

Don't hesitate to communicate!

A mixed-method study on communication around the future way of working and its effects on communication-, employee satisfaction and commitment in post-Covid Sweden.

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic caused many companies across the world to adopt a telework system with little or no preparation. The new way of working and the new method of communication between employees and organizations resulted in a high level of uncertainty. Even though the pandemic is coming to an end, it still poses some challenges for managers to decide on how the future working policy should look like and companies have adopted different levels of clarity in their communication to employees around such policy. This research aims to increase the understanding on how the policy around the future way of working has been communicated to white-collar employees in Sweden-based companies in such an uncertain period and how such communication affects their communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction as well as commitment to their employers. Specifically, the paper investigates how three levels of communication clarity were perceived by employees, what emotions it triggered and thereby how it affects their satisfaction and commitment. The research adopts a mixed-method approach where both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed. 20 qualitative interviews and 140 quantitative survey responses were conducted for the analysis.

The findings show that there are positive relationships between the clarity levels of communication and communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction and commitment. It also reveals the importance of adopting a clear communication as no or vague communication have no significant difference on some of the variables studied. This study contributes to literature regarding effective communication during organizational changes specifically in the post Covid-19 setting. It also opens a similar line of research on this matter in other countries which are reaching an end of the pandemic. The practical and managerial contribution includes providing understanding and suggestions for decision makers in Sweden-based organizations as well as consultants working closely with change management.

Keywords: communication clarity, uncertainty, post-pandemic, anxiety, inclusion, productivity, importance of work, belonging, support, future way of working, teleworking, communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction, commitment, retention.

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, a background to the study is presented, continuing with a problematization that unveils the research gap in previous research. The purpose and research question are then presented. Lastly, the study's delimitations and the disposition of the thesis are briefly described.

1.1 Background

In December 2019 the world learned the name of a new infectious virus “Sars-CoV-2” and the disease it caused in humans and animals “Covid-19”, or simply called “Corona” or “Covid” by some. Governments were closing borders in an attempt to stop the virus from becoming a pandemic, but the consequences for billions of people around the globe were severe. Up until April 2022, 482 227 744 cases of COVID-19 (in accordance with the same applied case definitions and testing strategies in the affected countries) have been reported, sadly including 6 130 303 deaths (European Center for Disease Prevention and Control, 2022) despite strict lockdowns of entire municipalities in many countries, leading to severe financial drawbacks, but also psychological affect. As countries acted differently in their preventive work to hinder the spread of the disease, Sweden chose a much more liberal way with no strict lockdown, but instead providing recommendations to their citizens. On April 1st, 2020 the Swedish Public Health Agency recommended that everyone who could perform their work tasks from home should work from home or telework. As the first, second and third wave of the pandemic swept over the society, the Public Health Agency in Sweden continuously recommended working from home up until February 9th, 2022 when all restrictions were lifted.

The pandemic forced managers to make decisions in highly uncertain conditions. In such a time of crises or changes with a high level of uncertainty, employees refer to their leaders for gaining information, which raises demands for effective organizational communication of important decisions (Sanders et al., 2020; Van der Meer et al., 2017; Van Zoonen and Van der Meer, 2015). Leaders and managers play the role of the main communicator in the time of crises (Coombs, 2010; Kartikawangi and Dahesihsari, 2020; Men and Stacks, 2014). Working from home even poses more challenges for communication (Sanders et al., 2020) such as slow data transfer, time delay of getting information, and insufficient explanation, which result in dissatisfaction and

anxiety among employees (Nakamura et al., 1995). Therefore, managers are expected not only to provide sufficient, transparent and truthful information to manage uncertainty and help employees understand the situation, but also to give them support in a difficult time (Kartikawangi and Dahesihsari, 2020). The role of management teams in such a situation can create positive outcomes such as employee satisfaction, engagement, productivity and commitment (Joo and Lee, 2017; Kartikawangi and Dahesihsari, 2020).

