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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly changed how many organizations operate, leading to the widespread adoption of a hybrid workplace model. This study seeks to examine the key factors that contribute to employee satisfaction in a hybrid work arrangement, wherein employees are expected to work from the office for three days a week and have the flexibility to work remotely for two days. Additionally, the study explores whether this arrangement influences employees to prefer working from home over working from the company office, which may impact employers' decision to offer such an arrangement.

The study was conducted through a qualitative approach, involving interviews with eight participants from a selected organization that offers this type of hybrid work arrangement, choosing participants with various years of work experience. Our findings highlight several key factors that influence employee satisfaction with the hybrid work model, including the flexibility to balance work and personal life, the ability to shape one's work, effective communication and collaboration, and the opportunity to maintain social connections at work. The findings are discussed in relation to existing literature on the hybrid work model, job crafting, self-determination theory, social connections, and belongingness.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insight into the factors contributing to employee satisfaction in a hybrid work arrangement. The study's findings enhance our understanding of the implications of hybrid work for employees and offer practical implications for organizations seeking to implement such models.

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1.0 Introduction

The last few decades have seen a significant shift in the ways organizations operate due to digitalization, including new ways of working. In response to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, many organizations were compelled to rapidly change their ways of working in order to maintain business as usual, including implementing home office for their employees (Lund et al, 2021). As the pandemic recedes, a new normal seems to have emerged, with organizations increasingly offering their employees a flexible blend of remote and office-based work, commonly referred to as the hybrid workplace or hybrid office (Rishi et al., 2021). Employees seem to appreciate some of the attributes of the home office and the new way of working. A recent study of 4371 companies found that the majority of Norwegian employees see more advantages than disadvantages to remote work, with over two-thirds indicating a desire to work from home for two to three days per week. However, more than half of the respondents believe that it is important to physically see coworkers at the office each day (Brugrand, 2022).

Oldham & Fried (2016) emphasize that most previous research on work design focuses on individuals or teams performing their jobs in stand-alone organizations. However, with the emergence of new work arrangements such as remote work and collaboration across different organizations, there is a fundamental shift in the nature of employees' jobs. This shift necessitates research that investigates the effects of these changes (p. 30). According to Kropp & McRae (2022), hybrid and remote working are one of the main trends that will shape the workplace in the future. In today's workforce, flexibility in terms of how, where, and when employees work is just as crucial as salary. Failure to offer such flexibility may result in higher turnover rates as employees seek organizations with more adaptable work arrangements. However, working remotely may create weaker social and emotional connections among coworkers, leading to higher staff turnover (Kropp & McRae, 2022).

Allowing employees the opportunity to choose their work location can create apprehension among employers who worry that their workforce may prefer remote work. Furthermore, there is concern that the flexibility of remote work might be abused, with individuals engaging in non-work activities during business

hours (Midelfart & Midelfart, 2023). The challenges associated with hybrid and remote work suggest that while many employers are embracing a future with hybrid models, some may ultimately reverse course and insist on full-time office attendance (Kropp & McRae, 2022). A recent example is JPMorgan, America's largest bank, which announced that all senior bankers now are required back to the office full-time, reflecting a broader trend among companies towards a pre-pandemic office regimen (Morrow, 2023).

In summary, it appears that modern workers are seeking job flexibility, valuing autonomy, and the ability to have a say in shaping their workday. Overall, employees seem indeed satisfied with having a hybrid work arrangement. Nevertheless, hybrid work carries possible negative outcomes that might create fear among employers of ending up with employees who only are motivated to work from the home office, as well as potential misuse of flexibility. Therefore, this master thesis aims to investigate what factors that contribute to the high value employees place on the hybrid work life. More precisely, in an arrangement where employees are required to work from the office three days a week and have the option to work from home for two days. Furthermore, this study aims to determine to what extent the hybrid work arrangement leads to employees preferring to work from home over working from the company office. For this reason, the research question for this study is:

What are the Key Factors Influencing Employee Satisfaction in a Hybrid Work Arrangement?

Our aim is to gain a deeper understanding of individuals' reflections and insight on the subject, and we found that a qualitative research design that emphasizes words over numbers would be most beneficial to attain this. Qualitative research may also provide a new perspective that can add to the existing literature. Therefore, for the purpose of this master's thesis, we conducted a study within a specific organization referred to as Company X. We selected Company X as our research setting because we wanted to investigate a hybrid work arrangement that permits its employees to work remotely for two days a week while requiring them to work from the office for three days. The flexibility of this arrangement allows employees to choose the specific days they prefer to work from home, as long as

they spend a minimum of three days at the office. Company X is a large international manufacturing company with global offices and multiple locations in Norway. The nature of their operations primarily revolves around project-based work, where collaboration with coworkers and customers across geographical borders is necessary.

We wanted to conduct a study focused on the hybrid work arrangement, recognizing its high relevance in shaping the future of office-based work. Our primary objective was to uncover the aspects of hybrid work that individuals value the most. Before starting the study, we held certain assumptions that employees highly appreciate the increased flexibility in balancing work and personal life that comes with this arrangement. We also expected to find out that social interactions with coworkers are highly valued but challenging to maintain when working largely remotely. Furthermore, we were intrigued to explore whether they were content with the current arrangement or if they desired even greater flexibility, such as the option to work remotely for the entirety of certain weeks. Additionally, we sought to examine the impact of the work arrangement on social connections within the workplace. Consequently, this thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of why today's workforce desires hybrid work and how it can foster productivity and motivation among employees.

2.0 Literature Review

To address the research question and gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic, the forthcoming paragraphs will present relevant literature. There is a growing number of studies on hybrid work and its impact on employees, and this section will begin by providing general information on the topic. Our objective is to also explore additional factors that contribute to employee satisfaction in a hybrid work context. Given the enhanced flexibility offered by hybrid work, theory about job crafting will be presented. Additionally, the self-determination theory will be presented to understand human motivation. Lastly, theory about the importance of social connections and belongingness will be presented, as we believe this is an important factor of work. Furthermore, by integrating insights from interviews and utilizing the literature framework, we aim to identify the key factors that influence employee satisfaction in a hybrid work arrangement.

2.1 The Hybrid Workplace Model

The hybrid workplace model enables work to take place in various physical and digital environments, providing employees with flexibility in where and how they work (Rishi et al., 2021, p. 41). The concept can be defined as “the flexibility for employees to work in the office, work from home, work from anywhere, or a combination of all three” (Rishi et al., 2021, p. 44). The notion of hybrid work organizations has been prevalent for some time, particularly with the rise of advanced remote communication technologies over the last decade, enabling employees to perform their work outside the confines of traditional office spaces (Rishi et al., 2021, p. 45). However, before the Covid-19 pandemic, hybrid work was predominantly referred to in the context of teams working with virtual members, people in part-time jobs, or people in self-deployment (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2022). Nevertheless, it was not until the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic that office organizations were forced to expeditiously adapt to new working arrangements, due to necessary isolation measures. This sudden change meant that employees who were used to working exclusively from the office had to adapt to working remotely from their homes (Wang et al., 2021).

Studies done on employees during Covid-19 show that there are variations in the ways individuals perceive working from home compared to working from the office. When it comes to informal meetings conducted solely through audio or video, people tend to experience greater satisfaction while working from their home office. Additionally, individuals are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction when working from home if they have a high degree of flexibility and a home environment that supports remote work. However, in the case of formal or scheduled meetings, collaborative meetings involving multiple colleagues, receiving or providing training to others, and engaging in social interactions, working from the office is generally considered preferable (Yang et al., 2023).

Despite the perceived benefits of working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic, Waizenegger et al. (2020) emphasize that being obligated to work from home limits the environmental affordances of one's home environment. When employees are confined to the home environment throughout the day, their well-being can be adversely affected by reduced social interactions and physical activities. Moreover, being forced to work from home because of the pandemic

created challenges because many workers had to share their work-home environment with other members of their household (p. 437). Additionally, studies have indicated a decline in overall work productivity during the pandemic (Yang et al., 2023).

Organizations are now compelled to determine whether to revert to traditional in-office work arrangements or continue offering employees the flexibility of working remotely for some or all days in the post-pandemic world. As a result of the pandemic, there is a growing trend among employees to seek greater flexibility in their work arrangements, including the opportunity to work remotely. This desire has led many workers to express a preference for working from home for at least some part of their workweek. Whereas this type of request was once viewed as a luxury afforded only to a select few, it has now emerged as a valid and practical option in the wake of Covid-19 (Rishi et al., 2021).

Based on the findings from JLL Research's Workforce Barometer in March 2021, a significant majority of workers expressed a strong desire to work for an organization that fosters human connection. As socialization and community-building are innate human needs, this preference is not unexpected (Rishi et al., 2021, p. 43). Thus, it is not surprising that 79% of employees reported they still want to be able to come into the office despite wanting some days to work remotely (Rishi et. al., 2021, p. 42).

The implementation of flexible work arrangements and hybrid work has been associated with positive organizational outcomes, such as a reduction in absenteeism and tardiness among employees (Halpern, 2005, referred to in Shifrin & Michel, 2022, p. 61). Additionally, employees can reap numerous benefits from such arrangements, especially when they feel they possess sufficient resources and control over those resources to meet work demands (Grawitch et al., 2010, referred to in Shifrin & Michel, 2022, p. 61). It can be assumed that employees experience more autonomy when working from home, and that the reduced contact with managers in a remote working arrangement might reduce the amount of monitoring and control at work (Oldham & Fried, 2016, p. 30-31). Moreover, working remotely reduces commuting time and therefore enhances time resources, allowing employees to devote more time to other aspects of their lives (Hill et al.,

2010). However, negative outcomes can also occur, particularly when employees perceive resources as scarce or have limited control over them (Grawitch et al., 2010, referred to in Shifrin & Michel, 2022, p. 61).

While multiple studies have shown that flexibility in the workplace can benefit employees in both their personal and professional domains, there is uncertainty about whether it is the flexibility itself or the perceived ability of being able to choose that produces this effect. Jones et al. (2008), referred to in Hill et al. (2010) found that employees' perception of the flexibility being available when needed is sufficient, and that it is not necessarily utilizing the flexibility that leads to positive outcomes. Accordingly, for workers to have autonomy and the opportunity to choose where and when to work can yield positive results in itself.

