation (disclosures on videoconferences, social media, and other online spaces); and (c) privacy (protecting personal information despite monitoring software, trackers, and algorithmic work). She argues that if we are to build "new normal" sustainable workplaces, colliding worlds and quantified algorithmic control are deep-rooted trends that must be addressed by workers, employers, unions, public policymakers, and scholars.

In Chap. 17, "COVID 19-Passports and the Safe Return to Work: Recommendations for HR Professionals on How to Navigate the New Responsibility," Pagliar and Tursunbayeva illustrated that employee well-being is a key remit of HR departments. They argued that HR professionals have had a central role in managing these changes, even more so in the context of government vaccine mandates. In view of this, they examined the sociotechnical considerations for HR professionals managing these new demands. The insights from the chapter can assist HR managers in facilitating employees' safe return to work, while navigating this complex issue and minimizing any potential negative impact on employees' safety, well-being, performance, or engagement. Herewith, the study fills a gap in the evidence on HR professionals' perspectives on HR management during public health emergencies. The authors concluded by discussing emergent HR capabilities that could prove useful in future pandemics.

In Chap. 18, "Perceived Lockdown Intensity, Work-Family Conflict and Work Engagement: The Importance of Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour during the COVID-19 Crisis," Van Engen, Peters, and Van de

Water build on insights from Organizational Behaviour (Job Demands-Resources Model), HRM (AMO-theory) and management (telework and social isolation) literatures. Their mediation moderation model showed that the perceived lockdown intensity was directly related to work engagement and to work-family conflict. However, in contrast to their expectations, work-family conflict was not a mediator in the relationship between perceived lockdown intensity and work engagement. In fact, the dimension of the work-to-family conflict was found to have a positive relationship with work engagement. In contrast to their expectations, family supportive supervisor behaviour in times of COVID-19 was not a moderator. Yet, this supervisor behaviour was shown to directly affect both people's work-life conflict and work engagement. The authors conclude that informal leadership styles that control workers, but also support them in combining work and family in times of COVID-19, can sustain people's work engagement.

In Chap. 19, "Sustainable Leadership and Work-Nonwork Boundary Management in a Changing World of Work," Mellner investigated perceptions on leadership in telework and the experiences of managers' own and their employees' work-nonwork boundary management. Her interviews revealed that authentic leadership enabled an open communication based on trust with employees, and subsequent clear agreements regarding work assignments. Moreover, it also supported managers' own and employees' preferences and needs for creating work-nonwork boundaries. Based on the study's findings, she concluded that to enhance employees' and managers' own psychological sustainability in telework contexts, organizations would benefit from implementing authentic leadership practices that foster manager-employee relationships based on open communication and trust.

Hybrid Ways of Working as the "New Normal"

What can we predict about what will be the "new normal" based on what we learned from the chapters? Now that nations may have entered a new phase in the pandemic, or perhaps "an endemic phase," in which the COVID-19 virus is likely to remain constantly present, but in which

people are allowed to commute and have face-to-face interactions again, people and organizations must give meaning to what is coined the "new normal," and the role of remote working in their own contexts. Based on what has been learned, it is widely expected that many people and organizations who worked remotely during the pandemic will not revert to the old way of working (Eurofound, 2020, 2021). They will be inclined to structurally adopt remote working, including working from home on a larger scale and with a wider scope than before the COVID-19 pandemic, although mostly combined with substantial office-based working.

Working arrangements in which onsite and offsite work are mixed (e.g. a mix of home and office and other remote locations), offering people greater flexibility regarding the time-spatial location of work activities after the COVID-19 pandemic, have been labelled "hybrid working" (Bloom, 2021; Gratton, 2021), previously referred to as "New Ways of Working" (Peters et al., 2014). However, it is predicted that there will be multiple ways to shape the "new normal," depending on the mix of types of activities and human and machinery or equipment interactions people engage in, as well as their skills and educational level (cf. Gratton, 2021; Lund et al., 2020). Contextual factors, such as industry and economy, also play a role. Lund et al. (2020) refer to a study by McKinsey, conducted in 2020 among 800 executives in the United States, Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Spain, and the United Kingdom, which showed that 38% of the executives anticipated that after the pandemic remote working will shift back to two or more remote working days (at home) per week. Only 19% anticipated that this would be more than that.

