Remote work and leadership during the Covid-19 Pandemic

- An exploratory study on how remote work is affecting leadership styles and employee motivation.
Abstract

**Background:** The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted all of society, and businesses are faced by having to close or adapt to the new regulations and laws by pursuing digital transformation. As companies are transitioning to remote work, leaders are now met with the obstacle of taking in-person, face-to-face leadership and putting it through digital transformation. Due to all these unforeseen changes employee motivation is at risk as employees are working remotely in isolation with leaders adopting new leadership styles.

**Purpose:** This research aims to investigate the change in leadership styles resulting from remote work and investigate if it has affected employee motivation.

**Method:** This research is an exploratory qualitative study conducted, focusing on multiple cases where semi-structured, and in-depth interviews were held with nine participants from three companies, with one leader and two employees from each company. A thematic analysis was used to investigate the primary data.

**Conclusion:** The empirical findings and the analysis provide two areas that have been found during this conducted research:

1) Leaders realized that instead of focusing on performances-oriented approaches with heavy monitoring and supervision, it was more important to tend to human-centric care and being more open and nurturing to alleviate stress for employees.

2) Employee motivation has generally been negatively impacted due to employees and leaders experiencing communication difficulties, loneliness, lack of support and easily accessible distractions. With a few exceptions of employees coping better with a more balanced supervision and higher level of isolation acceptance.
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Furthermore, we would like to thank all participants who took part in our study. Thanks to the time spent, information and expertise given, we have been able to fully analyze and conclude the effects that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on organizations. Without the participants, the results of this study would not be where it is today, and we therefore want to thank all of them for the time spent assisting us.

Last but not least, we would like to thank each other for the tremendous number of hours spent on this project, as well as the energy and spirit throughout the study. While these months has been stressful, challenging but productive, it has all led to the incredible result we are proud to present today.

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1.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the reader with an understanding of the chosen topic, theories, and terminology used throughout the research. Additionally, chapter one will introduce the reader to a brief overview of the existing situation that might have resulted in remote work and the need for leadership in a digital context. This chapter concludes with an insight into the author's delimitations.

1.1 Background

The beginning of the 21st century has been an era characterized by new, broader, and bold leadership (Unal, 2016). Technological developments have yielded useful communication platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Skype. Moreover, these communication platforms have prompted leaders to transition their leadership style to be digitized, as a result, organizations can be more agile, flexible, and responsive (Schmidt, 2014).

However, in the wake of the global Covid-19 pandemic, business operations have experienced disruption to various degrees, and traditional business practices have taken a significant impact (Bartik et al. 2020). Reports from the world bank denote that this pandemic's effect are the most devastating since the great depression in the 1930s (Harris et al. 2020).

During the last decade, digital transformation has become an essential factor for organizations as it became a catalyst for inducing company growth (Sabbagh et al. 2013). Lankshear & Knobel (2008) define digital transformation as adopting digital technology through replacing non-digital processes to transform services or businesses. The employees' mindset towards digital transformation will be determining the impacts it will have on the organization in terms of adoption and the efficiency it will bring (Solberg et al. 2020).

With that said, digital transformation has come to get a whole new meaning and importance for organizations in 2020/2021; it is now a matter of survival or going out of business (Blackburn et al. 2020). As the demand for remote work and social distancing is at an all-time high, leaders have been pushed to make changes. Further, it is also of grave importance for organizations to digitize to fight and minimize the risks of spreading and contracting Covid-19, which has led organizations to adapt and change to make their workplaces digital instead. A study made among enterprise leaders in the UK stated that 96% of them had experienced a boost in digital transformation (D'mello, 2020).
Companies such as Twitter, Google, and Facebook are also encouraging their employees to work from home. Twitter has even opened the door to making this an indefinite option for employees going forward (Guynn, 2020). As previously stated, many organizations are following these giant companies' footsteps. One can infer that it yields less expenditure as less office space is required and provides employees with more autonomy to conduct their work from home.

The concept of remote work was initially proposed as early as 1957 under the term "telework." However, the term did not get attention until the 1970s, after the oil crisis (Gallardo & Whitacre, 2018). Remote work has been an exciting factor for companies and industries returning to the end of the 1980s (Baruch, 2002). However, today's practices have changed, and today, working from home is becoming more interesting for organizations, freelancers, and employees who want to have more flexible and self-controlled work (Gallardo, & Whitacre, 2018). Today working from home has led to a digital transformation to stay connected and up to date with the entire organization and its various department (Martins et al. 2004).

Thanks to the modernization of technology and software applications, leaders have an abundance of technology at their disposal, Zoom, Microsoft teams, Google hangouts, Skype, and Slack, just to name a few. However, the challenge is that there is limited information, knowledge, and know-how on leading, navigating, and motivating employees through the Covid-19 pandemic, less so in a digital transformation context. Further, this is a challenge as there is no clear path for what leadership style is right or wrong, nor any past data on its implications on employees' work attitudes (Blackburn et al. 2020).

Further, in many organizations, leaders lack the knowledge and preparation for such a sudden, devastating event and are grappling with leading an organization in a holistic, performance-efficient direction (Hatami et al. 2020). Moreover, it is a tough spot for leaders to get all their employees on the same track, which is of great importance. This is because the collective mindset and participation towards digital transformation will directly affect growth opportunities and how well it is possible to retain work resources (Solberg et al. 2020).

Leaders are also under increased pressure from regulators and guidelines from institutions like the World Health Organization (from now on referred to as WHO), Ministry of Health (MOH), politicians, and other healthcare experts. According to WHO data, more than 150 million people have been infected by Covid-19, and more than three million have died as of March 2021 (WHO, 2021). Anti-pandemic measures such as social distancing and quarantine have undoubtedly caused severe impacts on many industries that rely on centralized operations. Leaders must step up to show that they can continue leading an organization, despite digital transformations. Leaders are now met with the obstacle of taking in-person, face-to-face leadership and putting it through digital transformation.
1.2 Problem

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted all of society, and businesses are faced by having to close or adapt to the new regulations and laws by pursuing digital transformation. As companies are transitioning to remote work, the effects on employee attitude and motivation are at risk as daily routines change, in return for less overwatch and more flexibility.

According to Bloom et al. (2014) remote work and digital transformation have been of interest for several years before the Covid-19 pandemic. Organizations that decided to implement digital transformation as part of their business have reported both positive and negative results with a remotely located staff (Bloom et al. 2014).

However, as the Covid-19 pandemic emerged as a shock, organizations were forced to quickly adopt digital transformation throughout the entire organization (Ahmad, 2020). With a remote workplace, leaders have less oversight, and employees are given more freedom and responsibility. There is limited information on how remote work affects the leader's leadership style employee motivation. There is limited information on how remote work affects the leadership style and employee motivation. Furthermore, remote work also became more challenging to tackle in the beginning, because many organizations were underprepared for an event such as the Covid-19 pandemic, both in terms of leadership preparation and the usage of digital communication platforms. More specifically, both leaders and employees are used to face-to-face interactions in the workplace, as leading an organization remotely (i.e. communicating digitally) is a new phenomenon for many leaders. Further, many organizations have minimal experience using communication platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft teams, Google hangouts, Skype, Slack, and more that are required to conduct remote work (Blackburn et al. 2020).

The existing gaps in knowledge and research about remote work are that the current literature lacks research on how leadership styles change when moving from face-to-face in a physical office to remote work and, investigating how this has affected employee motivation. This gap is notable and worth filling because it complements the current research on remote work but digs deeper and focuses more on the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation.

1.3 Purpose

This research aims to investigate the change in leadership styles resulting from remote work and investigate if it has affected employee motivation.

Authors such as Kanupriya (2020) claim that pandemics and crises similar to the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to happen again in the future. Hence, this research is much warranted as the expansion of world connectivity is happening at a rapid pace. The global impact is immense, and leaders of organizations might gain some valuable insight into how to grapple with a
similar level of unprecedented disruption in the future. Given the circumstances and regulations implemented by governments worldwide, organizations have had to adapt to the enforced social distancing laws, which have forced organizations to find solutions to remain operational (Harris et al. 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant number of organizations to reorganize and develop digital transformation, the report will also provide knowledge and understanding of what effects remote work has on employee’s motivation and leadership styles. These effects are necessary knowledge, given the recent global developments where the Covid-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst and expedited digital transformation, and pushed organizations to migrate towards remote work faster (D’mello, 2020; Delwer & Boe, 2020).

1.4 Research Question

The research questions outlined will form the foundation of this study, and the following analysis aims to fulfill the purpose of the paper. Hence, the research questions are:

*RQ I: How has leadership changed from the transition of face-to-face to digital interaction?*

*RQ II: How has remote work effected employee’s motivation?*

1.5 Delimitations

The focus of this research aims to look at leadership styles and employee’s motivation. In order to gain a broader understanding of the topic examined, our research will also include theories and models that consider the aspect of different leadership styles. This study will be intended for a leadership and employee perspective.

The scope of the research is on organizations that have gone through the process of transitioning their work from an office setting to working remotely. This research is not focused on investigating organizations that have gone through extensive digital transformation before the pandemic rather than during it. The rationale for this is that the research is focused on underprepared organizations, where leaders had limited experience of leading organizations conducting remote work and what lessons can be learned from an unexpected digital transformation process.
1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

Leadership – Leadership is a process of social influence which maximizes efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal.

Remote work – The practice of an employee working at their home, or in some other place that is not an organization's usual place of business.

Remote leadership - the process of social influence, which maximizes efforts, encouragement, and motivation of people working from a location that removes physical interaction.

Digital Interactions – A digital activity to build an interaction between an individual and an organization that is possible only because of digital technologies. This tool eliminates the need for face-to-face interactions.

Digital Transformation – The adoption of digital technology to transform services or businesses, through replacing non-digital or manual processes with digital processes or replacing older digital technology with newer digital technology.

Face-to-face conversation– Physical interaction, includes office meetings, conversations and other form of verbal conversations taking place in an office.

Human-centric care – A focus on kindness, compassionate, sympathetic, or generous behavior or disposition, from one human to another.
2.0 Frame of Reference

Chapter two aims to provide the theoretical background to the research topic in terms of literature by outlining the models, and theories used throughout the study. Secondly, it will present the theory for the following sections that are considered as key factors: Covid-19 Pandemic, Digital Transformation, Leadership Styles, and Remote Work.

