HOW IS ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AFFECTED BY WORKER FLEXIBILITY?

A quantitative report exploring the effects of worker flexibility on affective organisational commitment in a Swedish context.

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Master Thesis:	30 hp
Program:	Strategic Human Resource Management & Labour relations
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Supervisor:	Jing Wu
Examiner:	Monica Andersson Bäck

Abstract

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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore if, and how, affective organisational commitment (AOC) is affected by worker flexibility. Previous research usually promotes affective organisational commitment as a whole, whereas this study explores how each component of affective organisational commitment is influenced. This study explores three types of worker flexibility: working from home, working hours, and organising work and how they influence the feelings of emotional attachment, identification, and involvement in an organisation, i.e., the components of AOC. In addition, whether job satisfaction acts as a mediator between the focal relationship is explored.

Theory: This study derives from Meyer & Allen's (1991) theory on organisational commitment to elaborate three components of affective organisational commitment: emotional attachment to organisation, identification with organisation, and involvement in organisation.

Method: The study utilises a quantitative method building on data from "Work Orientations 2015" by the International Social Survey. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses are conducted on nine focal relationships to test how the three components of AOC are affected by three types of worker flexibility.

Result: The main findings in this study suggest that those who have some type of worker flexibility do generally also have some component of affective organisational commitment. More specifically, affective organisational commitment is significantly enhanced by the ability to decide how work is organised, even after controlling for covariates. Additionally, the relationship between having emotional attachment to an organisation and the ability to decide how work is organised is indicated to be mediated by the experienced job satisfaction. The ability to organise work might serve as an important, yet often overlooked, flexibility factor to promote affective organisational commitment.

Foreword

First and foremost, we would like to thank our supervisor, Jing Wu, who has been a tremendous support during the creation of this master thesis through constant encouragement to keep fighting. We would also like to thank each other for being flexible when deciding on hours, location and how to study; it definitely increased our affective educational commitment.

Emily & Ida

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Work has always been a natural part of how people make a living. The ways of working have changed over time due to development of new technologies, bringing more possibilities to work remotely and flexibly (Biswas et al., 2017). Working from home, deciding working hours, and being more flexible in work- and private life matters have become the new norms for many organisations and workers (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016). For example, large companies have launched flexibility policies such as remote working, to meet the needs and requests of their employees by exemplifying a modern way of working (Google, 2021; Spotify, 2021) and to maintain attractive employers (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). For organisations to have competitive advantage in the labour market (Boxall & Purcell, 2016), it is suggested that flexible working is linked to the employees' organisational commitment (Lyness et al., 2012; Onken-Menke et al., 2017), their job satisfaction (Cotti et al., 2014; Felstead & Henseke, 2017) and their intentions to stay in their organisation (Marx et al., 2021; Leineweber et al., 2016). Departing from the perspective of the working population in Sweden, it is now interesting to explore how worker flexibility influences the attitudinal side of organisational commitment. The attitudinal, or *affective organisational commitment* (AOC) is the emotional attachment to an organisation, feelings of identification with an organisation, and involvement in an organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These three attitudes to an organisation are from here on referred to as the three components of AOC.

The public discussion of worker flexibility in Sweden has shifted during the past decades. The focus has gone from an employer perspective e.g., having demands on mobility to meet the needs of the labour market, to an employee perspective e.g., reduced working time schemes and parental benefit programmes introduced in the 1970's (Engstrand, 2007). This shift makes it interesting to further explore the outcome of the employee perspective in a Swedish context. From an employee perspective, worker flexibility may be desired to be able to independently control when, where and how to work. In this study, worker flexibility will be defined into three different categories: (1) being able to decide working hours; (2) being able to work from home; and (3) being able to decide how to organise work. Previous research on the subjects of worker flexibility and AOC in Sweden have found that employees with a non-traditional work schedule had high levels of involvement in their organisation (Sverke et al., 2002). Even though working arrangements changed when Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by recommendations to work from home (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2022; Lang, 2020;

WHO, 2020), worker flexibility, such as remote work, has been a rising trend for the past decade (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016).

In a global context, it has been shown that worker flexibility is related to employees' AOC and their job satisfaction (Richman, et al., 2008). These three topics; worker flexibility, AOC, and job satisfaction, have been explored by researchers in various combinations. For example, AOC as a whole has been shown to be positively affected by worker flexibility (Lyness et al., 2012; Ng et al., 2006; Piszczek & Pimputkar, 2021), whilst worker flexibility is also proven to affect job satisfaction positively (Baltes et al., 1999; Cotti et al., 2014; Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Vega et al., 2015). In addition, job satisfaction is in turn strongly correlated to AOC, with studies showing job satisfaction influencing AOC positively and with the conclusion that job satisfaction is a factor of importance to AOC (Aamodt, 2012; Chordiya et al., 2017; Vandenberg & Lance, 1992; Williams & Hazer, 1986). The relationships mentioned above seem intertwined with one another, and an exploration for how the AOC components are individually affected by worker flexibility and job satisfaction has rarely been taken into consideration in previous research. Furthermore, AOC has been shown to be one of the predictors of turnover intentions as well as positively correlated to job engagement, which are of importance for HR functions in organisations (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Joo & Park, 2010; Rhoades et al., 2001). This makes AOC a subject of interest within the research area of HR.

This study therefore aims to further understand these relationships in a Swedish context, using data to analyse the effects of three types of worker flexibility (when, where and how to work) on AOC (emotional attachment, identification with an organisation, and involvement in an organisation), which in total generates nine focal relationships. Since previous research showed strong correlations between job satisfaction and AOC, job satisfaction will be explored as a potential mediating variable to further understand what makes employees committed to their organisation, and to add to the current research.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to understand if, and how, affective organisational commitment is affected by different types of worker flexibility. Additionally, the spread in affective organisational commitment will be analysed by adding job satisfaction to view its potential effect on the affective organisational commitment. The research questions are the following:

- Does worker flexibility (in particular, deciding when and how work is operated as well as having the possibility to work from home) have an effect on affective organisational commitment? If that is the case, *how* is affective organisational commitment affected by worker flexibility?

- Could the potential relationship between worker flexibility and affective organisational commitment be explained by the experienced job satisfaction?

1.3 Disposition

The disposition of this study is divided into seven sections. The first section introduces the subject and presents the research objectives and questions. The second section gives an overview of previous research within the field of worker flexibility and affective organisational commitment. The next section offers a description of the chosen theory. The fourth section describes the chosen methodology and considerations. Moving on to the fifth section, the empirical results will be presented from the conducted regression analyses. The sixth section will provide discussions of the results and implications for the HR function, followed by the final section that presents the conclusions of this study and suggestions for future research. References and appendix will be listed at the very end of the report.

2. Previous research

The purpose of this section is to attain an overview of the research area and to highlight the research gap. The section is introduced with previous research on different types of worker flexibility and their effect on AOC. Followingly, other factors that influence AOC are presented, including job satisfaction. Lastly, the section is concluded with reflections of the previous research.

2.1 Worker flexibility

Glass and Finely (2002) claims that worker's perception of control is what defines flexibility from a worker's perspective. Worker flexibility has mainly been defined and explored by having control over working hours and being able to work remotely (Berg et al., 2004; Charalampous et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2011; Lyness et al., 2012; Ng et al., 2006; Piszczek & Pimputkar, 2021; Taboroši et al., 2020). Below follows the previous research on the different types of worker flexibility that are of focus in this study, and their impact on AOC.

2.1.1 Working hours

Worker's control over working time is one type of worker flexibility and has been defined as "[...] the ability of individual workers to increase or decrease their working hours and to alter their work schedule" (Berg et al., 2004, pp. 331-332). Having control of the work schedule can be advantageous for the employee, bringing them more possibilities to alter work and private life in a more individually suitable and flexible way (Kelly et al., 2011). For example, having flexible work hours have shown to be positively correlated with affective organisational commitment (Ng et al., 2006; Piszczek & Pimputkar, 2021), even in a cross-national context using data for 21 countries (Lyness et al., 2012). Less perceived flexibility regarding work hours has been shown to be correlated with lower levels of AOC when measuring the involvement in the organisation by the variable "I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help the organisation or firm I work for succeed" (Lyness et al., 2012). This variable will be used in this study as well (see more in the Method section), hence of extra interest.

2.1.2 Working from home

Working from home has become more common and worker's control over where to work has been studied (Charalampous et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2010; Taboroši et al., 2020). If working at the office or company premises is the common or main way to work, being able to work from home has been interpreted as a flexible way of working, since working from home has been a choice and not a company demand (Hill et al., 2010). Working remotely has also shown to increase AOC (Taboroši et al., 2020). However, remote work has been shown to heighten feelings of isolation (Charalampous et al., 2019) which could result in emotional exhaustion and higher intention to leave the company (Orhan et al., 2016). The opposing findings may have depended on remote work being a choice of the employee, or a demand from the company or other circumstances. However, since contradicting conclusions were found on the topic of working remotely, it awakens interest to understand its implications on the AOC of the working population in Sweden.

2.1.3 Organisation of work

Limited research was found on worker flexibility in terms of being able to decide how to organise work. Most research on "organising work" has focused on working hours and working remotely as a broad concept, and not as an independent term (Berg et al., 2004; Charalampous et al., 2019; Taboroši et al., 2020). The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) constructed in 2015 an international survey and included this type of flexibility due to the limited research (Jutz et al., 2017). In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to report whether or not they were free to decide how their daily work is organised (ISSP, 2017). The lack of research on how the ability to organise work affects AOC acts as a motivator to define it as a type of worker flexibility and add to the limited research field to further understand its potential meaning of AOC.

2.1.4 Worker flexibility and job satisfaction

Baltes et al. (1999) found that job satisfaction was positively affected by having flexible working weeks. Previous research has shown that remote working, i.e., working from other places than solely the office or firm premises, positively affects job satisfaction (Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Kelliher & Anderson 2010; Vega et al., 2015). Having flexible work schedules

has shown to have a positive influence on job satisfaction (Baltes et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2011). Additionally, having control over when and where one works have also been shown to correlate positively with job satisfaction (Cotti et al., 2014). Since the studies above build on data from an international context, this study aims to add to the research by exploring whether the relationship between worker flexibility and job satisfaction exists in the Swedish context.

2.2. Affective organisational commitment

2.2.1 AOC and job satisfaction

Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as it being an emotional state that the employee evaluates as positive. Similarly, AOC is an emotional bond between the employee and their organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991) which enhances when the employee feels that the employer treats them fairly and in a supportive way (Vandenberghe et al., 2007). In other words, AOC can be viewed as being influenced by the employee's emotional state concerning the job and organisation. In a comparative cross-national study between the US and India in 2017, job satisfaction was found to have a significant positive effect on AOC (Chordiya et al., 2017). Additionally, multiple studies have concluded that job satisfaction is an important factor of AOC (Aamodt, 2012; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Vandenberg & Lance, 1992; Williams & Hazer, 1986).

2.2.2 Other factors involved in AOC

Mowday et al. (1982) categorised factors of AOC that included job characteristics. Since then, job characteristics such as job security and feeling competent in the job, have been shown to be important for an increased AOC. For example, research has shown that job security is positively correlated with AOC (Major et al., 2013; Yousef, 1998), whilst job insecurity has been negatively correlated with AOC (De Cuyper et al., 2009). Moreover, when employees feel competent and independent in their job, as well as comfortable in the organisation, AOC tends to increase (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The research on AOC often also includes age, gender, and education as control variables (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Chordiya et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2002). Since these factors have been included in multiple studies in the research on AOC, it is evident that many factors affect AOC, and should not be overlooked in this study.