As vaccinations and post-disease immunity increase, many countries, including Sweden, have declared that the situation around Covid-19 is sufficiently stable to remove a majority of restrictions (Ministry of Health and Social affairs, 2022) and hence, some companies have started to return to office work while others have continuously allowed employees to work from home. How companies define the future way of working (FWoW), and to what extent and how companies have communicated around the future way of working varies and may be a source of anxiety and demotivation.

In the article “What employees are saying about the future of remote work” by Alexander et al. (2020) written during the second wave of the pandemic, the authors reveal that many employees feel anxious and derive this to the lack of clear information and policies for how the post-pandemic way of working will look like. Since then, employers have had plenty of time to adopt the communication around the FWoW, and this is why we are focusing on this subject in this geography and at this time. We are interested to see how Swedish companies are dealing with this question. The timing of this report is great as the restrictions were recently lifted in Sweden before the data collection was conducted, while restrictions were still in place in many countries of the world.

1.2 Problem formulation

Prior research has found multiple interesting findings about work from home arrangements and attitudes during the pandemic. One such indicates that employees worldwide would like to work on average 2,5 days per week from home once the pandemic is over, and that two thirds would like the employers to be more flexible in terms of working from home (Broom, 2021). The latter is verified in yet another study, showing that the remote or flexible working condition has gained

popularity from the pre-covid share of 38% to 63% (Alexander et al., 2020). With this increased demand for more flexible working conditions one would assume that companies are in the midst of defining the FWoW for the organizations. While some organizations have already done so and clearly communicated it to their employees, others are reluctant in their communication strategies.

Earlier studies have pointed out the importance of having an effective communication strategy during both organizational change and during the time of uncertainty (as the current restriction-free time) but these are commonly focusing on an isolated event, such as a merger or accident with few involved organizations, and not the mass change we are witnessing in the present (Husain, 2013). Internal communication has also been proven to, if well managed, enhance employee satisfaction (Sharma and Kamalanabhan, 2012) and others have shown that communication satisfaction also is positively related to commitment (Ammari et al., 2017), and we can also conclude that earlier research has proven the positive link between employee satisfaction and commitment.

Effective organizational communication also triggers many positive emotions in employees such as happiness (Proctor, 2014), a sense of trust, a feeling of being important and appreciated, which has been proved to have lasting effects on satisfaction, motivation and performance, and commitment (Guzzo et al., 2021; Proctor, 2014; Rajhans, 2009). Otherwise, insufficient communication could trigger dissatisfaction and anxiety in employees (Nakamura et al., 1995). Verčič and Vokić (2017) also confirmed that internal communication satisfaction has a significant role in high employee engagement (commitment). Therefore, an effective communication strategy can indirectly support firms' operation and improve competitive advantages.

A variety of research has also been published in the setting of Covid-19, but these mainly study the mid-pandemic phase with the focus on the impacts of the pandemic on how organizations respond to those impacts (e.g. Buchheim et al., 2020) or the public communication in the social setting (e.g. Ataguba and Ataguba, 2020). One research into the communication strategies around the FWoW after the pandemic, but conducted in the middle of the pandemic, has

indicated that lack of communication leads to anxiety and reduced perception of inclusion and other positive emotional constructs related to commitment and hence, has a negative impact on the performance of an organization (Alexander et. al, 2020). Even though the research was only based on global data, was conducted in the middle of lock-down of many countries and was not yet peer reviewed, it offers inspiration to this thesis.

To our knowledge, no other research explores the relation between communication around the future way of working, the satisfaction around such communication and the impact on commitment. As communication around FWoW also contains an unprecedented event that differs to what has been researched in the past, namely the FWoW being a market-wide and long-lasting phenomena, we cannot be sure that earlier research explaining these relationships can be applied to this new context without questioning the reliability. We therefore see a lack of research into an otherwise rather well explored research area that we will be aiming at filling. As one of the first countries to remove all restrictions on February 9th, 2022 and since Sweden has been different in the way that the country has coped with the pandemic, we believe that it is of great interest to gain knowledge about how employees perceive the way organizations communicate about FWoW and how that is going to affect them, and as a consequence, the organizations.