2.1 Literature Review

Throughout the research, we will acquire reputable and pertinent sources that relate to and support our purpose. The literature has been collected through prior academic work, including previous research, theories, and studies that have been collected from Google Scholar, Jönköping University Library and Northumbria University Library with their literature search engine Primo. A qualitative research approach is warranted for this research as it allows the authors to draw comparisons between primary and secondary data. Further, one can get a better impression of specific patterns, which would help make conclusions. Lastly, it will allow the authors to better understand the critical role context plays, and how it might affect the results.

Table 1: The table presents the criteria and process of the report’s literature review.

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2.1 Digital Transformation

Solberg et al. (2020) explain the rare end of digital transformation, which is the synergy between the people within the organization and technological change. More specifically, the research depicts and explores the digital mindset of employees and what impact that can have for both recognizing and leveraging beliefs for digital transformation. Solberg et al. (2020) explain that this is important because employees' beliefs about technological change are pivotal as they directly affect the engagement with an organization's digital transformation initiatives. Employees' mindset and digital mindsets shape how these transformations can provide opportunities for professional growth and retain work resources.
Johnson et al. (2008) investigates the importance of reinventing yourself and your operations as a company to; firstly, not becoming stagnant and secondly, to address changes to the external business environment. The study was conducted by looking at big companies and investigating the importance of transforming to survive, maintain or improve their position in the market. Big companies such as Wal-Mart and Target shifted their business models to stay competitive and pioneered the retail market (Johnson et al. 2008). In order to survive as the external market conditions started to change with the popularity of internet retailers, Wal-Mart decided to initiate digital transformation to diversify and make its shopping available online. The strategy was a strategic digital transformation shift that made Wal-Mart diversify and leverage its technology to remain competitive. Competitors such as Kmart failed to do the same and, as a result, went from being one of the biggest department stores in America to virtually become nonexistent. By staying vigilant to changes in the market trends, being flexible and proactive, Wal-Mart still manages to stay alive even today and compete with giant internet retailers such as Amazon. Johnson et al. (2008) conclude that many companies should take notice of what companies such as Wal-Mart have done in order to survive (Johnson et al. 2008).

Similarly, Bleicher & Stanley (2019) suggest that digital transformation approaches can make or break an organization. When a business venture manages to exploit digital transformation, it can lead to sustainable economic accomplishment, but failing to do so can be devastating for an organization. Bleicher & Stanley (2019) explain that digital transformation can act as a catalyst for an organization as it provides opportunities for connectivity, enhanced decision-making, increased productivity, and economic growth.

2.2 Remote Leadership

A study of French and international employees' examined behaviors in remote leadership that would have a high-quality impact on the relationship between employees and their leaders (Jawadi, et al. 2013). In order to determine what behavior was the most impactful in terms of quality, the study focused on several role behaviors. These behaviors were: broker, director, producer, mentor, innovator, and facilitator. Jawadi et al. (2013) concluded that the different roles had various levels of impact, but the social roles of being a facilitator and mentor had the highest quality impact on employee-leader relationships. Further, the study also showed that the leaders in open system roles, roles of rational pursuit of goals, and human relation roles also had a notable positive impact on the relationship between employees and leaders (Jawadi et al. 2013).

Kerrisey & Edmondson (2020) write about what makes for good leadership during a global pandemic. The authors look at two separate leaders, Adam Silver, the commissioner of the National basketball association (NBA), and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. NBA commissioner Adam Silver decided to suspend the basketball season and was one of the earliest high-profile leaders to take decisive actions as a response to Covid-19. Jacinda Ardern was also early and delivered a nation address where she announced a four-level Covid-19 alert system. Thanks to the quick decisions and implementations of guidelines, regulations were introduced and presented their expectations on the country's citizens. Kerrisey & Edmondson (2020)
suggested that unique and bold leadership as displayed by both Silver and Ardern is critical when pushing against natural humans’ tendencies of downplaying and delaying. The authors boil down the information into four pillars for every leader to learn after. The first is to act with urgency, which entails that leaders make urgent decisions without all the information. This is challenging as the risks of delaying decisions usually are inevitable, much like the cases for both Silver and Arden. Secondly, is to communicate with transparency – express an honest and accurate description of the current circumstances. Thirdly, is to respond productively to eventual missteps. Problems will come up for all leaders, and it is vital to know how to deal with them. It is crucial for leaders to quickly reassess, listen, acknowledge and orient everyone they lead toward solving the problem. Lastly, Kerrissey & Edmondson (2020) conclude that it is vital for leaders to engage in constant updating. Leaders are required to be steady and use strategies to elicit new information and stay on top of the situation and keep everybody in the loop as new information comes to light. Relying on advisors and outside opinions can be incredibly valuable tools, which was proved to be valid for Silver, who had a long list of medical advisors. Similarly, Ardern was also aided by medical and virologist experts when making decisions (Kerrisey & Edmondson, 2020).

Holmberg & Petrelius (2020) conducted a study on 34 different managers to investigate how their leadership styles have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors explain that many managers experienced struggles, both with their roles and their view of leadership. Finding the balance between encouraging independence and self-motivation while having insufficient capabilities of live monitoring the workers was a common challenge amongst most of the interviewees. Holmberg & Petrelius (2020) indicated that building and sustaining trust became increasingly difficult, especially as work transitioned from physical offices to remote workplaces. As physical contact and overall oversight of the business operations diminished due to remote work, managers had to trust their employees and implement new practices. As many managers became unsure of themselves, the authors conclude that communication and trust (trust the process of change, trust in the employees, and for the leaders to trust him/herself) are the central factors for leaders in an organization during this pandemic (Holmberg & Petrelius, 2020).

Similarly, with Holmberg & Petrelius's study, Sobel Lojeski and Reilly (2020) suggest tacit communication is hard to convey in a virtual setting. Further, many smaller, informal social interactions such as "Water cooler conversations" or talking in the kitchen or break room were also found to be a common loss among the managers. This is crucial as many previous studies suggest that critical decision-making, lobbying, and dialogues are born through the informal chit-chat and small talk that might transpire throughout a traditional, physical workday (Malhotra et al. 2007). Conclusively, the authors suggest that Covid-19 has warranted a restructuring of the work, and with moving more towards remote work, new leadership practices can develop primarily collective leadership. However, there is a decent gap that can be filled further on how managers can improve and highlight a more holistic view of what remote leadership entails (Holmberg & Petrelius, 2020).
Wakefield et al. (2008) conducted a study on leadership behavior in a textual social cue, i.e., nonverbal communication. The study's focus was to investigate the roles that leaders fill in the teams they lead. It was conducted on American employees who were part of a team and five Korean companies. The study showed that leaders who demonstrated consistent qualities with monitoring, facilitating, mentoring, and coordinating experienced that the number of conflicts in the team was reduced and the team's overall effectiveness increased (Wakefield et al., 2008). The notion of leaders displaying qualities of mentoring and coordinating to improve team performance is further supported in another study conducted by Sutanto et al. (2011). This study focused on undergraduate students working with problem-solving tasks. In order to analyze the result, the researchers analyzed the social network interactions occurring between the students. The results indicated that leaders that were less prone to monitor his/her group extensively and try to be more of a mediator rather than director, saw better effectiveness than groups with leaders that displayed authoritarian behaviors characterized by lots of scrutiny’s (Sutanto et al. 2011).

In the article "Virtual Leadership: An important Leadership Context," Schmidt (2014) proposed the transformation trend of the leadership styles in the information age. The article emphasizes the improvement of the efficiency of leaders under different leadership styles and the maximization of the overall organizational productivity. The potential drawbacks of remote work require leaders to apply innovative communication methods to strengthen the transmission of information within the organization (Gajendran & Joshi, 2012) and personal communication between employees. Although traditional face-to-face communication is difficult to achieve through remote work, the options of multiple media methods such as email, online meetings, and team collaboration platforms are also affecting the transmission of information in today's organizations. In Lord and Dinh's (2014), research, it was concluded that compared with traditional leadership methods that focus on reviewing the history and assessing leadership performance, organizations and leaders who use remote work could make more flexible plans for future information and changeable models with the help of technological advances.

As work moves from the physical office, leaders and employees have to adapt and collaborate to make a smooth transition of the workplaces (Barrios & Pitt, 2020; Antonacopoulou & Georgiadou, 2020). Their conducted study successfully identified how leaders could help and assist their employees once they moved from the physical office to remote workplaces. Firstly, leaders have to improve communication to have more precise communication (Barrios & Pitt, 2020; Smartsheet: Majority of Young Workers, 2020) in what tasks are the most important and become better in delegating the work necessary for the team to perform. As employees are spread around, communication is vital in order to have all employees on the same page. Barrios & Pitt (2020) also identified the necessity for leaders to be available for the employees. A leader in a remote working environment has to be available for all employees for work and talk about issues with the remote working environment. As employees feel less involved in the business (Smartsheet: Majority of Young Workers, 2020), leaders should get more involved with their employees to make sure stress levels and anxious feelings decrease (Barrios & Pitt, 2020). Leaders have to understand the importance of physical contact that was a common factor
before, but which has now become difficult due to regulations. If leaders fail to face that factor and find a solution in the form of calls via webcam or other solutions, the employee might face a decrease in motivation to work (Tanpipat et al. 2021).

2.3 Remote Work

During the early attempts of remote work in the information age, Wang et al. (2020) research pointed out that remote work was not widely used before the Covid-19 pandemic. The data presented by an article from Eurofound (2017), shows that although the number of employees working at home in the United States rose from 1.8 million to 3.9 million respectively from 2005 to 2017, this only accounts for 2.9% of the total labor force. In Europe, the proportion is even smaller, which is 2% (Desilver, 2020). Moreover, the employees who choose to work remotely are mainly high-income employees and organization leaders. It is precisely because of this lack of experience that leaders and employees are not prepared for remote work, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Kniffin et al. 2021). When remote work suddenly became the new normal of the organization, millions of organizational employees and leaders began to realize the importance of leadership style transformation and employee motivation in crisis (Wang et al., 2020).

