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**Changing Work Pattern in Companies in the
Context of Covid-19 Pandemic**

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Abstract

This study is about investigation of the practices of two organisations/companies in terms of remote working within the context of the covid 19 pandemic. The study thus explored how the companies facilitated and enabled their employees to work from home as a response. Having a qualitative approach and based on in-depth interviews with different levels of employees at one Swedish and one Finnish company, the study presents the detailed processes of the transition having a prior, during and post transitional context in account. The study adopts the ‘Managing for the Unexpected’ as a theoretical departure point to analyse and contextualise the findings as pioneered by Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013). Findings revealed whether companies adopted a proactive or reactive approach determines the outcome of such practices. The company that adopted a proactive approach have been able to start adapting to the pandemic context at an early stage with a range of strategies. While the other one showed reactive approach and adjusted accordingly as things developed with comparatively different qualitative outcomes in employees’ motivation. This study is evidence of how rapid observation of issues and finding solutions are critical during crises. Furthermore, it demonstrates that mandating the decision-making to people who have experience and ensuring that a wide variety of aspects have been considered and prioritising the front-line employees can help managing unexpected events easier. The study offers an impression how the concept of organisation and/or companies is shifting making us to think more and more the virtual dimensions of it. The study concludes with the significance of similar study at a scale to have robust understanding of the process that can enable to generate general theories on work practices in the context of emergencies.

Keywords:

Working Remotely, Facilitation, Transition, Covid-19, Managing the Unexpected

Introduction

Organisations or companies mostly operate in physical office spaces offering a suitable environment for their employees to encourage them to do their best while performing their tasks. Covid 19 has made a breakthrough in this practice. Remote working has emerged as a new normal. Although such remote work varied greatly depending on the sector and occupation (Fana et al., 2020), remote working was not widespread before the Covid-19 pandemic (Wang et al., 2021). Prior to the pandemic, it has been mostly practised in high intensive knowledge companies and in ICT- services (Milasi et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021) and the number of remote workers was quite low in administrative and support services (Milasi et al., 2020). As pandemic like covid 19 fostered a significant change the way companies operate, it becomes an interesting area of study as a whole.

Since the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic in 2019, working from home (remotely) has become the most common pattern for millions of people in all over the world specially in EU countries (Milasi et al., 2020). Through remote working people can do their jobs from a location of their convenient being away from their physical offices and work stations without necessarily having physical contact with their managers, colleagues and co-workers. This kind of work is defined as “flexible work arrangement” as well (Wang et al., 2021, p17). Working

remotely is defined as an “arrangement in which employees work from home or convenient locations instead of commuting to a central work location, using information and communication technologies to interact with co-workers and clients” (Flores, 2019; p 40).

It is obvious that working from home or remote working helped companies and organisations deal with the consequences of the lockdown and restrictions implemented by governments due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Flores, 2019). Although it emerged as a new practice with opportunities that have never been seen before, there are challenges that have been faced by the organisations. These challenges are related to facilitating the transition to remote work, and at the same time to facilitate and track the performance of tasks for the organisation’s members. Weinert et al. (2014) consider that working in the office is crucial for IT workers because they need to be able to manage and keep up with the growth and development of the information system and technology. And working remotely can be challenging for workers because of social isolation, lack of information, and work overload (Weinert et al., 2014). This in turn implies that organisation should collaborate, harmonise, and react similarly to working in the office before the pandemic.

Flores (2019) stated that companies that integrated working remotely into their systems discovered new possibilities. Especially in large organisations, working remotely offered more flexibility in the production process. Flores (2019) also considers that this kind of work can generate benefits for both employees and organisations, and organisations that adopted this kind of remote working in their system could increase their efficiency in comparison to those companies that did not. Communication in this kind of remote working mostly take place through emails, phone calls, messages, and audio conferences. This means employees requires additional skill to organise tasks, solve issues and finetune technical problems to ensure continuity (Flores, 2019).

In Sweden, collective responsibility has been taken to reduce the spread of the pandemic under the guidance of the Public Health Agency of Sweden (hereafter PHAS,2020). The PHAS announced many recommendations and warnings for employers and companies in March 2020. The Agency recommended that employers and companies facilitate working from home for employees to avoid the infection, and to contain the spreading of the Covid-19 virus.¹ Accordingly, most companies moved from companies’ headquarters to work from home. However, strict lockdown has never been practiced in Sweden. The National Institute for Health and Welfare in Finland recommended people consider social distancing in March 2020. These recommendations were followed by declaring a state of emergency and enacting emergency laws by the Finnish government. These procedures affected people's social and work lives, changed the work manner of thousands of people, and forced them to work remotely from home (Oksanen et al., 2021). Question remains on how such changes punctuated by the pandemic impacted at the organisational level specially at the working modality? There is a strong vacuum of knowledge with enough empirical evidence. The proposed study fills in that gap partly.

¹ Information retrieved 18 February 2022 from: <https://www.krisinformation.se/en/hazards-and-risks/disasters-and-incidents/2020/official-information-on-the-new-coronavirus>

Study Purpose and Research Question

With this background note, the purpose of this research study is to investigate the procedures and applications initiated by organisations to shift their working place from offices to be in a remote setting due to the pandemic. This transition has been facilitated by organisations at different times and at different levels, and by using different methods while having different consequences. The focus will be on how the managers, employees, and top management have worked together to create and implement those solutions that pushed them to work remotely and how they responded, communicated, collaborated, and solved issues in this transition. Studying this change would be interesting because this pattern of work started to be the new normal which has remained understudied. It will supplement the present body of literature with more insights about working remotely and how this kind of work can be better managed and facilitated. Furthermore, this study might be a reference for companies and organisations that are going through the duality in decisions about which modality they should prefer for their employees, production and services. In this vein, the study will engage with only two companies pseudonymised as EMS and MIDS where EMS is a Swedish company and MIDS is a Finnish one. The overall research question is:

How have companies facilitated the change from physical workplaces to remote settings due to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Literature review

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic led companies to consider remote work as an aid that can be a solution for work issues caused by crises and unexpected obstacles, that related to human activities (Flores, 2019). The considerable technological development made it possible for companies to adopt this kind of work to help their employees to work from home (Flores, 2019). To adapt to this change, many organisations started to develop their infrastructure by providing tools and equipment to be able to digitise their activities and data (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021). According to Milasi et al. (2020), this transition caused a significant effect on people's work behaviour and the way they are working (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021). Furthermore, this change in working manner highlighted concerns among employees and managers about the risk of remote work due to limited face-to-face activities (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020). Pressing challenges of working remotely are, as found by Flores (2019) in his study: the need to interact, collaborate, and communicate with other people in the organisation, making technology work, separating work from personal life, knowing about developments and opportunities in the company, having guidance on completing and continue doing tasks and duties, contacting managers and getting help and feedback from them.

Through time, companies were forced to decentralize their working locations for several reasons. Some of those reasons are the increasing cost of transportation in urban areas. According to Nilles (1975), the cost of adopting the telecommunication network that can give the opportunity to an information industry to work remotely is equal to the transportation cost for the organisation's members to commute to work. This high cost of commuting necessitates that the employer should at least share some of the transportation costs or offer higher wages in addition to other benefits (Nilles, 1975). Staff costs, in addition to other expenses like renting office spaces, made the expenditures three times higher which in turn led to change in the

organisation structure, and adopt teleworking as a viable and economic solution (Nilles, 1975). The second reason for decentralisation and working remotely was the oil crisis. Because of the high prices of oil and the unavailability of oil products commuting to the workplace from a long distance became an issue. This also led to adopting the remote work and affected organisations (Baily & Kurland, 2002; Nilles, 1975).

Di Martino and Wirth (1990, p530) defined working remotely as “work carried out in a location where remote from central offices or production facilities, the worker has no personal contact with co-workers there, but is able to communicate with them using new technology”. According to Franken et al. (2021), many obstacles emerged because of adopting remote work. Companies were not able to adapt to all changes that were imposed because of those unexpected events. This fast change in the work conditions in addition to less physical contact between employees, managers, and the organisation itself led to different issues and challenges. Organisations faced issues related to resilience, development and sustaining the employees, organisation's welfare, and survival issues (Franken et al., 2021).