Researchers have paid little attention to organizational communication in the time of Covid-19 and how it would evoke emotions among staff as well as its impacts on employee commitment after all uncertainties from the pandemic. Also, the post-pandemic phase has not yet reached many other countries except Sweden yet when this research is conducted, so recent studies on such a phase were not based on a realistic situation. The organizational change of how we work post-Covid-19 pandemic has been unprecedented and will be long-lasting, which is the reason why it urgently needs to be investigated separately. Overall, there appear to exist several reasons to further study the way enterprises in Sweden communicate the future working modes and how it is perceived by employees, what kind of emotions it evokes and its impact on subsequent satisfaction constructs and organizational commitment.

1.3 Purpose and research question

While the pandemic has been controlled in many countries and the world is reaching the stage of a mostly similar era to the time before the outbreak, there will still be several consequential changes afterward - "There is no back to normal" (Baker, 2021; Benjamin et al., 2020). Research serving as predictors and giving pioneering suggestions or implications for the post-pandemic transformation has been conducted, but even though such focuses on the challenges of transforming and how the transformation should be managed (García-Morales et al., 2021; Benjamin et al., 2020). But transformation also requires communication of organizations to facilitate employees' understanding and engagement to changes but this area has been under-researched. The common questions raised among workers are how they will work when the pandemic is over, or whether the teleworking mode will proceed (Salon et al., 2021). To this date, there is a void of researching this in the post-pandemic setting.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of how employees' emotional and satisfactorial constructs, as well as commitment, relate to the communication practices applied around the future way of working by companies in Sweden. We find this important as efficiency is at the top of organizations' agendas and the well-being of employees is sometimes overlooked. Better awareness around this topic may be a rather simple tool for organizations to avoid reducing the satisfaction and commitment of employees due to poor communication practices. We specifically investigate what employees in Sweden know about their future way of working, how this has been communicated, how such communication has been perceived, what emotions it evoked and how this affects the commitment to the employer. With this thesis, we particularly aim to examine the following subquery questions and answering these will help us answer the main research question:

1. To what extent companies have communicated around the FWoW?
2. Which emotions surround the communication related to the FWoW?
3. How do emotions link to communication and employee satisfaction?
4. How does communication of FWoW affect the commitment to the organization?

To summarize, this thesis seeks to answer the research question:

“How does the clarity and content of communication around the future way of working affect communication satisfaction, employment satisfaction and employee commitment?”

1.4 Delimitations

This thesis is delimited in many ways. Firstly, it is framed to examine how the communication around the FWoW affects the communication satisfaction, job satisfaction and commitment, no other internal or external communication from the company is taken into consideration. Secondly, commitment in academia is also divided into several different sub-groups, where the most prominent are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). From there, the most important source is affective commitment as employees with strong affective commitment stay with their employers because they *want to* do so, not that they *need to* (continuance) or *ought to* (normative) do so due to perceived costs of leaving their organizations or due to the feeling of obligation to remain employed (Ibid). For the scope of this study, we explore only affective employee commitment and for the sake of space use the term “commitment” throughout. Finally, the research subjects in this study are white-collar workers who have been claimed to have the most opportunities to work from home due to their job characteristics (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). Therefore, other groups of the workforce are not examined due to the difference in job nature which may lead to other influential factors influencing the result compared to white-collar workers.

1.5 Disposition

First, a literature review and theoretical framework is presented around several related constructs to the research question. We thereafter proceed with methodology chosen before we commence with Study I and thereafter Study II. Study I first has a separate methodology section showing study design and sampling before the analysis part and finally the discussion of results. Study II follows, also with a methodology section showing study design and sampling before the analysis section and finally a discussion of results. The report then continues with a general discussion and a short conclusion of the findings in respect to the research question and a section highlighting practical implications for managers and scholars. We then declare limitations of the

research and suggest future research on the topic before the report is concluded with a reference list and appendices.