2.3 Summary and reflections

The purpose of this section was to attain an overview of the research area. Three different types of worker flexibility were explored: working hours, working from home, and organisation of work. Having flexibility in working hours could increase AOC (Lyness et al., 2012; Piszczek & Pimputkar, 2021), whilst having flexibility to work from home increases AOC on one hand (Taboroši et al., 2020) but may on the other hand increase isolation (Charalampous et al., 2019). Limited research was found on the ability to organise one's work as a flexibility factor. Further, several studies have found that job satisfaction affects AOC (Aamodt, 2012; Chordiya et al., 2017; Vandenberg & Lance, 1992; Williams & Hazer, 1986), and other factors that have shown to be involved with AOC have been outlined (Chordiya et al., 2017; Major et al., 2013; Meyer et al., 2002; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Yousef, 1998).

Since AOC is previously shown to be affected by the factors mentioned above, it is interesting to explore *how* the factors influence AOC, and which areas of AOC that are impacted. Therefore, an exploration of how the AOC components (emotional attachment, identification with organisation and involvement in organisation) (Meyer & Allen, 1991) could be affected by the different types of worker flexibility, and job satisfaction, will be studied. This makes our contribution unique and adds to the research area of factors affecting AOC. A rationalisation of the division of the AOC components is outlined in the theory section.

3. Theory

In this section, the chosen framework of Meyer & Allen's (1991) three-component model will be introduced, along with a further elaboration of the model. Followingly, this section contains critical discussion points of the theory and is followed by the developed hypotheses, which will be presented at the end of this section.

3.1 Affective Organisational Commitment (AOC)

Mowday et al. (1982) described that an employee was affectively committed to their organisation when their attitudes towards an organisation consisted of strong feelings of approval and faith in the organisation's goals, an intent to perform on a great level for the organisation's best as well as a strong desire to stay an employee of the organisation. Affective organisational commitment has later on been developed by Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organisational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) developed the theoretical framework to ease interpretations of research results within the area of organisational commitment. Organisational commitment is defined in three different components that have different implications for behaviours at work. Each component is explained to describe different types of psychological states, referring to either the necessity (continuance commitment) to stay in an organisation, the obligation to stay in an organisation (normative commitment) or the willingness to do so (affective commitment). Affective organisational commitment is about feelings of identification, involvement, and emotional attachment to an organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These components of AOC will be the focus of this study.

3.1.1 AOC as the core essence of organisational commitment

Research on what organisational commitment is has been claimed to be confusing and contradictory; when practitioners, academics and organisations strive to increase organisational commitment of their employees, they might fail to do so (Mercurio, 2015; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). In a literature review, where articles and texts from 1960 to 2015 on organisational commitment were reviewed, Mercurio (2015) suggests that since findings have shown that factors correlated differently when looking at normative, continuance and affective organisational commitment separately, they should be viewed as separate concepts instead of combining the components. Furthermore, departing from several different types of

organisational commitment theories, one being Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, Mercurio (2015) argues that affective organisational commitment is the core essence of all theories on organisational commitment since it is the type that has remained consistent and continued to be the main researched perspective (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Mathieu & Zajac 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). Therefore, affective organisational commitment has been selected for analysis in this study. By using three variables representing AOC's components: attachment, identification and involvement in an organisation, our research is thereby exploring a wide scope of the area and aiming to elaborate Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of AOC. Having the components of AOC guide in the choice of variables for this study also enhances the chance to measure what is intended to be measured. A model of this is provided in Figure 1, and a further elaboration of the chosen variables is provided in the Method section.
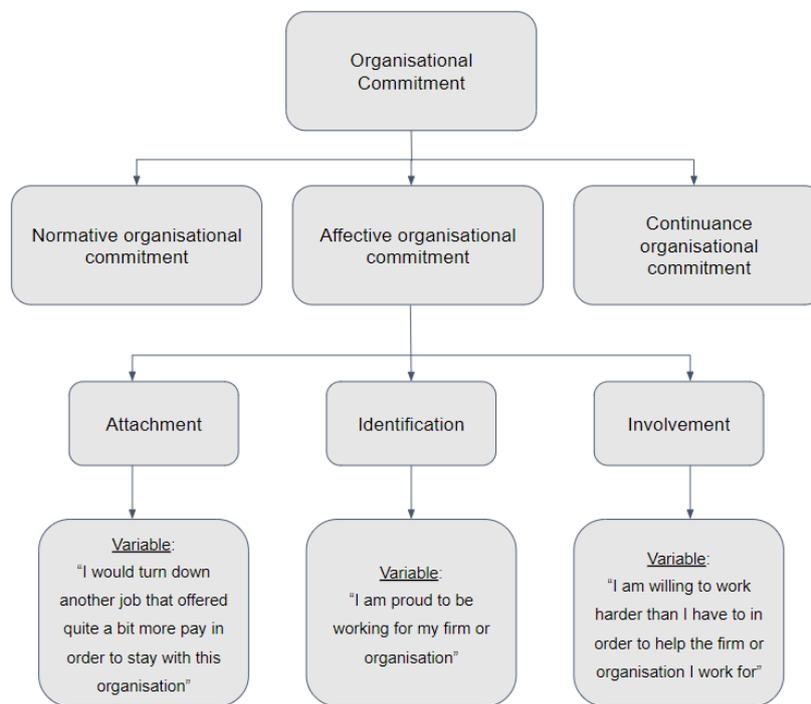

Figure 1. Meyer & Allen's (1991) three-component model and model of Affective organisational commitment and chosen variables that measures each component.

3.1.2 Measurements and criticism

Meyer and Allen's (1984) eight-item, and later six-item scale of affective organisational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), includes six variables that can be used when measuring AOC. The scale has been criticised for its lack of explanation of what commitment really is (Swailes, 2002). Identification of an organisation was, for example, measured as "I enjoy discussing my organisation with people outside it" in the scale (Meyer & Allen, 1984), but is lacking an explanation of how identification represents commitment (Swailes, 2002). The traditional ways of measuring AOC, by using Meyer and Allen's (1984) scale or Mowday's (1982) Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) scale have been questioned since the concept of what organisational commitment is in modern work-life may have changed and if the ways for measuring AOC really capture the meaning of it today (Swailes, 2002). However, studies using Meyer and Allen's (1984) scale presents support for it as well (Dunham et al., 1994; Gelade et al., 2006; Hackett et al., 1994; McGee & Ford 1987). Hence, while AOC is defined to be feelings of involvement, identification and emotional attachment to an organisation, the question of *what* makes employees feel committed to their organisation arises. This will be elaborated with the reasoning of Rousseau's (1998) theory.

Rousseau (1998) suggests that deep identification to an organisation occurs "where there is sustained exchange of particularistic rewards" (Rousseau, 1998, p. 222) between the organisation and employee. These particularistic rewards, i.e., exclusively interesting, and truly meaningful rewards from the individual's perspective such as bringing personal support or care for family matters, will increase the likeliness of the individual to care for the organisation on a deeper level, such as for its success and survival (aligned with Mowday's (1982) definition), according to the theory. In other words, the commitment to the organisation would enhance once the organisation provides support on a personal level. The theoretical viewpoint would then be to assume that if worker flexibility in the forms of work schedule flexibility, working from home, and deciding how the work is organised brings personal support to the individual, then AOC would enhance.

Having employees with high levels of AOC tends to lead to organisations having lower levels of turnover and more engaged employees (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Rhoades et al., 2001). This could explain the large scope of studies that have looked into what factors affect AOC, such as organisational support, job security and job satisfaction (Major et al., 2013; Naumann et al., 1998; Yousef, 1998).

3.1.3 Summary and reflections

A definition of AOC along with an explanation of its relevance for this study has been presented. Furthermore, criticism of the theory has been presented and also met with the help of Rousseau's (1998) theoretical framework which sheds light on *what* makes employees committed. In a context where flexible working arrangements are likely to continue post-pandemic and due to continuous technological advancement, a further exploration of worker flexibility and its relation to AOC is of high relevance to increase useful knowledge for organisations, practitioners, and academics. The theoretical contribution of this study is to elaborate Meyer & Allen's (1991) three-component model by further dividing AOC into three components by its definition presented by Meyer & Allen (1991), and to test whether and how worker flexibility types affect the AOC components. The constructed hypotheses are presented on the following page.

3.2 Hypotheses

Our main hypotheses will be explored by testing the three components of AOC combined with the different types of worker flexibility; deciding on working hours, working from home, and how work is organised. The first part of the hypotheses (a) refers to the first research question, and the second part (b), refers to the second research question. Since the hypotheses refer to worker flexibility in general, each hypothesis will be tested for support three times, each referring to one specific worker flexibility. Taken together, the three hypotheses will enable us to test both the correlation between worker flexibility and AOC, and if job satisfaction conveys the correlation between worker flexibility and AOC.

H_{1a}: There is a significant relationship between worker flexibility and emotional attachment to an organisation, even after controlling for all covariates.

H_{1b}: The relationship between worker flexibility and emotional attachment to an organisation is conveyed by the experienced job satisfaction.

H_{2a}: There is a significant relationship between worker flexibility and identification with an organisation, even after controlling for all covariates.

H_{2b}: The relationship between worker flexibility and identification with an organisation is conveyed by the experienced job satisfaction

H_{3a}: There is a significant relationship between worker flexibility and involvement with an organisation, even after controlling for all covariates.

H_{3b}: The relationship between worker flexibility and involvement with an organisation is conveyed by the experienced job satisfaction.

4. Method and material

The statistical method used in this study was multiple regression analyses. This section will firstly present the data material. Secondly, the assumed model will be introduced along with the chosen variables from the data. Thirdly, the procedure and lastly ethical considerations and limitations of this study will be stated.

4.1 Data material

This study explored the impact of variables; we have therefore chosen to conduct a quantitative study, consisting of quantifiable variables. There were possibly numerous ways to collect the type of data we needed to answer our research questions. The prospect of distributing surveys was one option. However, given that we wanted the study to represent the population of the labour force in Sweden, we strived to be as unbiased as possible. Therefore, we chose not to conduct our own surveys due to the risk of the surveys resulting in an unrepresentative sample (Bryman & Nilsson, 2018).

Another option, in which this study opted for, was to have a look at the already published data and statistics that raised questions on the subject of working life but was still large enough for the population to be representing the Swedish labour force. Therefore, the data used in this study was collected from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), called "Work Orientations 2015" and the material is collected from Svensk Nationell Datatjänst (SND) website (SND, 2019). The ISSP has conducted surveys on different topics within social sciences in several different countries on an annual basis (ISSP, 2022). In 2016, the topic on Work Orientations was explored internationally. The survey was conducted in Sweden by the Department of Sociology at the University of Umeå and SIFO, a fieldwork institute in Sweden (SND, 2019). A probability sample was conducted in the form of a randomly unbound sample, where 3000 individuals between the ages of 18 and 79 were selected to participate in the survey.