According to Franken et al. (2021), during working remotely, employees faced challenges in communicating and interacting with each other. Managers also had difficulties finding new ways to support employees and interact with them. The most critical challenge was that face-to-face communication is no longer available and accordingly managers have to design proper communication channels and provide technical support and ensure that all needs, resources, and requirements for working remotely were met (Franken et al., 2021). Managers should also maintain the organisation structure by enhancing the feeling that employees are working within the organisation and ensuring teamwork and strong leadership. Some other issues of working remotely were related to having a space to create a home office and ensuring necessary tools and equipment that enable the organisation's members to work from home (Franken et al., 2021). The management should also encourage informal communication among employees to keep morale and team relations by creating other ways of communication (Franken et al, 2021). Some studies noted several concerns about working remotely. According to Franken et al. (2021) "feeling isolated, both personally and professionally" (p1140) are some of the major challenges experienced during remote working. DI Martino and Wirth (1990) similarly argued that working remotely can increase social isolation and marginalisation, cause more stress and pressure for workers, and may expose them to exploitation. Baily and Kurland (2002) also expressed some concerns such as managerial control and loyalty to the firm. Furthermore, working remotely can increase inequality in the job market, and deteriorating working conditions and their job security (DI Martino & Wirth, 1990). In addition, Baily and Kurland (2002) consider that employees who work remotely are no longer visible in the workplace, remain forgotten in the distribution of official information, and get bad evaluations.

Theoretical Framework

The Managing for the Unexpected (hereafter MfU) theory as pioneered by Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) offers an interesting insight and framework to understand such changes that we are talking about in this research which are emerging from an unexpected situation due to the covid 19 pandemic. The theory recommends companies to consider different aspects while they face unexpected events that emerge from crises and treat those events by taking

proper procedures that in turn can contribute to the companies' survival with as less damages as possible. In addition, the MfU theory offers a rationalistic space for analysing data about practices made by companies during the Covid-19 pandemic and even when few other pandemics like Monkeypox virus is knocking at the door.

Managing for the Unexpected

Managing the unexpected requires a high level of awareness to observe small disturbances and vulnerabilities at the very beginning and to understand the consequences of these failures (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Authors consider that crises, accidents, and adverse events are not unavoidable, they occur because of mistreating and misjudging small problems and lapses. Accordingly, when crises and disasters occur, weaknesses emerge and become clearer in organisations (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). Consequently, the organisation's ability to manage the unexpected and to deal with those extreme incidents are dependent on procedures made by the organisation before a crisis. Weick and Sutcliffe, (2011) consider that "the ability to deal with a crisis situation is largely dependent on the structures that have been developed before chaos arrives" (p3). Those procedures involve routines and special resources that can help the organisation's members treat disruptions resulting from the crises (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). In this sense, practices help in turning the concern about failure, easiness, resilience, and expertise into routines that in turn can reduce and relieve misunderstanding, misestimation, and misspecification. Those practices strive to keep continuous attention on the unexpected (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). According to Weick and Sutcliffe, (2011), "expectations provide a significant infrastructure for everyday life. They are like a routine that suggests the probable course of events" (p25). Accordingly, when the organisation deals consciously with those symptoms while they are in the cradle the organisation will be able to avoid unexpected incidents and will have more options to deal with those issues. Sutcliffe and Christianson, (2013) stated, "issues of alertness, awareness, and action underpin an organisation's ability to manage the unexpected" (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; p3).

It is crucial for organisations to have the continuing mindful practice that helps in reducing the cruelty and frequency of crises, accelerates recovery, makes learning from extreme situations easier (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011), and learn from the successes and failures they face, and from others' experiences (Eastburn et al., 2011). But in general, the organisation's members should focus on failures instead of focusing on success (Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). Furthermore, Weick and Sutcliffe, (2011) noted that mindfulness helps organisations in a way that they enable to better observe the unexpected issues at the very initial stage that impede their progress, and then they will focus on how to keep the unexpected consequences under control. This mindfulness processes will become regular routine that produce and reproduce actions to manage the unexpected. In case organisations are not able to contain the unexpected, they will focus on resilience, and restore the system (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). Thinking mindfully helps organisations maintain mental function that will be continually updated and deeply interpret the context, defines problems, and what can help in containing them (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011).

Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) described seven key abilities that can enable competent action in an organisation to manage the unexpected, these key abilities are

considered as **the Capability Model for Managing the Unexpected** of Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) which are attempted to be described hereafter in a consolidated manner:

The first key ability is allocating attention: Organisations should be aware and allocate attention to be able to manage the unexpected (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Accordingly, Weick and Sutcliffe, (2011) consider that when crises occur, organisations should invest considerable amount of time in investigating issues. Attention can be allocated in two ways proactively or reactively. The first approach (proactively) means that the organisation will allocate attention to checking carefully their environment looking for problems and lapses. As noted by them, "the more attention top management directs to active scanning, the better the recognition of problems, threats, or changes" (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; p2). While the second approach (reactively) indicates that the allocation of attention is a response to a stimulus. Moreover, attention should be allocated from different levels of the organisation to enable the organisation's members to observe small problems proactively and reactively before they become big and crucial problems (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) consider that "when the flow of attention within teams of frontline workers is managed and coordinated, a balance is achieved then the team members can both attend to their individual tasks and to the collective work of the team" (p2). Thus, more control over the context can be achieved (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011).

The second key ability is sense-making: Sensemaking is an important factor in managing the unexpected, this in turn means that the organisation's members should invest time discussing what are the proper procedures to be applied to an unexpected event, and consider what is really happening (Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). According to Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013), the organisation needs to recognise the meaning of an incident to be able to know if it is a weak signal or discrepancy. The organisation also needs to understand what is happening, what could be going on, furthermore, what the observer anticipates happening (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). These mentioned factors are crucial because "cues and anomalies are not given by the situation — they are constructed and inferred" (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013, p2).

The third key ability is anomalising: Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) stated that to manage the unexpected the organisation should treat small failures as anomalous. Mindful organising will be more concerned about the anomaly "to become more alert to discrepant details, more able to hold on to those details, less likely to simplify those details into familiar events, and to become more aware of their significance" (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; p3). Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) and Weick and Sutcliffe (2011) suggest that the longer time that the organisation's members invest in investigating the failure by avoiding the simplification and developing varied expectations — the more accurate the understanding is about how they can react to the unexpected. Because less simplification gives the ability to see more (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). This in turn means that the organisation should examine anomalies deeper and treat them rapidly before they become unmanageable (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). In this sense, Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) consider that the mindful organising can be generated by institutionalise procedures and practices that encourage considerable awareness of crucial details and capability for action by investing more time in "a) examining failures to assess the health of the system, b) resisting the urge to simplify assumptions, c) observing

operations and their effects, d) developing resilience, and e) locating local expertise and creating a climate of deference to those experts" (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; p3). Thus, they enable the organisation to discover failures and react quickly (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

The fourth key ability is updating: It is critical for organisations to keep updating. This in turn enables the organisation to manage the unexpected easily. The organisation will be able to update the understanding of situations because situations may have evolved or changed during the time, or because the primary estimations are flawed. But engaging in updating is hard for the organisation's members especially if they have started to follow a particular way of understanding situations because in this case updating will be considered as a threat. Under threats "people tend to restrict information processing and constrict control" (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; p3). In this case, people will consider information that supports their hypotheses and reject facts that conflict with them (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013) as returning to established procedures gives a sense of safety (Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). Therefore, updating requires suspicion (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013) which is equivalent to "wisdom of doubt" that promotes people to reflect on new situations and avoid applying same solution to everything (Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). However, working in groups urges updating effectively, because groups can easily recognise the problem. Also, interactions can generate solutions to manage the unexpected (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

The fifth key ability is interacting and communicating: Studies confirm that a lot of communication and open communication are required to manage the unexpected. Increased level of communication improves the information base, generates new ideas about events, different points of view, more expertise, and increases the commitment to solutions, and taking the responsibility for decision and action (Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). According to Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) the organisation's design and culture have a crucial role in how the organisation's members can become alert and aware of problems because this design which is "(task and workflow interdependence and patterns of communication)" (p3) can affect individuals' awareness, and how they are linked to their awareness (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) stated that attention can be impacted by more controlled cognition which generates from mutual interdependence and mutual adjustment. Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) consider that "organizations are filled with ambiguous and messy details" (p3) and solving ambiguity in the organisation will pass through active listening, debate, and discussion. However, detecting and understanding anomalies require repeated procedures, and considerable communication and interaction. (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

The sixth key ability is containing the unexpected: Containing is the focal point in managing the unexpected, the word "contain" is meaning of "hold or encompass" and "restrain or control" which in turn requires skills of understanding and anticipating the boundaries of problems and how they can be contained, and skills to deal with those problems within their borders and to solve them. Organisations have different options to treat the unexpected, they can a) use an earlier routine, b) adjust an existing one to be proper to address unexpected incidents, or c) innovate new procedures. However, it will be easier and more effective for the organisation to enact completely new procedures to be able to deal with the unexpected. However, the organisation must be flexible and develop its procedures, because when problems

start they may look familiar but they may develop as unmanageable. And this in turn requires the application of new solutions. (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013)

The seventh key ability is resilience and the unexpected: Organisations should be flexible, able to recover from or to cope with dangers which became apparent (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). According to Weick and Sutcliffe, (2011), resilience is a unique combination that enables keeping errors small and improvising workarounds that allow an organisation to continue working. Usually, unexpected issues become salient before they are observed, and to deal with this case, organisations must develop their ability to face and bounce back from unexpected events (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Accordingly, procedures and dynamics that can create and keep resources such as cognition, emotion, relation, and structure in form of "sufficiently flexible, storable, convertible, and malleable" (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013, P. 4) generate resilience which in turn makes the organisation able to effectively deal and learn from the unexpected (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). In this sense, Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013) suggest that "processes, structures, and practices that promote competence, encourage growth, and enhance the efficacy improve organizational capabilities to mediate perturbations and strain" (p4). These mentioned abilities increase the organisation capabilities to understand, take procedures explain, and treat small contradictions at the time they emerged (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

All these key abilities collectively enable an organisation to manage unexpected events in a more structured and efficient way. The study would try to use these abilities as lens to understand the practices of the studied organisations.