The emerging use of hybrid working sets requirements for organizations' system for information and communication technology (ICT). Digitalization and the rise of ICTs have created new ways for organizations to create value. Technological advancements now enable employees to interact with each other effectively, without the constraints of time and physical presence (Vuori et al., 2019). ICT tools such as video conferencing software, messaging apps, and project management software have played a critical role in enabling hybrid work. These tools allow teams to collaborate in real time, share files, and communicate regardless of their physical location. Overall, the use of ICT has significantly impacted the way people work remotely, making it easier for businesses to adapt to changing circumstances and ensuring that work can continue regardless of physical location (Vuori et al., 2019).

While ICT has undoubtedly transformed remote working, relying excessively on these tools can lead to communication problems. Research suggests that communication through ICT may be perceived as less effective and may result in lower productivity compared to face-to-face communication (Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, employees with limited digital skills may find it more difficult to maintain social connections and collaborate effectively in a hybrid work environment (Martin et al., 2022).

2.2 Job Crafting

The implementation of a hybrid work arrangement is likely to enhance flexibility within individuals' work weeks. Consequently, we find it essential to look into how employees shape their work through job crafting. Job crafting can be defined as “a specific form of proactive behavior in which the employee initiates changes in the level of job demands and job resources in order to make his or her own job more meaningful, engaging, and satisfying” (Demerouti, 2014, p. 237). Job crafting can exist alongside top-down approaches by the organization, occurring when employees voluntarily take action in order to improve their jobs (Demerouti, 2014). Despite the presence of explicit job descriptions and procedural guidelines, individuals retain the flexibility to modify their tasks and mobilize necessary resources to accomplish their job proficiently (Petrou et al. 2012, referred to in Demerouti, 2014, p. 237). According to this perspective, jobs are continuously evolving on a day-to-day basis, which distinguishes it from job designs that are typically more fixed or permanent (Demerouti, 2014).

One of the main motives for implementing a hybrid work model includes improving the balance between employees' work and personal life, as well as also improving organizational productiveness and performance (Lazauskaite-Zabielske et al., 2020). However, achieving these goals requires that employees engage in job crafting. Job crafting encompasses various behaviors related to seeking resources, including actively seeking feedback and social support. It may also involve seeking out challenges, such as searching for new and difficult work tasks or maintaining a high level of activity throughout the workday. Additionally, individuals may engage in job crafting by minimizing the demanding aspects of their work or ensuring that it does not interfere with their personal life (Demerouti, 2014, p. 239).

Individuals engage in job crafting for various reasons. One reason why individuals may feel the need to control certain aspects of their work is to prevent negative consequences, such as feeling detached from their work. Another reason is to express and confirm a more positive sense of self to others. Individuals also engage in job crafting to deepen their sense of meaning and identity in their work, while also allowing them to fulfill the need for connecting with others (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, referred to in Demerouti, 2014, p. 240). Lastly,

an essential reason is for employees to create working conditions that work for them and in which they can feel motivated (Demerouti, 2014, p. 240). For instance, working remotely from home can be a way for certain employees to work more motivated.

Most of the research on job crafting does not consider the element of time and location. As a result, a term called time-spatial job crafting has emerged, referring to the extent employees adapt both the location of work and their working hours to the tasks needed to be done and demands in private life, in a way that is best fitted for them (Wessels et al., 2019). Hence, time-spatial job crafting can be explained as “the context in which knowledge work employees have the ability to decide when, where, and for how long to work on a daily basis” (Hill et al., 2008, referred to in Wessels et al., 2019). Providing employees with the flexibility to choose their work location based on their work tasks and personal life can possibly increase their level of engagement and dedication towards work. This can lead to a boost in their productivity and energy levels as they invest their skills and abilities more fully (Wessels et al., 2019). Further, choosing work location can be a form of a problem-focused coping strategy for employees, including weighing the different alternatives and the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative (Shao et al., 2021).

Time-spatial job crafting includes three different components: reflection, selection, and adaptation (Wessels et al., 2019, p. 5). In this context, reflection refers to the process by which individuals consider their work tasks, personal demands, and available work locations on any given workday. When thinking about the different alternatives, similar experiences from the past may also be used to make the choice. The next step is selection, which is the part where the actual decision is made on when and where to work on the certain day and is based on a consideration of different alternatives (Wessels et al., 2019, p. 5). Reflection and selection can be relatively easy steps on predictable days, such as having to pick up a child from kindergarten or school. However, in the realm of daily work life, unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances may arise that impede upon an individual's ability to perform tasks in their desired location, necessitating the skill of adaptation. Individuals can experience obstacles preventing them from performing their work on their desired location (Wessels et

al., 2019). For instance, in an open office space, an individual may encounter difficulties securing their preferred work location due to limited availability or high demand for particular spaces, such as meeting rooms. Or an individual may opt to work from the office to socialize with a coworker they have not seen in some time, even if they recognize that they typically work more effectively in a quiet, solitary environment. In such instances, the individual must adapt their approach and shift to tasks that do not require a high degree of deep concentration in order to make the most of their time and remain productive (Wessels et al., 2019).

While having a hybrid work approach allowing employees to work from home several days of a week would be considered a top-down approach, it also requires individuals to be proactive in how to best utilize this arrangement. Employees working in a hybrid workplace are confronted on a day-to-day basis with questions such as whether to work from home, from the office, where in the office, and when to start. To achieve employee well-being, work-life balance, and simultaneously perform their work tasks well, individuals are then compelled to reflect on what is most beneficial to them and then make informed choices to optimize the hybrid workplace (Wessels et al., 2019).

For organizations to offer time-spatial flexibility to their employees is often regarded as a central policy for individuals to effectively manage both work and life demands (Wessels et al., 2019). Work-life balance refers to an employee's division of work and leisure activities and can be defined as "the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities" (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p. 326). Research conducted on the area of flexible work arrangements reports both positive and negative effects on employee well-being, work-life balance, and organizational performance (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Consequently, the impact of flexible work arrangements is not inherently good or bad, but the way in which employees use the arrangement that determines its impact. By engaging in time-spatial job crafting, employees can tailor their use of flexible work arrangements to their individual needs and preferences, potentially increasing their overall benefits (Wessels et al., 2019).

2.3 Self-Determination Theory

To gain insights into the appeal of a hybrid work arrangement for employees, it is crucial to explore their underlying motivations. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory of human motivation, suggesting that fostering workplace conditions where employees experience autonomy is important in itself, and can lead to advantageous results, such as increased employee satisfaction and benefits for organizational effectiveness (Deci et al., 2017, p. 20). Deci & Ryan (2014) states that human beings have three evolved basic psychological needs: the need for competence, the need for autonomy, and the need for relatedness. This is the fundament of self-determination theory (p. 13-14).

Autonomy is defined as “the self-endorsement of one’s actions, or the extent to which one feels a sense of choice concerning one’s behaviors” (Ryan & Deci, 2008, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 251). Competence involves “a sense of efficacy in dealing with the environment and making effective use of surrounding resources” (Bandura, 1977; Ryff, 1989, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 252). Relatedness refers to “feeling connected to others and having a sense of belongingness” (Bowlby, 1979, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 252). When these three basic psychological needs are satisfied people evidence more volitional, high-quality motivation. Conversely, when these needs are hindered people display various forms of diminished motivation and more symptoms of ill-being.

Research in the field of SDT suggests that workplaces that prioritize employees’ basic psychological needs can foster autonomous motivation, enhance psychological and physical well-being, and improve performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000, referred to in Deci et al., 2017, p. 23). In other words, workplaces that hinder their employees’ feeling of satisfaction with those psychological needs will mostly likely experience negative outcomes. For example, if a workplace is using a hybrid work model that allows the employees to decide for themselves where some of the work is to be carried out, it can be assumed that the employees' need for autonomy is fulfilled. If the employer suddenly decides to end the hybrid work arrangement and requires that the employees must work from the office each day, this will probably create a feeling of dissatisfaction with the need to be autonomous, which can lead to low motivation and ill-being.

According to SDT, it is important to differentiate types of motivation, especially autonomous and controlled motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2014, p. 27). Autonomous motivation is “characterized by people being engaged in an activity with a full sense of willingness, volition, and choice” (Deci et al., 2017, p. 20), and it is often an intrinsic type of motivation, but under the right circumstances, it can also be an extrinsic type. The former type is the motivation that lies in the behavior itself, whilst the latter type is the motivation that comes from doing an activity to attain a separable consequence. Controlled motivation often has an extrinsic focus where results can narrow the range of employees’ efforts (Deci et al., 2017, p. 21). To summarize, when people’s basic psychological needs are satisfied, they are more autonomously motivated to work. When their basic psychological needs are thwarted, they feel controlled and less motivated to work (Deci & Ryan, 2014, p. 28).

Deci et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of autonomy in work contexts. For example, supervisors who are high in autonomy support entail more autonomously motivated employees with stronger intentions not to leave their jobs, fewer hassles during the day, fewer physical symptoms, more work satisfaction, and better psychological health. In contrast, when employees feel coerced and controlled by their supervisors, they have lower levels of autonomous motivation and more symptoms of burnout (Otis & Pelletier, 2005; Fernet et al., 2012; Moreau & Mageau, 2012, referred to in Deci et al., 2017, p. 26). As stated earlier, in a hybrid work arrangement job crafting is central, and Spreitzer & Porath (2014) emphasizes the importance of job crafting in the development of autonomous motivation, because job crafting offers strategies that individuals can use to enhance their autonomous motivation (p. 255).

Spreitzer & Porath (2014) emphasize how thriving may be nurtured from autonomous motivation (p. 245). There are several ways to define thriving since the term can be used in different types of contexts. In a work setting, thriving can be defined as “a feeling of vitality at work, and a sense that one is learning or getting better at work” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 246), and Robitschek (1998) summarizes thriving as “active, intentional engagement in the process of personal growth” (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 246). Hence, vitality and learning are the makers of thriving. Vitality “indicates the

sense that one is energized and has a zest for life” (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Nix et al., 1999, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 246-247), and learning “signifies acquisition and application of knowledge and skills to build capability” (Edmondson, 1999, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 247).