When using the data from Work Orientations 2015, variables were selected and analysed. The questionnaire used by ISSP consisted of 91 questions that the respondents answered anonymously. In total, the survey consisted of 147 variables. Questionnaires were sent by post with three reminders. Out of the issued sample, 42 were considered ineligible, 30 refused to answer, 1731 were unreachable and 35 were considered unproductive (ISSP, 2017). Because this study focussed on working individuals, we had to ensure that this was also true in our used dataset. The data was therefore filtered into people currently working for pay (Q10), which resulted in a total of 707 respondents from 1152 respondents and a generated drop-out

rate of 445 respondents. The drop-out rate might appear as a lot of data missing; however, it was a necessary filtration for this study, since the focus was on working individuals.

4.2 Model and variables

This section introduces a model over the assumed relationships explored in this study. The variables, and their role in the regression analysis, will be presented afterwards.
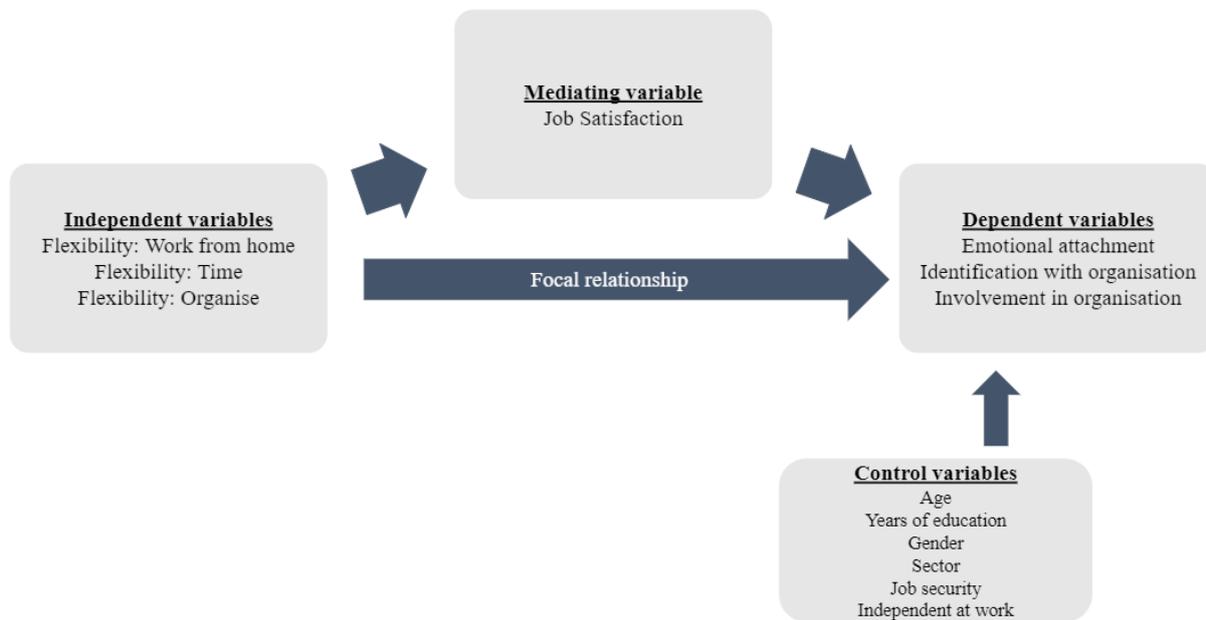
Model 2. Model over assumed relationships between the variables.

The focal relationship in this study, meaning the relationship of main interest (Aneshensel, 2002), is whether, and how, worker flexibility affects AOC. AOC was chosen as the dependent variable, since that was the variable being "affected". Hence, we perceived "worker flexibility" as a potentially important factor involved in AOC and have therefore chosen to study its impact and influence on AOC.

Mediating variables are affected by independent variables and in turn affect dependent variables (Aneshensel, 2002), see 4.3.2 for an elaboration of our Mediation analysis. The mediating variable that we have chosen is the experienced job satisfaction. The hypotheses H_{1b}, H_{2b}, and H_{3b} follow the reasoning: I have flexibility at work (independent) and therefore I have job satisfaction (mediating), which in turn increases my affective organisational commitment (dependent).

Control variables that are used are gender, age, sector, years of education, job security,

and being independent at work. These are included mainly to exclude *spurious correlations;* to ensure that the relationship between the main variables was not just because they share one common cause (Aneshensel, 2002). For example, we included the year of education to exclude the possible relationship that worker flexibility's effect on AOC was caused by differences in education. The control variables were commonly used in previous research, except for the sector. We have chosen sector as a control variable since it was not impossible to imagine whether an individual that works in the private or public sector could explain differences in flexibility or AOC.

4.2.1 Dependent variables: Affective Organisational Commitment

As we have decided on the topic and model, we have aimed to search for the relevant variables in our data. In order to answer our research questions, we have strived to use the data that measures our variables as accurately as possible. If we go back to the AOC concept, we have found that it is defined as the willingness to stay in an organisation due to feelings of attachment, identification, involvement to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These three types have served as guidance when choosing measurable variables from the ISSP Work Orientations 2015 questionnaire along with Allen and Meyer's (1990) six item scale (see Figure 2 in Appendix).

The chosen variable intended to measure "emotional attachment to organisation" is: "I would turn down another job that offered quite a bit more pay in order to stay with this organisation" (ISSP Work Orientations, 2017). This variable was named *Emotional attachment* and was inspired from Allen and Meyer's (1990) scale-variable: "I would be happy to work at my organisation until I retire".

To measure "identification with organisation", the variable "I am proud to be working for my firm or organisation" (ISSP Work Orientations, 2017) was chosen. This variable was named *Identification with organisation* and was chosen with inspiration from Allen & Meyer's (1990) measured variable "I am proud to tell others I work at my organisation".

The variable "I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help the firm or organisation I work for" (ISSP Work Orientations, 2017), was chosen to measure "involvement in organisation". This variable was named *Involvement in organisation* and had its inspiration from Allen & Meyer's (1990) scale-item "I really feel that problems faced by my organisation are also my problems".

In order for variables to be included in a regression analysis, they must be quantitative or binary (Djurfeldt et al., 2010). The three variables were therefore recoded into binary variables, previously being categorical, ordinal variables on a 5-point scale, whereas the response alternative "Can't choose" was coded as missing since the focus of this study was on those that had AOC or not.

As seen in Table 1 (Appendix), the *Emotional attachment*-variable consisted of 448 respondents, whereas nearly 78% reported not willing to turn down another job that offered quite a bit more pay in order to stay within their organisation, and 22% reported that they were willing. As for the variable *Identification with organisation*, a total of 496 respondents consisted of almost 90% of those who agreed being proud to be working for their firm or organisation, and 10% of the respondents did not agree on being proud. Furthermore, the variable *Involvement in organisation* had a total amount of 457 respondents, where 76% were willing to work harder to help their organisation, and nearly 24% were not willing to work harder to help their organisation.

4.2.2 Independent variables: Worker flexibility

To measure worker flexibility regarding ability to decide working hours, the following question was used from the dataset of ISSP Work Orientations 2015: "Which of the following statements best describes how your working hours are decided? (By working hours, we mean here the times you start and finish work, and not the total hours you work per week or month)". The original question contained three response alternatives, see Table 2 in Appendix, and was recoded into a binary variable: being able to decide working hours (1) or not being able to decide working hours (0). The variable was named *Flexibility: time*. In total, there were 703 respondents, whereas 71% reported being able to decide the time of work, and 29% not having the ability to decide the time of work.

To measure worker flexibility regarding working from home (WFH), the following question was chosen from the ISSP Work Orientations 2015 dataset: "How often do you work at home during your usual working hours?". The scale was a 5-point ordinal scale and was recoded into a binary variable to use the number of people that had the ability to work from home (1) or not (0), see Table 2 in Appendix. The variable was named *Flexibility: WFH*. In total, there were 701 respondents, whereas 30% consisted of those who always and often worked at home, and nearly 70% hardly ever or never worked from home.

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To measure worker flexibility regarding the ability to decide how work is organised, the following question was chosen from the ISSP Work Orientations 2015 dataset: "Which of the following statements best describes how your daily work is organized?". The four-point ordinal scale was recoded into a binary variable, see Table 2 in Appendix, into those that had the ability to organise their work (1) and those that did not have the ability to organise their work (0). The variable was named *Flexibility: organise*. In total, the variable consisted of 700 respondents, whereas 86% of those had the ability, or within certain limits, to decide how their daily work is organised, and 14% did not.

4.2.3 Mediating variable: Job satisfaction

The original variable of job satisfaction in the data referred to the question: "How satisfied are you in your (main) job?" The variable was on an ordinal scale level with eight response alternatives from 1 = "Completely satisfied" to 7 = "Completely dissatisfied" and 8 = "Can't choose". With an increasing value, the more the respondents were dissatisfied at work. The variable was recoded into a binary variable to simplify the interpretation in the regression analysis, since the interest was in those that experienced job satisfaction or not. The binary variable job satisfaction had the values 0 = "Dissatisfied" and 1 = "Satisfied", whereas the response alternatives "Can't choose" or "Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" were coded as "System Missing" because they did not provide any relevant information of whether or not the respondents were satisfied. The variable was named *Job satisfaction*. The number of respondents was 636, with a generated missing case of 71. In total, 89% rated being satisfied in their job, whilst nearly 11% reported being dissatisfied.

4.2.4 Control variables

Age, years of education, sector, gender, job security, and being independent at work were chosen as control variables. The variables *Job Security* and *Independent at Work* were on ordinal scales, with six response alternatives each ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree", and "Can't choose" as a sixth alternative. "Can't choose" was recoded as a missing value due to its irrelevance in this study. The variables were recoded into binary variables, as seen in the Table 3 in Appendix. The *Sector* variable was on a nominal scale, where the response alternatives were "Public employer" or "Private employer". Out of these, 45.2% responded to be working for a public employer and 54.8% responded having a private employer. The dropout rate for this variable was 14 respondents. As seen in Table 4 in

Appendix, it can be read that the variable *Gender* consisted of 54.2% women and 45.8% were men, without any dropouts. The variable was naturally on a dichotomous, nominal scale. The variable *Age* was a continuous variable. The average age was (according to Table 3 in Appendix) 46.2 years, with almost 12 years as standard deviation. We have not recoded the *Age*-variable, which as a result remained without any dropouts. The variable *Years of education* was a continuous variable. The average years of education amongst the respondents were 14.29, with a standard deviation of 3.36 years and a dropout rate of 13. See the recoding to binary variables of control variables in Table 3 in Appendix and descriptives over all variables in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics over all variables in this study.

Variables	All	Yes/Agree/Satisfied	No/Disagree/Dissatisfied	
	n	*n(%)*	*n(%)*	*M(SD)*
Affective organisational commitment				
Emotional attachment	448	98(21.9)	350(78.1)	
Identification with organisation	496	445(89.7)	51(10.3)	
Involvement in organisation	457	349(76.4)	108(23.6)	
Worker flexibility				
Flexibility: WFH	701	212(30.2)	489(69.8)	
Flexibility: time	703	499(71.0)	204(29.0)	
Flexibility: organise	700	601(85.9)	99(14.1)	
Job satisfaction	636	567(89.2)	69(10.8)	
Job security	607	539(88.8)	68(11.2)	
Independent at work	620	597(96.3)	23(3.7)	
Sector	693			
Public		313(45.2)		
Private		380(54.8)		
Gender	707			
Women		383(54.2)		
Men		324(45.8)		
Age	707			46.2(11.97)
Years of education	694			14.29(3.36)

Note. N = 707. n(%) for qualitative variables and M(SD) for quantitative variables (comp. Djurfeldt et al., 2010).