Hence, how hybrid work models and the associated "freedom" to self-determine "when" and "where" and "with whom" to work will look like and evolve may depend on how people and organizations see a "fit" between hybrid working and the type of work they do, the way the work is dependent on the input from others (Gratton, 2021), and other elements in their ecosystems, including their organizational and household environments (Pedersen & Bergum, Chap. 2; Yde Aksnes, Chap. 4). The challenge for designing and managing work and relationships in the associated "borderless office" is to engage and inspire in a meaningful and fair way (Gratton, 2021; Van der Velden & Lekanne Deprez, Chap. 3).

Below, we will discuss themes emerging from the chapters that relate to HRM and leadership, which organizations need to consider in their alignment with hybrid working.

Implications of Hybrid Working for HRM

What can we learn from the chapters when it comes to HRM in future (hybrid) workplaces? One of the challenges for HRM is to find alignment between hybrid working and the organization's competitive strategies, but also with its institutional environment, its intra-organizational environment, and with other HRM practices (Boselie, 2010). This will be reflected upon below.

Strategic Alignment

One of the reasons for adopting hybrid working may be the need for strategic collaborating with partners within ecosystems (Van der Velden & Lekanne Deprez, Chap. 3). Moreover, organizations can save overhead costs since office spaces can be used more efficiently, caused by activity-based working in hybrid work contexts (Van der Velden & Lekanne Deprez, Chap. 3). Another rationale for the adoption of hybrid work is the competitive position of the organization in the labour market (Pedersen & Bergum, Chap. 2). After the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations are experiencing labour-market shortages (Ando et al., 2022). Hybrid working can be used in employer branding and recruitment practices, targeting people who do not need to be collocated to do their work and can offer their services around the globe (Russo & Manca, Chap. 11; Haave et al., Chap. 12). Although the outcomes of home working during the COVID-19 pandemic were shown to be ambiguous for employees and managers alike (Vartiainen, Chap. 14), many of them indicated they appreciated the simultaneously rewarding and challenging remote work style. To stretch and deepen the pool of potential workers, hybrid working could relax organizations' labour-market problems by offering hybrid onboarding and hybrid working (Van der Velden &

Leprez, Chap. 3; Russo & Manca, Chap. 11; Haave et al., Chap. 12; Ring, Chap. 5). Online (home) working allows commuting time to be reduced, which also enables (partly) disabled workers to enhance their participation.

Despite the reported ambiguous outcomes of remote working (Vartiainen, Chap. 14), it is expected that people's psychological contract has changed after the pandemic (Yde Aksnes et al., Chap. 4; De Ruiter & Schalk, Chap. 8). More than before, employees require hybrid working as part of their work agreement. In particular, hybrid working may fit the expectations of new generations who are tech-savvy and value job autonomy, flexibility, work-life balance, and corporate social responsibility. However, the younger generations are found to prefer to combine efficiency with coaching and close, meaningful, and respectful (online and offline) interactions with leaders and teammates with whom they want to develop personal bonds (cf. Winter & Jackson, 2014; De Ruiter & Schalk, Chap. 8; Haave et al., Chap. 12). Hence, variations in personal values, both within and across generations, need to be considered when designing hybrid working in organizations (Gratton, 2021).

Institutional Alignment

The new psychological contract in which hybrid working can be considered an obligation not only relates to employers' dependency on the workforce, but also reflects societal changes in what is deemed appropriate and legitimate. Therefore, the challenge for organization is to align its (HR) strategy with the institutional environment (Boselie, 2010; Pedersen & Bergum, Chap. 2). Generally, organizations must consider that people have busy lives and do not want to commute that much anymore, especially when the technological infrastructure is present and hybrid working can be offered, and work and commuting time must compete with people's parallel careers in the work and non-domains. The demand for hybrid working may be amplified by the enhanced costs of living and housing in urban areas close-by offices and the fear of infections with the COVID-19 virus. The latter may have caused people to look for (physical and mental) safety (De Ruiter & Schalk, Chap. 8; Suomi & Somerkoski,

Chap. 15) and to leave densely populated places, a phenomenon referred to as "urban sprawl" (Bil et al., 2021).

The new sense of entitlement regarding hybrid working and the proven value of remote working (Eurofound, 2020, 2021) may also have taken away the uncertainty that hindered the uptake of telework before the pandemic. In addition, because of mimetic pressures, organizations may be more inclined to adopt hybrid working, which may reduce people's intention to leave. Moreover, the experiences with remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic may have strengthened normative pressures from (HRM) managers who favour remote working but had to combat existing stigmas (Chung, 2020) and convince others who got cold feet when home working was discussed (Peters & Heusinkveld, 2010; Pedersen & Bergum, Chap. 2).