Methodology

Data collection

The nature of this research asks for an in-depth exploration of the practices and people's opinions, experiences, and reactions. Thus, a qualitative approach has been adopted to meet the objectives of the research. This method allows the researcher to collect data by interacting with the interviewee to understand and get more insights into the variety of the interviewee's skills and experiences (Silverman, 2019), and to get more knowledge about the world from the interviewees' points of view (Kvale, 2006).

However, I have also relied on other sources to enhance the reliability and validity of the information collected. As Bowen (2009) suggests that the researcher is expected to collect data from multiple resources, at least from two resources to seek convergence and corroboration. Accordingly, primary data has been collected through semi-structured interviews with people who are working at different levels and positions in two companies (EMS and MIDS). As Silverman (2019) noted, the interviewer role should not be passive in research. I have actively performed in this process of data collection from beginning to the end (i.e. developing the interview guidelines to conduction of the interviews to transcription and transcribing to the data analysis, taking notes during the interview, coding, and writing) To make sure of the interview questions and the data that can be resulted from these questions, I performed three trial interviews with two managers from different companies, and an employee

from a third company, before initiating the interviews with EMS or MIDS. In total sixteen interviews have been collected from two companies (EMS & MIDS), ten interviews from EMS, and six interviews from MIDS. Of the total interviews done with EMS, five interviews were with managers, and five interviews were with staff. Out of six interviews done with MIDS, four were with managers and two interviews were with staff.

Secondary data has been collected by reviewing the documents I got from both organisations (EMS & MIDS). According to Bowen (2009), documents are an important source that can provide more data about the context that research participants worked in, documents also can provide information about what happened in a specific period, or can help the researcher to understand the circumstances of specific issues which are under investigation. In my case, these documents gave me an understanding of the context that both organisations worked in, and I could collect more data about what have happened while the organisation EMS was transitioning to work remotely and the assessments they made about working remotely. And how the organisation MIDS managed remote work and the transition to work from home. These documents complemented the data gathered through semi-structured interviews and helped the researcher of this study to examine, validate, and to ensure triangulation with the primary data.

However, more focus was exerted to collect data through qualitative interviews, as they provided in-depth insights into what happened before, during, and after the pandemic. Nineteen interviews have been conducted in total. All the interviews were conducted online using the Zoom platform. The minimum duration of the interviews was 52 minutes and the maximum duration was 78 minutes where the average duration of the interviews was 65 minutes. The number of interviews was not fixed prior to the interviews. I have stopped at a point when no such diverse and new responses were appearing which is often known as data saturation. Most of the interviewees were open and positive, responded to questions in detail, and responded to cross information.

As informed earlier, participants in this study were about fifty percent managers from different levels and about fifty percent employees who have different positions and missions. Participants from both organisations helped in accessing relevant people to participate in this research study, they sent recommendation emails to their colleagues and copied me in these emails. In addition, participants offered the researcher opportunities to have additional interviews and to get more clarifications by responding to emails after having interviews. Altogether I was able to generate a rich set of data that have allowed me to understand in detail the practice, and processes, investigate and follow events, and make comparisons.

Data analysis

Grounded theory methods have been considered to analyse the empirical data. According to Charmaz (1996), grounded theory is proper to study “individual processes, interpersonal relations and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes” which in turn is helpful to study social issues like personal experience, attraction, cooperation, motivation, and emotions. Charmaz (1996) noted that grounded theory provides interpretative analyses that consider the life experiences of a specific group of people and exert efforts to

have a description, explanation, and understanding of this group. In this sense, the researcher of this study will be able to consider micro details because these methods rely on knowledge from the inside events. This means, that grounded theory gives the researcher the opportunity to start and develop analyses from interviewees' points of view, and to describe the interviewees' feelings, actions, situations, and thoughts to grasp their worlds (Charmaz, 1996). The researcher will also be able to make sense of how those people build and develop their experiences through their beliefs, feelings, actions, and interaction. (Charmaz, 1996)

Transcribing recordings helped the researcher to have more understanding of the collected data. During the transcribing process, the researcher could recognise micro differences and details of participants' meanings and experiences, understand participants' feelings and views, and live these interviews again. These previously mentioned factors are in the shade of Charmaz, (1996).

To understand and identify the collected data, the researcher started with coding, according to Charmaz (1996), “qualitative grounded theory coding means creating the codes as you study your data” (P. 37). The coding process started by examining the data line-by-line and defining practices, processes, events, and actions, and giving names to these aspects (Charmaz, 1996). This coding process helped the researcher to connect the data to the research question and to trace the data related to work practices, transition, and facilitation of remote work. Furthermore, coding the data helped in initiating and building the analysis. After this stage of coding line-by-line, the researcher started to gather those detailed and small codes under the main codes to be able to treat those codes conceptually and analytically Charmaz (1996). Furthermore, the researcher will consider the Managing for the Unexpected theory and the sequence of the *capability model* to analyse the data collected.

Ethical considerations

It is crucial in any research study that researchers apply appropriate ethical principles. When the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews the anxiety about ethical issues emerges and becomes clearer (Mohd Arifin, 2018). There are a lot of concerns about these principles particularly in a qualitative study, because of the in-depth nature of the research procedure and process in qualitative studies (Mohd Arifin, 2018). In addition, Kvale (2006), pointed out that the interviewer may manipulate and use ambiguity to collect information without letting the interviewee know what he/ she is after (Kvale, 2006). Furthermore, Kvale (2006), has referred to the asymmetry of the distribution of power between the interviewer and interviewee, in this sense Kvale (2006) highlighted that the interviewer has more power than the interviewee because the interviewer puts questions, rules the interview and decides the topic.

In this research study, I have followed the standard ethical procedures from the beginning to the end. At the very beginning, I sent the participants a consent agreement via email that consists of a comprehensive explanation of the data collection process, the purpose of the study, and the scope and extent of the research. Furthermore, they were also informed that they are anonymous in the study and their participation is voluntary. Participants have been assured that there is no possible harm they may face in this study and they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences and without needing an explanation.

Participants were informed also that they are free to decline to answer any particular question they do not wish to answer for any reason, and their consent to record the interview was also ensured. All inquiries and concerns were addressed before participants confirmed their participation. To make the participant aware of the asked question they were informed that they could ask for clarifications about this research study. The researcher will also share the final report with the participants once it is ready to make them aware of how the information was used.

Limitations

This study investigated the transition to work remotely made by two companies due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that the outcome of this study cannot be generalised to other companies in other sectors or in the Nordic context. However, the findings still offer a range of insights which are crucial both empirically and theoretically.

Empirical Findings

This research study has been done when the pandemic has already been there for two and half years. The studied organisations have had a remote working nature for about two years by the time I interviewed. Interviewees shared their experiences about a) how they did manage before the pandemic, b) during the transition, and c) during the remote arrangement. In the next few sections of this chapter, I am going to organise the findings based on these three subsections that emerged from the interviews.

Working practices before the pandemic

Working pattern in the office

EMS

The organization EMS had normal working days, and employees worked in the office most of their time before the pandemic. But it was possible for them to work from home before the pandemic in case they wished and only one day a week. The aim of working from home before the pandemic was only to have more focus on a specific case or on the performance of a particular case, at this time they did not have a need to communicate with their colleagues or managers, but if there was something urgent, they could have a quick call. This in turn indicates that there was no much interest to work remotely or away from the organization's headquarters. In general, the organisation's offices have different characteristics and were equipped with all means that allow employees to perform the work and achieve tasks easily such as high-speed internet, printers, and computers. While the organisation's members worked in the office before the pandemic, they relied mainly on the deliberation of physical documents.