4.3 Statistical analysis

In this study, we have conducted multiple linear and hierarchical regression analyses of the variables presented above using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. There were a number of reasons why regression analysis was the most suitable for this study. Firstly, the overall goal was to study the effect of worker flexibility on AOC, whilst other variables were held constant (or under control) (Djurfeldt et al., 2010). This was possible with the help of a multiple regression analysis, as well as comparing different variables' relative meaning on AOC. Building models with multiple variables would also enable us to understand the relationships between the variables (Djurfeldt et al., 2010).

There were numerous procedures within multiple regression analysis, and the procedure in this study was a hierarchical kind. The idea behind the hierarchical method was to place the independent variables in different blocks (Borg & Westerlund, 2012; Field, 2018). The reason why we chose to divide the independent variables was because it enabled us to divide them into focal, control-, and mediating variables. Hence, we could attain an overview of how the focal relationships were affected. The analyses were therefore made in a controlled manner, instead of inserting all the independent variables at the same time. If we were to proceed with entering all variables at once in the regression, also known as *forced entry*, it would have been more difficult to predict and interpret the variables' relative meaning to each other (Field, 2018). Because we used the hierarchical method, it enabled the results to be replicable should anyone desire to re-test the model (Field, 2018), which is an advantage to an increased reliability for this kind of study on a master level.

In the results, we have presented standardised beta-coefficients and the standard error. The advantage of standardised beta-coefficients enabled us to compare the variables size and therefore interpret the variables' relative meaning for AOC. The disadvantage of this choice, however, was that we were not able to make predictions. For example, an interpretation of unstandardised coefficients (B), it could have been possible to interpret that "one step of change in X gave B change in Y" (Borg & Westerlund, 2012). Although, since the majority of the variables were binary, this was not applicable either way. For the purpose of this study, we assumed it to be more important to interpret the variables' *relative* meaning for AOC. Since the original variables were based on responses such as "strongly agree", or "agree", the distance between the scale steps were not equidistant. Also, if we were to insert a variable with five response alternatives, there may be many dropouts considering some of the variables only having for example ten respondents. This would decrease the likelihood to generalise our study

population and was not a risk we were willing to take. This reasoning supported us to recode the ordinal scale variables into binary ones.

When interpreting the results, we chose to report two levels of significance: the 95% and the 99%. When relationships have that level of significance, we have interpreted them with the assumption that the percentage of certainty was accurate in our population. For example, if the ability to decide when to work would correlate with an AOC component with a significance of 95%, we interpreted it as there being a 95% chance that we would find the similar result in the population.

To ensure that the chosen variables were not too highly correlated with one another, i.e., multicollinearity (Aneshensel, 2013), a test was included in every regression analysis to examine the tolerance and the variance inflation factor (VIF). The main reason these tests were included was because the previous research indicated job satisfaction being a great part of AOC. This could have produced multicollinearity in our variables, e.g., it was imaginable that the variables Job satisfaction and Identification with organisation (being proud of one's organisation) could provide the same information about one another (Aneshensel, 2013). In other words, being satisfied with one's job and being proud of one's job could potentially generate similar information. The tolerance criterion set for this study was 0.1, and the VIF criterion to be greater than 1, since those are the most typical criterions used in the social sciences (Aneshensel, 2013). The collinearity statistics are presented in Table 12 in Appendix.

Since we have measured and studied the effect of adding variables in a step-by-step manner, it made it irrelevant for us to adapt a certain interpretation protocol for the effect sizes. For example, using Cohen's *d* would have been one option (Borg & Westerlund, 2012). However, given the fact that we wanted to measure the variables' *relative* meaning to each other; we simply compared the standardised beta-coefficients to each other and understood the effects thereafter. Since standardised beta-coefficients already compared the strength of the effect on the variables (Aneshensel, 2002), it would be unnecessary to determine the effect size, when it was unknown.

Additionally, we interpreted R^2_{adj} as a method of understanding improvement when adding variables (Field, 2018), and compared the difference in values between models. However, it was important to note that by adding new variables into the regression, R^2_{adj} would likely increase, and the number of respondents (n) would likely decrease (Field, 2018).

4.3.1 Procedure

With the help of Model 1, we could plan the regression analyses. In the first regression analysis, we have studied the focal relationships. Again, the focal relationship in this study was between the independent variables of worker flexibility (Flexibility: time; Flexibility: WFH; and Flexibility: organise) and the dependent variables of affective organisational commitment (Emotional attachment; Identification with organisation; and Involvement in organisation). These relationships were studied in the first models of analysis. In the second models, we included the control variables to exclude spurious relationships. If the focal relationships were still significant, we could test the other hypotheses on whether or not the focal relationships were mediated by the variable Job satisfaction in the third models. However, there were a few criteria to be met to conduct mediation analysis and to test the hypotheses of mediating relationships, which is presented below.

4.3.2 Mediation analysis

A mediating variable is one that intervenes on the focal relationship (Aneshensel, 2013). The different types of mediation include: partial mediation, complete mediation, and absence of mediation; all of them had a potential presence in our regression analyses. A *partial mediation* is present when the regressed focal relationship's significance is partially reduced when the variable M is inserted into the analysis. However, the focal independent variable X still has a significant effect on the dependent variable Y (Aneshensel, 2013). In our study, this would mean that the relationships between the variables $X_{Worker\,flexibility}$ and Y_{AOC} were still statistically significant, even when inserting $M_{Job\,satisfaction}$ into the analyses. If this was the case, the hypotheses would be partially supported, indicating a conveyed relationship but not serving as a complete mediation and full support of the hypotheses, which ultimately was the focus of this study. However, despite them being partially supported, partial mediations were still noted to be included in the discussion. The next possible outcome, *complete mediation*, happens when the focal relationship between X and Y is no longer statistically significant because of the inclusion of the variable M; the M variable takes over the significant relationship and serves as a complete mediator (Aneshensel, 2013). This would happen in this study if the significant relationship between the variables $X_{Worker\,flexibility}$ and Y_{AOC} completely disappeared when including $M_{Job\,satisfaction}$ in the regression analysis. This would mean that the hypotheses were fully supported, indicating a conveyed relationship due to the full mediation. The last outcome, *absence of mediation*, happens when the focal relationship is still intact (statistically

significant) after including the proposed mediating variable. This means that the proposed mediating variable had little to no impact on the focal relationship (Aneshensel, 2013). If this was the case in our results, the relationship between $X_{Flexibility}$ and Y_{AOC} would not be largely affected by the insertion of $M_{Job\ satisfaction}$ in the regression analysis. This would consequently bring the hypotheses to not be supported due to the absence of mediation.

An alternative approach to conduct a mediation analysis was to test mediation with Hayes' process in SPSS (Hayes, 2013), that was suitable for binary dependent variables. However, one of the requirements for SPSS to do the analysis was to have a continuous mediating variable, which we did not have in this study; job satisfaction was binary. The similar reasoning goes for mediation with bootstrapping in SPSS (Preacher and Hayes' indirect dialog) (Hayes, 2013); it required a continuous dependent variable, which we have chosen not to have in this study. Therefore, we conducted Chi square tests and Gamma tests, both tests suitable for binary and categorical variables (Djurfeldt et al., 2010), and got the following results, as seen in Table 5. We needed to make sure that $M_{Job\ satisfaction}$ had significant relationships with the flexibility variables in order to test that the relationship was mediating AOC variables (Aneshensel, 2002).

Table 5

Bivariate analysis of job satisfaction and the ability to work from home.

	Flexibility: WFH No	Flexibility: WFH Yes	Total
Job satisfaction			
Dissatisfied	50	18	68
Satisfied	389	175	564
Total	439	193	632

Chi-2 (df) = 0,594 (1); p>0.05 p=0,441
Gamma = 0,111; p>0.05, p=0,425

Table 5 shows that there is no significant relationship between $X_{Flexibility:\ WFH}$ and $M_{Job\ satisfaction}$. This entails that we were not able to test the relationships in the regression analysis (Aneshensel, 2002).

Table 6

Bivariate analysis of job satisfaction and the ability to decide time of work.

	Flexibility: time No	Flexibility: time Yes	Total
Job satisfaction			
Dissatisfied	36	32	68
Satisfied	140	425	565
Total	176	457	633

Chi-2 (df) = 23,981 (1); p<0.001
Gamma = 0,547; p<0.001

Table 7

Bivariate analysis of job satisfaction and the ability to decide how work is organised.

	Flexibility: organise No	Flexibility: organise Yes	Total
Job satisfaction			
Dissatisfied	26	42	68
Satisfied	53	511	564
Total	79	553	632

Chi-2 (df) = 46,141 (1); p < 0.001
Gamma = 0,713; p < 0.001

Table 6 and 7 shows that there are significant relationships between both $X_{Flexibility:\ time}$ and $M_{Job\ satisfaction}$; and $X_{Flexibility:\ organise}$ and $M_{Job\ satisfaction}$. Therefore, we could include the variable $M_{Job\ satisfaction}$ in the regressions as a potential mediating factor (Aneshensel, 2002).

4.3.3 Correlations between variables

Before conducting the regression analyses, we also had to make sure that certain variables were significantly correlated with one another (Djurfeldt et al., 2010). As seen in Model 1, the focal relationship in this study was between worker flexibility and AOC. In order to assume those relationships, and ultimately test the support of the hypotheses, bivariate correlation analysis was conducted and is presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Bivariate correlations between study variables.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Emotional attachment	—								
2. Identification with organisation	.228**	—							
3. Involvement in organisation	.219**	.577**	—						
4. Flexibility: WFH	.043	.111*	.132**	—					
5. Flexibility: time	.101*	.218**	.263**	.296**	—				
6. Flexibility: organise	.128**	.273**	.286**	−.213**	.440**	—			
7. Job satisfaction	.107**	.613**	.381**	.031	.195**	.270**	—		
8. Job security	.107*	.076	−.028	.037	.116**	.050	.222**	—	
9. Independent at work	.094	.203**	.182**	.099*	.220*	.314**	.278**	.058	**—**

$^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$

Table 8 indicates significant relationships between nearly all focal relationships, with an exception of the variables $X_{Flexibility:\ WFH}$ and $Y_{Emotional\ attachment}$. Since this relationship was part of the focal relationship (Model 1), we could not conduct a regression analysis on this specific relationship and instead focused on the remaining eight focal relationships.

4.4 Considerations

4.4.1 Methodological considerations and limitations

The interpretations made from this study had a few limitations that we did not ignore. The use of secondary data may have had an impact on the interpretation of the variables used in the study. Although publicly accessible data has its benefits, one risk was that the intention of what the variables aim to measure by the developers of the questionnaire may have differed from our interpretation or how the respondents interpreted them. For example, the variable 14a from the questionnaire, about how often one worked from home during their usual working hours could not automatically be interpreted as a type of worker flexibility. Respondents that answered the question may only have had the choice of working from home due to for example managing their own company with no office location. If working from home would be a company demand, it would be questionable if it was still a flexible way of working. Although,

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the variable could be interpreted as a way for employees having the flexibility and possibility to work from home to either some extent or fully, by choice. If the main way to perform work was at an office location and there was a possibility to also work from home by choice, it has been interpreted to be a type of worker flexibility (Hill et al., 2010). Although we were aware that the question asked in the survey could be interpreted in different ways, we have chosen to keep it since it could still be interpreted as a way of flexible working, and this is why we have chosen to include the variable as one of the types of worker flexibility. Furthermore, the pros of using secondary data weighs up. The usage of secondary data saved time that could instead be used on the interpretation and analysis of the result (Bryman & Nilsson, 2018), which led to a more thorough analysis with a broad scope. The data was of high quality and conducted on a national level; there would not be enough time nor finance to conduct our own data with the same level and quality.