The reason why thriving is important in a work context is because it can serve as a gauge for employees to sense their own growth and development. An employee can use internally generated cues, such as how they are feeling, to assess their forward progress or growth. Internal cues can serve as potential gauges for self-regulation, and paying attention to how one feels is important for self-regulation of for example burnout or personal progress in a work setting (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 248-249). The levels of both vitality and learning should be high to get the most positive outcomes. Thriving individuals perform better, help others, and tend to be healthier and less burned out (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 250).

SDT can provide valuable insights into how to create thriving employees. The three components of autonomous motivation (autonomy, competence and relatedness) have been found to be important for thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 251), and several studies confirm that autonomy, competence, and relatedness increase the feeling of vitality (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 251). To illustrate, it is found that the feeling of vitality is higher on the weekends when people have more opportunities for autonomy and relatedness activities (Ryan et al., 2010, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 251).

2.4 The Importance of Belongingness and Social Connections

Although flexible work arrangements as mentioned can bring several benefits for both employee and organization, Rishi et al. (2021) emphasize the continued importance of the office in fostering human connections. Human connections are an important aspect of the workplace, and most employees view the office as a place for social interactions (p. 161-162). As previously mentioned, the feeling of relatedness is important for employees’ motivation. Research has shown that social connectedness within an organization can lead to increased enthusiasm and motivation among employees (Gerbasi et al., 2011, referred to in Spreitzer &

Porath, 2014, p. 252). For this reason, cultivating social relationships in the office can be seen as an important aspect to consider in a hybrid work arrangement.

2.4.1 Social Connection

Human connection is an essential part of our existence. Holt-Lunstad (2018) states that being socially connected has “a significant impact on our health, well-being, and even our risk for premature mortality” (p. 1310). The term Social connection can be seen as an umbrella term that “refers to the ways in which one can connect to others physically, behaviourally, cognitively, and emotionally” (Holt-Lunstad, 2018, p. 1308). Considering that many adults spend a significant portion of their waking hours at work, fostering social connections in the workplace is crucial.

In addition to “feeling good”, fostering social connections may increase productivity at work, and social disconnection can have significant health and economic costs. There are various factors that can contribute to creating social connections among employees in the workplace. For example, employers can provide employees opportunities for socialization (called structured support), such as open space offices or social hour gatherings. However, structural support does not necessarily reduce perceptions of loneliness, and not all social interactions are positive. Therefore, employers should create strategies that foster high-quality interactions, such as having a focus on increasing trust and promoting a feeling that everyone is valued and respected (Holt-Lunstad, 2018, p. 1309).

Understanding the nature of social connections in the workplace is crucial for comprehending how employees thrive in their work environment. High-quality connections are a term used to explain positive, short-term interactions in the workplace leading to favorable outcomes for both employees and the organization (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Remarkably, even a brief five-minute conversation with a coworker can foster high-quality connections, given that both parties actively participate (Hallowell 1999, referred to in Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Furthermore, high-quality connections can contribute to individuals’ perception of a positive meaning in the work they do. By engaging in high-quality connections, employees can create a shared sense of purpose and identity, and they can experience meaningful connections that help them feel valued and appreciated at work (Dutton & Heaphy 2003).

Furthermore, it is important that employers implement policies that let people foster meaningful relationships outside of work to be able to foster a healthy work-life balance. Although workplace relationships are valuable, they may not fully meet all our social needs. Thus, employers must recognize the importance of relationships beyond the workplace. Flexible work hours, for instance, can be a factor in strengthening social connections outside of work (Holt-Lunstad, 2018, p. 1309 – 1310).

2.4.2 Belongingness

The desire to belong is an innate need rooted in human beings, which includes the motivation to develop and maintain relationships with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Baumeister and Leary introduced the belongingness hypothesis, which posits that "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). To achieve this, two prerequisites must be met. Firstly, there is a requirement for regular engagement with others. Secondly, the interactions must occur within a reliable and lasting environment, where there is genuine care and consideration for each other's welfare. This fundamental interpersonal motive causes a significant portion of people's behavior, thoughts, and emotions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Because humans spend a majority of their hours being awake during their life working, belongingness in the workplace is crucial in maintaining employees' well-being. If employees perceive factors such as relations with coworkers, interpersonal work behavior, and supervisor support to be unfulfilled, they are likely to experience low workplace belongingness, which can result in detrimental outcomes such as job dissatisfaction and turnover (DeWall et al., 2008, referred to in Raza et al., 2020, p. 429). Research provides ample evidence that humans naturally form social bonds with others. The only prerequisite is frequent contact with others as a prerequisite, without the need for many other factors (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In today's job market where job loyalty is increasingly scarce, fostering a sense of belongingness among the workforce can be an effective way for organizations to retain talented employees (Jena & Pradhan, 2018).

Thus, a sense of belongingness in the workplace appears to be an important component of job satisfaction. Studies have shown that appreciative leadership is positively related to workplace belongingness (Raza et al., 2020). According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), developing a sense of value and appreciation can also contribute to fostering a stronger commitment. Additionally, employees may strategically cultivate their interpersonal relationships in order to acquire necessary information to perform their jobs effectively. Research suggests that engaging in job crafting can increase affective commitment, and ultimately enhance workplace belongingness (Raza et al., 2020).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Strategy and Design

A qualitative research strategy is used for this thesis. Qualitative research is “a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data” (Bell et al., 2022, p. 361). A qualitative research strategy has a focus on an individual’s perception and meaning, and the importance of studying the complexity of a particular situation. In this process, data is normally analyzed by collecting information from participants in their environments, and themes are inductively constructed from characteristics. Interpretations of the collected data are then made by the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). An inductive approach can be explained as “the relationship between theory and research in which the former is generated out of the latter” (Bell et al., 2022, p. 590).

There are different research designs that can be used to collect and analyze data. For this thesis, there is used a case study design. A case study is a “research design that entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case” (Bell et al., 2022, p. 587). In a case study the focus is on “a bounded situation or system, an entity with a purpose and functioning parts” (Bell et al., 2022, p. 64). In our case, the focus is on studying the implementation of a hybrid work model and its impact on employees within an organization.

The case study method proves to be valuable when the objective of the research is to investigate explanatory questions that delve into the "how" or "why" behind a

particular occurrence (Halkias et al., 2022, p. 16). Moreover, it serves as an effective approach for researchers seeking to attain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Halkias et al., 2022, p. 17). In light of our thesis, which aims to explore the impact of a hybrid work model on employee satisfaction, we have determined that the case study design is well-suited to address our research question.

3.2 Data Collection

To collect relevant data semi-structured interviews have been conducted. When doing qualitative interviewing the focus is mostly on the interviewee's point of view and there is an emphasis on greater generality in the formulation of questions. Semi-structured interviews are a flexible type of interview, and interviewers can depart significantly from a schedule or guide, and usually, there are asked follow-up questions based on the interviewee's answers (Bell et al., 2022, p. 427). However, an interview guide containing a list of questions on the specific topics we wanted to cover was prepared in advance, making the interview semi-structured rather than unstructured. The interview guide was organized into four main parts, aligning with the selected theory for our study. These parts included an introduction, questions regarding the participants' use and thoughts of the hybrid work arrangement, questions regarding how the arrangement affects their everyday life at work, and questions about the importance of social relations in the work life.

3.2.1 Sample

For this thesis, we conducted a study within a selected organization, hereby referred to as Company X. Company X is a large international manufacturing company with offices across the world and several different places in Norway. The nature of their operations primarily revolves around project-based work, where collaboration with coworkers and customers across geographical borders is necessary. The company follows a hybrid working model that permits its employees to work remotely for two days a week while requiring them to work from the office for three days. It is optional which days they want to spend in the home office and vice versa, as long as at least three days are at the office.

We conducted our research with a sample size of eight employees working as engineers at Company X's office in Oslo. Our aim was to obtain insights into what

different employees appreciate about their current hybrid work arrangement. To achieve this objective, we interviewed two distinct groups: employees who were relatively newly graduated and had little (maximum six months) or no work experience prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and employees further in their career with longer work experience. We distinguished between employees in these two groups because we believed that their experiences and perspectives on the topic may differ based on their prior work arrangements. An employee who has worked for several years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic has most likely experienced a different kind of work environment where working exclusively from the office each day was more common, and working from home was less used or not allowed at all. On the other hand, an employee with little or no work experience prior to the pandemic may not have any experience working solely from the office and a hybrid work arrangement is their view of what is normal. Therefore, grouping employees based on their prior work experience allows us to gain valuable insights into their perceptions of hybrid work.

3.2.2 Conduction of the Interviews

Most of the interviews were carried out physically at Company X's office location in Oslo. However, two interviews were conducted digitally through video calls on Microsoft Teams due to the interviewees working remotely. By using semi-structured interviews and asking open-ended questions we allowed the participants flexibility to get a good insight into their experiences. We also ended each interview by asking questions to make sure we understood the participants accurately and allowed them to fill in any additional information. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian and the length of the interviews varied from 30 to 45 minutes. Each interview was transcribed verbatim shortly after the conduction of the interview. Quotations taken out from the transcriptions have been translated to English. Following the transcription process, we summarized the data and underlined common patterns among participants. Our coding process enabled us to discern the main trends present within the data.

3.3 Assessment of Data

3.3.1 Validity

Validity and reliability should be taken into consideration when assessing the data we collect, as these factors are important in establishing the quality of the research (Bell et al., 2022, p. 368).

When it comes to validity, we must consider both internal and external validity. In terms of internal validity, it is the degree to which the researcher's observations match their theoretical ideas. Internal validity tends to be a strength with qualitative methods (Bell et al., 2022, p. 369). External validity refers to the generalizability of the findings, if they are applicable across social settings. Due to the research being conducted on a specific case in a case study, the results cannot be generalized to other contexts. This poses a possible challenge in conducting case studies (Bell et al., 2022, p. 369). Because our research is done on a small sample of individuals expressing their own experiences with having a hybrid workplace model, our results are not transferable to other contexts. Instead, the goal is to focus on understanding the complexity of the case (Bell et al., 2022, p. 66).