“In the office, we had everything needed to get the job done. We had desks, desk chairs, and access to printers and WiFi [...] We exchanged a lot of documents, I was forced to print out all decisions and many other documents, I had checklists and all that stuff.” (Annika)

Cooperation in the office led to the facilitation

The organisation's members had the opportunity to work close to each other, and they were able to know about each other's perspectives when they worked in the office (Karin). The organisation's members collaborated to achieve their tasks and to find solutions for problems and issues. Colleagues met during the whole day, they could always have small and side discussions about tasks and cases they worked on. The organisation's members worked together in small groups and big groups, they also had joint workshops. In addition, they were able to exchange knowledge and experiences and get feedback from each other. They discussed the cases that they worked on and made the decision together. Employees in this organisation could always go between rooms and units in the organisation to meet each other, to ask about having for instance a signature of a workmate, or to hand over a document. All above-mentioned cooperation processes indicate that this organisation's members had a lot of communications and interactions, and good relationships among them that led to motivating working days and easier performing tasks.

Social activities in the office

Having a break is a lovely and appreciated thing among the organisation's members while they were working in the office before the pandemic. They met in the break room for drinking coffee or having lunch. At the coffee machines employees could have various subjects to consider. People in this organisation had good relationships, they talked to each other and discussed the task that they were doing, news, and social issues. They could also check if it was for instance possible for their colleagues to attend a meeting and they were able to get a quick response about different matters. Employees could have a lot of random discussions and meetings during break times. In addition, they could have short walking and physical relaxation. Going to the break room could somewhat facilitate the work for employees and made the working process quicker.

“We had the opportunity to talk about different topics at the coffee machine. It was possible for us to rapidly solve small issues related to the job during the break, this kind of meeting can give further dimensions” (Margareta)

Having and managing meetings in the office

While spontaneous communication among employees was common in the organisation, the spontaneous communication with managers was somewhat limited, employees in this organisation (EMS) met their managers in meetings that were decided in advance, those meetings were called, for instance, unite meetings, follow-up meetings, and update meetings. Employees and managers in this organisation had the meetings in conference rooms in the same building that they are working in, these rooms were equipped with a projector, a whiteboard, and speakers, that in turn indicates that the organisation considered all needs to manage meeting successfully. Meetings with outsiders have taken place in the organisation headquarters or in other locations. This is depending on the case and the situation. People in this organisation had a high level of communication and interaction, they often preferred to walk between rooms to confirm personally with colleagues about different issues such as attending meetings though they were able to send an email or make a call, which in turn enabled them to achieve tasks quicker.

During physical meetings, participants can see each other and thus body language, expressions and approach help to grasp things better and quickly. It is also possible to start the meeting from any point because the purpose of the meeting is known in advance. The meeting leader is able to ask questions and get a quick response from attendees in a physical meeting. The participants also had a scope to present, or start a discussion and even join others' discussions, which means that everyone has the opportunity to participate. It was common to see that most attendees collaborate and discuss to get the best outcome of the meeting.

“In physical meetings, there is a room for everyone to participate. In addition, it is easy to use body language and to see people's impressions and emotions” (Karin & Kajsa)

MIDS

Working in the office and its features

The staff of the company MIDS worked full time in the office before the pandemic, despite the fact that the company is working on digital solutions but they did not have any task to be achieved somewhere else outside the office. The office is equipped with everything that employees needed to achieve their job, they had desks, displaying devices of different sizes, laptops, workstations², desk chairs, group rooms, etc. Managers and employees had all meetings together with clients while they worked in the office. But because the company has clients in several countries, sometimes only the client could attend the meeting on a video call, otherwise, all meetings were planned and scheduled physically in the office. Employees in MIDS had a Recreation Committee that was coordinating and planning fun activities in the company and organised the celebrations of various occasions. In general, all activities, meetings, and work have been done in the company headquarters.

“So before the pandemic, the entire team was together on one floor, basically in the same large room. And during a normal day, my meetings would be either online, because we have international customers, so they would be remote calls or video calls. But those teams that are working together for those projects would normally be in the same place, I mean in the office.” (Leevi)

Cooperation and interaction

The staff in this company worked together on one big floor location, they worked as an integrated group. People in this company (MIDS) interacted and collaborated with each other every day, they had a high level of cooperation and a lot of interactions at various levels, they worked often in groups to achieve their tasks, and solve problems. During working hours employees had a lot of random and spontaneous discussions because they worked on many projects at the same time. They moved forth and back within this big office to discuss with other groups and colleagues, to help each other, to agree on solutions, and to address some

² Workstations are desktop PCs designed to handle demanding workflows such as data science, 3D design, video editing, and engineering (www.hp.com)

issues. According to Mikko who works there “in our work two heads are always better than one”.

Managers in this company worked very close to their employees, they could go in person to talk to their employees, give them instructions, listen to the ongoing discussions and add to those discussions, furthermore, they participated in finding solutions and in solving problems for the same group of employees or between many groups when they were working in the office. By working in this way, managers were able to solve problems quickly, answer employees’ questions, and speed up the achievement of the work. Furthermore, this working pattern gave managers the ability to make decisions quickly. Besides this, when managers were working in the office, they could know how the team members were feeling without asking them, then if any employee was in a bad mood, faced difficulties in his work, or even if they had a private issue, then managers could work on finding solutions. Because of these various activities in the workplace, managers and employees were able to achieve their jobs on time, correct mistakes, and mitigate the consequences of wrong decisions rapidly.

“Before the pandemic, we had a lot of walk over to employees' desks. It took a few seconds to go over and ask a question, hear the discussion going on, I had the opportunity to act on that discussion, or to add to that discussion, we could solve issues quickly [...] We had high cooperation and a lot of interactions in the office because employees were working in the same place and they collaborated to achieve the tasks” (Mikko)

Meetings and facilitation

In this company, managers did not need to book follow-up meetings because this can happen spontaneously and at any time, and it is because managers also were working close to their employees and were going around and talking to them. But when they had big meetings, they could send an email and wait until all intended people had responded and confirmed their attendance. In physical meetings, the company had someone who is taking meeting minutes and everything that is said during the meeting has been written down. In general, managers in this company appreciated physical meetings because they could use body language, and observe attendees' feelings and their facial impressions. Managers think that in the physical meeting there was always a scope for more discussions and interactions, which helped them to unfold issues and solve them.

“We had physical meetings before the pandemic, we could have a discussion about the meeting subject. In physical meetings, I could have a discussion with a specific group of people in the meeting while other people were discussing in small groups [...] In physical meetings there was always room for more discussion” (Leevi)

The outbreak of the pandemic

EMS

The pandemic effects on the organisation

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic caused high anxiety for the management team and employees in the EMS organisation. Many employees showed a willingness to stay home to avoid meeting people, particularly on the public transport. And some other people who are in risk groups³ had taken time off work. Those people made other employees more aware of the risk of commuting to the office during the pandemic and gave them the motivation to work remotely. Again, many employees started to ask for permission to work from home, which led to the number of people who wanted to stay at home increasing. During this time the situation was shrouded in mystery, and the management team started to have several meetings to discuss the situation and find solutions.

Taking procedures and finding solutions

The management team, general manager, and managers from different sections in the organisation started to review, discuss and analyse different possible scenarios. They made risk analyses of each scenario and defined obstacles and difficulties. After that, they found that working remotely is a proper solution to these obstacles to human activities caused by the pandemic. Then the management team made more assessments and risk analyses of this kind of work and they expected issues that might occur because of working remotely. Furthermore, they investigated how working remotely will affect the organisation and the people working there. They also considered the technical environment and their employees' needs, they prepared everything before taking the final decision. The management team made sure that they are ready to solve all issues that can be emerged. At that time employees constantly declared their concerns about working remotely, most of them thought that it was challenging, and they did not think that it would be possible to perform all tasks from home and to achieve them completely remotely. The preparation phase for remote work started two months ahead, and the management team took several procedures to enable the transition, treat employees' concerns, and face the consequences of working remotely.

“I worked sometimes at home before the pandemic but it was about having a focus on particular cases. I did not think that it is possible to work and do my job while I am sitting at home. I never imagined that one day I would work completely remotely.” (Margarita)

“The management team in our agency had a lot of meetings, they started planning and preparation for this transition two months ahead, they discussed different scenarios and made risk analyses, assessments and considered the consequences of each scenario ” (Krister)

One of those procedures is creating a group that is called the Pandemic Group. This group consists of employees and managers who are working in the EMS Agency. These people have been selected because of the variety of their experiences and skills which can help the organisation in facing issues that emerged because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim of this group is to take care of all issues, solve problems that can emerge due to the pandemic, and take appropriate decisions. This group started immediately to contact the Swedish Health

³ People who have chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes.

Agency and update the EMS Agency about the spread of the Covid-19 virus and infection cases, what the next step is for the Swedish Health Agency, and what will be applied henceforward. In addition, the Pandemic Group had contacts with other authorities and agencies and made coordination between those authorities and agencies and EMS Agency. The Pandemic Group had a crucial role in helping the organisation to survive and continue working during the pandemic, and in the transition to remote work, because this group always provided clarifications to EMS Agency about the Covid-19 pandemic, resolved the ambiguity that arose out of this emergency, and helped people in the organisation by always updating them and spreading the information quickly to relieve confusion.