Additionally, the question of whether there was a time limit for how long results can be considered valid should be acknowledged. There was no way to be certain if the data can still be considered true in today's circumstances (Bryman & Nilsson, 2018), but the usage of data from 2016 could of course increase the risks of the result not being applicable in 2022. Bryman & Nilsson (2018) argued that big events could affect the results, and the pandemic could be an example of this. However, worker flexibility and AOC was a subject of interest in 2015 and questions about them were included in the ISSP 2015 Work Orientations survey. The trend would probably continue to be a subject of interest post pandemic, and it was still of interest to study how the factors affected each other. Note that the ISSP 2015 Work Orientations study started in 2015, but the Swedish study was conducted in 2016 and reported in 2017, hence the difference in referencing.

This study was quite extensive as a whole, where different topics were involved. One weakness of this study may have been that every factor that affected AOC, was originating from a survey with 91 questions. Despite the theme Work Orientations, there were questions included that were not referring to working life. For individuals to answer such an extensive survey could have been both time-consuming and required effort, which could ultimately have impacted their responses and the answers may not have been reflected upon on a deeper level. This may have affected the reliability (Djurfeldt et al., 2010), although we still trust the measurements to be accurate since this dataset was conducted and financed by the Swedish Research Council (SND, 2019).

The question of whether the validity of the identified variables in the data could be translated into the AOC components and worker flexibility types arised. Since there is extensive research on organisational commitment, AOC, and worker flexibility, it would be nearly impossible to identify all variables affecting each other. Instead, we have chosen one variable per component to identify AOC and one variable to identify worker flexibility type. Furthermore, the question of whether the AOC components were defined by one variable each may have had an impact on the validity of this study. Because of this, we did not expect R^2_{adj} to explain 100% of the variation in AOC. Since Meyer and Allen (1984), Allen & Meyer (1990), and Mowday et al., (1982) developed scales measuring AOC; they included multiple variables that together constituted AOC. If we were to choose multiple variables of AOC, we may have attained an elaborated and nuanced image of AOC; in that sense, we could then have elaborated our own scale of AOC, and the validity would have increased. However, given the fact that the chosen independent variables and dependent variables together generated nine focal relationships, they were considered to be enough for this thesis, and we urge future research to elaborate on further variables of both AOC and worker flexibility.

Furthermore, the sector variable was included as a control variable to ensure that the results would not be dependent on whether the respondents were working in a public or private sector. Since the dataset did not include the respondents' occupations, it was interesting to analyse the sectors to begin an understanding (in the future research) of how flexible working arrangements affects AOC in specific occupations. For example, a nurse would not be able to work from home and a doctor on call would not be able to decide their own working hours due to the characteristics of their job.

The only possible outliers were the variables on a ratio level (Field, 2018). In this study, the variables on ratio level were *age* and *years of education*. The age variable had a minimum value of 18, and a maximum value of 76, with no outliers. The years of education variable had a minimum value of 2, and a maximum value of 25, with no outliers.

The recoding of variables into binary could have affected the validity in this study. Most of the variables were on a five-point ordinal scale level. Although, since we had around 700 respondents, and if we were to perceive the ordinal variables as continuous, the number of respondents would have decreased significantly, and that was not a risk we were willing to take, since we wanted the regression analyses to be as representative as possible to our study population. Also, since we were interpreting the results with standardised beta-coefficients, it enabled us to see the independent variables' *relative meaning* for individuals' AOC.

4.4.2 Ethical considerations

This study used secondary data from ISSP Work Orientations 2015. All ISSP questionnaires must comply with legal requirements of each country and be ethically approved by the main representative organ of the ISSP (ISSP, 2022). All answers were anonymised (ISSP, 2022).

SND was financed by the Swedish Research Council to conduct the ISSP Work Orientations in Sweden (SND, 2019). The Swedish Research Council is a governmental body responsible for taking initiatives to draw ethical issues to attention within research contexts, as well as to spread awareness and information on issues regarding research ethics (Vetenskapsrådet, 2022a). Because of the fact that the Swedish Research Council founded the ISSP Work Orientations 2015 in Sweden, we entrust that the questionnaire and collected data comply in accordance with the Swedish Research Council's regulations and standards for ethics. There are several regulations that are required to be followed when conducting research, and all legal requirements as well as ethical considerations must be reported when applying for research grants from the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2022b). The Swedish Research Council refers to a number of different ethical regulations that the applicants need to comply with. The Swedish Act (2019:504) on responsibility for good research practice and testing of misconduct in research and All European Academic's (ALLEA, 2017) report "The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" are examples of these regulations (Vetenskapsrådet, 2022b). Furthermore, the fundamental principles of good research practice are listed in ALLEA's (2017) report, which the Swedish Research Council highlights on their website; reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability (Vetenskapsrådet, 2022c). The Swedish Research Council's high standards of ethics in research have served as a gatekeeper for ISSP's Work Orientations 2015 ethical considerations since the organisation financed the research project. We therefore assumed high reliability in the data and chose to continue with all chosen variables without any measurement errors.

5. Results

In this section, tables are presented from the conducted regression analyses on AOC with interpretations of the models in order. A hypothesis chart will later follow. A notation is that the relationship between emotional attachment and worker flexibility work from home will not be regressed, since that relationship was not significant, as seen in Table 8 in the Method section.

5.1 Emotional attachment to organisation

Table 9

Regression analyses of Emotional attachment. Standardised beta-coefficients (standard error).

Variables	Model 1a Focal relationship	Model 2a Control variables	Variable	Model 1b Focal relationship	Model 2b Control variables	Model 3b Mediator
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	0,101* (0,042)	0,107 (0,056)	**Flexibility: Organise** (Yes)	0,128** (0,052)	0,134* (0,070)	0,080 (0,081)
Age		0,116* (0,002)			0,121* (0,002)	0,112 (0,002)
Years of education		-0,130* (0,007)			-0,125* (0,007)	-0,121* (0,007)
Gender (Men = 0)		0,025 (0,050)			0,035 (0,050)	0,051 (0,053)
Sector (Public sector = 0)		0,061 (0,049)			0,075 (0,049)	0,095 (0,052)
Job security (Yes)		0,072 (0,067)			0,086 (0,066)	0,076 (0,072)
Independent at work (Yes)		0,055 (0,108)			0,043 (0,109)	0,022 (0,118)
Job satisfaction (Yes)						0,145* (0,084)
Intercept	0,158	-0,014		0,104	-0,099	-0,164
R^2_{adj}	0,008	0,044		0,014	0,050	0,065
n	445	315		446	315	283

*Significance levels: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01*

5.1.1 Flexibility: Time and Emotional attachment

Model 1a (Table 9) reveals that those who have the ability to decide when to work, are emotionally attached to their organisation. $R^2_{adj} = 0.008$, which can be interpreted that those who have the ability to decide when to work, explain 0.8% of the variation in emotional

attachment to an organisation. The fact that the percentage is low can be interpreted that there are other factors affecting the emotional attachment.

The covariates age, years of education, gender, sector, job security and being independent at work are included in the regression analysis in Model 2a and tests H_{1a}. The results show that the relationship between those with the ability to decide when to work and those that have emotional attachment is no longer statistically significant. H_{1a} is therefore not supported when testing one of the three variables of worker flexibility (deciding working hours). Age and years of education is shown to have a significant effect on emotional attachment. The rest of the variables gender, sector, job security and independent at work did not show any significant relationships. Furthermore, the R^2_{adj} has increased, and can now explain 4.4% of the variation in emotional attachment to an organisation. However, we do not have the prerequisites to insert and test whether the variable job satisfaction is mediating the focal relationship (see *Mediation analysis* in 4.3.2), since the focal relationship is not significant any longer.

5.1.2 Flexibility: Organise and Emotional attachment

Model 1b reveals that those who have the ability to organise their work, are emotionally attached to their organisation. R^2_{adj} is explaining 1,4% of the variation in emotional attachment. Again, this can be interpreted that other variables affect the emotional attachment.

The covariates are included in the regression analysis in Model 2b (see Table 9) to test H_{1a}, which shows that the emotional attachment is still affected significantly by the ability to organise work. The effect has now increased, which means that H_{1a} is fully supported. The statistically significant variables that have an effect on emotional attachment are age and years of education. R^2_{adj} is now explaining 5% of the variation, which is an increase of 3.6% from Model 1b. The rest of the variables gender, sector, job security and independent at work did not show any effects with significant relationships. As a result of the remaining significance of the focal relationship, we are now able to test whether the variable job satisfaction mediates this relationship.

The variable job satisfaction is included in the regression analysis in Model 3b (see Table 9) to test the support of H_{1b}. As a result, the effect of the focal relationship is now diminished, and is not significant any longer, although job satisfaction is significant. The rest of the variables gender, age, sector, job security and independent at work did not show any effects with significant relationships. The only other variable that is still significant is the years

of education-variable, which was included in Model 2b, and has since then hardly changed its effect. Hence, since the focal relationship is not significant any longer, and H_{1b} is fully supported, indicating that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between emotional attachment and the ability to organise work. R^2_{adj} is now explaining 6.5% of the variation in emotional attachment, which can be interpreted as other factors still make up 93.5% of the variation in emotional attachment.

5.2 Identification with organisation

Table 10

Regression analyses of Identification with organisation. Standardised beta-coefficients (standard error).

Variables	Model 1a Focal relationship	Model 2a Control variables	Variable	Model 1b Focal relationship	Model 2b Control variables	Model 3b Mediator	Variable	Model 1c Focal relationship	Model 2c Control variables	Model 3c Mediator
Flexibility: WFH (Yes)	0,111* (0,029)	0,095 (0,031)	**Flexibility: Time** (Yes)	0,218** (0,031)	0,277** (0,035)	0,178** (0,031)	**Flexibility: Organise** (Yes)	0,273** (0,040)	0,250** (0,051)	0,174** (0,046)
Age		0,082 (0,001)			0,058 (0,001)	0,001 (0,001)			0,086 (0,001)	0,020 (0,001)
Years of education		0,038 (0,004)			0,007 (0,004)	-0,027 (0,004)			0,035 (0,004)	-0,014 (0,004)
Gender (Men = 0)		0,008 (0,030)			0,010 (0,029)	0,008 (0,025)			0,020 (0,029)	0,013 (0,025)
Sector (Public sector = 0)		0,075 (0,030)			0,037 (0,029)	0,048 (0,025)			0,071 (0,029)	0,070 (0,025)
Job security (Yes)		0,072 (0,049)			0,034 (0,048)	-0,079 (0,044)			0,080 (0,047)	-0,051 (0,044)
Independent at work (Yes)		0,212** (0,072)			0,151** (0,072)	0,075 (0,064)			0,132* (0,075)	0,058 (0,066)
Job satisfaction (Yes)						0,537** (0,055)				0,541** (0,054)
Intercept	0,873	0,379		0,782	0,449	0,213		0,677	0,276	0,093
R^2_{adj}	0,010	0,063		0,046	0,120	0,372		0,073	0,108	0,371
n	494	377		495	376	359		493	376	359

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

5.2.1 Flexibility: WFH and Identification with organisation

Model 1a in Table 10 reveals that feelings of identification with organisation are affected by the ability to work from home. R^2_{adj} is 0.01, which explains around 1% of the variation in the population. This entails that we are able to proceed with inserting the covariates in the next model, to test the support of H_{2a}.