Once Covid-19 turned into a global pandemic, the whole society were surprised and organizational leaders worldwide had to adapt and change their business to operate fully and as efficiently as before (Fletcher & Griffiths, 2020; Forster et al. 2020). Authors agree that the Covid-19 pandemic has forced organizations to increase their usage and ability to have a remote and digital workforce available. As most organizations had not prepared for an event such as the Covid-19 pandemic, organizations had to rapidly respond and acquire equipment, infrastructures, and safety measures for remote work of such a considerable size (Gabryelczyk, 2020; Fletcher & Griffiths, 2020). Furthermore, as leaders were underprepared for an event such as the Covid-19 pandemic, leaders were not ready to lead in a remote workspace (Forster et al., 2020). The quick change forced leaders to adapt and learn from the situation quickly and implement new technology (Callahan, 2020), with the attempt to save their work, organization and keep the usual efficiency (Foster et al. 2020). As businesses are implementing remote work, communication has become increasingly critical to remain as functional as before, which has been a significant issue for many leaders (Foster et al., 2020).

According to the existing knowledge about remote work, it is only regarded as an occasional or infrequently applied organizational work alternative. Lapierre et al. (2016) pointed out that employees' acceptance of remote work cause differences in behavior and motivation. At the same time, when studying the transformation of leadership style, there is selection bias with some organizations that are interested in remote work or have to accept remote work (Kaduk et al., 2019).

A study conducted by Patrizio shows that 41% of all organizations taking part in a survey stated that their current remote working solutions are not as secure as before (Patrizio, 2021), which
could lead to cyberattacks for organizations, causing massive disruptions (Curran, 2020; Uberti, D. & Stupp, C. 2020).

However, remote working places are leading to several benefits and improvements for organizations and their employees. The study shows that remote work led to a 56% increase in flexible working, and 41% of the employees enjoyed the new usage of remote working and the technology implemented with it (Patrizio, 2021). A study made by Delwer & Boe (2020) states that remote work has had a positive impact on productivity, with a 75% increase in productivity working from remote locations. Moreover, the digital transformation during the Covid-19 pandemic has led employees to unite and come closer together, resulting in stronger bonds between employees and leaders of departments (Antonacopoulou & Georgiadou, 2020).

Given the benefits of remote work, there are also issues and challenges for employees, leaders, and organizations. One of the most significant issues identified was that employees had issues disconnecting from work, and could not feel like they could ever relax, as the office now moved home (Barrios & Pitt, 2020; Stinton, 2013). As a result, employees felt more stressed seeing their work setup and reported feeling anxious and distracted even when not working. Additionally, a majority of the employees that participated in the survey reported a decrease in their work productivity, mainly due to the fact of feeling distracted while being at home (Barrios & Pitt, 2020). Moreover, employees reported an overall decrease in their motivation for work and an increased feeling of stress, resulting in a decrease in their mental health status (Barrios & Pitt 2020). Additionally, Delwer & Boe (2020) reports that two major disadvantages were discovered, which showed that employee motivation and their ability to be creative was decreased, which was mainly believed to be because of the decrease of social interactions.

Wang et al. (2020) pointed out that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the transformation of leadership style and employee motivation will first be reflected in the psychological perspective. Organizations are faced with insufficient communication between leaders and employees, unfavorable efficiency factors caused by changes in the working environment, procrastination in employee performance, and loneliness. The above challenges related to remote work reflect the negative attitudes of employees at the level of task completion, interpersonal communication, and social barriers under the influence of the pandemic, which has caused the transformation of leadership styles (Steel, 2007). Whether for the leader of an organization interested in remote work or an organization that has to accept this approach, it is necessary to think about how to make changes in the leadership style suitable for the current situation concerning employee motivation.

Furthermore, the author Stinton (2013) also points to several challenges with working that are related to focus, efficiency, and work-life balance. Firstly, there is the issue of remaining focused while working from home. Stinton (2013) says that employees working from home are very likely to face different distractions and interruptions that they would not face in the office regularly. Working from home leads to interruptions that are very uncommon in the typical
workplace and could for example be, dirty dishes, loud neighbors, or barking dogs. Secondly, working remotely could also affect productivity negatively, as employees are spending more time on specific job tasks than they would do at an ordinary office. Stinton (2013) also points to the issue where employees cannot relax and put work away once the day is finished. Of the employees who took part in the survey, a majority of them did not switch off the computer and mentioned that they kept thinking about work and what to do next. As the computer is just located close by, it is easy for employees to get started and work outside of the ordinary working hours. According to Stinton, this is of extreme importance, as employees should relax throughout the time they are not working, and hence this would be an issue mentally for the employees (Stinton, 2013).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, leaders of organizations have begun to experiment with leadership transformation and have obtained mixed results. Hoch and Kozlowski (2012) pointed out that the depth of the transformation of the leadership styles to be digital has affected employees and organizational performance. However, the research groups have reached conflicting results: Hambley et al. (2007), found that the organization's overall performance is not significantly related to the degree of leadership transformation. Purvanova & Bono (2009) found that the transformation of the leadership styles for remote work can significantly improve the organization's performance. In response to this contradiction, Schimdt (2014) explained two factors to explain the deviation of the research results. One is to measure the performance of an organization's leadership style after transformation, and it is necessary to consider the frequency of communication between leaders and employees. Secondly, the different applications of communication platforms will also affect the efficiency of the transformation of the leadership style into organizational productivity (Schimdt, 2014).

Wang et al. (2020) explain the disadvantage of remote work, such as decreased motivation and lower productivity, which is caused by the work characteristics. In terms of this factor, there are four types of virtual work characteristics that are determined by the leadership styles and communications: Job Autonomy (more independence and choice), monitoring (constant overwatch of productivity), Workload (heavy workload with little breaks), and Social Support (social interactions, assistance, and guidance). Wang et al. (2020) explain that traditional leaderships like monitoring and workload are not suitable for the digital age and remote work. The participants in the research complained a lot about the pressure and loneliness brought by both strict monitoring and heavy workloads after switching to remote work (Wang et al. 2020). In summary Wang, et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of adaptation for new working environments and the challenges in the digital era. Employees and leaders should be aware of the challenges in practicing remote work.

The advantages and pitfalls of remote work for organizations had aroused interest and discussion in the academic world before the pandemic happened. In Baruch’s (2000) research, he explained the impact of remote work on organizations and the opportunities and challenges leaders have to face. The research in this article mainly discusses the transformation of the leadership styles, so the drawbacks of remote work have a substantial reference value for leaders' decision-making in the Covid-19 pandemic. Baruch (2000) pointed out that the
possible disadvantages of remote work, include those employees who work from home are more difficult to control and motivate, lower employee loyalty, and lose the benefits of teamwork (Baruch, 2000).

Finally, a study conducted by Patrizio shows that 41% of all organizations taking part in a survey stated that their current remote working solutions are not as secure as before (Patrizio, 2021), which could lead to cyberattacks for organizations, causing massive disruptions which are of great danger throughout an event similar to the Covid-19 pandemic (Curran, 2020; Uberti, D. & Stupp, C. 2020).

2.4 Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical framework of McGregor's X and Y theory will be utilized in this research to understand how a leader has adapted his leadership style after transitioning to remote leadership. In order to accomplish this, the interview questions used are constructed around McGregor's framework to determine how the leadership style is identified with potential changes throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. These questions will primarily be directed to the interviews conducted with the leaders of the organization.

The theoretical framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs was considered for the research, but after some deliberation and deeper investigation, it was concluded that another framework regarding motivation would be more suitable. Maslow's hierarchy of needs considers more fundamental needs and is more psychologically driven. Instead, the authors decided to explore the research phenomena through Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. This framework is more centered on workplace-related factors and how these affect the motivation of the employees. The framework was primarily utilized when designing interview questions for the employees of the organization.

2.4.1 McGregor's Theory X and Y

McGregor's theory originated in the 1950s and was made as guidance for leaders of organizations. The theory is divided into two parts and two sorts of employees. Employees identified to be model X, and employees identified to be model Y. Depending on the employee, leaders must adapt their ability to lead and guide employees of the organization (Morsch & Lorsch, 1970).

Theory X employees are assumed to dislike work and in order to be productive have to be controlled and directed to be successful. If possible, a model X employee rather take breaks or socialize instead of working, and employees of this model can usually be found among the bottom level of an organization, where responsibilities are few. As a result, these types of employees prefer to follow orders and directions instead of making their own decisions (Morsch & Lorsch, 1970).
Theory Y employees are more likely to enjoy working and usually want to have more responsibilities in their position. Theory Y employees have the wish to grow in the organization and receive more trust from superiors. Model Y employees are usually found among the upper parts of a company, as they are self-serving and like to have the freedom to conduct their business, as they are usually self-oriented and self-going (Morsch & Lorsch, 1970).

McGregor's theory X and Y is essential for managers who want to understand how to act, behave and focus on different types of employees. Depending on the employee models, the manager must change their style of leading, where managers need to have closer supervision on employees and therefore be more focused and directed in their work, and the opposite for theory Y employees (Morsch & Lorsch, 1970).

2.4.2 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory is the theory put forward by Abraham Maslow in the 1943 psychology review paper "A Theory Human Motivation" (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's theory was fully expounded in his 1954 book "Motivation and Personality". Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is still a popular framework in sociology and management today, where the most significant effect of hierarchy theory is that it points out that everyone has needs. As a leader, in order to motivate his subordinates, a leader must understand what sort of needs his subordinates have and how to meet them.

The hierarchy of needs theory is essential to explain motivation. It puts forward that the internal of individual growth is motivation. Motivation is composed of various levels and natures of needs, and there are levels and orders between various needs (Maslow, 1943). The needs and satisfaction of each level will determine the individual's personality development state. The hierarchy of needs theory divides people's needs into five levels, from low to high, and proposes incentive measures, respectively. A primary hypothesis of its theory is that "people are an animal pursuing complete needs." (Maslow, 1943).

**Physiological needs**
Physiological needs are the lowest and most urgent needs. Incentives for physiological needs include increasing wages, improving working conditions, giving more spare time and space to rest, and improving welfare benefits.

**Safety needs**
Safety needs are also lower-level needs, including things related to personal safety, stability of life, freedom from pain, threats, or disease, physical health, and own property. Organizational leaders can meet and motivate employees' safety needs through strong rules and regulations, occupational security, welfare benefits, and protecting employees from unemployment, providing insurance, and avoiding confusion when employees receive double instructions.