The second procedure in the preparation phase was, the management team started to call for Employee Days meetings, the aim of those meetings is to show employees how they will work, attend digital meetings, collaborate, give recommendations of having a break, lead digital meetings, and what will be applied while people in this company are working remotely. Employees in EMS Agency had the opportunity to attend a meeting that was called Digital Handling Meeting. In this meeting, employees listened to a lecture and had training about how to create, participate in, and lead a digital meeting. The organisation adopted the Teams system as a communication tool. In this lecture, attendees were told about how to sign in to this system, which functions are available, and how those functions can be used, for instance how to join a meeting and how to create small groups when they have big meetings. After the lecture employees worked in small groups to practise using functions in the Teams system and to exchange experiences with each other since they had different levels of knowledge about using digital tools.

“We had the opportunity to attend a lecture about how the digital tools can be used. A theoretical lecture followed by a practical application about the use of digital tools such as Teams” (Rose Marie)

Another meeting was called Information Meeting. In this meeting the management team informed employees about how to work, collaborate and interact with each other, and how they will be supported while they are working remotely and during the digital meeting. In addition, the management team declared that the number of follow-ups and update meetings, and unit meetings will increase. And while employees work remotely, managers will always be available during working hours, thus employees can access their managers by sending them a message via Teams. Furthermore, the organisation’s members were also informed that they can borrow equipment and tools that they need to make them able to work at home. In this context, the organisation's members could borrow screens, desks, desk chairs, desktops, etc. During this meeting attendees had the opportunity to ask more questions about this new information, discuss different things and needs related to remote working, and get more clarifications about the management team’s expectations for the coming days.

“We had an information meeting during the preparation to work remotely. We got some instructions from the management team about collaboration and interaction when we will work at home. We got permission to borrow the tools and equipment we need. For me, it was important to lend a big screen and desk chairs” (Karin)

The third meeting was about the body and mental health, and how to maintain mental energy. In this meeting the management team showed two minutes films, in those films, there are instructions about taking breaks when employees are working at home. One of those films explained the importance of having physical relaxation during working remotely. Another one demonstrates ways that employees can have breaks, for instance, to go outside and walk for 15 minutes, and to talk to a friend or a colleague when she/ he walks. In this film, the general manager of the EMS agency appeared and told employees how they can have breaks. The general manager in this film was working and when it was time to have a break, he left the working place and went outside to walk around the building. The general manager told employees in this film that this is important to do when you work from home, in this way we will work when we are working at home. Then he said, “the best work position is your next work position” (Karin). After that the general manager was present in this meeting, he asked employees to try walking, to go together, and to walk around the building similar to what he did in the film. When they came back to the conference room, the management team did the same. They also had a walk around.

In this meeting, the management team announced that they hired a training instructor who lectured later about gymnastics and the importance of training for the body and mental health. Moreover, employees were informed about many features related to the body and mental health. *The first feature is*, that when employees are working from home they will have the opportunity to access Tappa App which is a health app that gives motivation to the user to increase their activities. This app measures the distance and accounts for the user’s steps. Every team in the organisation is present in this app, they will compete and challenge other teams in the organisation by walking long distances and recording more steps, then the winning team will be rewarded. *The second feature is*, that employees will have two opportunities every day to meet each other virtually and drink coffee, a half-hour in the morning and a half-hour in the afternoon. *The third one is* that employees were given additional hours on their wellness card that they have from the organisation. *The fourth one is* painting activities online, which gives them the opportunity to paint together but online. *The fifth feature is* to exercise in groups online and to get help from the training instructor hired by the organisation during the pandemic. In addition to many other advantages that will make working from home easier.

“The management scheduled a lot of activities that helped us to have physical relaxing and funny times, and we got many features that helped us when we worked from home and in addition to stay in touch with our colleagues and managers” (Ann-Britt)

MIDS

Reaction to the pandemic outbreak

The company MIDS had a different reaction to the circumstances that prevailed due to the pandemic. Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic the company followed the instructions of the National Institute for Health and Welfare in Finland, during this time the recommendations were about personal care and cleanliness, moreover, people should consider social distance. The company applied the government recommendations and always updated the staff in the organisation about new recommendations. During this time the company had

no expectations or plans for working from home, the management team did not think that in any case that the company would work remotely at least because of the nature of the work they do. Accordingly, employees continued working in the office, as usual, they had more focus on tasks they performed and were more concerned to keep the organisation working with consideration to the government recommendations. In general, neither employees nor the managers were willing to work remotely.

“Here in Finland, our recommendations have always been based on what the government recommendations have been. [...] There was not any discussion in either among the team or management team about working from home” (Leevi)

Working remotely

EMS

The organisation EMS decided to work remotely at the beginning of May 2020. Their decision was based on the recommendations of the Public Health Agency of Sweden. At this time everything was prepared and the organisation's members were ready to move to work from home completely. Employees allocated a place in their homes to work from, they equipped these places with materials they borrowed from the organisation. Working from home was something quite different from working in the office. At this time employees should perform their work while they are sitting at home, which means that they do not have any more physical connection with each other.

Facilitation

Creating Communication channels and the virtual work

The organisation's members communicated with each other digitally, at this time the communication occurred via Teams, phone calls, Zoom, and e-mails, depending on the case. Employees had communications via Teams during working hours, in the Teams system they had the main channel for all people in the organisation, and they had many other channels, in each channel, there was a group of people. If they needed any help then they could send a question via the chat function in Teams, they also could ask for a quick meeting via Teams to discuss a case. Employees made phone calls to communicate with each other when something was urgent, and in case they had problems in the connection to the internet or in accessing Teams or Zoom. The organisation's members used Zoom when they had something to do with someone from outside the organisation. The number of emails that were sent while working remotely increased because the organisation's members exchanged a lot of documents via email during the pandemic.

“When I worked remotely, if I had a question or needed any help then I had to write in the chat function in Teams or to make a phone call in case I had something urgent” (Annika)

The cooperation and interactions among employees were virtually through the communication channels they had. The cooperation among employees was bigger than in working in the office because it was easy to access people while they are working remotely.

They worked on different cases in groups, but it was in small groups and through channels created in Teams for this aim. Solving problems while employees worked from home needed making calls to describe the problem and then agree on solutions or to decide on a meeting to discuss the problem and find solutions; in addition, employees had the opportunity to include a manager in case it was needed. When someone faced an issue not relating directly to the case he/she was working on, then employees could contact the Pandemic Group or IT service center in the organisation who were always available and working in the place. At this time, employees no longer needed to print out the decisions, exchange physical documents, or have a checklist because almost everything in the organisation was digitised to make working from home easier.

Easier to contact managers

At the same time as the employees worked from home, the number of meetings for both employees and managers increased. The organisation's members had more meetings in comparison to the time before the pandemic. The number of follow-ups and update meetings increased and new kinds of meetings emerged all along working remotely, for instance, all employees together had three meetings a week only to meet and discuss in general anything they liked. These above-mentioned facts indicate that managers are more engaged in the work processes during remote work, they are ready and willing to treat issues quickly. Booking a meeting when everyone is working online went quickly, it was easier to book a meeting in the calendar. It did not take a long time to get confirmation from the participants about attending the meeting. It was about sending a message in the chat function and then getting a response.

The efficiency of the tools and procedures

While the organisation's members were working from home, they were able to book meetings the whole day i.e from 8:00 Am to 5:00 PM, on all working days from Monday to Friday. Starting the digital meeting was always on time without any delays, and participants were in the digital meeting room on time. This in turn means that tools and systems were assigned to facilitate working remotely and employees have no obstacles in using those tools. Digital meetings were more effective than physical meetings because the participants only discussed the topic for which they met without having side or social conversations this in turn helped in focusing on the meeting's subject.

Leading digital meetings

Leading the digital meeting required that the meeting leader go through the points and discuss them in order, and make sure that all points were covered. During the meeting, the meeting leader would direct questions to attendees to be able to know that everyone is aware of what the meeting is about and to encourage them to participate in the meeting. The meeting leader wanted to be sure that everyone was involved. Meeting with other people from outside the organisation required often sending an email to check the availability of intended people, or sometimes making a phone call. The meeting with outsiders always occurred via the Zoom platform and was managed in the same way similar to the meeting with insiders.

Having a break for coffee or lunch while working remotely is quite different from having a break while working in the office. Employees could not meet physically, they had the

coffee break virtually. Lunchtime was also different, some employees met virtually to make food while other employees met virtually to have lunch.