Model 2a in Table 10 shows that the focal relationship between identifying with organisation and the ability to work from home is no longer statistically significant. The rest of the variables, except for independent at work, does not show a significant effect on identification with organisation. The only variable showing a significant effect, on 0.01 level, is being independent at work. The variable independent at work shows the strongest effect than other models until now. R^2_{adj} indicates a variation explaining 6.3% of identifying with an organisation, which is a large increase, compared to the other models conducted. The inclusion of covariates did not prove a significant correlation between identifying with an organisation and having the ability to work from home. Therefore, H_{2a} is not supported.

5.2.2 Flexibility: Time and Identification with organisation

Model 1b in Table 10 shows that identification with organisation is affected by having the ability to decide time of work. The variation in the population can be read to be 4.6% from the R^2_{adj}, which is the highest percentage of a focal relationship so far. We now proceed to test the support of H_{2a} by adding the covariates into model 2b, as seen in Table 10.

The effect of having flexible working hours on identification with organisation is now stronger. This is the strongest effect of the results so far. All the covariates, except for independent at work, are not significant. $R^2_{adj} = 0,12$, which can be interpreted as whether one has the ability to decide time of work explains 12% of the variation in identifying with an organisation. Since the focal relationship is still intact, H_{2a} is fully supported. We proceed with testing the support of H_{2b} on whether job satisfaction is conveying this relationship.

Model 3b in Table 10 shows a remaining significant relationship between identification with organisation and the ability to decide the time of work. Followingly, the effect of the variable independent at work has decreased and is no longer statistically significant along with the rest of the covariates. Remaining is the newly included variable, job satisfaction, that has the strongest effect so far. R^2_{adj} is 0,372, which follows the reasoning that the variation in identifying with an organisation can be explained, to 37.2%, by the included variables in the regression analysis in Model 3b. The fact that job satisfaction is highly significant and affects

the focal relationship, it results in H_{2b} being partly supported since the ability to decide time of work is still shown to have a relatively strong effect on identification with organisation. Therefore, it is instead concluded job satisfaction is *partially mediating* the relationship of flexibility: time and identification with organisation.

5.2.3 Flexibility: Organise and Identification with organisation

Model 1c in Table 10 shows that identification with organisation is affected by having the ability to decide how to organise work. $R^2_{adj} = 0,073$, which is the highest percentage when testing a focal relationship so far. By adding the covariates into model 2c, H_{2a} will be tested, see Table 10.

The effect that organising work has on identification with organisation is weaker than in Model 1c (Table 10). None of the covariates, except for independent at work, show a significant effect on identification with organisation. The one variable that is having an effect is shown to be independent at work. The $R^2_{adj} = 0,108$, which is interpreted that nearly 11% of the variation in identifying with an organisation can be explained by the added variables. Since the focal relationship is still significant, H_{2a} is fully supported. We proceed with testing the support of H_{2b} by adding the potential mediator to the regression analysis.

In Model 3c in Table 10, job satisfaction is now included in the regression analysis. As seen in Table 10, the effect on identification with an organisation by having the ability to organise work is now weaker than in Model 2c, although still significant. Additionally, none of the covariates are shown to have a significant effect on identification with organisation. The job satisfaction variable is yet again setting the record of having the strongest effect on identifying with an organisation. The variation in identification with organisation can be explained to 37.1%, by the added variables in Model 3c. Since the focal relationship is still significant, H_{2b} is partially supported; job satisfaction is partially mediating the relationship between identification with organisation and having the ability to organise work (see *Mediation analysis* in 4.3.2).

5.3 Involvement in organisation

Table 11

Regression analyses of Involvement in organisation. Standardised beta-coefficients (standard error).

Variables	Model 1a Focal relationship	Model 2a Control variables	Variable	Model 1b Focal relationship	Model 2b Control variables	Model 3b Mediator	Variable	Model 1c Focal relationship	Model 2c Control variables	Model 3c Mediator
Flexibility: WFH (Yes)	0,132** (0,042)	0,094 (0,047)	**Flexibility: Time** (Yes)	0,263** (0,044)	0,229** (0,056)	0,135* (0,057)	**Flexibility: Organise** (Yes)	0,286** (0,057)	0,231** (0,075)	0,117* (0,081)
Age		0,108* (0,002)			0,083 (0,002)	0,054 (0,002)			0,092 (0,002)	0,058 (0,002)
Years of education		0,082 (0,007)			0,055 (0,007)	0,056 (0,007)			0,085 (0,007)	0,069 (0,007)
Gender (Men = 0)		-0,105 (0,047)			-0,106 (0,046)	-0,114* (0,045)			-0,082 (0,047)	-0,099 (0,045)
Sector (Public sector = 0)		0,110* (0,048)			0,092 (0,071)	0,097 (0,046)			0,112* (0,047)	0,108* (0,046)
Job security (Yes)		-0,014 (0,070)			-0,048 (0,071)	-0,074 (0,071)			-0,022 (0,070)	-0,061 (0,070)
Independent at work (Yes)		0,185** (0,132)			0,147** (0,131)	0,151** (0,130)			0,132* (0,133)	0,148** (0,132)
Job satisfaction (Yes)						0,283** (0,080)				0,287** (0,080)
Intercept	0,722	-0,009		0,575	0,068	-0,138		0,450	-0,124	-0,238
R²adj	0,015	0,075		0,067	0,112	0,185		0,080	0,114	0,182
n	456	338		454	336	313		454	336	313

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

5.3.1 Flexibility: WFH and Involvement in organisation

Being involved in an organisation is shown to be affected by the ability to work from home, as shown in Model 1a in Table 11. Compared to the other regression analyses, this effect is not a strong one. The $R^2_{adj} = 0,015$, which can be interpreted that 1.5% of the variation in being involved in organisation is explained by having the ability to work from home.

Model 2a in Table 11 shows that working from home has no significant effect on the involvement in the organisation. However, age and sector is shown to have significant, although weak effects, and can be interpreted that working in a private sector has a significantly stronger effect on the involvement in organisation, compared to those working in the public sector. Moreover, being independent at work is shown to have an effect on the involvement in

organisation. The standard error of independent at work is however relatively high compared to the other variables. Therefore, we are withholding from interpreting the effect it may have on involvement in organisation from here on. R^2_{adj} is now 0,075; 7.5% of involvement in organisation can now be explained by the included variables. However, since the focal relationship is no longer significant after including the covariates, H_{3a} is not supported, and neither is H_{3b} consequently.

5.3.2 Flexibility: Time and Involvement in organisation

The involvement in the organisation is shown to be affected by having ability to decide when to work, as seen in Model 1b in Table 11. $R^2_{adj} = 0,067$, which means that roughly 7% of involvement in organisation can be explained by having the flexibility to decide when to work.

The covariates are included in Model 2b (Table 11). Having the flexibility to decide when to work still has a significant effect on involvement in organisation. None of the covariates, except for independent at work, were shown to have a significant effect on the involvement in organisation, however the standard error is still relatively high. $R^2_{adj} = 0,112$; the variation in being involved in organisation is now explained by roughly 11%. Since the focal relationship is still significant, H_{3a} is fully supported and the support of H_{3b} is tested in the next model.

The effect that the flexibility to decide on working hours has on the involvement in organisation, Model 3b (Table 11), has now reduced, yet is still a significant one. Gender is also shown to have a negative effect on the involvement in organisation. This can be interpreted that the involvement in organisation might entail gender differences in our population. Additionally, independent at work is shown to have an effect on the dependent variable. Also, job satisfaction is shown to have an effect on involvement in organisation. R^2_{adj} is 0.185, which can follow the reasoning that the variation in being involved in the organisation one works for can be explained, by 18.5%, by the added variables. Since the focal relationship is still significant, we are not able to conclude job satisfaction as a full mediator of the relationship between flexibility: time and involvement in organisation. H_{3b} is therefore partially supported with the note that job satisfaction is partially mediating the relationship, considering the effect significantly weakened.

5.3.3 Flexibility: Organise and Involvement in organisation

Model 1c in Table 11 reveals that having the ability to decide how to organise work affects the involvement in organisation. The variation of the involvement in organisation can be explained by 8% (R^2_{adj} = 0.08).

Model 2c shows that the focal relationship is still significant. Yet again, sector and independent at work are shown to also have significant, although weak, effects on the involvement in organisation. R^2_{adj} is now 0.114; 11.4% of the variation in being involved in organisation can be explained by the added covariates. Since the focal relationship is still significant, H_{3a} is fully supported.

Job satisfaction is inserted as a variable in Model 3c (Table 11). The ability to decide how to organise work is still affecting the involvement in organisation significantly. The effect of the sector variable did not drastically change. Also, the effect of being independent at work is stronger than in Model 2c. Moreover, job satisfaction is, yet again, shown to have a relatively strong effect on involvement in organisation. R^2_{adj} is now 0.182 and follows the reasoning that around 18% of the variation in involvement at work can now be explained by the included variables in Model 3c. Since the focal relationship is still significant, H_{3b} is partially supported; job satisfaction does not fully mediate the focal relationship between the ability to decide how to organise work and the involvement in organisation. Job satisfaction is merely partially mediating the relationship.

The test of multicollinearity was included when conducting the regression analyses. The results showed that there was low multicollinearity between all independent variables (see Table 12 in Appendix). We can therefore assume there are no intercorrelations amongst the variables in this study.

5.4 Hypotheses results chart

To clarify the results, a hypotheses results chart is presented below for the reader to attain an overview of the regressed relationships and tested hypotheses in this study.

Chart 1

Overview of the tested hypotheses and their outcome from the regression analyses.

	Tested relationship	Result		Tested relationship	Result	Mediation
H_{1a}	Flexibility: WFH and Emotional attachment	Not supported	H_{1b}	N/A, Not supported		
	Flexibility: time and Emotional attachment	Not supported		N/A, Not supported		
	Flexibility: organise and Emotional attachment	Supported		Job satisfaction conveying relationship in H_{1a}	Supported	Full mediation
H_{2a}	Flexibility: WFH and Identification with organisation	Not supported	H_{2b}	N/A, Not supported		
	Flexibility: time and Identification with organisation	Supported		Job satisfaction conveying relationship in H_{2a}	Partially supported	Partial mediation
	Flexibility: organise and Identification with organisation	Supported		Job satisfaction conveying relationship in H_{2a}	Partially supported	Partial mediation
H_{3a}	Flexibility: WFH and Involvement in organisation	Not supported	H_{3b}	N/A, Not supported		
	Flexibility: time and Involvement in organisation	Supported		Job satisfaction conveying relationship in H_{3a}	Partially supported	Partial mediation
	Flexibility: organise and Involvement in organisation	Supported		Job satisfaction conveying relationship in H_{3a}	Partially supported	Partial mediation

As seen in Chart 1, H_{1a} was supported once, meaning that there is a significant relationship between worker flexibility (in particular, being able to decide how to organise work) and emotional attachment, even after controlling for all covariates. Followingly, H_{1b} was supported with full mediation; the relationship between worker flexibility (in particular, being able to decide how to organise work) and emotional attachment to an organisation is fully conveyed by the experienced job satisfaction.