2. Literature review and Theoretical framework

In this section we will present the theory on which this research is based and relevant literature on subjects of interest to reach the aim of this thesis. We here also present specific areas to further investigate qualitatively in Study I and relations we wish to test in Study II.

2.1 Theoretical approach - Uncertainty management theory

Uncertainty has been described as one's "perceived inability" to precisely forecast something (Milliken, 1987). Uncertainty literature has explained the attributes of such inability to predict events as an ambiguity of information or a lack of information (Berger and Calabrese, 1975). Uncertainty has been considered an undesired state, which motivates coping mechanisms aiming at uncertainty reduction (Berger and Bradac, 1982). Uncertainty reduction theory's original proposition (Berger and Calabrese, 1975) and its extension (Kramer, 1999) proposed that when facing uncertainty, people are driven to seek information to alleviate the distress.

Uncertainty reduction theory explained how people use communication when they are not sure about their current situation (Berger and Calabrese, 1975). Uncertainty reduction theory has been expanded and advanced in various directions taking different perspectives such as the uncertainty management theory, predicted outcome theory, and the theory of uncertainty management in organizations (Berger et al., 2015). For the purpose of this research, we rely on the original scope of uncertainty management theory focusing on the perspective of individuals coping with uncertainty and uncertainty management theory in organizations (i.e. the subpart of change management) for our analysis.

The uncertainty management theory posits that people can face uncertainty from many sources such as meeting new people, planning events, making decisions, etc. Individuals also have their own appraisals and emotional responses to particular types of uncertainty. Usually uncertainty is considered to induce anxiety, however, Brashers et al. (2002) argued that uncertainty does not always trigger anxiety as an emotional state among people, and the emotional response is influenced by individual appraisals. To reduce uncertainty in any context, people adopt appropriate coping strategies based on their appraisals. For example, individuals who perceive

uncertainty as a danger would be more active to cope with uncertainty (for example, by seeking information) compared to people who characterize uncertainty as an opportunity. However, most of the time people seek information to reduce uncertainty because uncertainty is predominantly characterized as a dis-preferred state (Allen et al., 2007). Communication has therefore been placed at the center of the theory of uncertainty management (Berger et al., 2015).

Existing literature on uncertainty management theory has identified information-seeking as a communicative way for uncertainty management. Uncertainty is usually associated with one's perception of both the quantity and quality of information. If people perceive that there is a lack of communication or that the available information is not of high quality, they are likely to experience negative emotions. Seeking information also means finding support, so one would feel supported and experience less uncertainty when receiving perceived sufficient information.

In the organizational settings, research has illustrated that uncertainty is one of the biggest consequences for employees especially when it comes to organizational changes (Allen et al., 2007; DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998). Employees could experience uncertainty related to issues such as implementation process, outcomes of changes, or the security of their position (Bordia et al., 2004a). Therefore, organization change has been a major situation with a high level of uncertainty, which is a main drive for employees to seek information to understand the uncertain situation. In response to such information seeking behavior, employers should be the main sources providing information to their employees in such cases. Existing research suggested that communication is an essential component of any successful change implementation and to mitigate uncertainty among employees (Ibid). The importance of organizational communication in change management and uncertainty reduction is emphasized from the early stages of change in most of the change management models (Pryor et al., 2008). However, the dominant model is Lewin's model in which communication is highlighted in all three stages, i.e. unfreezing, moving and refreezing. For the purpose of this study, only the first stage which is the "unfreezing stage" will be presented. As most employees are not involved in such a process directly and do not know exactly what will happen, the level of uncertainty raises and rumors appear. Communication in the early stage is thus of paramount importance and has the following goals:

to provide employees with accurate and detailed information; to provide guidance in their roles and responsibilities, as well as provide information about how the change will affect employees.