“In general we met virtually to have a break or lunch. I had to go to my kitchen to make my coffee instead of going to the coffee machine in the break room”
(Margaretta)

More procedures to ensure the facilitation

The general manager, management team, and the Pandemic Group showed extra concern and paid more attention to employees during the pandemic. In addition to the fact that the number of different kinds of meetings has increased, and managers were available at any time during working hours, they also had some meetings with employees to make sure that everything is going well in general. Furthermore, the management team decided to pay one thousand Swedish crowns for employees in 2020 to buy the equipment needed to make working from home easier. In 2021, employees were awarded two thousand Swedish crowns to buy additional stuff that can help them while they worked remotely, some employees stated that they bought a sun umbrella for the garden to be able to work outside when the sun is shining. And during 2022 the organisation’s members received a sum of three thousand Swedish crowns for more tools that can facilitate working from home. The organisation’s members had a schedule for social and recreational activities while they worked remotely, they had digital painting workshops, and during those workshops, they painted together and learned each other how to paint something. Employees also had collective training with help of training instructors to have better health. Moreover, they had plans to walk by using the Tappa health app.

MIDS

Moving to work remotely and the procedures made

The National Institute for Health and Welfare in Finland announced in March 2020 that the situation due to the pandemic is tough and working remotely is recommended. The organisation MIDS decided to work from home the day after. In the beginning, it was difficult for every member in the organisation to work from home, because basic needs like workstations, desks, desk chairs, and monitors were not available in their homes. Employees started to contact their managers and tell them about their needs to be able to work from home. At this time, the management team in the company had a meeting and decided to lend out things that employees needed. After that, the company's technical team took the responsibility to facilitate the communication among the organisation’s members, they created general channels and technical channels in Teams and Slack platforms that the organisation’s members could join to communicate and interact with each other. Through those channels employees communicated and worked with each other individually and in groups. If any employee needed help he/ she could send a message through the chat function and then some people who have experience with the question would respond and provide this person with solutions.

“Because our recommendations are based on government recommendations we did not have any idea to work outside our office, but in March the government

recommended companies in Finland to work from home. We moved to work from home the day after.” (Leevi)

“Initially, it was more difficult to work from home because I didn't have a lot of the equipment that I had in the office. So working from home was not as ideal, I preferred working in the office because I had much better equipment. So it was easier for me to work.” (Eevi)

Solving big issues required having contact with managers, supervisors, or the management team, depending on the situation and who could help to find solutions. Because the company did not plan for this transition and did not prepare to address issues that can emerge while the organisation’s members working remotely, at the beginning of working remotely managers in this company improvised to find solutions for daily issues. They worked together with employees to find and test different solutions, and then choose the proper solution to be developed and applied henceforward.

Facilitation by several kinds of meetings

The management team has created and developed a meetings matrix to be sure that all people and sections in the company will be in contact while they are working remotely (Document N.1). This meetings matrix consists of different types of meetings such as daily meetings, planning meetings, and update and follow-up meetings. All managers from different sections, top management, and employees are included in this matrix. The aim of those meetings is to have ongoing communication and to share information about activities that everyone did while working from home, present those activities in general, and highlight what is new. During those meetings employees and managers are required to share their experiences and highlight the best practices while they worked remotely and give tips. Attendees are also expected to talk about lessons learned from the project they are working on, the technology they are using, working practices, and everything else.

“In the management group, we have created a big matrix to make sure that we have all kinds of meetings. We need to make sure that we have a social cohesion and that we share ideas and best practices.” (Vaino)

“The information sharing and communication meetings are scheduled to give tips, share best practices, talk about lessons learned, and interesting new things will be shared during the meeting” (Document N. 2)

During the meeting, attendees are expected to mention what interesting things they found while they were working at home and what are the best tools. They were also required to present if there is something interesting from external resources. During those meetings, managers will work on improving teamwork and individual responsibility. Furthermore, managers are required to adopt new practices and implement those practices by giving employees trial tasks and asking them to use those new skills. Moreover, managers are required to coach, support, enable decision-making, and give employees the opportunity to learn more skills.

The management team also scheduled coffee meetings every day for one hour, thus employees had the opportunity to join and meet their colleagues during the coffee meeting. They are expected to talk to each other about ways they are working and how those ways affect the workflow. During those meetings, managers will ask attendees questions and will motivate

them to talk to each other. In addition, Managers will listen to employees' discussions. By listening to employees' discussions, managers aim to explore if there are any issues or mistakes to be addressed. In general, during coffee meetings, people can talk about work issues and everything else they like. At the same time, this kind of meeting is helpful for people who are living alone or who are working individually. In addition, it is helpful to enhance the feeling that they are a team, and there is no manager and employee.

“We have daily coffee meetings, it is one hour scheduled in everyone's calendar to get together. So there is a chance for everyone to discuss whatever they want and to talk also about work stuff. But I find that has been useful for some people who might be just at home alone.” (Leevi)

Different ways to lead digital meetings

Leading digital meetings differ from leading physical meetings. Managers started to be more social during the digital meeting, they also started to think more about their voice tone and be very polite because they are not as visible as before, and they are not able to use body language or express emotions when they lead digital meetings. Managers are listening more carefully to participants in digital meetings, thus if there is any question or comment managers will not miss it. If someone answers the question, managers will make sure that the answer is correct, and that the person who asked the question got the answer. Moreover, managers will make sure that every participant is involved in the meeting.

“I try to be more social and very polite in digital meetings, I need to make everyone in the meeting feel that they have something to say. [...] In the digital meeting not everybody is present in a physical meeting. Trying to involve people in the meeting is the important thing to do” (Vaino)

The meeting matrix is vital, it develops over time depending on cases and situations the company faces. Developing the meeting matrix involves improving communication between people in the company, facing challenges that emerge over time, and considering different aspects of needs that the company or individuals might have. By developing this matrix, the management team also wanted to reduce the stress and pressure on people while they are working from home.

In addition to the meetings matrix, the company took more procedures to make remote work smoothly. Because people working in this company are multicultural and have different backgrounds, the company assembled people who are working in the same section and have the same culture or similar backgrounds to work in the same group. For instance, speakers of English as a mother tongue who work in the sales department worked together. Furthermore, the company gave the staff more freedom and made them somewhat independent, particularly those employees who work individually. And managers worked hard to help employees who felt confused while they worked remotely and led them. The company assigned more people to work in the technical support team and gave the organisation's members access to the company's main servers. The management team recruited new people to help employees in different sections with their tasks. In addition to general channels and technical channels, the development team created social channels on Teams and Slack platforms to make a scope for employees to have social activities while they are working remotely and they assigned a big

budget for social events. The company also started to record meetings and instructions and put them on the company's internal site to give their employees more flexibility while they are working remotely.

Analysis and Discussion

The empirical findings section manifested how both companies EMS and MIDS reacted to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and how these two companies treated the consequences of the pandemic when they worked in the office and when they made the transition to work remotely. The empirical findings section also demonstrated what companies made to facilitate the transition to work remotely and to keep companies working. In this section, the data collected from EMS and MIDS will be analysed by considering the Managing for the Unexpected theory, and its capability model which contains seven key abilities, here it is worth mentioning that these key abilities have an overlapping character.

Procedures made by EMS and MIDS to facilitate the transition
Throughout the ages, human beings have faced many crises that led to restrictions on their activity or even made the communication and interaction between people limited or not existed. Some of those crises that led to limited activity among people are the oil crisis that occurred in 1973 and its consequences which are the cost increasing of transportation in urban areas (Nilles, 1975). These crises led to that companies to start looking for solutions, in this time the proper solution was remote work which helped companies to treat the consequences of the oil crisis and to avoid paying high costs to rent offices and locations (Nilles, 1975). The transition to working from home demonstrated several challenges that the companies should solve before and during working remotely (Milasi et al., 2020; Flores, 2019; Weinert et al., 2014). EMS and MIDS faced several challenges because of the Covid-19 pandemic, those challenges required that these two companies should be aware and react quickly to survive and keep the organisation working (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Eastburn et al., 2011).