**Love and belonging needs**
Social needs belong to higher-level needs, such as the needs for friendship, love, and affiliation. Employees need more communications to interact with colleagues, support or praise from leaders and establish a warm and harmonious interpersonal relationship with colleagues to meet the need for social support.

*Esteem needs*

Esteem needs are higher-level needs, including achievement, fame, status, and promotion opportunities. The need for dignity includes the personal feeling of achievement or self-worth and the recognition and respect of others for oneself. Effective incentives include public rewards and praise, emphasizing the arduousness of the work and the superb skills required for success.

*Need for self-actualization*

Self-actualization needs are the highest-level needs, including the needs for attaining life achievements. Therefore, after it meets the conditions of the first four needs, the highest-level needs can be generated accordingly (Maslow, 1943). Maslow expounds on the need for self-realization as a kind of derivative needs, including self-realization and full potential (Maslow, 1943). Organizational leaders need to use adaptive strategies for complex situations when designing work, assign particular tasks to capable people, and leave room for subordinates when designing work and implementing plans to stimulate employees' potential and achieve self-value.

### 2.4.3 Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory

Employee motivation and workplace satisfaction is an essential component to consider for both researchers and company leaders alike. This is an important element to consider for many reasons, some of which are absenteeism and high staff turnover which affect an organization’s bottom-line as hiring processes and temp-employee costs add up. By having organizations neglecting the importance of having job satisfaction as one of the top priorities they miss out on some essential opportunities.

Studies suggest (Syptak, et al. 1999) that an employee that is satisfied is more committed, more creative and show a higher productivity. The outcome of fostering a positive work environment with satisfied employees tend to lead to a positive feedback loop in which the environment is constantly being strengthened as motivation and satisfaction is contagious and easily spread within the organization. On the contrary, a negative work environment will act like a cancer and spread equally as fast and may result in a negative spiral that stifles productivity, creativity and overall work performance (Syptak, et al. 1999).

The American psychologist Frederick Herzberg developed the theoretical framework of two dimensions of job satisfaction, called “Herzberg’s motivation hygiene theory”. The framework was developed in order to dissect employee’s attitudes to their jobs and to discover what prompted these attitudes and how this impacted the employee’s motivation to work (Syptak, et al. 1999).
Herzberg concluded that an employee’s needs are split into two sets of needs, a low level need that is based on avoidance; avoiding pain, deprivation and fatigue, and a high-level need, which was for employees to have the opportunity to grow (Syptak. et al, 1999). The hygiene factors can be broken down to a subset of factors, which are:

- Supervision/monitoring
- Policies within the organization and administration
- Working conditions
- Working relations
- Status and security
- Salary

The factors are called hygiene factors because similarly to hygiene, a good hygiene does not improve your health quality, but a poor hygiene will have a negative impact on your health and well-being. Similarly, these hygiene factors will not necessarily improve motivation and attitude, but it can harmful if these factors are mismanaged.

The other factors that this framework covers are the motivators. These factors are pivotal for improving employee’s motivation towards work and are elements that leaders and management in an organization need to carefully consider, if they want to stimulate a better work environment (Syptak, et al. 1999). The motivators are:

- The work itself
- Achievement in the workplace
- Being recognized
- Being given responsibility
- The opportunity for advancement

These two categories of factors jointly make up the two dimensions of work motivation and satisfaction. Herzberg explains that once hygiene issues have been addressed, the motivators can start to generate satisfaction among the employees of the organization. By using this framework, it can provide the reader a more profound understanding of what factors specifically have played a big part in affecting motivation and attitudes towards work, after transitioning to a remote work environment and how well the leaders have utilized these factors in their leadership style.
3.0 Methodology

Chapter three will describe the chosen methodological structure and approach of the research project, followed by an appropriate research design, including data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Philosophy

3.1.1 Research Paradigm

“A research paradigm is a philosophical framework that guides how scientific research should be conducted” (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Throughout the research, the authors will be conducting and using an interpretive paradigm. There are two paradigm approaches which are widely used: positive and interpretive paradigm.

A positive approach can be identified by: “knowledge is derived from positive information because it can be scientifically verified” or “it is possible to provide logical or mathematical proof for every rationally justifiable assertion” (Collis & Hussey, 2014). A positive approach is knowledge and information gathered, objectively and independently, and is, therefore, commonly supported by facts instead of beliefs for the research participants. Additionally, a positive approach is commonly used in quantitative studies, where the data can be more easily observed and analyzed without having the authors analyze and try understanding the usage of words or thoughts. Therefore, the authors of this research choose to work with an interpretive approach instead.

An interpretive approach is knowledge that has been based on feelings and believes from participants of the study. It could easily be explained by: “interpretivism is underpinned by the belief that social reality is not objective, but highly subjective because it is shaped by our perceptions” (Collis & Hussey, 2014). While a positive approach aims to analyze and understand a social phenomenon, an interpretive approach aims to understand and gain an interpretive understanding of a topic. Hence, it can be easily said that interpretive research is conducted once the findings are not found in statistics but instead fewer more in-depth cases. Having this approach for the current research is that the study focuses on feelings and interpretation from employees of the companies analyzed, and therefore subjectivity is essential for the results and empirical findings.
3.1.2 Research Approach

From the perspective of interpretivism, the authors choose to conduct abductive research to test existing phenomena based on theoretical foundations and practical investigations. Abductive research was introduced and used initially by Collis & Hussey (2014) since the grounded theory was applied widely and inevitably by the academic world, aiming to discover the little-known knowledge behind the puzzling phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Peirce (1998) describes abductive research as an inference approach distinguished from deductive research (top-down work) and inductive research (down-top work). The main idea of abductive research focuses on reaching explanations for existing surprising phenomena and puzzling facts (Peirce et al., 1998).

When considering the time limit of this research and the particularity of the research objectives, it is more appropriate to conduct an abductive research, rather than using an inductive approach which requires a larger scale of vision and sampling-research which is unrealistic for this study. The research aims to investigate existing facts and discover reasons behind a certain phenomenon for explanations and apply the conclusion in future practical fields, instead of introducing a new theory. When the researchers attempt to uncover theories behind a certain phenomenon and present reliable explanations, abductive methods are more relevant for this case.

3.1.3 Research Design

In order to fulfill the purpose of this study, the authors will use an exploratory design approach. Firstly, the literature review provided grounded theory-based research and reliable data. The authors will uncover the driven elements of the research target to provide a possible explanation to the research questions (Collins & Hussey, 2014). In addition, the research will provide reliable and understandable insights for the readers interested in the unexplained phenomena.

To better understand the research topic and provide more precise problem statements, the exploratory research would help authors to analyze the deep and open responses from practical investigation under the uncertainty and the limitations of the phenomena (Collins & Hussey, 2014). In the process of collecting data, since the authors aim to obtain a deep understanding of the facts and provide explanations through abductive research, the exploratory design suits well with an objective conclusion. Moreover, semi-structured interviews will be conducted as the basis of data collection.

3.2 Method

The authors have decided on a methodical review to examine leadership styles, digital transformation, remote work, and employee motivation. Once primary and secondary data have been collected, these will be combined to provide the study with a holistic picture to understand the relationship between remote work through digital transformation, the change in leadership styles, and how these elements affect employee motivation.
3.2.1 Data Collection

The data collection is made up of two categories of data: primary and secondary data. Primary data is data that the authors collect directly from a selected person or a sample group. The data gathered is specific and is gathered to help understand, explain and support the research purpose, subsequently making the questions specific and designed for the intended research purpose (Collins & Hussey, 2014). The primary data is traditionally gathered through interviews, direct observations, surveys, or focus groups. Potential disadvantages with collecting primary data are that it can be a lengthy and costly process.

3.2.1.1 Primary data

This research is based on qualitative research, and the primary data are collected from interviews with organizational leaders and employees interested in this project. All interviews are to be recorded and then transcribed by all authors before applying data through thematic structuring, which will improve the credibility of the primary data findings. To ensure validity and honest responses from the interviews, we have in agreement with the interviewees to keep the identity and replies anonymous. The data collection for this research is conducted through the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive research approach is depicted by examination and interpretation. Aikenhead (1997) explains this paradigm by stating "observe to collect information about events, while to interpret is to make meaning of that information by drawing inferences or judging the match between the information and some abstract pattern."

3.2.1.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data is data that has been collected by someone else. Secondary data is usually less time-consuming as it has already been gathered by other companies, institutions, organizations, or governments (Collins & Hussey, 2014). A critical difference between secondary and primary data is that primary data is gathered explicitly for the intended research purpose, whereas secondary data might have a different research purpose in mind, making it less valid than primary sources. One data should not be discredited for another, as they can both be valuable to use in the same research for different reasons. Combining these different forms of data can provide the research with more context, a richer insight, more perspectives and contribute to making the study more holistic (Collins & Hussey, 2014).

3.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Through the study, nine interviews were held, with all conducted at the end of March of 2021. Depending on the research, interviews can be conducted in different ways: unstructured, semi-structured, or structured. The authors decided to conduct a semi-structured interview approach for this research, where most of the questions were pre-made and then follow-up questions were asked when appropriate (Collins & Hussey, 2014). A sheet with questions prepared for the interview was given to the interviewer to secure that all questions, and topics were brought up and answered throughout the interviews. Thanks to this approach, the authors could ensure that the level and quality of answers given to the questions were of the highest possible quality. Before conducting the interview, the participants were introduced to the research's purpose, to
present key concepts and topics of high importance for the study. All of the participants signed a digital consent form, which was signed before the interview was conducted (Appendix 1). To ensure the participants dared to speak the truth, all participants were informed that all data gathered were anonymous and no one other than the authors would see any answers in correlation to their identity. The interviews took place via telephone and live meetings and varied in time between 20 to 40 minutes. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some interviews were made easier thanks to digital tools such as Zoom, Skype, or Telephone instead of face-to-face interviews. The ages of the participants varied between 20-45 years. The interviews were conducted in Swedish and English to make it easier for certain participants to participate in the research.

3.2.3 Interview Questions
The complete list of all interview questions can be found in Appendix 2 and 3. The purpose of the interview questions is to investigate the impact that remote work has on employees and leadership styles due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the interview, the authors decided to use an open question model where all the questions required the participant to develop an answer out of their own thoughts, thereby decreasing the interviewer's risk to lead the participant towards a specific answer. Additionally, the interviewer did ask follow-up questions, as they got more understanding of the topic and theme. As a result, the data gathered gave the authors more valuable information that helped understand and get an accurate result from the questions asked.