3.3.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to “the degree to which a measure of a concept is stable and consistent” (Bell et al., 2022, p. 593). Some researchers argue ways to assess reliability that is different than in quantitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that striving for dependability is beneficial for qualitative researchers (Bell et al., 2022, p. 50). Dependability involves ensuring complete records throughout the whole process (Bell et al., 2022, p. 370). The fact that we needed to translate the interview transcripts from Norwegian to English, might reduce the research dependability as it can lead to misinterpretations. In order to reduce the risk of potential errors and misinterpretations and build dependability, we were both present during interviews and transcription.

3.3.3 Ethical Consideration

Ethical questions are important to consider, regarding protecting the research participants, as well as the credibility of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 88). We did not report our study to the Norwegian Centre of Research Data

(NSD) as the research would not include any personal data from the participants. For this reason, we were particularly careful not to access any sensitive personal data, and all participant information used in the thesis is anonymized. Participation in interviews was voluntary for all participants. Further, all participants received an information letter beforehand (see Appendix 2). They were informed about the study's purpose and how the data would be collected and used before starting the interviews, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time. All participant information has been handled confidentially, and participants' anonymity is maintained. In order to preserve participant anonymity, the participants will throughout the thesis be identified as Participant 1 (P1) – Participant 8 (P8), with P1 - P4 being the ones with limited work experience, and P5 - P8 being the more experienced employees.

4.0 Findings

In this chapter, we will present and analyze our empirical findings. The aim of this thesis is to investigate what factors that contribute to the high value employees place on the hybrid work life, more precisely the arrangement where it is required to work from the office three days a week and getting the option to work from home for two days.

From the interviews, it was confirmed that all the participants from both groups expressed a positive reaction to having a hybrid working arrangement. They all use the arrangement to some degree, some of them are utilizing it fully by working from the home office two days each week, and some of them only partially by only occasionally working from home. We wanted to investigate how two different groups of employees experienced the hybrid work arrangement to identify if there were differences in their answers. We had assumptions that their experiences and perspectives on the topic may differ based on their prior experience with remote working, due to the fact that employees with little or no work experience prior to the Covid-19 pandemic most likely have exclusively worked under this type of arrangement. Nevertheless, we found limited differences in their answers, therefore the findings from both groups will be presented in parallel. A summary of our findings is presented in the table below.

A Summary of our Findings	
Finding 1	<p>Hybrid work gives flexibility to balance work and private life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Saves commuting time, making it easier to combine work with other commitments → Enables them to work when you or your child is sick
Finding 2	<p>Hybrid work gives flexibility to shape one’s own work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Having a hybrid work arrangement is expected by employees → Similar preferences for certain tasks preferred to do from home and from the office
Finding 3	<p>Hybrid work foster effective communication and collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Collaboration across offices and countries → Microsoft Teams makes communication and collaboration easy and effective
Finding 4	<p>Hybrid work still allows the employees cultivate social connections at work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Social connections at work are highly valued, which leads to a preference for working from the office → A positive work environment is fostered by supportive and helpful coworkers → Brief conversations with coworkers during day are appreciated

In the following chapters, we will provide a more detailed examination of each of the different findings.

4.1 The Flexibility to Balance Work and Private Life

During the interviews, we focused on investigating how the participants found the hybrid work arrangement to affect both their work and their private life. The participants told several stories about how the hybrid work arrangement is making it easier to combine their work and private life. Notably, the findings reveal that the hybrid arrangement facilitates in combining their work with family life and other daily engagements, primarily attributed to the time saved from commuting.

All the participants expressed a positive reaction to the hybrid arrangement because the arrangement makes it possible to combine work and private life. They all mentioned commuting time and saving a lot of time by not having to travel back and forth to the office each day. There were mentioned several reasons for why saving time on travelling was seen as important. An example was if they were working shorter hours or going on a weekend trip. P3 emphasized that the last time they worked from home was when they were going on a cabin trip right after work. Further, they explain:

“Sometimes I’ll have home office if I’m only working for half a day for example or going on a weekend trip or things like that. Then it is nice not having to travel all the way to the office.” (P3, 2023)

Saving commuting time also applies to other areas, such as the advantage of being able to sleep in for longer in the morning, or if they have other plans during the workday, like an appointment at the doctor. Additionally, having a hybrid work arrangement benefits the company by saving time on necessary appointments during the workday. As P8 pointed out:

“Because then I can just use two minutes to travel there, instead of maybe having to take half the day off to do that [the appointment].” (P8, 2023)

Furthermore, the differences in how the participants utilize the hybrid work arrangement can largely be explained by travel distance from the office. P5 emphasizes that they live very close to the office, and for that reason, they are one of the participants who only work from the home office occasionally:

“I live close to the office, as it only takes me 15 minutes by bike. [...] The reason why I use the home office sometimes is if I have plans after work, for instance on a Friday. It is quicker to take the lift down to the basement, get in the car and drive to the cabin.” (P5, 2023)

In contrast, P8 fully utilizes the hybrid work arrangement and works from the home office two days every week, as they live far away from the office:

“As I live several miles from the office, I have quite some commuting time. When working from home I can sleep almost an hour longer and still have an equally long day at work.” (P8, 2023)

In addition to saving time spent on commuting, the opportunity to prioritize family and other relations in their private life while also prioritizing their work seems to be an important factor for why they appreciate the arrangement so much. Several participants who have families and young children, like P7, expressed a very positive reaction to the current arrangement, emphasizing how much easier it makes it to now balance work and family life:

“It is fantastic and super flexible. For instance, if I have to deliver or pick up kids from kindergarten, I can either take the first or last meeting at home. And that works perfect for me.” (P7, 2023)

Further, P7 emphasizes that while before you had to stay home from work and take the day off from work if you or your child were sick, you are now able to still perform some work from home. P7 notes that it can possibly be stressful to feel like you always have to work, even when you feel unwell:

“I’m staying home if I’m feeling sick, but I’m still working and joining meetings etc. This can potentially be really stressful. I should probably be a little better at taking the day off when I or my child is actually sick. I guess it is very efficient in terms of work, but for people who already have a lot on their plates it could be a risk factor.” (P7, 2023)

However, P8 believes that this flexibility in being able to balance work and illness is one of the benefits of the hybrid work model, due to making everyday life work easier despite of illness. P8 states they believe getting people to go back to the pre-hybrid work model would be difficult when they have now experienced that hybrid working is possible:

“When you have a sick child, it's possible to work from home instead of having to take a sick day. And this sort of works in a way. Due to this, I think it will be very difficult to demand everyone back at the office every day.” (P8, 2023)

As it seems, the hybrid work arrangement offers the flexibility to blend work and personal life by allowing employees to work from home. However, it also appears from interviews that the participants also appreciate the aspect of separating work and personal life by going into the office. P7 expresses a strong dislike for working from home, despite having a dedicated office setup there. They state that they feel better when having worked from the office, while feeling much more drained when having worked a full day from home. P7 notes that they feel more fulfilled and less drained after a day spent working at the office, possibly due to the clearer separation between work and personal life that the office provides. Additionally, P7 mentions the need for leaving the house, seek new experiences, and create a distinction between work and personal life as reasons for their preference for office work:

“When working from home you wake up and walk five meters to your desk and then five meters back. I like having a routine and getting out of the house.” (P3, 2023)

4.2 The Flexibility to Shape Their Own Work

We also wanted to investigate how the participants perceived their work tasks and performance to be affected by having a hybrid work arrangement, given that this factor could significantly influence their overall satisfaction with their work. It was found that the participants experienced that having a hybrid work arrangement gave them flexibility, enabling them to structure their workday in a way that optimally suits their individual preferences and needs.

Several participants emphasized how the hybrid work arrangement was a potential deciding factor when selecting an employer. It was also expressed during the interviews that as long as there are employers that offer a hybrid work arrangement, the ones that demand full office attendance five days a week will most likely not be seen as attractive. Respondent P2 expressed that they noticed that Company X practiced a hybrid work model before applying for the job and thought it was a positive feature and valued the opportunity to be able to work from home for some days a week. Moreover, the same respondent stated:

“I think that is very suspicious when we have seen through the pandemic that having home office works well, yet you are very stubborn about the employees’ must be at the office every day. Then I think, what is the reason for that?” (P2, 2023)

A common theme among the participants with limited work experience was the preference for working physically from the office. An aspect that was highlighted as an advantage in doing so, was the perceived increase in productivity when working in a physical office environment. P1 explained that while it is nice to have the option to work from home occasionally, they believed that they were more efficient and focused when working in the office:

“I think it's nice to work from home once in a while, but I believe you're more efficient in the office. There are also fewer distractions, and it's easier to get work done. There are more distractions at home.” (P1, 2023)

The sentiment of perceiving to be more productive in their work at the office is supported by P2, expressing that being surrounded by coworkers provided a sense of peer pressure that motivated them to work harder. Mentioned distractions when working from home are picking up the phone or starting to do something else around the house. It can seem as if being surrounded by coworkers who are

focused on work can be motivating, as it encourages one to work harder. In contrast, working from home may lack this sense of accountability, as no one is physically present to observe and potentially motivate one to stay on task. P3 summarized preferring working from the office over working remotely: “I like that we have the opportunity, I just don’t take advantage of it that much” (P3, 2023).