2.2 Review of literature

2.2.1 Organizational communication

Communication can be conceptualized as “the unity of utterance, information, and understanding: an utterance is understood as conveying a particular information” (Luhmann, 1995). Internal communication is an aspect of the organizational setting that determines whether or not employees are engaged (Bakker et al., 2011). Without proper organizational communications, it is difficult to establish a symbolic linkage between the organization and its members which is considered the core of organizational identification (Myers et al., 2016). Other research also supports the idea that internal communication, if well managed, enhances employee identification and commitment (Sharma and Kamalanabhan, 2012).

Organizational communication is even more important in the context of changes. Change communication has long been investigated as a key subject in change management literature. Lewis (1999) indicated that the processes of organizational change and communication are inextricably linked. However, beyond the essence of the mere provision of information, other research argues that the quality of the communication rather impacts on employees’ appraisals and reactions to changes (Bordia et al., 2004b). Communication around the change helps lessen, or to a larger extent, eliminate employees’ resistance to change (Husain, 2013). When the resistance level is relatively low, the change turns out more productive and successful. Therefore, it poses a need for effective communication from employers.

Effective organizational communication can be characterized by openness, trust, involvement and participation (perception of having a voice in the decision-making process), and supportiveness (feeling of being seriously taken into account) (Yue et al., 2021). Other than that, Stranzl et al. (2021) also discusses the role of transparency and suggested transparency to be a factor contributing to the effectiveness of communication. Transparent communication could be viewed as a socioemotional resource that is repaid with trust by employees. If employees do not perceive their organization to be transparent, they may be hesitant to return any resources. A lack

of transparency contributes to increased uncertainty and anxiety experienced by employees. This results in them disengaging from their job by disconnecting from their jobs, which challenges the improvements of satisfaction and commitment.

2.2.2 Employee satisfaction

Employee satisfaction is defined as the level of employee contentment with a job (Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska, 2021) or “a construct that reflects the extent to which employees have a positive attitude towards their workplace or certain facets thereof”, including both affective and cognitive elements (Goretzki et al., 2022). Employee satisfaction is a complex concept that influences and is influenced by a variety of factors and groups (Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska, 2021). One of the central aspects of research in organizations is what factors affect employee satisfaction. To answer this question, Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska (2021) classify those into two levels. The factors at the organizational level comprise salary, offered benefits, organizational communication, organizational identity. Individual-level factors include personality, personal values, and well-being. Moreover, a variety of research has focused on identifying factors for job satisfaction enhancement where effective organization communication has been identified as one of the key elements (Sageer et al., 2012).

Employee satisfaction is also presented as a key factor contributing to the success of an organization (Goretzki et al., 2022). Understanding employee satisfaction is thus of great importance for an organization as a number of work-related aspects are greatly influenced by it. Employee satisfaction is proven to contribute to the improvement of motivation, productivity, morale, engagement and employee relations and help reduce absenteeism, sabotage, employee turnover and commitment (Sageer et al., 2012). Employee satisfaction can also have “spill-over effects” such as increasing customer satisfaction or performance and profitability of a firm (Goretzki et al., 2022).

2.2.3 Employee Commitment

Commitment is defined as “a force that binds an individual to a target (social or non-social) and to a course of action of relevance to that target” (Meyer et al., 2006, p. 666). Commitment has been classified in several ways, but Mueller et al. (1992) carefully addresses three forms of

commitment i.e., organizational commitment, career commitment and work commitment. Commitment is also established in three components (Meyer and Allen, 1991) which are affective, normative, and continuance commitment. As earlier stated, we focus on affective commitment throughout this report and .

Kalleberg and Berg (1987) conceptualize commitment as “the degree to which an employee identifies with the goals and values of the organization and is willing to exert effort to help it succeed” (p. 159). This form of commitment has been widely discussed among sociologists and economists such as Steers (1977) and Mowday et al. (1982). Two dominant concepts of commitment are loyalty and intent to stay that are discussed by Mueller et al., (1992). Loyalty is argued to be a vital “intervening variable between the structural conditions of work and the decision to stay or leave” (p.212). Specifically, positive work attributes are expected to improve employee loyalty, which in turn help reduce the intention of leaving. Intent to stay refers to the intention of an employee to remain a member of his/her organization. Both loyalty and intent to stay are believed to stabilize with tenure (Price, 1977; Mueller et al., 1992).