Other institutional pressures that may need to be considered are national policies and regulations, and the power of and position taken by employer representatives, trade unions, and works councils, who in the first phase of the pandemic collaborated to deal with the pandemic (Peters & Doyer, 2021; Pedersen & Bergum, Chap. 2). National and local governments may consider remote working a "window of opportunity," for example, to manage traffic congestion and deal with labour-market issues.

Organizational Alignment

Organizations may also need to align the internal organizational context, alternatively labelled the configuration of the organization (Boselie, 2010). This calls for HRM to align hybrid work model(s) with organizational systems, including workforce characteristics, technological systems, production systems, and the organizational culture. The chapters in this volume suggested that to allow participation in hybrid work contexts, people need access to knowledge and communication systems, for example, to socialize in the organization (Haave et al., Chap. 12; Ring, Chap. 5; Russo & Manca, Chap. 11) and to build trust (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6), and to be able to make both autonomous and joint decisions at a distance (Bergum & Haukåsen, Chap. 9). During the pandemic, organizations that already had a high level of digitalization in

their work processes, or that were able to digitalize their work processes overnight (Haave et al., Chap. 12), experienced an advantage. Also those who had other empowering HRM practices and leadership that fit hybrid working (e.g. autonomy and time-spatial flexibility) (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6; Coun et al., 2021; Edelbroek et al., Chap. 13) in place were advantaged, reflected in high-commitment, high-trust, high-involvement, or high-performance work systems (Peters et al., 2010; Løkke & Wunderlich, Chap. 7), as these provide people with the ability, motivation and opportunities to participate, develop, and perform (Løkke & Wunderlich, Chap. 7; Van Engen et al., Chap. 18).

Hybrid working also demands a close interaction to maintain or change the identity of the organization, if necessary (Aksnes et al., Chap. 4), and to build and maintain a culture or climate of trust in hybrid work contexts (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6). This can be referred to as transforming thin places into places that have characteristics of thick places (Ring, Chap. 5). In hybrid workplaces, collaboration and learning with others inside or outside the organization may need to be based *on swift trust* (Costa et al., 2018), for example, based on anticipated knowledge, skills, and professional behaviour (Tomè & Costas, Chap. 10). During collaboration, it is examined whether that trust is being damaged. In hybrid working, mutual trust can be nurtured by intensive offline or online communication systems (Ring, Chap. 5), as well as leadership, communication, and support (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6; Vartiainen, Chap. 14).

Because employees in hybrid work contexts have less frequent physical contact with the organization, managers and colleagues, social isolation can occur (Van Engen et al., Chap. 18), and a culture and group climate, in which everyone experiences sufficient control, can be less well established. The psychological climate, therefore, is primarily dependent on the quality of the workplace, at home and at the office (Suomi & Somerkoski, Chap. 15; De Ruiter & Schalk, Chap. 8), the nature of the work, the distractions during work and the support that people receive for carrying out and combining work and private life (Alvestad, Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6; Mellner, Chap. 19; Van Engen et al., Chap. 18). A shared climate is established in a socialization process of intensive social interaction, negotiation, and the internalization of shared perceptions

about the norms and values. Consequently, there must be room for negotiation, for example, about the degree of autonomy and flexibility that employees get, about the distribution of resources (such as knowledge, information, participation, development opportunities, time, money, cooperation, and support) (Edelbroek et al., Chap. 13), and about availability and the associated management of work-nonwork boundaries (Mellner, Chap. 19).

For a coherent and supporting HRM system and compliance with common goals, it is important that employees are included and experience participation and power (De Ruiter & Schalk, Chap. 8). Coming to shared norms and values, meanings and work routines, therefore, requires a continuous dialogue about hybrid working, in which employees with different experiences, interests, interests and values work together and learn together about how contradictory, multiple goals and values (such as economic performance and well-being) can be achieved (Nuis et al., 2021).