H_{2a} was supported twice: there is a significant relationship between worker flexibility (in particular, the ability to decide time and organisation of work) and identification with organisation, even after controlling for all covariates. H_{2b} is partially supported twice; experienced job satisfaction partially conveys the relationship between the worker flexibility

(in particular, the ability to decide time and organisation of work) and identification with organisation.

H$_{3a}$ was supported twice: there is a significant relationship between worker flexibility (in particular, the ability to decide time and organisation of work) and being involved in organisation, even after controlling for all covariates. H$_{3b}$ is partially supported twice; experienced job satisfaction partially conveys the relationship between the worker flexibility (in particular, the ability to decide time and organisation of work) and being involved in organisation.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to study if, and how, affective organisational commitment is affected by worker flexibility. Furthermore, the aim was also to explore the spread in AOC by adding job satisfaction as a possible mediator to view its potential effect on AOC. With help from Meyer and Allen's (1991) theory about AOC consisting of the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement in an organisation, we were able to explore how three types of worker flexibility (working hours, work from home and organise work) individually affected AOC. The results in this study showed that all components of AOC were affected by having the flexibility, and ability, to decide how to organise work, whereas one of the relationships was fully mediated by having job satisfaction. Moreover, two of the AOC components were shown to be affected by having the flexibility, and ability, to decide when to work. Having the possibility to work from home did not show any significant effect on the three components of AOC. The following section discusses the research questions in more detail, followed by implications for the HR-function. Suggestions for further research will be addressed throughout the discussion and later summarised in the final section of the thesis.

6.1 Research question 1

The first research question is as follows: Does worker flexibility (in particular, deciding when and how work is operated as well as having the possibility to work from home) have an effect on affective organisational commitment? If that is the case, *how* is affective organisational commitment affected by worker flexibility? In our population, we can state that those that have some type of worker flexibility do generally also have some component of affective organisational commitment. This means that AOC is positively affected by worker flexibility. All results of how the three components are affected by the types of worker flexibility differed. We can therefore agree with Mercurio (2015) about not using Meyer & Allen's (1991) three-component model combined, but separately. Furthermore, exploring the different components of AOC as separate variables have contributed to more detail in the research field. Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model has been validated and we argue that the three components of AOC need to be studied separately and not merged into one. That is because AOC can be affected in different ways and possible correlations may be overlooked when not separating it.

6.1.1 Working hours affecting AOC

The AOC components "involvement with organisation" and "identification with organisation" was significantly and positively affected by the worker flexibility type "time", i.e., being able to decide one's own working hours. In Lyness' et al., (2012) cross-national study, worker flexibility type "time" was tested with the same AOC-variable "involvement with organisation" also used this study (i.e., "I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help the organisation or firm I work for succeed"). The result of this study shows similarities to Lyness et al.'s (2012) results. While Lyness et al. (2012) concluded that less perceived flexibility regarding working hours correlated with lower levels of AOC, this study showed that being able to decide your working hours positively affected the AOC component "involvement in organisation". While the results are not entirely the same, it does add to the scope of the research field within worker flexibility and being involved in an organisation. Lyness et al.'s (2012) study was conducted by using ISSP's data from 1997 and it is interesting to see how the results show similarities over a longer period of time (18 years). The similarities are also prominent even though Lyness et al.'s (2012) study was conducted in a cross-national context, using data from 21 different countries, while this study only explored one nation (Sweden).

The AOC component, "emotional attachment to an organisation", was not shown to be significantly affected by the worker flexibility type "time". To have the ability to decide on working hours therefore showed contradictory findings than Piszczek and Pimputkar (2021) that flexible working hours had positive correlations with AOC. Even though the dataset that Piszczek and Pimputkar (2021) used was from 2013-2017, and therefore conducted around the same time as Work Orientations 2015 was, their study population originated from Germany, and our dataset from Sweden. It is not impossible to imagine cultural differences and attitudes towards flexibility in working hours. When comparing results from Lyness et al.'s (2012) and this study, as seen above, there were similarities even though it was a cross-national study. A possible reason for the contradictory results from Piszczek and Pimputkar's (2021) study and this study could therefore be that the interplay of cultural differences are prominent when studies are solely focusing on national contexts. We therefore hope to have shed further light on this topic, by adding to the research from a national perspective. For future research, it would be interesting to include cultural factors in the analysis and test the interplay and national differences. Alternatively, qualitative research could be conducted to study the employee perceptions of how worker flexibility influences AOC and job satisfaction on an international level.

6.1.2 Working from home and AOC

As seen in the results, none of the three AOC components were shown to be affected by the worker flexibility type "working from home". Previous research has found contradictory results on this topic, since working remotely has been shown to increase AOC (Taboroši et al., 2020) although it may also increase feelings of isolation and turnover intentions (Charalampous et al., 2019; Orhan et al., 2016). The contradictory results may also depend on whether remote work is a choice of the employee, or a company demand (Hill et al., 2010). In this study, this type of worker flexibility departed from respondents that were working specifically from home, and not working remotely. Despite working from home being a part of working remotely as a whole, this type of flexibility may not always be perceived as flexible; individuals may not have a choice than to work from home. Since the pandemic resulted in workers being encouraged or required to work from home (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2022), it would be interesting to follow up on the rising trend about working remotely. Our research did not show any significant effects on the AOC components but that may have changed as a result of the pandemic. We suggest further research using operationalised variables that measure remote work in a similar manner as the other two worker flexibility types are operationalised. In that way, it could be measured if working remotely is perceived as a worker flexibility type.

6.1.3 Organisation of work affecting AOC

All components of AOC; emotional attachment to the organisation, identification to the organisation and involvement to the organisation, are positively affected by the flexibility, and ability, to organise work. These results are interesting since there is not much research on the topic; the research gap was highlighted in ISSP (Jutz et al., 2017) and was included in the questionnaire as an effort to explore the research field. The ability to organise work could, on the other hand, be related to research keywords such as employee control, independent work, or the freedom to plan work. When it comes to worker's control, previous research has mainly focused on worker's control over working hours and where to work (Berg et al., 2004; Charalampous et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2010; Taboroši et al., 2020). One reason for this could be that being able to decide how to organise work could be interpreted as being able to perform work when and where you want. However, this study focuses on whether or not the option to organise work is available, i.e., deciding on how the daily work is operated.

6.2 Research question 2

The second research question is as follows: Could the potential relationship between worker flexibility and affective organisational commitment be explained by the experienced job satisfaction? The variable job satisfaction was included and tested in this study as a potential mediator, since multiple studies reported job satisfaction being an important factor to both worker flexibility (Baltes et al., 1999; Cotti et al., 2014; Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Kelliher & Anderson 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Richman, et al., 2008; Vega et al., 2015;) and AOC (Aamodt, 2012; Chordiya et al., 2017; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Vandenberg & Lance, 1992; Williams & Hazer, 1986).

In contrast to what Felstead and Henseke (2017), Kelliher and Anderson (2010), and Vega et al. (2015) stated, job satisfaction did not have a significant relationship with working from home in our study. This resulted in us not being able to test job satisfaction as a mediator between the relationships working from home and the AOC components. A possible explanation of this occurrence could be, yet again, that the respondents did not interpret working from home as a flexibility factor. Another way of reasoning could simply be that the majority of the respondents were not working from home, which resulted in the relationships not reaching the significance level.

In the results, we were able to fully support one hypothesis of full mediation; the relationship between the ability to organise work and emotional attachment was conveyed by job satisfaction. This is an interesting result yet again since the worker flexibility type "organise work" is not as researched as the other flexibility types.

Furthermore, the results showed four partial mediations (see Chart 1). Whilst the effect of the flexibility types time and organise decreased on both "identification with organisation" and "involvement in organisation", the focal relationships were still significant. The variations in the identification variable could be explained to 37% respectively, whilst the variation in the involvement variable was around 18%. These results could therefore be as partial support of Meyer and Allen's (1991) statement that job satisfaction is an important factor in AOC as well as support of Aamodt (2012), Chordiya et al. (2017), Richman et al. (2008), Vandenberg and Lance (1992), and Williams and Hazer (1986). Even though some of our hypotheses were only partially supported indicating partial mediation, we still urge future researchers to further elaborate the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between AOC and the flexibility to organise work.

Applying Rousseau's (1998) theory; attitudes, or feelings of affective organisational

commitment is created when the organisation offers the employee personal support. The results in this study have shown that being able to decide how work is organised is positively correlated with all components of AOC, and according to the theory, the employee could feel that personal support is given to them via the flexibility and therefore, AOC increases. From this perspective, personal support could be seen as a possible mediator of the focal relationship. This is not a relationship that has been tested in this study, although one that could be interesting to further explore in future research.

6.3 Implications for the HR function

One central HR function could be to retain employees by supporting in facilitating a workplace that employees feel comfortable working in. The findings in this study show that employees who have worker flexibility are also prone to have an increased affective attachment to the organisation, which in turn enhances the likeliness for the employees to stay within the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Joo & Park, 2010; Rhoades et al., 2001). To promote these types of flexibility policies could therefore support the HR function in retaining employees and increasing their commitment to the organisation. More specifically, since the ability to organise work was shown to affect all components of AOC, we would suggest HR practitioners possibly explore the needs of their employees and how they interpret being able to organise work. However, we do want to highlight the importance of having a critical mindset and not blindly trust that worker flexibility will increase AOC without any risks or consequences. For example, co-workers deciding on when to work could mean that emails would be sent on weekends or Friday nights. The questions arises, and remains, whether too much flexibility could disrupt work-life balance. We therefore recommend HR practitioners to have an ongoing conversation about the potential implications for the employees.

To summarise, Meyer and Allen's (1991) definition of AOC, which is about the willingness to stay in an organisation due to feelings of emotional attachment, identification and involvement in an organisation, aligns with HR's common mission to retain the employees of an organisation. This study provides valuable insight and useful information to HR practitioners and which measures could potentially be of importance to retaining employees.

7. Conclusions

The results of this study showed that all AOC components are positively affected by having the flexibility to organise work in Sweden. These relationships are either partially or fully conveyed by experienced job satisfaction. However, the ability to organise work as a flexibility type has been overlooked in the research field and this study suggests it to be assumed as a flexibility type. Also, two AOC components (identification with organisation and involvement in organisation) were positively influenced by having the flexibility to decide when to work, and the two relationships were partially conveyed by the experienced job satisfaction, which supports previous research that job satisfaction is an important factor related to AOC. Moreover, the ability to work from home did not show an effect on AOC in this study. The contribution of this study provides new knowledge on how worker flexibility affects all components of AOC in a Swedish context.

This study has additionally contributed to the research field in terms of testing and validating Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model by separating the components of organisational commitment. This research followingly elaborated, tested and contributed to Meyer and Allen's (1991) concept of AOC by dividing it into three components (emotional attachment, identification with organisation, and involvement in organisation) to measure AOC and how it was influenced by worker flexibility.

7.2 Future research

Further research is suggested to study the importance of organising work as a flexibility type and its impact on AOC and job satisfaction. This study has its limitations, and suggestions for future research will be presented based on the identified research gap, the limitations, and the findings of this study.