3.2.4 Data Analysis
With the purpose of presenting a qualitative data analysis, a thematic analysis method has been selected in order to examine the primary data. The gathered data from the interview participants of the study will be analyzed through the scope of Braun and Clarkes (2006) thematic analysis. A thematic analysis framework comprises six steps that will allow the authors to examine patterns, draw conclusions, understand how context matters, and discover potential difficulties in the gathered data to identify essential themes of the research.

Thus, with the thematic analysis framework, the reader will be provided with a more profound understanding of the connection between remote leadership and employee motivation. The thematic analysis consists of the following chronological steps:

1. Familiarize yourself with your data
2. Assign preliminary codes for your data to describe the content
3. Search for patterns or themes in your codes across the different interviews
4. Review themes
5. Define and name themes
6. Produce the report.
Based on the thematic analysis, the researchers intend to carefully examine the interview data thoroughly to gain a more comprehensive understanding of it and accurately generate codes of importance for the research. After that, codes will be categorized and put in different groups.

3.3 Ethics

In order to certify that the participants are treated respectfully without and threat towards ethical harm, the research has been conducted per the ethical guidelines for qualitative research established by Market 25 Research society (MRS Guidance, 2014). To examine the following guidelines further, please refer to Appendix 4. The people partaking in this study are considered participants. Participants signify a person who is actively and freely participating in the study, and this is ordinarily the approach taken in qualitative studies (Morse, 1991). This study has valued the importance of ethical and moral principles to conduct the qualitative study. When conducting the study, the authors have considered the parameters of confidentiality, transferability, confirmability, and credibility to stipulate a high-quality research practice characterized by relevant and trustworthy data. Each parameter will be expanded upon in individual sections.

3.3.1 Anonymity and Confidentiality

To achieve the most information from each interviewee, the study aims for all participants who took part in the research and their answers to be anonymous for their safety. Primarily, all participants signed the consent form (Appendix 1), which informed all participants about their anonymity with the possibility to remove and withdraw the information at any time throughout the interview session if interested. Further, to hide the participant's identity, we exchanged names with numbers, with the hope to increase responses from the interviews. To ensure confidentiality, the authors asked the participants to read the informative formula and explained the purpose of the research altogether to explain the fundamental concepts of the research. The authors also presented how the data were to be stored to keep all personal information confidential. Additionally, to avoid any form of scrutiny, opinion, or other types of cause the authors decided to keep the company anonymous as well.

3.3.2 Credibility

As Shenton (2004) mentioned, credibility is one of the main components to ensure trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the intention of trying to describe the actual situation when examining related phenomena (Shenton, 2004). It is the first step in establishing the authenticity of data or participant opinions and their interpretations as well as representations (Cope, 2014). The first step to meet the requirement of credibility is completed by collecting data from the previous 67 articles, which are extensive, valuable, and relevant to the research question. In this case, combined with the credibility verification method proposed by Shenton (2004), this research has established solid credibility. The authors of the study have used detailed information about all aspects and steps of the process (including withdrawal, anonymity, voluntariness, and confidentiality of data collection) to ensure that voluntary respondents' answers are as trustworthy and objective as possible. In addition, the authors
informed the participants of the General Data Protection Regulations (EU 2016/679) before the interview. In order to build high credibility, researchers evaluate the project regularly and made changes when needed to ensure credibility. Besides, in order to improve the validity of the research data, data triangulation must be performed. In this study, several interviews were conducted with different leaders and employees in different industries. Data triangulation means that data is collected from multiple sources and at different times (Collins & Hussey, 2014). Triangulation means using more than one method to collect data on the same topic. This is a way of assuring the validity of research using various methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different perspectives of data collection. However, the purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to cross- validate empirical findings but rather to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon, which is helpful to the purpose of this research.

3.3.3 Transferability

The term "transferability" denotes if the data and finding are being applicable or transferable to a similar situation" (Houghton et al. 2013). Thus, the information, data, and knowledge presented in the study must be valid and practical in the instance the theory may be tested and reapplied by a reader (Cope, 2014). This research has not only contributed valuable ideas, insights, and approaches within the field of remote leadership, but it has also provided a more inclusive understanding of how remote leadership can impact employee motivation. Due to the author's decision to conduct a qualitative study with a smaller selection of participants, it could be argued that the study's transferability may be limited. However, it is worth noting that the intended purpose of this study is to investigate the change in leadership due to remote work and to examine if it has affected employee motivation, in order to use practical key findings that both leaders and employees can implement and learn from.

3.3.4 Confirmability

The authors confirm that the gathered data is originated from data collection in the form of literature and interviews and are not affected by the author's biases and thoughts. The importance and criterion of confirmability have been fulfilled thanks to the available steps of the data gathering, where the authors demonstrate that the information discussed has emerged from information found in literature and interviews. This approach will prove that the data discussed are not twisted, changed, or angled in any way possible for maximum confirmability. Moreover, the study uses quotes collected from the interviews, which is increasing the level of confirmability.

3.4 Case Study

A case study as a method for qualitative work is an approach that is of time and space-bound phenomenon. A case study requires more work from the authors as they are playing a critical role within the inquiry process of this methodical research approach. A case study is an approach to investigate, examine or explain a phenomenon (Alpi & Evans, 2019). There can be several sources of evidence when conducting a case study; these may include documentation, archival record, direct observations, participant observations, or interviews (Alpi & Evans,
The most critical component of evidence in a case study is the data gathered from the interview. However, documents and archival records are also crucial as they can support, validate, and complement the data gathered from the interview, thus serving as another vital element to the case study (Byrne, & Ragin, 2009). In addition to an interview and archival records, it is also essential to be observant and as direct observations can have significant input as evidence in the author's case study. Direct observations are something that can be done throughout the entirety of the case study. Case studies can be conducted in various ways and is a methodical approach that is constantly evolving. Case studies can be either comparative cases or multiple case studies. The rationale for doing this is to synthesize information and research across several instrumental bounded cases to create a more holistic and profound understanding of phenomena. Compared to a single case, it can provide both the researchers and the readers with more depth and a more accurate result (Byrne, & Ragin, 2009).

The limitation of doing a case study is that it only deals with one person/event/group, so the authors can never be sure that the case in question is illustrative of a wider body of comparable situations. With that said, a multiple case study might suggest a more accurate result as it considers more perspectives and might therefore combat biases, group thinking, or other factors that influence the result (Alpi & Evans, 2019). To pursue a multiple case study, the authors of this research intend to focus on three companies. These companies can be considered as three separate cases. Information will be gathered from each case (company) and then jointly analyzed in order to come to synthesize information and research across several instrumental bounded cases to create a more holistic and profound understanding of the intended research purpose. Pursuing a multiple case study approach to research the author's phenomena will allow for a more realistic understanding of the change in leadership styles resulting from remote work and how it has affected employee motivation as it considers more cases with more views. If the authors were only to pursue a single company case study, the results might be arbitrary and a poor representation of the phenomena.

When selecting company participants for the research the authors established early on that industry specific selections of participating companies was not of importance. Instead, the focus was to identify companies that operated in a physical office setting where interactions between employees and leaders occurred face-to-face prior to the pandemic. Further the authors were looking at companies with limited experience from a leadership perspective as well as infrastructure (communication platforms, digital work platforms etc) to conducting their day-to-day operations remotely. These criteria were selected in order to investigate how an unprecedented event without any preparedness (in this case the Covid-19 pandemic) would affect leadership styles and employee motivation as operations transitioned from physical work with face-to-face interactions to remote work and digital interactions.

The companies selected are companies from the authors own contact network. The companies all operate in different industries and vary in size, but what they do have in common is the aforementioned criteria. The rationale for the selection criteria for this study is the notion that the participating companies will be a good representation of any business that utilizes a physical workplace with face-to-face interaction between employees and leader. Additionally, it is meant to represent participants with little to no preparation (both structural with
communication platform preparedness, as well as remote leadership expertise). Moreover, by using companies from our already established network there is already built rapport that can make the participants in the study more relaxed and articulate better, more in-depth data which will improve the study.
4.0 Empirical Findings and Analysis

Chapter four presents the empirical findings which have been gathered through conducted interviews. The chapter is divided into subsections, to present and combine the result and analysis of the identified themes intended for this research. The purpose of chapter four is to provide the reader with an understanding of the empirical findings and its results in correlation to the theoretical frameworks used throughout the study.

4.0.1 Interview Overview

In this section, all participants and their answers from the interviews will be presented. The three tables below present the three companies that our study has focused on and where each employee belongs. The three companies have been named; A, B, and C (for anonymity), while participants are numbered between one to nine. Additionally, the tables also present the duration of the interviews and how the interviews were conducted.

**Company A Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duration of Interview (min)</th>
<th>Channel of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Department-Leader</td>
<td>55 minutes</td>
<td>Virtual camera meeting (Skype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>Virtual camera meeting (Skype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td>Virtual camera meeting (Skype)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Company A interviews

**Company B Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duration of Interview (min)</th>
<th>Channel of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Team-Leader</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>32 minutes</td>
<td>Virtual camera meeting (Zoom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>22 minutes</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Company B interviews

**Company C Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duration of Interview (min)</th>
<th>Channel of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Remote meeting (Zoom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>27 minutes</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Company C interviews
4.0.2 Interview Themes

The below table presents the themes identified through our thematic analysis to analyze the empirical findings. These themes will assist in locating a pattern that is interesting to the authors subject and study. Additionally, those codes that have been identified will also be presented after each theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discouragement</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Distractions</td>
<td>Lack of Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveillance</td>
<td>Lack of trust</td>
<td>Lack of freedom</td>
<td>Monitoring / strict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Work Environment</td>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5: Interview Themes*

4.1 Organizational Changes and Implementations

The participants were asked questions regarding how business is conducted in the organization before and after the Covid-19 pandemic to understand the new implementations and changes.