Internal Alignment

Another challenge for HRM is to configure (align) different HRM policies and bundles of practices *within* the HR system (Løkke & Wunderlich, Chap. 7) to achieve powerful connections (positive synergy) and, at the same time, to avoid deadly combinations (negative synergy) (Boselie, 2010). First of all, the way work tasks are organized determines the degree of interdependency between people, teams, departments, and organizations. Hence, interdependent units need to coordinate the work, which can enhance cognitive proximity, which is particularly needed in crisis situations when people and organizations must improvise (Bergum & Haukåsen, Chap. 9), and can be enabled by technology, such as video-conferencing and other digital services (Ring, Chap. 5). HRM needs to develop both attractive physical and virtual meeting places (Van der Velden & Lekanne Deprez, Chap. 3). In some cases, however, organizations and managers may use surveillance technology to mitigate control and the coordination risks of remote working, which raises critical questions (Ollier-Malaterre, Chap. 16). For example, does this benefit the

mutual trust that can be considered "the glue" in remote working (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6; Nilles, 1998; Ollier-Malaterre, Chap. 16).

Alternative practices to indirectly manage potential control and coordination risks (cf. Peters et al., 2016) are the selection and training of people as hybrid working demands new skills and capabilities (Tomè & Costas, Chap. 10). Moreover, new onboarding strategies should take into account that newcomers to hybrid workplaces need to be socialized differently, as they will experience many barriers due to working remotely, more specifically when it comes to what rules to comply with?, what tasks to do and how?, how are things done in this organization?, who can I turn to and do I need to know in order to learn and develop to do my work? (Russo et al., Chap. 11; Haave et al., Chap. 12). Also, at the central workplace, new health policies need to be implemented (Pagliari & Tursunbayeva, Chap. 17). In fact, when the socialization process is not properly managed, multiple risks, such as the information leaks, physical and mental health associated with remote working, will occur (Suomi & Somerkoski, Chap. 15). Leaders or mentors play an important role in the socialization process.

Implications of Hybrid Working for Leadership

While a laissez-faire *laissez-aller* management style may initially have led to good results in some cases, in the later phases of the pandemic, both employees and managers experienced ambiguous outcomes, such as fatigue and role ambiguity (Vartiainen, Chap. 14). That is, a laissez-faire leadership style can enhance people's proactive work-behaviour in response to the autonomy they may experience. However, people may also experience negative effects hereof, such as social isolation (Van Engen et al., Chap. 18). Too little interaction, feedback, and support from leaders and peers reduce work engagement, which hinders individuals and teams in their professional development in the longer run, and, hence, hinders in double loop learning (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6; Wong & Giessner, 2018).

Leadership training should, therefore, be focused on making leaders more tech-savvy, so that they can better use technologies to support the informal exchange of knowledge in their intentional and virtual communication (Ring, Chap. 5). Digital skills for leaders also strengthen cognitive trust (Alvestad & Bergum, Chap. 6). Besides psychological safety, there are other issues involved, such as information leaks, physical and mental health (well-being) (Suomi & Somerkoski, Chap. 15). Therefore, managers need to be trained to take their role in the socialization of newcomers (Russo et al., Chap. 11; Haave et al., Chap. 12), for example, pointing out safety regulations (De Ruiter & Schalk, Chap. 8; Pagliar & Tursunbayeva, Chap. 17; Suomi & Somerkoski, Chap. 15).

Even so, hybrid working does not imply falling back on traditional command-and-control leadership mechanisms (directive leadership). Instead, managers can enact empowering leadership, to complement the empowering HR practices (information, autonomy, and flexibility) discussed in the previous section. On the one hand, this allows people to focus on the essential tasks, and, on the other hand, this allows them to flourish, which stimulates innovative work-behaviour (Alvestad & Bergum, Chap. 6; Edelbroek et al., Chap. 13; Gratton, 2021). Managers must, therefore, be willing to transfer (part of their) decision-making power and responsibilities to employees. By contrast, people must receive support and coaching to (further) develop their self-leadership qualities and must be provided with the necessary resources (such as participation, knowledge and information, time, money, and support) to have the ability, motivation, and opportunity to carry out the work independently (Van Engen et al., Chap. 18). In this process, employees and their team members may take on joint leadership responsibilities *(shared leadership)* to support each other and coordinate tasks, which demands cognitive proximity (Bergum & Haukåsen, Chap. 9). In particular, the interaction with others allows them to perform not only prescribed tasks, but also unplanned and unstructured tasks proactively and with more confidence (Bergum & Haukåsen, Chap. 9; Edelbroek et al., Chap. 13; Van der Velden & Lekanne Deprez, Chap. 3). Empowering leadership can enhance people's experience of their work being meaningful, to have an impact, and to feel autonomous and competent (Spreitzer, 2008). This resonates with the basic idea of the *self-determination theory* of Deci and

Ryan (2000), suggesting that people need a certain degree of autonomy, relatedness (belongingness) and competence (De Ruiter & Schalk, Chap. 8), which benefits job satisfaction, health, and well-being.