Further, the employees with limited work experience interviewed were typically younger, and it was perceived that they lived in smaller apartments or shared living spaces with roommates. Hence, the living conditions at home were also mentioned as a reason for preferring the office over working from home:

“I haven’t used time and energy to set up a proper office, and since I live in a shared living space, it is not ideal to work there.” (P3, 2023)

When it comes to the participants with longer work experience, it was observed that they were able to concentrate better and encountered fewer distractions when working from home. Among the reasons why they tended to focus better from home, was when performing tasks that require a lot of focus, like writing, which is typically a task they do at home:

“For instance, if there are days when I’m going to produce a lot of text and therefore need to be focused, then I prefer to sit at the home office to avoid interruptions.” (P5, 2023)

Furthermore, P5 also highlights the open-plan office that Company X has, and how this might influence the need for doing tasks like writing at the home office, since an open-plan office might create several situations during a workday where people stop by their desk to say hello or ask questions. This is supported by P6, who emphasizes how much they liked the hybrid arrangement, both because it is flexible, but also because of the open-plan office:

“We have an open-plan office now. Therefore, it is a great advantage to be able to sometimes work from home where you can work more quietly and focus on your tasks.” (P6, 2023)

This sentiment emphasizes how the hybrid work arrangement grants participants the freedom to select the most suitable work environment for their needs, promoting flexibility and productivity.

The interviews revealed that the participants have similar preferences for certain tasks they prefer to do from the office and those they prefer to do at home. Participants noted that tasks such as writing reports, procedures, or researching topics were more enjoyable when done from home, while activities like problem-solving, meetings, and collaboration with co-workers were more effective when done in the office. P2 stated: "I set up more meetings when I'm at the office, and at home, there is more writing" (P2, 2023).

As mentioned earlier, Company X has offices in several places in Norway and abroad, and they conduct most of their work through projects where they collaborate with some coworkers and customers remotely regardless of the hybrid arrangement. P8 suggests that this structure of work likely shapes the team's perception of the hybrid office. In addition, P8 notes that although these projects require collaboration, there is also a significant amount of independent work involved, such as creating presentations and documents. As a result, working from home can be an attractive option for certain tasks that require sustained concentration, with P8 stating: "I find it very convenient to be able to work on certain tasks at home, as it demands uninterrupted focus for several hours." (P8, 2023)

Further, meetings are also mentioned as a task one might choose to do from the home office, depending on what kind of meeting it is. P6 elaborates:

"I make an assessment whether it is a meeting that would be good to participate physically in, or if it better to just take it from home. For instance, if the whole days consists of Teams meetings, I find it better to sit at home, without having to stress finding a quiet room or disturb others in the open-space landscape." (P6, 2023)

Other meetings are preferred to do physically from the office. P8 emphasizes how longer meetings can be difficult to conduct when all or some of the participants are in the meeting digitally, especially when there are many participants, such as around 30 people. This because of technical reasons, but also because it might be difficult to get everyone's attention at same time over a longer period, when people sit on different locations. P8 explains:

"Firstly, it requires a competent person leading the meeting to keep everyone's attention for a long time. A meeting might last five hours. And

then you have to be able to manage it so that the right people get to speak at the right time, so there is a good flow in the meeting.” (P8, 2023)

Besides this, this group of respondents also prefers to do tasks that require collaboration and discussions with coworkers at the office:

“The collaboration is better if you physically sit with some of the employees you work with on a project, then you can discuss things continuously when something comes up.” (P5, 2023)

P4 mentioned they communicated within the teams of their projects which days of the upcoming week they would be at the office, and they make an effort to be proactive in aligning their in-office days with their teammates. This approach enables them to easier to bring up questions one might not think of sending in a chat or an e-mail, but that is easier to remember when you see each other in person.

As mentioned, Company X has an open-space and free seating in their office solution, which consists of limited desks available, most likely due to the recent large influx of employees. If all employees in the department were to come into the office every day, there would not be enough space to accommodate everyone. The perception of this arrangement varied among the participants. Some found it tolerable and would simply go sit with another department in the building when the office was full. Others found it more stressful and tiring. For instance, one participant stated that if they had a morning appointment and were not able to come in early, they would choose to work from home for the rest of the day instead of walking around searching for a free desk. This aspect of office design and its influence on satisfaction in a hybrid work life was not something we had considered when starting this study.

Additionally, the open-space office layout contributes to more noise and socializing throughout the workday, in contrast to having individual offices. P4 highlighted that working from home helps them recharge their social batteries, as the open office setting can be overwhelming at times due to the frequent social interactions. P4 expressed:

“I think that, for introverted people like me, or those who use a lot of energy being social, sitting at home occasionally can be a recharge.” (P4, 2023)

Overall, participants found it manageable to craft their work week to fit different tasks, and they all had found a suitable solution that worked for them. This contributed to their overall satisfaction with their work situation. P4 highlighted that having the ability to choose when and how to complete different tasks was perceived as a motivating factor. P4 explained:

“You get a little boost of motivation from thinking that tomorrow I’m going to the office, then I can get this specific thing done, or, tomorrow I’m planning on working from home, then I can work on that.” (P4, 2023)

P8 sums up the participants’ shared experience with having a hybrid work arrangement well:

“I think that the way we have it now is perfectly ideal. Three days from the office are just right, and two days from home are just right, as long as you have that flexibility and can choose days.” (P8, 2023)

To summarize, all the participants seem satisfied with the hybrid arrangement because it gives them the opportunity to shape their everyday working life, by choosing where to do certain types of tasks in order to be able to perform their best. As P6 emphasizes, the current arrangement offers more flexibility, allowing one to choose to work in peace from their home, while still having the option to go to the office and socialize with coworkers on other days.

4.3 Communication and Collaboration in the Hybrid Workplace

Effective communication is a vital aspect of collaboration, whether employees work together in an office or remotely. Therefore, we wanted to investigate how the collaboration and communication with both manager and coworkers was perceived by the participants at Company X. Overall, the employees find the ICT tools provided by the company efficient and have become well-acquainted with this. However, they also acknowledge certain limitations when it comes to digital communication and that physical collaboration still holds its unique advantages.

The interviews revealed that the employees found the ICT tools provided by the organization to be efficient for communication and collaboration. Microsoft Teams was the primary tool for daily communication, meetings, file sharing, and project management. Many participants appreciated the chat function on Teams as a useful tool for informal communication, which could sometimes feel like talking to each other in person. P4 emphasizes:

“Teams is a very convenient communication platform, it takes much less to send a chat there than sending an email, so it works very well.” (P4, 2023)

However, some of the participants also expressed there being some limitations to this way of communicating in the form of misunderstandings, which might be easier in person: “[...] but usually when you talk on Teams, you often talk a little past each other” (P2, 2023). A few of the respondents also stated that even though they often got quick responses digitally, sometimes it could take up to several days to get an answer from coworkers working remotely:

“Sometimes you send them an e-mail or chat message and it will take a week for them to respond. In these cases, it is much easier when they are at the office. Then you can just walk over to them, and they can’t ignore you.” (P3, 2023)

Even though most of the participants generally agreed that it worked relatively well having digital meetings, they also noted that encountering minor technical issues that caused delays were not uncommon. Several participants also pointed out missing non-verbal cues, and that being able to observe body language and social cues during face-to-face meetings provided some advantages. As one participant put it: "You do get a better response when you're sitting face to face and can see people’s body language” (P2, 2023).

Regarding communication, it seems that communicating with other employees works just as well regardless of whether the employees work together in the office or from the home office. P5 emphasizes that after several years with the pandemic they have all gotten some experience with communicating digitally, more precisely with the use of Microsoft Teams. Further, they explain that communicating and collaborating remotely is something they are used to because

they have several offices, and that rarely all the participants in a meeting are physically present from the office regardless of the hybrid arrangement:

“After two years of an established routine with the use of Teams [because of the pandemic], communicating digitally works quite well. When there is a meeting, there is always someone who joins the meeting through Teams from home or other places. [...] This works quite well, but if there are huge meetings with many participants, it can be hard to include the participants on Teams as much as the participants who physically sit together, such as not seeing everybody attending the meeting.” (P5, 2023)

Furthermore, it appears that participants sometimes use Teams to communicate even when they are all present at the office, as this allows for fast responses and efficient discussions:

“It is easier to contact people when we’re both at the office, but at the same time, it is quite easy to send an email or a chat at Teams. I get responses fast and can discuss things either way. It happens that I sit here in the office and call other people who also are at the office [...]. If there is 50 meters to walk to their desk, I might call to save the time it takes to walk over to my co-worker to communicate more effectively.” (P5, 2023)

All the employees expressed a satisfaction with using Teams in their workday as their primary communication tool, and several of the participants emphasizes that Teams is an easy tool to use. As P7 states: “It is amazing how Teams work for us, it is super effective” (P7, 2023). However, P7 also notes that people usually do not have their cameras turned on during meetings and that this might influence the meetings:

“There are very few people who have their camera on here, and I’m pretty sure that most the people that are able to work with something else at the same time during the meeting does it. So there is benefits to that, but also disadvantages.” (P7, 2023)

Further, P7 notes that people usually did this in physical meetings too, before starting to work remotely, but it has continued and now to an even larger degree than before due to more digital meetings. P7 suggests that this aspect of the work culture could be improved, as it is important for individuals to pay attention and actively participate during meetings to ensure effective collaboration.

Given that Company X conducts most of its work through projects, it is commonplace for employees to collaborate with colleagues from different offices in Norway or abroad. One respondent shared their experience of working on a project with a team leader based in another city. As a result, the majority of the communication within the project took place through Microsoft Teams' chat function. While the respondent expressed a neutral reaction to this, they did note that there was a slightly higher threshold for asking questions due to the need to type and formulate every query:

“When you have to type and formulate the question, you may also think more about it when you’re typing, and look around and find out things on your own etc.” (P2, 2023)

This is supported by P4, expressing that being a newly hired employee straight into a company having a hybrid work arrangement can make it a little more difficult daring to ask people you have never seen before for help.