EMS and MIDS allocated attention to observing disturbances in different ways. EMS reacted proactively and started to observe rough events that emerged because of the pandemic carefully and at the very beginning when those issues were small and before they evolved (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013), People in this organisation from different levels made continuous and mindful practices that led to reducing the cruelty of the pandemic and urged the organisation to recover quickly (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011), this organisation had more focus on the tiny issues that emerged instead of focusing on what they could achieve, which increased their understanding of the situation (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). While findings section manifest that the company MIDS had a different reaction. This company reacted reactively at the outbreak of the pandemic (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013), the company had more focus on updating the organisation's members about the governmental recommendations, keeping the organisation working, and paying more attention to the performance of tasks they had during this time. Different aspects of this section extend our knowledge on the aspect of leading the organisation during the extreme situation and show how much it is crucial to observe and manage small issues when they are small because those issues will become difficult to treat when they are visible. Furthermore, both companies made

us aware of the importance of keeping the organisation working during crises (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013)

The organisation's members in the company EMS worked hard on considering the situation that emerged because of the pandemic and made the evaluation of these effects. They invested a long time in understanding what is happening in reality and what can happen. They investigated and discussed what proper procedures are to be taken to cope with these unexpected events and how those procedures will be applied (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). The management team and general managers expected different scenarios that can happen and suggested different kinds of solutions for those scenarios. Furthermore, they made risk analyses for each scenario which helped the organisation to have a clear idea of which solution can fit best to cope with the pandemic consequences, which is adopting remote work (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). The management team made even more assessments and risk analyses after deciding on the solution because they recognise that cues and anomalies are not given by the situation, they have to be constructed and concluded (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). The company MIDS started to cope with the effects that emerged because of the pandemic after that they decided for transitioning and work from home, they invested time on how working remotely would be applied which in turn led to some disturbances before the company recovered and continued working. During this time, the company MIDS worked on developing the expertise to create critical expectations to observe the situation and find solutions (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Accordingly, managers and employees worked together on finding solutions and try this solution to check the reliability before adopting them to be used by the company's members. This finding extends our knowledge of the importance of investing enough time discussing a proper solution to treat the unexpected before adopting any solution.

By considering less simplification and considering small failures and slips as factors that will have considerable effects on the organisation (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013), both EMS and MIDS were able to facilitate working remotely for their members and give them a feeling that they still work within the organisation structure. EMS invested a long time investigating the situation that prevailed because of the pandemic and called for many meetings such as Employees Days Meetings, Digital Handling Meeting, and Information Meeting (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). The management team in this company called their employees to attend lectures and have training, considered what is happening, anticipated what can happen, developed their expectations, and thought about tiny details of each step they made to solve the consequences of the pandemic (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). They considered the technical environment and employees' need to be able to work from home. This company created a climate that is deference to the expertise to make the transition towards remote work easier (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019), in addition to different kinds of meetings, the organisation created the Pandemic Group which consist of different members in the organisation and have different experiences that help in making right decisions. This group had the responsibility to increase the security in the organisation in different ways, they worked on updating the organisation's members with different information needed about the pandemic which in turn facilitated the transition, furthermore, people in this group helped the organisation's members in solving issues that

emerged because of the pandemic and solve the ambiguity. This company created a mindful structure that enabled them to avoid mis-appointing, mis-appreciating, and mis-recognising things (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

Though the company MIDS made a sudden transition it also strived to avoid simplification and worked hard in treating problems that emerged because of the pandemic (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). In this company (MIDS) managers and the management team worked together on solving problems. Managers also worked with employees on finding solutions to how tasks will be done while people work from home, they tested different kinds of solutions and made sure that the solution works for all employees before adopting any solution. Managers worked on relieving employees' concerns and tried to help and guide every employee who was not able to adapt to remotely working, in addition, managers and the management team worked hard to employ more people to help employees in their tasks. Furthermore, the management team in this company assigned more people to the IT Service section in the company to enable them to solve issues rapidly. The company MIDS was also deference to the expertise (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019), they enabled skilled managers to solve issues immediately, they required employees to talk and present the interesting tools and working ways that they discovered when they were working at home, and they required managers to discover those tools and ways and adopt them by given employees trial tasks and make them familiar and aware about those tools and working ways. This company also required their employees to try to know about those tools and working ways from external sources which in turn made this company extra concerned about avoiding simplification and helped them to create a mindful infrastructure and to avoid mis-appointing, mis-appreciating, and mis-recognising things (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

The previous finding evoked the importance of updating. Both companies were eager to update their members with more information about the pandemic to make them aware of the current status (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). EMS created the Pandemic Group which worked keenly on updating the organisation's members with the latest information regarding the pandemic. This group worked on collecting information from different resources and delivered information to the organisation's members to solve the ambiguity and lead the organisation to make an appropriate decision. In addition, the organisation EMS updated its information about the pandemic by persistent observing issues and problems inside and outside the organisation (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). This organisation also updated its solutions many times before deciding to adopt remote work as a solution, and deciding which tools and systems will be used. MIDS also worked on updating the organisation's members with information about the pandemic and the procedures that will be applied when they worked in the office at the outbreak of the pandemic and after the transition (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Before the transition to work remotely, the organisation was eager to follow the governmental recommendations and to update its members about those recommendations. But after they started to work remotely, they worked hard on updating the meetings matrix that they created to keep up with the pandemic circumstances and to make sure that the new form of this meetings matrix will help them in solving those new problems that were emerging because of the pandemic (Sutcliffe &

Christianson, 2013; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). By considering updating procedures made by both companies, it is obvious that EMS and MIDS were sceptical about this pandemic and developed their information and procedures constantly. In addition, they often worked in groups which in turn led to that updating being easier because groups are a source of ideas and information (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

Accordingly, it is obvious that these procedures made by EMS and MIDS are solutions for challenges and concerns highlighted by different authors who conducted studies about remote work such as keeping up with the growth and development of the information system and technology in the organisation (Weinert et al, 2014; DI Martino & Wirth, 1990; Franken et al, 2021), and having guidance on completing and continue doing tasks and duties, contacting managers and getting help and feedback from them (Flores, 2019). In addition, these procedures indicate that both EMS and MIDS are more aware of conflicting details (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013), they invested a long time investigating failures and discussed appropriate solutions (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011), and in addition, this indicate that working on updating led to make proper decisions, solve issues, and facilitate working remotely.

The most critical issue that is related to working remotely and caused a high level of concern for organisations and their members are communication and interaction during working remotely. Several studies about working remotely highlighted this challenge. Flores (2019) stated that organisations members had concerns about communication and interaction because of the limited face-to-face communication because of working remotely. Moreover, Baily and Kurland (2002) considered that the organisation's members have anxiety about social and professional isolation, becoming forgotten in the distribution of the information and no longer visible in the workplace when they will work away from their offices. Both companies (EMS & MIDS) invested a lot of resources and took several procedures to enable working remotely by having intensive communication and interaction (Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). The organisation EMS encouraged the communication and interaction among the organisation's members since the outbreak of the pandemic. The organisation's members worked together to observe issues, understand its effects on the organisation, and find solutions. These procedures to discover anomalies and solve the ambiguity required repeated actions from different members in the organisation (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Furthermore, this organisation adopted open communication among members by creating several different kinds of channels on the Team and Zoom platforms (Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). The organisation created main channels for people in the organisation and many other channels that contain different groups of the organisation's members (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). And to increase the communication and interaction among employees, the organisation created other channels to give the possibility to the organisation's members to have a break together and drink coffee or eat lunch virtually in addition to many other collective activities. The organisation EMS also increased the number of meetings during working remotely, the organisation had different kinds of meetings such as follow-up meetings and update meetings. These communication channels and the big number of meetings led to the interaction and communication among the organisation members increased.

The company MIDS also created several channels on the Teams and Slack platforms. Through these channels, the organisation's members could have a high level of communication and interaction (Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). They were able to meet and work on different tasks, have breaks and drink coffee, and attend different kinds of meetings. The management team in this organisation created a meetings matrix, in this matrix they had different kinds of meetings such as planning meetings, update meetings, and leisure meetings (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). They included all people from different sections in the organisation and all managers in this meetings matrix. By creating this meetings matrix the management team wanted to increase the number of meetings to ensure that all people in the organisation will be connected to each other (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). In all kinds of meetings, managers and supervisors work on increasing communication and interaction by being more social than usual, urging employees to talk and discuss different issues and topics with each other, and directing questions to people attending these meetings. During meetings, managers made sure that everyone attending those meetings is participating in the meeting.

The procedures made by EMS and MIDS to increase communication and interaction during working remotely indicate that they redesigned their organisations to enable task and workflow interdependence and patterns of communication. Furthermore, both organisations could generate more knowledge from mutual interdependence and mutual adjustment that in turn helped in keeping the organisation working during working remotely. To solve the ambiguity and avoid the chaos that emerged because of the pandemic EMS and MIDS worked hard on constructing and encouraging active listening, debate, and discussion among the organisation's members and related people. These considerable communication and interaction created by EMS and MIDS led to smoothie working remotely, easier discovering and recognising of the pandemic consequences, and avoiding isolation concerns of working remotely. (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

It is salient that the pandemic led to restrictions on people's activities in different fields Flores (2019). This in turn led to a rapid change in the work conditions and aroused concerns about containing issues that emerged because of the pandemic and finding new ways to work and support employees (Franken et al., 2021). In addition to using new technology (DI Martino & Wirth, 1990), managers should maintain the organisation structure, ensure cooperation and teamwork, ensure necessary tools and equipment to prepare home offices to enable the organisation's members to work from home and encourage informal communication among employees to keep morale and team relations by other ways of communication (Franken et al., 2021).