Only when employees experience that they have more job autonomy and flexibility and maintain more affective relationships with their manager and colleagues, will they appear to experience more *work-related happiness (work-related flow)* (Peters et al., 2014). Due to the availability of digitized information, employees can also design their work more flexibly, and thus more efficiently, and align it with private obligations. However, work-related flow does not guarantee people experiencing a better work-family balance per se (Edelbroek et al., Chap. 13). As a result, leaders also need to be trained to support work-family balance and their own and others' boundary management in hybrid work-contexts, since work-nonwork boundaries are blurred (Mellner, Chap. 19) and people need support to better balance work and family life, and to feel engaged in their work (Van Engen et al., Chap. 18). Thus, leadership needs to be more authentic, and deliver customized attention in individual cases (cf. Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6; Mellner, Chap. 19; Vartiainen, Chap. 14). Furthermore, they need to be aware of the risk of intrusion of work into the private domain (Mellner, Chap. 19; Ollier-Malaterre, Chap. 17; Suomi & Somerkoski, Chap. 15) coming at the expense of people's well-being.

A Window of Opportunity for Sustainable HRM and Responsible and Inclusive Leadership

What does the "new normal" imply for HRM and leadership in organizations to be sustainable? The COVID-19 pandemic has offered a window of opportunity that can be seized to rethink and reset people's and organizations' values and behaviours, and, hence, outcomes. The implications for organizations, HRM, leadership, and people discussed above resonate with the emerging paradigm of Sustainable HRM, defined as: "the pattern of planned or emerging HR strategies and practices intended to enable the achievement of financial, social and ecological goals while

simultaneously reproducing the HR base over a long term" (Kramar, 2014, p. 1084). Human Sustainable HRM embraces a people-centred approach, which suggests that organizations need to be more inclusive and open to the needs of their stakeholders, including people, families, and communities (De Ruiter & Schalk, Chap. 8). Out of respect for all elements in the ecosystem (Van der Velden & Lakanne Deprez, Chap. 3), parties must take co-responsibility for both the positive and negative impact they can have on people, communities, and society (Aust et al., 2020), which has also been advised in the context of hybrid working (Contreras et al., 2020; Gratton, 2021). For this reason, the new cultural values of "respect," "openness" (situational awareness), and "continuity" of organizations and people's work, family, and community careers are key (De Prins et al., 2015). These values need to be reflected into a shared sense of purpose that communicates an organization's reason for being, which provides significance, aspiration, direction, unification, and motivation for all stakeholders, and can shape their work activities and relationships (Van Ingen et al., 2021).

Despite all this, stakeholders may not agree or may be uncertain about what sustainable outcomes entail, especially since hybrid work outcomes can be ambiguous (Vartiainen, Chap. 14; Gratton, 2022) and intended mutual gains may only partly be achieved (Edelbroek et al., Chap. 13). In any case, the discussion presented above makes clear that neither one HRM configuration, nor one leadership style can guarantee a permanent contextual fit with one way of hybrid working. Consequently, organizations, HRM, and people need to experiment with and toggle between different hybrid models. This means that all parties must enact paradoxical leadership behaviour, that is, enacting "seemingly competing, yet interrelated, behaviours to meet structural and follower demands simultaneously and over time" (Zhang et al., 2015, p. 538), to proactively cope at a cognitive, emotional, and behavioural level with the growing plurality and different logics (Ehnert, 2014) in hybrid organizations. Paradox can be defined as "contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time" (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 382). Sustainable hybrid working can, therefore, be regarded as a learning process (cf. Kramar, 2014), in which stakeholders need to feel psychologically safe to interact on an ongoing basis and (pro)actively find ways to

achieve desired outcomes and avoid undesired outcomes for all parties. This demands a stakeholder dialogue and humble inquiry. This, however, does not go without saying in organizational contexts in which power relations may be skewed (Nuis et al., 2021).