In terms of receiving feedback from managers and coworkers, several participants mentioned that they rarely received feedback, either digitally or in person. Surprisingly, the participants did not perceive this lack of feedback as a significant issue. The amount of feedback appeared to be less important than what we anticipated. One potential reason for the limited feedback mentioned by participants was the hybrid work arrangement. P4 pointed out that when working in the office you automatically get some feedback and an impression of what the other person thinks, and coming in to work physically from the office can serve as a type of confirmation that one’s work is appreciated. On the contrary, working from home does not facilitate the same opportunities for interaction and feedback. As P4 explained:

“When you work from home, it's harder to know if you're on the right track [...] It’s a little easier to receive feedback without having to ask for it, when you’re at the office.” (P4, 2023)

Further, when it comes to guidance and collaborating with their manager, this also seems to be working well under the hybrid work arrangement. Despite expressing that they do not receive much feedback on a daily basis, participants perceived their leaders as available when needed. During interviews, P3 talked about despite having the option to work several days of the week from home, their manager was

more or less always working from the office. This was perceived as a conscious decision on the manager's part, to demonstrate their availability and encourage others to come into the office as well. According to P3: "I think he makes a point out of trying to be there and showing that he is available if needed" (P3, 2023). P5 shared a similar perception and emphasized the importance of a leader being present and available every day. Despite Company X's open-plan office setup, P5 noted that everyone knew where to find the manager regardless:

“He is here every day, and I believe that this is a good thing. We have free seating at the office, which means that you might sit in different places from day to day, but he takes the same desk every day. Nobody dares to take his place, he is always there, and everyone knows where to find him.” (P5, 2023)

Although participants acknowledged that their manager was frequently occupied with meetings, the manager's physical presence in the office allowed employees to connect with them if needed during the day, which was highly valued.

4.4 The Value of Social Connections at Work

Having a hybrid work arrangement could potentially have significant implications for the work environment, particularly in terms of fostering social connections at work, as employees may not have daily face-to-face interactions with their coworkers. Thus, we aimed to examine the participants' views of their current work environment and work-related social relations. Our findings reveal that the participants value the social aspect of the workplace and would find it challenging to sustain if primarily working from home. Maintaining social interactions with coworkers emerged as the primary reason for their preference to continue working from the office.

From interviews, it was prevalent that all participants preferred the new hybrid arrangement to the previous way of working exclusively from the office. The arrangement works well and gives them the flexibility they need in their everyday life. However, they did express a preference for working from the office. P5 exemplified this sentiment, stating:

“I personally prefer working from the office, and I want most people to come into the office because of the need for being social and collaborating

with coworkers. But at the same time, I appreciate that everyone has the opportunity to work from home.” (P5, 2023)

Further, it became apparent during interviews that many of the participants placed a high value on having a positive work environment. When asked to elaborate on this, several participants explained that they appreciated how coworkers were willing to assist one another and make themselves available when needed. P4 noted that coworkers made an effort to make a hybrid work environment easier for each other:

“I feel like people in general are working to have an environment where there is a low threshold for asking each other on Teams or e-mail if you’re at home, because you know that you are not necessarily in the office the same days.” (P4, 2023)

P3, being new to the workforce, shared that even though they had a lot of questions, they felt comfortable asking for help without feeling like a burden to their coworkers. Additionally, they also did not feel scared of trying or making mistakes in their job. P3 also noted that people were very supportive and accommodating in their interactions, contributing to a welcoming and helpful work environment. Further, P4 mentioned that both managers and coworkers were always helpful in referring to others when they do not know the answer to a question, demonstrating a care for their coworkers’ work, not just their own. P4 expressed a positive reaction to this, appreciating that people showed a willingness to help solve problems by forwarding emails, showing the way, and not just saying "ask them". This attitude of helpfulness and collaboration makes P4 feel supported in the workplace.

As expected, the social aspect of the workplace is considered important to all the participants to varying degrees. During the interviews, it was noted that new employees in Company X often work independently on tasks, and only seeking assistance from coworkers when needed. However, despite mostly working alone, P3 expressed a great appreciation for the presence of others around them while working, even when collaborating is not necessary. Additionally, it was mentioned by several participants that the social aspect of the workplace is what

they missed when working from home. P4 noted that the office environment must offer something that working from home cannot:

“Especially when it gets very comfortable working from home, it is very important that there is something you think is nice when you come into the office. That you get a positive feeling of being there.” (P4, 2023)

This statement highlights the importance of having a work environment that employees look forward to coming into and that contributes to their overall well-being.

As mentioned previously, there were some higher thresholds experienced concerning asking team leaders or coworkers through digital tools compared to in-person interactions. Company X had initiated several team-building exercises, likely due to a large influx of new hires in the last years, which was positively received by the participants. When asked about this, a participant expressed it could contribute to a better work environment and improve collaboration among coworkers. Moreover, it was expressed by P2 that having met someone in person prior makes reaching out and asking someone for guidance or feedback over phone or through chat easier:

“It is valuable to have met people one time before. In my experience it is easier to contact people over Teams if I have met them once before physically in person.” (P2, 2023)

It is worth noting that it was also mentioned that the threshold to ask someone for help is not considered significantly high in the first place. Nevertheless, having prior in-person interactions with someone was seen as helpful in making it easier to approach them digitally. P4 expressed that they perceived their coworkers were working towards creating a culture of making it easy to ask for help through digital tools when working remotely, given that not everyone would be present in the office at all times.

As previously mentioned, the company had experienced a significant influx of new employees in the past couple of years, which has had an impact on the work environment. P1 pointed out that although they knew many of their coworkers, it is not a close-knit working environment where everyone knows everyone. However, they noted that their manager has been instrumental in introducing new hires to different people and helping them acclimate to the workplace.

As stated above, most of the participants prefer to work from the office, even though they find the hybrid work arrangement beneficial. All the participants agree that the social interactions at the workplace are the main reason why they prefer to work from the office mostly, and that this is why they would never want to only work from a home office. There are several reasons why being social at work is perceived as vital, for example eating lunch together is mentioned as important. Furthermore, the spontaneous conversations that happen during a day, such as the talks you have when getting a coffee are seen as crucial aspects, as P5 expresses:

“[...] but then there is the collegial aspect, that’s what one usually misses when working from the home office. There is not as easy to call someone to chat [non-work-related chat], and that’s bad for the work environment. When we’re at the office, we have coffee breaks, we talk within the work landscape and so on.” (P5, 2023)

Several of the participants has children, and they noted how the office becomes an important social arena during this life phase. P7 notes that during their current life stage with the demands of having young children, the office takes on a heightened significance, as parents with young children often find themselves constrained from participating in other social activities.

During the interviews, participants shared their thoughts on the work environment in the company. Many of them spoke positively about their experiences, exemplified by P7:

“Then there’s the work environment, it is pleasant to be there. And there’s the coffee chats that are enjoyable, but also very important. Cause you talk a lot about work-related things in between also.” (P7, 2023)

Two participants remarked on how they perceived that most of their colleagues were proficient at coming into the office, with many coming in more often than what was necessary under the current hybrid model. However, while perceiving the work environment to be relatively good, another participant expressed how the previous work arrangement with coming into the every day of the work week might be the best for a work environment:

“The work environment might become a little better with people coming into the office. Like the way we had it before, going into the office five

days each week. It's probably better for the work environment, where everybody sees each other at lunch etc.” (P5, 2023)

Several participants emphasized the value of having brief conversations with coworkers during the workday, even if it is just for a few minutes. These chats were highly valued for the social aspect, which was considered an important reason to come in to work from the office. As one participant noted: “Having someone to chat with and be a little social with throughout the workday is nice. It doesn't have to be a lot of it to achieve this, but it is an important part” (P8, 2023). P8 also highlighted how the social aspect is not only important for enjoying being at work but also for finding meaning in it. Especially when the tasks in itself are not very rewarding, working together as a team and achieving common goals creates a sense of accomplishment and a good feeling that is not possible when working alone.

P8 noted how the design of the office could affect the human aspect of the work environment. Due to having an open-space office and free seating, locating individuals can become challenging, leading to wasted time spent searching for someone who may or may not be present at the office. P8 suggested that it might be better to have fixed seats for at least some phases of projects to promote visibility and to interact with the people you are working with. In terms of the human relations in the workplace, P8 stated: “In terms of the people and such, I'm thinking it might have been better to be here even more than people are now” (P8, 2023).

Overall, participants emphasized the significance of the social aspect of the workplace for enjoyment, meaning, and accomplishment in their work. The design of the office, such as open-space and free seating, influenced human relations, and some participants believed that increased presence in the office could enhance the work environment.

5.0 Discussion

In this chapter, we will discuss our findings in accordance with the presented theoretical framework. The aim is to get a deeper understanding of the findings, which will help us answer our research question: “*What are the key factors*

influencing employee satisfaction in a hybrid work arrangement? ”. According to our findings, the key factors influencing satisfaction with the hybrid work arrangement are the flexibility to balance work and private life, the flexibility to shape one’s own work, that it fosters effective communication and collaboration, and it allows employees still cultivate social connections at work.

Research from during Covid-19 shows that individuals are more likely to experience higher levels of satisfaction when working from home when having a high degree of flexibility and a home environment that supports remote work. However, it was observed that during the pandemic, when people were forced to work remotely, productivity declined (Yang, 2023). In our findings, the participants emphasized the importance of flexibility in choosing tasks to be done from home and highlighted the effectiveness of digital meetings conducted remotely, which aligns with previous research (Yang, 2023). Now that workers are no longer obligated to work from home, they have the opportunity to optimize their home environments for increased productivity. Those who lack a suitable work environment at home can opt to work from the company office, as indicated by our findings. Consequently, our findings suggest that implementing a hybrid work arrangement, where employees have the ability to choose where they work for some days of the week, enhances autonomy and ultimately leads to improved productivity.

Our findings indicate that the participants are generally express satisfaction with the organization’s ICT tools, primarily using Microsoft Teams, and feel capable of fully utilizing these resources in their daily work. However, they did not feel like this was as effective as face-to-face communication that occur in the office, recognizing the value of being present when communicating with each other. According to Wang et. al (2021), relying too heavily on communication through ICT may be perceived as less effective and result in lower productivity. Interestingly, one of the participants stated that they sometimes use the chat function at Teams even though both parties are physically present at the office, suggesting that they found it to be highly effective in certain situations.

According to Wessels et al. (2019), offering time-spatial flexibility to employees is often regarded as a way for individuals to effectively manage both work and life

demands. Our findings support this, as the hybrid work arrangement seems to grant the employees a certain level of freedom in determining when and where they carry out their work. We found that employees responded positively to this flexibility, emphasizing that it facilitates the integration of work and everyday life responsibilities. Notably, it saves time, such as reducing or eliminating the need for commuting time to and from the office.