4.1.1 Company A

All the participants from the company experienced one significant change as the pandemic emerged. Their workstation transitioned from a public office setting where employees sat nearby each other into self-isolation at home and worked remotely. A small set of employees who had more flexible work assignments had the freedom to choose their workstation before the covid-19 pandemic, but most of the employees were previously bound to their office desks. Participant #3 explains that "for me, I work towards another city so technically I worked remotely in a sense before it even became a thing prior to covid, but I used to be stationed in the regional office stationed in the city I live in, the peers in the regional office work as call center operators, so these people are tied to the office to conduct their business." Besides the apparent change in location, neither of the three participants noticed any difference in their work schedules or the number of meetings being conducted. The manager, participant #1, explains, "The meetings for the employees were relatively unaltered, we already had in my opinion a very solid protocol with our 9 ’o clock meetings that transitioned well with covid-19. What did change a little however was the agenda of these meetings, now we put a bigger emphasis on discussing how everyone was doing and how their work from home was going and if they needed help with anything in specific. So, we focused a little more on that in order to make sure everything was running smoothly, especially in the beginning”. The morning meetings were sacred before the pandemic and was something all employees participated in. These meetings would consist of risk analysis, independent work, and a general check-up on each employee, both workwise and personally, so continuing with this format during the pandemic made sense, but with an increased focus on a personal level.
4.1.2 Company B
Throughout the interview with participant #4, an explanation regarding new regulations and ways of conducting business was introduced regarding company B. Participant #4 explains: "There are not that many things that has changed throughout the year. The most obvious is the flexible solution of working remotely instead of working at the office". The organization works online individually, and therefore the work was as simple conducting at home as it was at the office. With this implementation being the most extensive, participant #4 states, "... no difference in meetings or schedules. These have all remained the same, the work could continue similarly as prior to the Covid-19 pandemic". Additionally, participant #4 also present that Company B still keep their focus on the organizational goals, and that focus on other areas such as employee health has not been a vital factor to consider; "Of course we do make sure all employees are feeling okay at home, but since it is optional, we have a bigger focus on keeping up the work. If they feel bad working at home, they can just come back and work at the office. So, operations remain the same as before".

4.1.3 Company C
Participant #7 introduced that Company C had a flexible approach of selecting work location during the initial period of the Covid-19 pandemic. The reason behind this approach is that the leader of Company C considered that the function of their business did not warrant a completely shut down. In the interview, Participant #7 pointed out that because of his profession, companies need to maintain the necessary frequency of interviews with their customers, they did not adopt a direct remote work approach immediately but instead used a flexible transition period to adapt the company and customers to remote communication gradually. Fortunately, the organization has been able to accept the entire process of remote work with little difficulty, as organizations were faced with stricter social distancing regulations from the government, as reported by Participant #7: “We started launching remote work as early as the start of pandemic to consider staff’s health and safety. Besides, we tried to reach the highest proposition of internal communication and hold meetings every day.”.

4.2 Effects of Remote Work
Throughout the interviews, the participants were asked what challenges they had been able to identify after the implementation of remote work. With these questions the results of the digital transformation will be presented.

4.2.1 Company A
With a change in the office environment, all the participants from company A reported that they experienced various levels of decline, both in how they were feeling, as well as their overall motivation towards working. Participant #2 states, "I am personally thriving in an environment where I have people around me working, it makes me feel like I'm part of something bigger, but when I'm working in an isolated environment I feel rather discouraged and when I'm discouraged it is easier to get distracted, and at home, there are plenty of
distractions." This appeared to be the consensus among the participants from company A, as participant #3 explain that "When I am in the office, I feel much sharper. When I'm in the office, I am both physically and mentally there, and I feel equipped to do my best to get the work done. Also, when you have colleagues around you working, you feed off that energy, but when I'm at home, there is just me, alone with all the distractions (tv, computer, bed, etc.), and it is challenging to lock in on the work mentally.". Both participants reveal that work colleagues are essential as they motivate and stimulate the work process and that they keep each other accountable. Further, they both notify that it is significantly harder to work because it is easier to get distracted in your apartment, where you have video games, tv, and duties that steal focus from work.

The manager of company A (participant #1) agrees with the other participants. Participant #1 adds that from his perspective that "...the majority of the employees have been a bit discouraged, and that's not a very fun thing to see as a manager. It can't really be seen through a decline in productivity but if you know your employees well you can just see that the general mood and excitement for working has been steadily declining."

### 4.2.2 Company B

At the beginning of participant #4's interview, it was clear that there had been positive attributions by implementing remote work in the organization. Participant #4 stated, "actually, it has helped in increasing the productivity from those working at home. As some of them had some issues concentrating at the office, the overall productivity for all has gone up". Additionally, employee/participant #5 states that remote work has led to an increased peaceful working environment, ensuring that productivity has increased for their work. Further, participant #5 stated: "working in the office, is usually chaotic with a lot of noise and disruptions." However, participant #6 reports that working from home has been challenging and have limited productivity. According to participant #6, "it is very easy to be disrupted at home sadly." Further, participant #6 refers to other activities that they have access to at home, which are either more fun to do or, according to the participant, more critical. Some of the examples provided were video games, dirty dishes, or vacuum cleaning.

Another aspect identified by participant #4 is that communication has become a more significant issue, as employees cannot be seen and naturally supervised at the office. While chats are available, such as Skype and Microsoft Teams, communicating as efficiently as before is more complicated. This theory is also identified by participant #6, saying: "communication has become more difficult with the implementation of remote work, which is a challenge to say the least."

Lastly, participant #6 also states: "Working from home has affected me negatively in relation to motivation, attitude and health as I am missing the relation with employees which is effecting me critically.", being an indirect negative effect on employees of a company.
4.2.3 Company C

Although Company C implemented a more relaxed remote work regulation at the beginning of the pandemic, organizational leaders also faced similar challenges as the above two groups of interviewees. Participant #7 states: "At the initial stage of remote work, our working efficiency was decreased temporarily. It happened basically because employees were not familiar with remote work platforms. But it was solved in a short time. Besides, the biggest challenge appeared in terms of employees’ health and lack of resources. So everyone in the company experienced stress during the pandemic.”.

When Participant #8 and Participant #9, were questioned about their challenges during remote work, their responses showed that work experience also affects employees' acceptance of remote work. For participant #9, who just started working in the company, the separation of work from home and office reduces communication efficiency between him and other experienced colleagues, resulting in frustration when facing tasks alone. Participant #9 stated: “I felt helpless sometimes because I usually received help from experienced colleagues at the office and I could hardly adapt to the pace of remote work since I have only been with the company a few months.” However, Participant #8, who is a long-term employee since the company was established, did not feel the same way. The main challenge that affected his motivation came from the distraction of the home environment.

4.3 Leadership Styles

To understand how the organizations and leaders of the companies have changed, the participants were asked questions on how they have experienced their leaders and how they have acted during the Covid-19 pandemic and noticed a change in leadership style compared to before the pandemic.

4.3.1 Company A

In Company A both employee participants appeared to have a similar understanding and experience of how the leadership style has transitioned with the relocation from face-to-face interaction to working remotely. Both participants proclaim that the leader has made himself more available and displays a more nurturing, open, and warmer side when interacting with his employees. Participant #2 says: "something that has especially stood out to me though is that I feel much closer to my manager now, and I don't think that is by chance. Our manager has made himself a lot more available to us and became more personal. It is always nice to feel heard and seen so it is something I appreciate, especially during times like this.”.

The leader has actively taken action to make sure his employees are being seen and heard during a time where this has become increasingly difficult. Both participants also shared this belief, and participant #3 said, "My boss has really shown a warmer and more comforting side of himself and really been there for me during this pandemic. My boss has been very attentive and understanding of my mental state, I have even been granted special permission to go to my
gym during work hours (unless something really pressing is occurring) in order to decompress and have some form of an escape when it gets too much, this allows me to do my work better."

Before the pandemic, both participants reported that the leader was more closed off and instead had a more work-oriented approach, but it has shifted towards becoming more personal and emotionally supportive during the pandemic.

Participant #1, the employee leader himself, reflects and says, "as far as my leadership approach goes, I think I have become a lot more attentive and try to be a lot more thoughtful, because I think that is warranted right now. My initial response was supposed to be more performance oriented and require a lot more discipline since I would not be physically present. By people are stressed, people are anxious, and some fear what this pandemic is doing, and I can relate to all of this. I figure that if I were to assume my traditional leadership style it might just add on to the already overwhelming pressure and stress my employees might already feel, so I have tried to be a lot more open and warmer if that makes sense.".

4.3.2 Company B
Throughout the interviews conducted, all company B participants realized a correlation between remote work and an increase in the leader monitoring and supervising of the employees. As stated by participant #4: "Since people started moving home, I have put more focus on monitoring the activity and productivity a bit." Additionally, the employees being participant #5 and #6, also stated that they felt the monitoring had been increased throughout the year. As stated by participant #6, "the feeling of being a bit more supervised and monitored makes sure that my work is actually conducted and made." Furthermore, participant #4 successfully identified why this was the reason—claiming that the lack of trust was not the primary reason, but rather pointing out that it was an issue of lack of physical proof and fear of losing control of the department work.

4.3.3 Company C
From the leader's (Participant #7) self-evaluation and Participant #8 and Participant #9's response, Company C's leadership style is certainly more relaxed. As the leader of the company, Participant #7 claimed in the interview that Company C is indeed facing the problem of declining motivation among employees who work from home. He believes that remote workplaces require higher organizational discipline and employee responsibility. However, at the same time, Participant #7 regards employees' physical and psychological health as a more critical concern. Therefore, he pointed out that many organizational objectives have been made regarding safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. A more relaxed leadership style and the priority for human care were also verified by Participant #8 and Participant #9's evaluation of the leader. Participant 8 states: "My leader's personality is relatively relaxed. When working at home, I think proper supervision can arouse everyone's enthusiasm.".
4.4 Motivational changes of remote work

The participants were asked questions about their experiences throughout the remote work process and to explain how their motivation was affected and what adjustments leaders did to address any changes in motivation. With these questions, the results of the change in employee motivation when working remotely will be presented.