To make the economic and social success of new forms of hybrid working sustainable, the chapters in this book make clear that people and organizations can no longer ignore paradoxical tensions (values) related to trust and control, individualization and cohesion, autonomy and coordination, proximity and distance, efficiency and sustainability (e.g. safety, well-being and motivation). These paradoxes are briefly elaborated on below.

Trust and Control The chapters revealed tensions between trust and control, and may prompt a discussion on what is needed to manage the employment relationship in hybrid settings. Paradoxically, however, the degree of trust that can be provided, including swift trust, depends on the presence of both direct and indirect (hard and soft) controls (Hales, 1993; Peters et al., 2016). HRM and managers can exercise alternative forms of control via creating a shared culture and climate (meta control). A trust culture and empowering climate is considered the glue that enables remote working (Nilles, 1998). The internalized norms, values, attitudes and routines, as well as developed shared perceptions and meanings, signal what the organization expects of people (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6; Schneider et al., 1996; Yde Aksnes et al., Chap. 4). Additionally, trust and control can be enhanced by the selection and training of people so that they possess the proper hybrid working skills (ex ante control) (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6). Moreover, rewarding interactions (ex post control) can engage workers (Van Engen et al., Chap. 18). Organizing work activities, such that people must collaborate (peer control), can also enhance mutual trust and control, even when working in a geographically dispersed manner (Bergum & Haukåsen, Chap. 9). Yet, how trust and control are balanced, and the role of mediated forms of concurrent control (monitoring), might depend on the national context, including national culture and rules and regulations, which determines the degree of uncertainty avoidance when it comes to people's opportunistic behaviours and the degree of power dis-

tance accepted in that culture (Peters & Den Dulk, 2003; Peters et al., 2009). Strikingly, the chapter by Ollier-Malaterre (Chap. 16), reflecting the Anglo-Saxon culture in which power distances are larger and risk-taking lower, emphasized the dark side of the pole of control, whereas the Nordic countries emphasized the bright side of trust (Alvestad Skogseth & Bergum, Chap. 6). However, using digital monitoring software to compensate for the loss of direct management control can indeed have negative consequences for mutual trust and psychological contract; when people experience too much control, they do not feel empowered (Spreitzer, 2008). In a similar vein, the use of IT-mediated control to support decision-making, such as planning work and hiring employees, controlling and directing employees, and supporting and developing employees can infringe on people's privacy. Moreover, researchers also warn about higher work pressure, work reduction, reduced cooperation and job satisfaction and discrimination in HRM processes (Das et al., 2020).

Individualization and Cohesion   The chapters and figures (Eurofound, 2020, 2021) illustrate that people and organizations are willing to embrace hybrid working, for example, as these can offer better (although ambiguous) work and family outcomes. This supports the trend of customization or "individualization of HRM" (cf. Taskin & Devos, 2005) but also the plea for "collective flexibility" to open up the "collective right of workers to customize their work schedule, place, workload, boundaries, connectivity, and employment mode with their employer and other stakeholders to benefit employers, employees, and society" (Kossek & Kelliher, 2022, p. 2). Even so, at the same time, people and organizations fear social isolation and a lack of cohesion. This paradox in hybrid working needs to be managed via HRM policies, practices, and collective processes (such as dialogue) and paradoxical leadership, which demand a toggling between individual and collective needs. In this process, the challenge is to manage the risk of social exclusion (Taskin & Devos, 2005).

Autonomy and Coordination   Hybrid working is associated with enhanced boundary control, as it provides people room for organizing their work in line with personal preferences. Organizations, managers, and peers

may fear that people are not willing to come back to the office or are not even available for work online when this does not fit their personal preferences, thereby hampering work coordination. Conversely, enacting individual preferences may also be bounded by, or even overruled, by others' preferences and needs. The constant information access, autonomy and flexibility, and the enhanced (own and team) responsibilities, may force people to comply to demands from others, especially when this is internalized due to a time-greedy organizational or professional culture. The trend towards intensified availability norms and behaviours affecting people's boundary control has been referred to as the autonomy paradox (Ollier-Malaterre, Chap. 16) at the individual level and the boundary management paradox (Peters et al., 2017) at the team level, which can lead to excessive working hours. To help manage the paradox of autonomy and coordination, people need to develop skills and capacities to manage themselves, both in work and at home (Mellner, Chap. 19; Van Engen et al., Chap. 18). Detaching from work, may need to be formally or informally supported by HRM and leadership, and by an onboarding trajectory.