Our findings suggest that employees in the hybrid work arrangement demonstrate proactive behaviour in organizing their work week. They engage in thoughtful consideration of their work tasks, as well as their personal commitments or leisure plans when deciding whether to work from home or the office. This aligns with existing research, suggesting that such actions can be seen as a form of engaging in time-spatial job crafting. By engaging in this deliberate planning process, individuals strive to enhance their well-being, achieve work-life balance, and effectively fulfil their job responsibilities (Wessels et al., 2019).

Research suggests that employees can derive significant advantages from adopting a hybrid work arrangement when they perceive themselves as having adequate resources and control over these resources to effectively address their work demands (Grawitch et al., 2010, referred to in Shifrin & Michel, 2022, p. 61). It occurs from our findings that one of the primary reasons employees appreciate the option to work from home on certain days instead of going to the office is the time saved on commuting. By eliminating the need to commute, employees gain greater control over their time resources and can allocate them more efficiently.

According to Wessels et al (2019), giving employees the opportunity to choose where work obligations are being done, can increase levels of engagement toward work, which can lead to a boost in productivity. Our findings support this notion, and suggest that participants perceived having more energy, from being able to optimize their workdays by engaging in job crafting. Further, the ability to work from home while taking care of a sick child was found to contribute to higher productivity. However, an important observation is the potential downside of this arrangement, namely the challenge of balancing work responsibilities with caregiving duties simultaneously can be difficult.

According to Demerouti (2014), employees should engage in job crafting in order to improve their jobs, as jobs are continuously evolving on a day-to-day basis. Our findings show that the participants proactively take action to plan their tasks, determining where and when to perform them based on their individual preferences and strengths, thereby engaging in job crafting. Previous research has highlighted that job crafting serves as a means for employees to enhance their motivation by shaping their work (Demerouti, 2014). Correspondingly, our findings indicate that the participants derive motivation from having the freedom to choose their work location. By exerting control over certain aspects of their work, they can also prevent negative consequences from occurring (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, referred to in Demerouti, 2014, p. 240). Our findings suggest that the participants possess an understanding of effective strategies for this way of job crafting, such as working from home to recharge their social batteries.

As presented in the findings, all the employees appreciate the hybrid work arrangement, as it empowers them to shape their work in terms of what kind of tasks they do from home, and what kind of tasks they do from the office. The self-determination theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy in the workplace (Deci & Ryan, 2014; Deci et al, 2017), aligns with our findings, indicating that the employees appreciate the opportunity to decide the type of tasks and their work location, thus enhancing their sense of autonomy. This can largely explain why the hybrid work arrangement is highly regarded among the different employees, as experiencing autonomy in one's work is an important factor of employee satisfaction (Deci et al., 2017)

While there was a consensus among employees regarding the benefits of choosing where to perform different tasks, the opinions varied on where they were most productive. Less-experienced employees tended to focus better when working from the office, whereas those with more experience found better focus while working from home. Several factors may contribute to this discrepancy, but a likely explanation is that younger employees with limited work experience may feel more insecure in their work, and therefore prefer the presence of co-workers and the sense of security that comes from working as a team. On the other hand, more experienced employees may feel more confident in their work due to their years of experience and require less external input and affirmation. This finding

can be attributed to the concept of competence within self-determination theory, which relates to an individual's perception of effectively utilizing their environment and available resources (Bandura, 1977; Ryff, 1989, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 252). In order to maintain motivation, employees need to feel secure in their work, as autonomy alone is not sufficient. Hence, it can explain why less-experienced employees tend to focus better working from the office, while more experienced employees find better focus when working from home.

When employees are autonomously motivated, they are more likely to experience thriving, which includes a sense of vitality (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014). Research has shown that individuals typically experience higher levels of vitality on weekends, when they have more opportunities for autonomy and relatedness activities (Ryan et al., 2010, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 251). Our findings suggest that the hybrid work arrangement blurs the boundaries between weekdays and weekends, enabling employees to maintain better contact with friends and family or engage in leisure activities during the week. This is possible due to saved commuting time and reduced fatigue from this. Moreover, the arrangement provides individuals with more time and energy to participate in "weekend activities" during weekdays, enhancing their sense of vitality throughout the entire week. Furthermore, it seems that the hybrid arrangement let the employees feel more connected to relations both at work and in their private life, which are important and are an important psychological need according to self-determination theory and its relatedness component (Deci & Ryan, 2014).

According to the self-determination theory, the feeling of relatedness is as important as the feeling of competence and autonomy to feel autonomously motivated at work (Deci & Ryan, 2014), and the feeling of relatedness includes feeling connected and having a sense of belongingness to others (Bowlby, 1979, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 252). Our findings align with this theory, as participants expressed a strong emphasis on the importance of social relations. In fact, they identified it as the central factor influencing their preference for working predominantly from the office.

Our findings unveiled that all the participants expressed positive experiences with communicating and collaborating digitally, especially the use of Microsoft Teams was seen as excellent. There seemed to be a consensus that they had become well-acquainted with the use of Teams, both because of the pandemic, but also because they worked with coworkers from different places anyways. Their knowledge about the use of Teams is probably one of the reasons for their overall satisfaction with their remote communication and collaboration. This can be explained by the component of competence in self-determination theory since the employees emphasized how simple Teams were to use, they probably feel that they are able to make effective use of the surrounding resources when they have to communicate and collaborate with coworkers digitally (Bandura, 1977; Ryff, 1989, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014). Furthermore, efficient digital tools facilitates for increased competence by enabling knowledge sharing among coworkers and providing fast feedback on inquiries.

The component of relatedness in self-determination theory might also explain why they communicate and collaborate well, no matter where they work. As defined earlier, relatedness refers to “feeling connected to others and having a sense of belongingness” (Bowlby, 1979, referred to in Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 252), and our findings revealed that the participants found chatting to someone through Teams almost like talking to someone in person. This indicates that they appreciate the platform not just because of the opportunity to collaborate, but also because it gives them the opportunity to stay connected and cultivate the feeling of belongingness with their coworkers.

According to Holt-Lundstad's (2018) research, fostering social connections in the workplace is crucial for employees' well-being. Similarly, our findings indicate that participants perceive interacting with co-workers and establishing social connections as vital to their working life. Many participants expressed that the primary reason they prefer working from the office is the opportunity to connect with others. Furthermore, Baumeister and Leary (1995) emphasize the human need for regular engagement with others in a reliable and enduring environment through their belongingness hypothesis. Given that employees spend a significant portion of their waking hours at work, it is not surprising that our participants perceive their office as a reliable and enduring environment and feel the need to

engage regularly with their fellow human beings who are also present there. Moreover, Baumeister & Leary (1995) emphasizes the fact that humans naturally form social bonds with others, and the only prerequisite is frequent contact with others. Hence, it is natural that our findings indicate that the participants have developed valuable relationships with their co-workers.

According to Jena & Pradhan (2018), employers should foster a sense of belongingness among their workforce to retain talented employees, especially in a time where job loyalty is becoming increasingly scarce. Correspondingly with our findings, with Company X's choice to require a minimum of three office workdays per week. By necessitating physical presence, the organization effectively prompts its employees to foster interpersonal connections, thereby fostering a sense of belongingness within the workforce.

Research shows that high-quality connections in the workplace contribute to individuals experiencing a positive sense of meaning and a shared sense of purpose in their work (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Our findings support this, as participants stated that being able to connect with others is an important reason for working at all, as the work tasks are not always that rewarding. Hence, the importance of social connections should not be underestimated. Previous research suggests that only a brief five-minute conversation could foster high-quality connections if port parts actively engage (Hallowell 1999, referred to in Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Our findings suggest that fulfilling the need for social connections does not require much effort, as a small chat at the coffee machine can be sufficient. Participants in our study valued these conversations that often occur during the workday, and the absence of such interactions while working remotely is a major reason for preferring to work physically from the office.

Further, research has found that there are various factors that could contribute in fostering social connections among employees, such as offering structural support by implementing an open-space office plan has been shown to be beneficial (Holt-Lundstad, 2018, p. 1309). Consistent with these findings, our study indicates that the office where the participants were employed embraced an open-space layout accompanied by flexible seating arrangements. This arrangement was perceived by most of the participants as fostering a sense of collaboration and facilitating

socialization by the participants. However, it is important to acknowledge that the open-space design can also introduce noise-related challenges and inadvertently encourage individuals to work from home.

6.0 Limitations and Future Research

The aim of this study was to investigate what factors that contribute to employee satisfaction with a hybrid work arrangement where employees are required to work from the office three days a week and have the option to work from home for two days. Furthermore, if this type of arrangement leads employees to develop a preference for working from home over working from the company office, which could potentially influence employers' decisions regarding offering such an arrangement to their employees. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of our study.

Firstly, the sample size used for data collection may restrict the generalizability of our findings. Even though the purpose of qualitative study is about understanding the complexity of a case and individuals' thoughts about a particular occurrence (Bell et al., 2022; Halkias et al., 2022), a larger sample size could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Moreover, including a selection of participants from multiple companies, rather than just one, could have offered additional insights. It is worth noting that all our participants were based in the same office, and diverse workplace environments might have provided other perspectives.

Another limitation includes that all participants had the same type of hybrid work arrangement, and incorporating individuals with different types of hybrid work arrangements could have enriched our understanding of the topic. Lastly, another limitation with the study is that it was conducted within an international organization where collaboration between different cities and countries occurs often, resulting in a significant reliance on digital work practices regardless of having a hybrid work arrangement.

Nevertheless, our study provides some practical implications for organizations and employers, shedding light on the aspects that employees genuinely value about hybrid work arrangements and the underlying reasons for their appreciation.

This thesis serves to enhance comprehension as to why organizations and employers should consider implementing hybrid work arrangements for their workforce. In 2020 the world experienced how drastically everything can change within a few hours when the Covid-19 pandemic came, and organizations were compelled to adapt their working practices. By adopting and normalizing hybrid work arrangements, organizations will become acclimated to remote work, thus ensuring better preparedness for future crises, such as pandemics, and enabling them to maintain business continuity with minimal disruptions.