4.4.1 Company A

For Company A, it has been apparent that the motivation and general attitude towards working have taken a significant hit after working remotely for the better part of a year. The two employee participants express how they progressively felt more discouraged to work and that this process has been an emotional rollercoaster. Participant 1#, the leader, agrees and notes that his impression is that his employee's general happiness, and motivation have seen a decline. Participant #3 says that working remotely "has affected my motivation a lot, and it is a negative impact. I feel that I have lost a lot of energy, lost a lot of motivation and generally my attitude towards working has seen a strong dip. I feel that working remotely has made me anxious, stressed and frankly, mildly depressed." Participant #2 has been coping better and explained that it has been both good and bad but over an extended period, it has been mainly negative. Participant #2 states that "over time I noticed how I became lazy, lost a lot of energy, motivation and generally my attitude towards working has seen a decline."

Participant #2 speculates and talks about what has been the cause for the widespread decline in motivation, and the participant says, "It is tough to say exactly why this is (decline in motivation), but a good guess would be the social interactions. With the social factor being removed, a vital part of our work environment is missing. I used to be excited for work, it used to be more than just a workplace, but covid has changed that". Both employee participants similarly express how working remotely has made them feel lonely, and that isolation has bulldozed all the excitement around everything related to work. The limited number of social interactions is just brief, and to the point, so it does not open any room for that social, vibrant environment that is present in the physical office.

Participant #1, the leader, has a good overview of the whole organization and the general sentiment amongst the employees he manages. The manager concurs with what the employees have stated. Participant #1 states, "I feel like their (the employees) interest for the work has definitely declined, we don't see the same excitement that we used to see prior to the pandemic. I know this for a fact, because employees have told me that they have a hard time focusing on the work because they are more easily distracted at home and generally have no excitement." Something all participants agree on is that the environment that had been fostered in the physical office was something special that made everyone feel comfortable. It was one of the intangible factors that made the workplace attractive and made the employee feel excited about their jobs and coming to work. Participant #1 says, "I think that the most important intangible thing we had in our organization was the environment that we have managed to foster here. I
think it really was something different and it really increased the motivation and everyone's attitude towards work”.

With a declining motivation for work, the management in the organization was, according to participant #1, scrambling for ideas to try to boost motivation. The consensus in the organization was that the essential factor the Covid-19 pandemic had deprived was the social interactions, the atmosphere, and the comradery between the employees. In an attempt to salvage this, the organization started hosting after-work hangouts, trivia days, and just general virtual hangouts to make up for the absence of informal interactions or watercooler talk. This showed some great results as people reported that it helped increase their motivation and overall mood. Participant #1 says, "We have these things on occasion where we all meet up on zoom and play games and trivia. It really brought back some of that old spark that we so desperately have been missing and I think our employees have really appreciated it, you can tell they are really having fun seeing each other during a relaxed none work related “meeting”.”. Participant #2 reports that "Implementing the virtual afterwork where we would drink beer on Fridays, the games or trivia nights and things of that nature, was huge to boost morale and increase general motivation. I felt that a lot of us really needed it.". Participant #3 agrees with participant #2 and says that these implementations from management have been good as it brings back an absent element, but unfortunately, it cannot replicate the atmosphere and feeling of being in the physical office.

4.4.2 Company B

With the result of the interviews, there are clear implications and effects that all company B participants can identify. Participant #5 states, "Isolation from colleagues, has led to both negative and positive aspects for my work. I have been able to focus more, which has given me a better feeling for work and therefore increased the motivation. However, with the loss of proximity and contact with coworkers, it has been negatively affected by it". Furthermore, participants #4 and #6 were also able to identify the loss of motivation due to feeling lonely, and therefore their motivation towards work was decreased. Participant #6 said; "working is more than just numbers and work, it's a lot about the social aspect which I found limited and has disappeared due to working from home." Additionally, participant #6 stated the difficulties of working from home due to other implications and temptations of doing other, more exciting things; "When I'm working from home, there are always temptations and other more fun activities to do. This can be tv-games, or other activities at home. Because of this, my feelings towards work have decreased in contrast to other more fun activities.”.

4.4.3 Company C

From Company C's response, remote work has positive and negative impacts similar to those of Company B on employee motivation. The leader explains that distractions due to the family environment often occurs, which leads to a decrease in employee motivation and efficiency. For this negative impact, Participant #8 explained that he is comfortable with his family present, but a downside is that it makes him more prone to habitual procrastination. The company culture and style of the company's office environment makes it easier for him to concentrate
and collaborate with colleagues. However, over time Participant #8 would like to add: "I think my ability to concentrate has been greatly improved with time. I can maintain a high level of enthusiasm even when working alone. I think that if I were to return to the office, the experience of working from home has improved my overall work performance. This has been a valuable lesson.". Participant #9 also affirmed the role of remote work in improving personal capability. As an employee who has just entered the field of company C, he believes that remote work has improved his business communication and self-learning capabilities. For this positive impact, one of the possible explanations can be taught from the response of the company leader, Participant #7. In the interview, he mentioned the changes in the company's task allocation model during remote work. Participant #7 chose to establish smaller phased goals for more complex tasks and more frequent team communication to ensure employee concentration. Participant #7 said: "We solve this issue by setting a smaller target and increasing the frequency of smaller scale team work to increase concentration.".
5.0 Final Analysis

Organizational Changes and Implementations
The companies analyzed throughout the research; all present a similar approach on how they dealt with the issues of the Covid-19 pandemic. All the companies interviewed showed that work has moved from face-to-face to remote working, with employees located at home. While company A and C decided on a mandatory stay at home approach, company B did a liberal style where the employees could decide whether to work from home or at the office. Additionally, company A and C also identified an increase of meetings held within the team, with the intention to increase communication and knowledge of what everyone in the team was doing and working on. With these meetings, the content and information discussed and brought up have also changed, with more a bigger focus on employee's needs and help with the adjustment of remote work.

Effects of Remote Work
Throughout the empirical findings, the respondents from each of the companies all agreed that remote work had impacts and challenges on every company. One of the most important aspects for all the companies was that the participants working remotely were feeling lonely with a feeling of lacking support and communication from their colleagues. This has led to the social factor being decreased as co-workers no longer met each other, leading to a decrease in their motivation and health. Participants in the study also present that remote work has led to distraction issues for all of the employees, where people working from home are more likely to be distracted by activities that they find more interesting.

Leadership Styles:
After examining the responses from all participants, it becomes evident that the styles of the different leaders in Companies A, B, and C have gone through some changes. A common attribute that all the leaders have displayed during the pandemic is that they have shown behavioral changes and become more relaxed, more open, and inducing more freedom. All three of the leaders expressed concern for the psychological toll that this pandemic has on their employee's mental health. It was reported that the focus shifted from productivity and performance to a more human-oriented approach where the need for psychological support for employees was warranted. This prompted the leaders' response to induce more freedom and openness to alleviate some of the already mounting stress and anxiety created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the leaders from Company A and C both noted that their initial response to working remotely would be a leadership style characterized by increased discipline, monitoring, and a more result-driven approach, but both quickly noticed that this was the opposite of what was needed. Instead, these two leaders did what they could to display a warmer and more open leadership style to make themselves more available to the employees, so they felt that their physical and psychological needs were being considered to incite more motivation and encouragement towards the work. This notion is also supported by previous research made by Holmberg & Petrelius (2020), where the authors explicitly suggest that one of the keys to navigating through this pandemic is "finding the balance between encouraging independence and self-motivation." Self-motivation proved to be a tough challenge for many
employees that participated in this research, and instead, a lot of the burden to stimulate motivation was put on the leaders.

The leader of company B did not do as much to make herself more available but still believed it was essential to promote more freedom and for the employees to be given the choice of deciding their work environment. To still be kept in the loop with the employees working remotely, it came with a requisite of a healthy level of increased monitoring from the leader to balance the increased freedom with some responsibility. The idea of a positive connection between leaders allowing more freedom and less excessive monitor and scrutiny and motivation was also supported in previous research conducted by Sutanto et al. (2011). Similarly, to the results reported from the participants in Companies A, B, and C, Sutanto's et al. (2011) research showed that leaders were less prone to extensively monitor their groups and try to be more of a mediator rather than director saw better effectiveness than groups with leaders that displayed authoritarian behaviors characterized with lots of scrutiny.

**Motivational changes of remote work**

From the responses of the leaders and employees of the three companies, it is a common phenomenon that the employee motivation in the initial period of remote work has declined. In combination with Wang’s et al. (2020) study, which explained work characteristics on declining motivation during remote work, such as monitoring, social support, and workload, it can be verified that social support is a common cause which affects the motivation of employees. Although the family environment provides the necessary psychological care for individuals, most of the interviewees were affected by the family environment to a certain degree as a distraction. Therefore, it is difficult for remote workers to find the balance of attention between family and company in the early stages of the remote work. The interviewees believed that part of their social support before the Covid-19 pandemic came from the communication between colleagues as water cooler talk. In other words, the result of reduced motivation can also be explained by separation among colleagues.

A fact that cannot be ignored is that the leaders of Company A and C have made a successful attempt to motivate employees. According to the interviewees' response from Company C, the company's leader has made corresponding motivate measures in response to the decline in employee motivation. Two of these attempts are to maintain a more relaxed supervision and reduce the personal workload of employees. This has also been supported by reliable theoretical support from Wang’s previous study about work characteristic. In the case of Company A, the leader tried to ignite motivation through trying to replicate the environment of a physical office by having leisure activities during certain workdays. Though this showed to be helpful, it still was not enough for the employees to really get excited about work, the damage from isolation had already hurt the motivation. The concept of how social interactions play a pivotal role in the workplace experience and its impact on motivation was supported by previous research conducted by Delwer & Boe (2020). Similarly, to participants in Company A, the research showed that employees' motivation was decreased and their ability to be creative, which was believed to be mainly due to the decrease of social interactions.
At the same time, the Company C employees' response to self-positivity can also be obviously affirmed. Since the leader of Company B have not made similar attempts to the negative emotions of employees, the interviewees' response from these two groups is not as evident as Company A and C for the topic of motivation regain.