Both EMS and MIDS exerted persistent efforts to contain the problems that emerged because of the pandemic. Findings manifested that the EMS agency started at the very beginning to understand the nature of problems that emerged because of Covid-19, containing them by keeping them under control and within the borders of the EMS organisation (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). The management team worked with other members to expect how the situation will evolve and suggested different solutions. The EMS agency worked on finding completely new solutions that may be proper to deal with unexpected events that emerged due to Covid-19 (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). The organisation developed its structure by providing digital solutions that can enable communication and interaction among the

organisation's members. The management team in this organisation made a decision to lend the organisations members tools and equipment needed to enable them to prepare home offices and in turn enable working from home. Managers in EMS ensured cooperation among employees by encouraging them to work together in groups. The management team worked hard on keeping morale and team relations and encouraged informal communication between the organisation's members by creating different channels and events such as virtual breaks and training, events to paint and make food together that the organisation's members could join when they worked remotely. In addition, the organisation EMS was able to contain the consequences of the pandemic and enable working remotely by creating the Pandemic Group that worked hard on updating the organisation with information and solving problems, furthermore, the organisation enhanced its IT team and made them able to solve issues related to the IT and system quickly. The organisation also awarded its members money three times during working remotely to enable them to buy more tools and equipment that can make working remotely smooth. These procedures made by EMS demonstrate that EMS's members enacted totally new procedures that enabled the organisation to contain the unexpected events which are in harmony with Sutcliffe and Christianson (2013).

MIDS was also able to contain the problems that emerged from the pandemic successfully. Though the company reacted reactively to the pandemic they reacted quickly to assign resources needed to contain the consequences of the pandemic and to enable working remotely (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). This company lent its employees the tools and equipment needed to create their own office at home. In addition, because this company is a multicultural company, they assigned people who have similar backgrounds and knowledge and who were working in the same section to work together to reduce the making of errors during working remotely. By providing the organisation with digital tools and planning different kinds of meetings, the organisation was able to solve the communication dilemma and encourage employees to work together and present new tools and solutions. Through the communications channels managers were always available during working hours, they worked hard to solve issues and support employees. The management team required managers to give their employees more freedom to decide, encourage making-decision among them, and make them independent. The company supported the technical support team by assigning more people and resources to enable them to solve issues as soon as possible. Furthermore, this company assigned big-budget and resources to make social and recreational activities for their members during working remotely and encouraged them to attend informal meetings to increase the enthusiasm and self-confidence. Managers in this organisation were eager to discover and understand problems to find proper solutions while the staff was working remotely (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). They exerted efforts to observe tiny issues and find solutions. The company MIDS also enacted totally new solutions to be able to consider and manage unexpected events that resulted from the pandemic (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

Organisation's resilience is one of those challenges demonstrated by many studies such as Franken et al. (2021). EMS and MIDS manifested a high level of resilience while they dealt with the pandemic, both organisations were able to manage and cope with the unexpected events, and bounce back (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Nachbagauer & Schirl-Boeck, 2019). The organisation EMS developed its ability and

allocated a lot of resources to observe problems prematurely and to keep them in the cradle (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Expert people in this organisation worked together to take appropriate procedures that generated resilience and enabled keeping the organisation working (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). In this sense, the organisation made anticipations, suggested solutions, and made assessments and risk analyses of those solutions. And at the same time, this organisation was updated with the latest information about the pandemic and in turn, they updated their members. These factors led to smooth remote work.

MIDS worked hard to develop its ability and allocated resources to be able to manage issues that emerged because of the pandemic and the sudden transition they made to work remotely (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). Managers worked together with employees to anticipate and improvise solutions for obstacles that hindered the accomplishment of tasks, and choose the best solution that can be applied to the staff which in turn helped in keeping issues small and the organisation working (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013). These procedures made by the organisation's members led to generating resilience which in turn is an important factor to deal with the unexpected incidents and enable working remotely (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2013).

Findings of this research study manifested that solving challenges requires a combination of many factors; findings also demonstrated that following specific practices during crises can help the organisation avoid destructive effects of unexpected incidents and guide the organisation to implement successful change which in turn can help the organisation to survive and continue working despite the pandemic and its consequences on the organisation. The analysis section helped in recognising that working in groups to find solutions generated knowledge and made organisations investigated in this study flexible, this, in turn, gave both organisations the ability to manage unexpected events that emerged because of the pandemic and find solutions for continual problems.

It is salient in the empirical findings section that both companies were concerned about employees and their health. The organisation EMS gave the organisation's members access to many health care opportunities, this organisation increased training hours for employees, gave them access to the Tappa app that encouraged them to train, hired a training coach, and created and scheduled several events such as virtual coffee breaks, virtual painting, and other features that can enhance employees' health. The company MIDS assigned a big budget for recreation events and activities, and scheduled daily and weekly activities that the organisation's members can attend to have breaks, meet their colleagues, and discuss issues that they are concerned about. The Managing for the Unexpected theory did not consider these factors which are crucial for all organisation and their members, especially who are working during crises and facing big and unexpected issues.

Conclusion

This research has been done at the time when studies are still shaping around the scope of the paper. So, the lack of the literatures around the theme of the paper shows the significant of the study. Very few studies which are available mostly investigated how working remotely affected people's behaviours and highlighted concerns and challenges about working remotely limited

face-to-face activities, and keeping up with the organisation's development and information (Milasi et al., 2020; Flores, 2019; Weinert et al., 2014). Compared to those few available studies, this research presented new and nuanced insights about remote work adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic and how the investigated companies facilitated this kind of work and made it possible for their members to work from other places away from companies' locations.

In this study, it was clear that companies moved to work remotely because of the Covid-19 pandemic and governmental restrictions on people's activities. EMS and MIDS adopted working remotely as a solution and enabled their members to work from home through mitigating the effects of unexpected events that emerged because of this pandemic. These two companies updated their resources with digital solutions and made the organisation's members available on these digital platforms, managers were also available during working hours and ready to help, and employees were able to access managers easily by sending a message on the Teams platform. Furthermore, managers encouraged communication and interaction among employees. Both organisations increased the number of meetings and scheduled informal meetings, digital breaks, and leisure activities to encourage employees to communicate and to have informal communication to keep morale and team relations. Moreover, managers worked hard on encouraging collaboration and teamwork among employees which in turn led to solving problems quickly. Both organisations maintained the organisation structure by digitalising their activities. EMS and MIDS lent out necessary tools and equipment to the organisation's members to prepare their home offices and to enable them to work comfortably from home. In addition, EMS awarded its members money three times during working remotely to enable them to buy more stuff that can make working remotely easier while MIDS employed more people to help their employees in performing their tasks. EMS and MIDS allocated a budget for recreation activities for their members. These two organisations created groups of expert people to solve IT issues and other issues that can emerge when employees work remotely.

In summary, aiding the employees with required tools and equipment seems to be crucial to enable to adjust and work in a new context. At the same time, updating the technical infrastructure with standby technical expertise to solve issue are crucial to have in place. Making the leadership and mentoring available through increased number of virtual meetings worked well. In a context where employees have origin from different cultures requires an understanding and adaptations based on such cultural understandings. A proactive approach found to be benefit in a number of ways enacting companies to respond to situation from the very beginning. Most crucially, it becomes apparent that allowing different level of employees to be independent and empowered to make some sort of decisions help.

The study has indirectly indicated some key learnings to take forward. For example, virtuality in work is becoming a new normal in organisational work culture. Maybe in the near future most of companies would have a major staff size who would be working remotely or virtually. The findings in this study highlights how the definition of company or organisation are growingly shifting towards the virtual dimensions of them requiring maybe a completely different set of strategies, workplan, rules, regulation, and welfare arrangements for the employees to manage and thrive in such a virtual reality. Altogether further studies are required at scale to enhance or knowledge base where this research might serve as the starting point.

Implications

As demonstrated during this study, both EMS and MIDS transitioned to work remotely as a solution to the restrictions imposed by governments and through managing the incidents that emerged because of the pandemic. This study highlights ‘mindful organising’ as a kind of best practice to continue and stressed on considerable awareness of all details inside and outside the organisation during crises. The study through empirical evidences highlighted the need to invest time to examine failures, resist simplification, observe operations, develop resilience, and appreciate expertise as also echoed by Sutcliffe & Christianson (2013). These factors have considerable effects on the organisation and will help organisations to manage during crises and survive. Findings in this study can help managers to better understand transitions and what to consider in which stage. The study highlights several key dimensions emerging in the next context requiring not only innovations in work culture but also suggesting for theoretical innovations. The research thus has to be considered as a pioneering attempt in the absence of empirical evidences in such a new context.

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