Proximity and Distance Are distance and technology enablers (Thompson, 2021) or barriers (Yang et al., 2022) of collaborations and innovation? Bergum and Haukåsen (Chap. 9) described how collaboration and innovation among distributed HR advisors increased when they moved from the office to their homes. This is different from the findings by Van der Velden and Lekanne Deprez (Chap. 3) who described that collaboration networks often became more siloed and local, with fewer bridges across distance and different organizational units. Gratton (2022) gives examples which support both sides, and argues that it is important to find the optimal balance between face-to-face communication (proximity, analogue) and remote work (distance, digital).

Efficiency, Sustainability, and Morality (Safety, Well-Being, and Motivation) The chapters showed that working from home was embraced by many people, also when the serious threat of the COVID-19 virus was relaxed, and even though remote working during the pandemic was accompanied by ambiguous and challenging outcomes. Remote working was considered both efficient and has the potential to boost engagement when managed in a way that empowered people, possibly steering up

productivity (Edelbroek et al., Chap. 17). At the same, the chapters stressed risks for data security, physical, and mental well-being. The use of technology to enhance efficiency and health requires a more (personalized) focus on human well-being by HRM and leaders (Haave et al., Chap. 12; Mellner, Chap. 19; Russo et al., Chap. 11; Tomè & Costa, Chap. 10; Van Engen et al., Chap. 18) and the ethical behaviour of managers and other stakeholders (Ollier-Malaterre, Chap. 16). Nonetheless, satisfying basic psychological needs may be harder through technology-mediated interactions. The job of HR, leadership, and peers, therefore, is to sense people's experiences and create moments for stimulating positive emotions, as these can sustain their psychological, intellectual, and social resources, thus enabling them to broaden and build the thought-action repertoires needed for personal learning and development, creativity, innovation, and, hence, competitiveness (Fredrickson, 2004). This implies that both efficiency and sustainability can be achieved by providing personal attention in hybrid work settings.

Limitations and Implications for Research and Management Practice

The insights gained from the chapters in this volume can inform both scholars and practitioners. The chapters challenged scholars and practitioners to consider trends and parties in wider ecosystems, and to equilibrate "ambidextrous" or paradoxical strategic challenges. In view of dynamic markets, institutional developments and pluriform stakeholders' values, conditions, and needs, paradoxical poles (Smith and Lewis, 2011) associated with sustainable hybrid working need to be actively reconciled on an ongoing basis, which can be viewed as a learning process.

The chapters in this book described the situation in various contexts pre, during, or post the COVID-19 pandemic from their own perspective, which was mostly a Western perspective. Still, professional literature and international comparisons of figures on the adoption of remote or hybrid working pre, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic showed that these vary widely across countries (Eurofound, 2020, 2021;

Mori, 2021). Despite early attention for the role of national contextual factors in Strategic HRM (Beer et al., 2015), the influence of national context factors on the adoption on sustainable hybrid working has not yet been systematically studied. Hence, more attention is called for examining in the role of national contexts in the adoption of sustainable hybrid working.

Moreover, the figures also showed that there is a wide variety in the adoption of remote and hybrid working across- and within organizations, and industries. The COVID-19 pandemic can be expected to have enhanced the existing inequalities between industries and organizations, for example, when it comes to autonomy, flexibility, work-life balance, mental, and physical health (Gratton, 2021, 2022). This can lead to tensions between groups, which is important to consider for both scholars and practitioners.

Third, remote working can help to balance work and family, as it allows people to synchronize roles. Even so, work-family obligations were also found to be heightened, especially for mothers, affecting their work-family balance (Power, 2020, Shockley et al., 2021; Yerkes et al., 2020). Therefore, the gendered effects of hybrid working also remain an interesting angle for scholars and practitioners alike.

Conclusion

After the pandemic, remote working can be expected to be a structural part of work for many. A balance will have to be sought between working online and offline, depending on how a balance can be found between trust and control, individualization and cohesion, autonomy and coordination, proximity and distance, and efficiency and sustainability (safety, well-being, and motivation). To do so, the office will increasingly have the function of a meeting space for stimulating collaboration and innovation. An inclusive HRM policy and leadership should focus on motivating, keeping both permanent and flexible employees healthy, happy, and employable over the life course (De Vos et al., 2020), to enhance the resilience of people and organizations in both the short and long term.

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