Summary
To summarize the results from all the empirical data, it can be deduced that the most meaningful change and implementation during this pandemic have been the transition of the workplace. The analysis yielded different results, with one company pursuing a hybrid approach where employees decided their workplace themselves either in the office or at home, and the other two companies fully transitioning to a remote work location. The general effects reported from this transition were that employees and leaders experienced communication difficulties, loneliness, and a lack of support. It was identified that distractions were easily accessible and stealing a lot of focus for many employees working from home. The leadership style saw changes to various degrees, but the consensus was that the leaders wanted to implement more freedom, become warmer and more open, and prioritize the employees and make sure they were being seen and recognized. The leadership approach saw a shift from a more disciplined and performance-oriented approach to focusing on a human-centric approach where the employees were in the middle. The rationale was to tend to the psychological well-being of the employees to be more uplifting and reduce stress and anxiety brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. The changes in leadership style prompted the following practical changes, to increase motivation and positive attitude towards work by breaking down the workload into smaller increments with clearly defined goals, induce more freedom and provide the employees with more responsibility and trust while balancing this with a healthy level of supervision. Finally, instigate more social interaction remotely between everyone in the organization to emulate a similar atmosphere to that of the physical office.
6.0 Conclusion

The empirical findings and the analysis provide two areas that have been found during this conducted research.

*RQ I: How has leadership changed from the transition of face-to-face to digital interaction?*

After conducting a multiple case study and summarizing the gathered data from the company leaders, in combination with previous research, it has become evident that the leadership style has changed during the course of transitioning to a remote working environment. Through the scope of McGregor’s Theory X and Y, all the interviewed leaders transitioned from a disciplined and performance-based approach (Authoritative Theory X) towards inducing more freedom where managers displayed a warmer, more empathetic and open leadership style (Libertarian, Theory Y). Furthermore, leaders focused on tending more to psychological support in order to alleviate stress and anxiety amongst employees. Leaders also improved their own communication by clearly defining their targets, and then breaking them down into smaller increments to make it less overwhelming for employees. As leaders became more empathetic, they realized that they needed to provide employees with more responsibility and ensure trust in them for them to feel motivated. This is something that needed to be accomplished with a healthy level of supervision. The transition from remote work caused some employees to become isolated in their remote offices and this resulted in less communication. Leaders noted this and started increasing communication throughout the entire organization, to ensure that employees felt recognized, seen and heard.

*RQ II: How has remote work effected employee’s motivation?*

After summarizing the gathered data from the conducted employee interviews, it has become apparent that the motivation and attitudes towards work among the employees has seen a decline across all case studies. The employees reported that there are several factors that determine and affect employee motivation, similarly to Herzberg's motivation hygiene theory, there are low level needs based on avoidance and there are high-level needs with opportunity for employees to grow. Some of the low-level needs that have been displayed throughout this multiple case study has been supervision and monitoring, more distractions in the remote work environment and isolation with lack of support from colleagues. These aforementioned factors have all played a part in decreasing the motivation among employees. The leaders noticed this early on and this prompted a change in leadership style in order to improve the hygiene issues. The result was more freedom, more focus on interpersonal relationships, and trying to improve the work conditions through trivia night, afterwork or choosing their own workplace.

Further, in an attempt to balance out the negative hygiene factors that impacted the decline in employee motivation, the leaders in each organization focused on the high-level needs (the motivators) to increase employee motivation. These elements and implementations were discussed in “RQ 1”, as a change in the leadership style (discussed from the leader's perspective). The high-level needs solicited from the employees was a remote work environment characterized with more social interaction to balance out the loneliness from being
isolated, more focus from leaders to feel recognized and heard, more freedom with the trust of increased responsibility and being rewarded for their achievement. Furthermore, the leaders managed to address the employee motivation through redefining their goals and breaking them into smaller increments to avoid adding additional pressure to their employees.
7.0 Discussion

7.1 Contributions

This research makes an important contribution to future research on the effects that remote work has on employees and their motivation towards work. Primarily, in comparison to prior literature and studies, this research has the aim to answer how remote work has affected employee motivation, and how future companies can utilize this research as a guideline for future scenarios such as this one. While the Covid-19 pandemic, has forced most of the industries, companies and nations to move operations and work remotely, this has opened opportunities for organizations of the future to remove the physical office, and instead hire and have their employees located at home or at another location. While the research has focused on employee's motivation, the report has been successful in presenting the data on how efficiency and attitude has changed as well.

7.2 Practical Implications

From an exploratory perspective, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the empirical findings in this study explain how remote work affects leadership style and employee motivation. For leaders it entails, conducting assessment of the organization's status (get feedback of employee's mental health), adaptation of new technology and work approaches, active and constant feedback, and making motivative attempts for employees' mental health are particularly important elements when avoiding the negative effects and challenges of remote work.

7.3 Limitations

Time limitation: First of all, this study focuses on the organization's time scale of one year after the occurrence of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The long-term impact of remote work still requires in-depth long-term observation and scientific quantitative indicators. At the same time as a theoretical excavation for a special phenomenon, long-term research and feedback also play a constructive role in the birth of a potential future theory on the subject. The response from interviewees provides sufficient substance and insight for the purpose of the initial study, which is investigating the change in leadership styles resulting from remote work and to investigate if it has affected employee motivation. However, further research for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of remote work, requires more variables to that can explain this phenomenon further, for instance specific organizational performances such as annual profit statements and a clinical employee mental health evaluation.

Language Barrier: Secondly, there are implications since some of the interviews were held in different languages to make it simple for the participants. By having to translate the interviews there are risks that the content might be lost in translation, and that some of the answers provided, could be misinterpreted, and presented incorrectly, making the research unreliable
with low credibility. In addition to the answers provided, the questions were also difficult to translate to achieve the same answers.

Covid-19: Given the recent implications of the global Covid-19 pandemic, there has been implications and limitations on how the authors has been able to approach the collection of data and the contact with companies related to the research. Initially, the plan to interview all participants face-to-face was disrupted due to the social distancing laws and interviews were therefore forced to be either online via virtual camera tools, or through phone calls. As a result, it became more difficult for the interviewers to understand and catch the body language, and signs that can usually be identified throughout a physical interview. With interviews moving from face-to-face, the credibility of understanding all of the aspects, and answers are therefore worsened, which would be an implication for the data collection.

7.4 Future Research

The research conducted by the authors in this study, has been focusing on the implications that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on companies that have not gone through digital transformation prior to the pandemic. The broad study topics and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, provides a variety of possibilities for researching remote long-term remote work and remote leadership style in the future and the internal motivation system of the organization. Remote work has contributed to a possible negative impact on employee motivation and the inspiration of leadership style transformation. This cannot be concluded with certainty due to the limitations of the study. However, it has opened a window opportunity for a more in-depth research in a variety of subjects, including but not limited to management, psychology, and communication, all within the scope of remote work. For example, according to the research time scale mentioned in the limitations part, this study can provide possible research designs and approaches for long-term organizational observation and tracking interviews in the future for follow-ups. At the same time, this study draws a conclusion as a short-term or initial remote office learning, and it can also provide reliable organizational feedback for future theoretical improvement.

Additionally, this study focuses on the impact mechanism of remote work on different levels of the organization rather than the negative macro-environmental factors of the Covid-19 pandemic itself. The long-term research on the driving force of the pandemic on remote work development, could get possible inspiration from this study.
8.0 References


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9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1. GDPR Thesis Study Consent Form

*Required by European Union General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679*

The GDPR consent form should always be accompanied by a Participant Information Sheet [see JIBS' guidelines at the end of this template]

GDPR Consent for [thesis title]

Please tick the appropriate boxes

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<td>I consent to JIBS processing my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.</td>
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<td>I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.</td>
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My signature below indicates that I choose to take part in the thesis study and consent to JIBS treating my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.

_______________________ _____________________ __________
Name of participant [IN CAPITALS] Signature Date

**Thesis contact details for further information**

[Name, phone number, email address]
This is a template to assist thesis students in the design of their GDPR consent form. You may adapt this template to the requirements of your particular project, using the notes and suggestions provided. The below information should always be included in any GDPR consent form on paper and as text in a web survey when personal data is processed within the framework of thesis work at JIBS. When using a web survey, add a box to the survey and a hyperlink to the survey, followed by this text: I choose to take part in the thesis study and consent to JIBS processing my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation.
Appendix 2: Interview Questions

The interviews are defined in beforehand for clarity.

- Is it OK if we record this following interview session?

Questions regarding the participant
1. What is your job role/position?
2. How long have you worked in your current company?

Questions Overall how business conduction has changed
3. How was business conducted, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic?
4. How was business conducted, during the Covid-19 pandemic?
5. What are the biggest changes that have been implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic inside of the organization?
6. Have there been any challenges working from home?
7. Have you noticed any general organizational atmosphere changes since the launching of remote work?

Questions regarding leadership style
8. Prior to remote working, was your leadership strict and monitoring, or was it relaxed and free?
9. Do you feel like your leadership style has changed as a result of leading your employees remotely?
10. Has your level of supervision increased due to remotely working staff?
11. Do you feel like employee attitude and motivation for work have changed?
12. What do you personally think is the most important element of motivating your employees during the pandemic?
13. Have you tried attempting to get feedback on employees’ needs?
Appendix 3: Bonus Questions from Employee Perspective

The interview with employee participants includes same questions as in Appendix 3: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Questions regarding employee's motivation during remote work

1. Have there been challenges working from home?
2. Do you feel like you are easily distracted by other stimuli when working remotely?
3. Do you experience that increased monitoring and supervision are going to make you more motivated or more discouraged?
4. Do you consider social interaction (family, friends) as a distracting or supporting factor when you work remotely?
5. How has the implementation of remote work affected your level of motivation towards work?
6. Do you feel more controlled or freer to conduct work?
7. Are there any motivational implementations made by the managers that you’ve felt?
8. What actions from leaders would make you feel more motivated when working remotely?
9. Has isolation from coworkers and peers affected your work-motivation?
10. How do you feel your relationship with co-workers has been affected in terms of social interactions?
Appendix 4. The Principles of the MRS Code of Conduct

1. Researchers shall ensure that participation in their activities is based on voluntary informed consent.

2. Researchers shall be straightforward and honest in all their professional and business relationships.

3. Researchers shall be transparent as to the subject and purpose of data collection.

4. Researchers shall respect the confidentiality of information collected in their professional activities.

5. Researchers shall respect the rights and well-being of all individuals.

6. Researchers shall ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by their professional activities.

7. Researchers shall balance the needs of individuals, clients, and their professional activities.

8. Researchers shall exercise independent professional judgement in the design, conduct and reporting of their professional activities.

9. Researchers shall ensure that their professional activities are conducted by persons with appropriate training, qualifications and experience.

10. Researchers shall protect the reputation and integrity of the profession.