Additionally, our study emphasizes the importance of social connections in the workplace, which hopefully can help employers understand the importance of creating a work environment where social connections can be cultivated. This includes for example prioritizing an onboarding process where employees get to establish good connections to their work environment and the other employees working there, but it also involves considering social arrangements beyond the confines of work. Furthermore, the importance of social relations underscores the reasoning for structuring hybrid work arrangements in a specific manner, rather than allowing employees to work remotely without any guidelines. By requiring employees to be at the office some days each week, there is an encouragement for physical interactions with coworkers, complementing the digital interactions that occur.

Regarding future research, we suggest conducting further research into the implications of hybrid work arrangements, particularly with regard to employees working from home when they or their children are sick. Our findings indicate that this practice can be viewed as beneficial, as working from home allows them to continue working and fulfill work duties without missing out. However, it is important to consider the potential challenges that may arise from this arrangement. One challenge is the possibility of employees feeling compelled to work regardless of the severity of their illness, uncertain about when they should take a day off. This pressure to continue working even when unwell can lead to burnout, ultimately increasing the likelihood of long-term sick leaves. Therefore, future research should go deeper into the responsibilities of leaders in maintaining a balance between the benefits of working from home while sick and the potential

risks associated with employees feeling obligated to work when they should be taking time off to recover.

Another recommendation is doing more research on the combination of hybrid work arrangements with open-space offices and free seating. As our study discovered, the open space office and free seating can influence employees' preference for working from the office. On one hand, an open space office and free seating can facilitate the development of social connections in the workplace, which our findings strongly support. However, on the other hand, the absence of an assigned seat when coming to the office may make employees feel like they lack personal space and lean towards working from home. Therefore, for further research, it could be interesting to explore how the design of the office space encourages people into choosing to work from the office or from home.

7.0 Conclusion

Our thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on hybrid work by exploring why employees in today's workforce appreciate hybrid work arrangements. Furthermore, whether this type of arrangement leads to a preference for working from home over working from the office and if employers should fear the arrangement. By investigating how a hybrid work model affects employee satisfaction, we have identified and discussed various factors that contribute to employee contentment with hybrid work, thereby enhancing our understanding of this work arrangement. By employing a qualitative research design and integrating existing literature, we have gained valuable insights into why hybrid work is well-received and effective.

Our study suggests that individuals find satisfaction in a hybrid work arrangement due to the increased flexibility it provides in balancing work and personal life, as well as the greater autonomy it affords them in their work. Our findings indicate that factors contributing to this satisfaction include improved work-life balance and the ability to craft one's work to meet personal needs and preferences. Additionally, that the use of digital communication tools plays a crucial role in ensuring efficient work performance in a hybrid work arrangement. Moreover, when starting the study, we were curious to determine whether the participants desired even greater flexibility, considering that they were required to come to the

office three days a week in the current arrangement. However, our findings demonstrate that this is not the case, as participants express high levels of satisfaction with the existing hybrid work arrangement. They did not mind coming into the office several days of the week due to the desire to socially connect with coworkers, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal interactions in the workplace.

Despite certain limitations, such as a small sample size and the study's specific focus on a particular company that makes generalizability difficult, our thesis offers some valuable practical implications. Based on our findings, we recommend the following actions for organizations:

- Embrace the hybrid work model by implementing a defined framework that outlines how remote and office work will be balanced and integrated effectively.
- Enhance communication and collaboration by implementing effective digital tools and platforms for remote and in-office teams.
- Provide a thorough onboarding program with team-building activities to promote social connections and build relationships.
- Prioritize socialization at the office by having an office layout that encourages face-to-face interactions. Promote social events outside of work for stronger personal connections.

Furthermore, our findings suggest the need for further research on the balance between the benefits of working from home while sick and the potential risks associated with feeling obligated to work while being sick. Additionally, exploring how the design of the office space might influence the use of a hybrid work arrangement would be valuable. Based on our study, it can be argued that employers should confidently embrace the implementation of a hybrid work arrangement due to the numerous beneficial factors it offers to employees.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Del:	Spørsmål:	Formål:
Del 1: Introduksjon	<p>Introduksjon om oss og oppgaven:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si noe om hvem vi er og oppgavens formål. • Samtykke • Er det greit at vi tar opptak av samtalen til transkribering? • Fortelle om strukturen på intervjuet <p>Introduksjon om intervjuobjektet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kan du fortelle litt om deg selv? Utdanning, karriere o.l. • Kan du fortelle litt kort om nåværende jobb og din stilling? • Hvor lenge har du vært ansatt? 	<p>Bli kjent med intervjuobjektet.</p> <p>La intervjuobjektet bli kjent med oss og oppgaven</p>
Del 2: Generelt om bruken av hybridkontoret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan du bruker hybridkontoret? Hvor mye er du på kontoret? Hvor mye jobber du hjemmefra? • Hva liker du med kontoret? Hvorfor foretrekker du å jobbe derfra? • Hva liker du med hjemmekontoret? Hvorfor foretrekker du å jobbe derfra? • Hva er din erfaring og opplevelse med bruken av hybridkontor? Hva fungerer bra? Mindre bra? • Hva synes du om det at du kan være med på å forme din egen arbeidshverdag? 	<p>Finne ut av hvordan intervjuobjektets opplevelse og bruk av hybridkontoret er. Hva er grunnen til at de ønsker å jobbe fra kontoret, og hva er grunnen til at de ønsker å jobbe hjemmefra.</p>
Del 3: Hvordan hybridordningen påvirker arbeidshverdagen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hva er typiske arbeidsoppgaver du gjør på kontoret? Og hjemmefra? • Hvordan opplever du at bruken av hybridkontor påvirker arbeidsoppgavene dine? • Hvordan opplever du tilgjengeligheten er for å spørre om råd/veiledning fra leder? Fra kollegaer? • Hvor viktig opplever du at oppfølging og tilbakemeldinger på dine arbeidsoppgaver er i din arbeidshverdag? • Hvordan opplever du at tilbakemeldinger/veiledning fra leder og/eller kollegaer er på kontoret i forhold til hjemmekontor? • Hva slags tiltak har bedriften gjort for å sikre god kommunikasjon i en hybrid arbeidshverdag? • Hvordan opplever du oppfølgingen du får via digitale verktøy? 	<p>Hvordan hybridkontorordningen påvirker deres arbeidshverdag, da mer konkret det å faktisk gjennomføre arbeidsoppgaver, kommunikasjon, tilbakemelding og veiledning.</p>

<p>Del 4: Viktigheten av sosiale relasjoner i arbeidslivet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hva er et godt arbeidsmiljø for deg? • Hva mener du er viktig for å etablere et godt arbeidsmiljø? • Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan du opplever arbeidsmiljøet du er en del av nå? • Hvor viktig er det sosiale for deg på jobb? • Er det noe forskjell på arbeidsmiljøet på kontoret i forhold til hjemmekontoret? I så fall, hvordan? • Hvordan tror du det påvirker arbeidsmiljøet at dere ikke møtes fysisk hver dag? 	<p>Finne ut av intervjuobjektets opplevelser av arbeidsmiljøet. Hvordan påvirker bruken av hybridkontor arbeidsmiljøet og det sosiale på jobb. Føler hen seg trygg og ivaretatt, selv på hjemmekontor.</p>
<p>Del 5: Avslutning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppsummere intervjuet • Har du noe du ønsker å tilføye? • Takke for hjelpen 	<p>Oppsummering og finne ut av om intervjuobjekt har noe mer og tilføye</p>

Appendix 2: Information About the Research Project

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet:

Hva er nøkkelfaktorene som påvirker ansattes tilfredshet i en hybrid arbeidshverdag?

Formål:

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke hva som er nøkkelfaktorene som påvirker ansattes tilfredshet i en hybrid arbeidshverdag. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Masterstudentene Eva Johanne Brænden og Maja Alstad ved Handelshøyskolen BI (Campus Oslo).

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du har fått spørsmål om å delta fordi du er ansatt i en bedrift som benytter seg av hybridkontor, mer presist en hybridkontorordning hvor man jobber tre dager i uken på kontoret, og har mulighet til å jobbe på hjemmekontor to dager i uken. Vi har fått informasjon om at du benytter deg av denne ordningen, og ønsker derfor å intervju deg angående din opplevelse av dette. 5-10 medarbeidere fra din bedrift vil bli intervjuet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Vi ønsker å gjennomføre semi-strukturerte intervjuer for å innhente den informasjonen vi trenger. Intervjuet vil ta maks en time. Intervjuet vil inneholde spørsmål relatert til dine opplevelser rundt bruken av hybridkontor, hvordan hybridkontorordningen påvirker din arbeidshverdag, og dine opplevelser av sosiale relasjoner i arbeidslivet.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Det er kun prosjektansvarlige, Eva Johanne Brænden og Maja Alstad, samt vår veileder Øyvind Kvalnes, som vil ha tilgang til informasjonen. Informasjonen vil ikke være identifiserbar i det ferdige forskningsprosjektet. All informasjon vil bli slettet når sensur foreligger.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er 3. juli 2023. Alle digitale opptak vil bli slettet etter endt prosjekt. Datamaterialet anonymiseres i en slik grad at det ikke vil være mulig å identifisere deltagerne. Ved potensielle publikasjoner vil det heller ikke være mulig å identifisere deltagerne.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet)
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hvis du har spørsmål om forskningsprosjektet og/eller personvern, ta kontakt med: Eva Johanne Brænden (evab-96@hotmail.com) eller Maja Alstad (majaalstad@hotmail.com). Du kan også kontakte vår veileder Øyvind Kvalnes (oyvind.kvalnes@bi.no).

Med vennlig hilsen

Eva Johanne Brænden og Maja Alstad

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Hva er nøkkelfaktorene som påvirker ansattes tilfredshet i en hybrid arbeidshverdag?* og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

Å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. 03.07.2023.

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)