Future research could advance the measurement of "working from home" as a flexibility type, to understand whether it could be perceived as a worker flexibility type. This was one of the limitations of this study; the unawareness of how the question was perceived as a flexibility factor or not by the respondents. We therefore suggest that the questionnaire used in ISSP 2015 Work orientations could be rephrased and aimed at a broader audience to include those that for example have the choice to work from home, or remotely. Then, it can be improved to truly measure worker flexibility in terms of location, in particular, as an individual choice instead of a company, societal demands, or restrictions.

As mentioned in the considerations section, there was no possibility to include occupation as a control variable from the ISSP dataset. Results on how worker flexibility affects AOC could differ depending on the type of occupation, especially if the type of job limits the employee to have flexible working arrangements in one or more categories. Some jobs within the public sector, such as professions within healthcare could for example be affected by this. We therefore suggest further research to focus on either comparing different occupations or solely focus on specific types.

To be able to decide how work is organised resulted in significantly affecting all components of AOC in this study. As stated in the previous research section, limited research was found on whether being able to decide how work is organised could be perceived as a worker flexibility type. It could be possible that this factor should be added to the research as an important factor that affects AOC and in turn, add knowledge for practitioners and organisations to retain employees and understand the factors influencing AOC and job satisfaction. Perhaps it is also possible for future researchers to identify and agree on what "organise work" actually entails, whether it be for example planning, managing schedules, mapping tasks etc. This identified worker flexibility type has now been explored in this study, however, we strongly suggest future researchers add to the current gap in the research. One alternative way of approaching this could be to conduct qualitative research to understand the cultural differences and the meaning of organising work and what it entails for that specific culture. More specifically, since job satisfaction was shown to mediate between worker flexibility and AOC, there might be different results when replicating this study in different countries and comparing those to the result of this study. This could potentially be an idea for a thesis on the same level, or perhaps for a dissertation to also follow up on the results after the pandemic.

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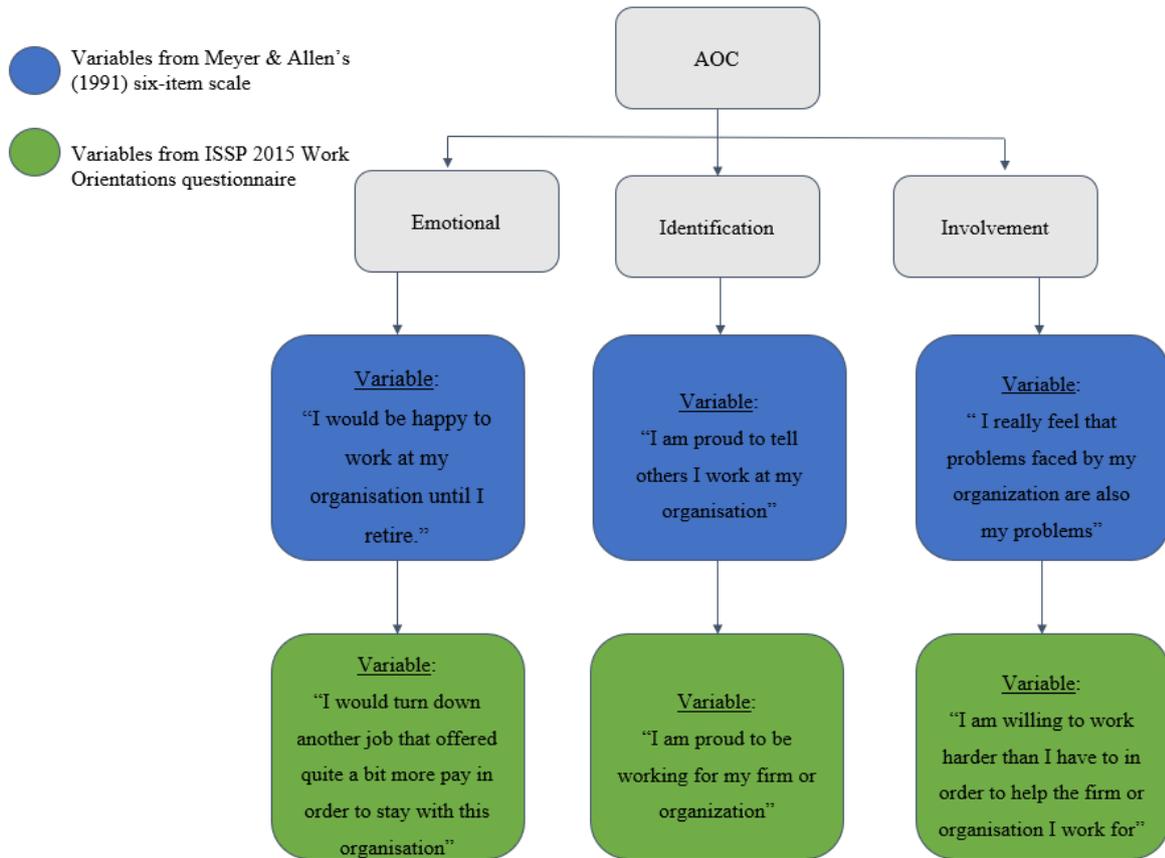
Appendix

Figure 2. Illustration of the chosen variables with inspiration from Allen & Meyer's (1990) six-item scale.

Table 1

Recoding to binary variables of dependent variables.

Dependent variables	0 (Disagree)	1 (Agree)
Emotional attachment	Disagree	Agree
	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
Identification with organisation	Disagree	Agree
	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
Involvement in organisation	Disagree	Agree
	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree

Table 2

Recoding to binary variables of independent variables.

Independent variables	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Flexibility: WFH	Working from home - Hardly ever - Never	Working from home - Always - Often
Flexibility: time	- Starting and finishing times are decided by my employer and I cannot change them on my own	- I can decide the time I start and finish work, within certain limits - I am entirely free to decide when I start and finish work
Flexibility: organise	- I am not free to decide how my daily work is organized	- I am free to decide how my daily work is organized - I can decide how my daily work is organized, within certain limits

Table 3

Recoding to binary variables of control variables.

Control variables	0	1
Sector	Public employer	Private employer
Gender	Men	Women
Job security	My job is secure: No	My job is secure: Yes
Independent at work	I can work independently: No	I can work independently: Yes

Table 12

Collinearity statistics.

EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT			
Variable	**Model**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	1a	1	1
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	2a	0.854	1.171
Age	2a	0.940	1.064
Years of education	2a	0.903	1.107
Gender (Men=0)	2a	0.866	1.154
Sector (Public sector=0)	2a	0.865	1.157
Job security (Yes)	2a	0.941	1.063
Independent at work (Yes)	2a	0.931	1.074
Flexibility: Organise work (Yes)	1b	1	1
Flexibility: Organise work (Yes)	2b	0.901	1.110
Age	2b	0.946	1.058
Years of education	2b	0.921	1.086
Gender (Men=0)	2b	0.860	1.162
Sector (Public sector=0)	2b	0.892	1.121
Job security (Yes)	2b	0.974	1.026
Independent at work (Yes)	2b	0.913	1.095
Flexibility: Organise work (Yes)	3b	0.833	1.200
Age	3b	0.929	1.076
Years of education	3b	0.923	1.083
Gender (Men=0)	3b	0.868	1.153
Sector (Public sector=0)	3b	0.881	1.135
Job security (Yes)	3b	0.932	1.073
Independent at work (Yes)	3b	0.865	1.157
Job satisfaction (Yes)	3b	0.798	1.253
IDENTIFICATION WITH ORGANISATION			
Variable	**Model**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**
Flexibility: Work from home (Yes)	1a	1	1
Flexibility: Work from home (Yes)	2a	0.930	1.075
Age	2a	0.966	1.035
Years of education	2a	0.891	1.122
Gender (Men=0)	2a	0.881	1.135
Sector (Public sector=0)	2a	0.891	1.122
Job security (Yes)	2a	0.972	1.029
Independent at work (Yes)	2a	0.970	1.031
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	1b	1	1
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	2b	0.844	1.185
Age	2b	0.957	1.045
Years of education	2b	0.902	1.108
Gender (Men=0)	2b	0.886	1.129
Sector (Public sector=0)	2b	0.872	1.147
Job security (Yes)	2b	0.948	1.055

Variable	Model	Tolerance	VIF
Independent at work (Yes)	2b	0.910	1.098
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	3b	0.820	1.220
Age	3b	0.944	1.060
Years of education	3b	0.898	1.113
Gender (Men=0)	3b	0.892	1.121
Sector (Public sector=0)	3b	0.874	1.145
Job security (Yes)	3b	0.891	1.122
Independent at work (Yes)	3b	0.894	1.118
Job satisfaction (Yes)	3b	0.807	1.239
Flexibility: Organise (Yes)	1c	1	1
Flexibility: Organise (Yes)	2c	0.853	1.172
Age	2c	0.967	1.034
Years of education	2c	0.020	1.077
Gender (Men=0)	2c	0.882	1.134
Sector (Public sector=0)	2c	0.894	1.118
Job security (Yes)	2c	0.975	1.025
Independent at work (Yes)	2c	0.853	1.173
Flexibility: Organise (Yes)	3c	0.830	1.205
Age	3c	0.948	1.055
Years of education	3c	0.918	1.089
Gender (Men=0)	3c	0.889	1.125
Sector (Public sector=0)	3c	0.895	1.118
Job security (Yes)	3c	0.895	1.118
Independent at work (Yes)	3c	0.848	1.179
Job satisfaction (Yes)	3c	0.813	1.231

INVOLVEMENT IN ORGANISATION

Variable	Model	Tolerance	VIF
Flexibility: Work from home (Yes)	1a	1	1
Flexibility: Work from home (Yes)	2a	0.944	1.059
Age	2a	0.957	1.045
Years of education	2a	0.878	1.139
Gender (Men=0)	2a	0.855	1.169
Sector (Public sector=0)	2a	0.872	1.147
Job security (Yes)	2a	0.947	1.056
Independent at work (Yes)	2a	0.953	1.049
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	1b	1	1
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	2b	0.867	1.153
Age	2b	0.946	1.057
Years of education	2b	0.867	1.153
Gender (Men=0)	2b	0.855	1.169
Sector (Public sector=0)	2b	0.865	1.156
Job security (Yes)	2b	0.914	1.094
Independent at work (Yes)	2b	0.921	1.086
Flexibility: Time (Yes)	3b	0.810	1.234
Age	3b	0.930	1.075
Years of education	3b	0.881	1.135
Gender (Men=0)	3b	0.862	1.161

Sector (Public sector=0)	3b	0.857	1.167
Job security (Yes)	3b	0.879	1.138
Independent at work (Yes)	3b	0.918	1.090
Job satisfaction (Yes)	3b	0.812	1.231
Flexibility: Organise (Yes)	1c	1	1
Flexibility: Organise (Yes)	2c	0.888	1.126
Age	2c	0.956	1.046
Years of education	2c	0.895	1.117
Gender (Men=0)	2c	0.845	1.183
Sector (Public sector=0)	2c	0.879	1.138
Job security (Yes)	2c	0.940	1.064
Independent at work (Yes)	2c	0.893	1.120
Flexibility: Organise (Yes)	3c	0.820	1.220
Age	3c	0.934	1.071
Years of education	3c	0.903	1.107
Gender (Men=0)	3c	0.853	1.173
Sector (Public sector=0)	3c	0.873	1.146
Job security (Yes)	3c	0.891	1.123
Independent at work (Yes)	3c	0.898	1.114
Job satisfaction (Yes)	3c	0.810	1.235