Meyer and Allen (1991) posit that commitment is linked with an employee’s “emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization”. An employee with strong commitment voluntarily remains employed at the current organization. Mowday et al. (1982) classify the antecedents of affective commitment into categories: personal characteristics, organizational structure, job-related characteristics, and work experiences. Personal characteristics are suggested as demographic characteristics (despite no consistent relations with commitment); need for achievement, affiliation and autonomy; and central life interest in work (Steers, 1977). Some attributes of organizational structure that have a relation with affective commitment are decentralization of decision making and formalization of policy and procedure (Morris and Steers, 1980). Work experiences and job-related characteristics are allocated into two categories as follows (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Firstly, the comfort category includes organizational support; organizational dependability, and reward distribution. Secondly, the competence category comprises job challenge, opportunity for self-expression, participation in decision making, and personal importance to the organization (Ibid).

2.3 Theoretical framework

The 2019 novel coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented and unanticipated. During the outbreak, many white-collar workers had to work from home and communicate with colleagues via online platforms. Even though various benefits of telework have been claimed in existing research such as flatter and more decentralized structures, improved flexibility, the utilization of human resources from outside of the traditional workplace (Cortellazzo et al., 2019), a sudden change with no preparation due to the Covid-19 outbreak has created a number of challenges for organizations to maintain their operation. Several companies implemented telework without properly attending to technical issues such as security and the information technology environment (Nagata et al., 2021). Employees were overwhelmed with too much information from both internal and external sources during the time of infodemic (Reddy and Gupta, 2020). Other challenges that could be named are relationship building, new complex communication methods, and how to manage performance in an effective way (Contreras et al., 2020).

The situation brought about uncertainties because people had an inadequate understanding of the scenario, and the information provided could be perceived as incomplete, ambiguous, or unreliable (Lipshitz and Strauss, 1977). Uncertainty is commonly described as an anxiety-producing cognitive state that is addressed through information-seeking behaviors (Berger and Bradac, 1982). Research has stated that uncertainty causes anxiety, especially during times of crisis or times of change (Holman et al., 2020, Özmete and Pak, 2020). In addition, uncertainty results in a number of other undesired psychological states. Uncertain situations without a proper intervention could lead to a decreased feeling of support (Cullen et al., 2014); a reduced sense of inclusion, and belongingness (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020); diminished productivity (Michac, 1997) and a declined feeling of work importance or appreciation. It is thus interesting to investigate further the emotional and psychological responses to uncertainty.

Anxiety refers to the feelings of “nervousness, worry, and/or tension” (MacIntyre, 2019). Unmanaged anxiety in the organizational context could also result in long-term effects on decreased performance and satisfaction, frequent absenteeism and turnover, which in turn have negative effects on commitment (Labrague and McEnroe-Petitte, 2018; Lee et al., 2020). The definition of perceived organizational support can be illustrated as employees’ “global beliefs

concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p.501). The conceptualization of inclusion can be seen as “the extent to which all employees are accepted as valued members of the organization, recognized for their unique characteristics, and encouraged to participate in the workplace” (Brimhall et al., 2016; Barak, 2013, 2015; Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011). Belongingness is defined as “the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment” (Hagerty et al., 1992, p. 173). Productivity is conceptualized as the contribution to an organizational outcome in relation to resources used. The definition of appreciation can be seen as “communicating that one values someone else” (Stocker et al., 2018, p.4) and is sometimes stated as equal to feeling that one's work is important. We henceforth mainly use the construct importance of one's work in our study, but will partly also refer to this as appreciation. These five last mentioned factors, all hereinafter referred to as “positive emotional constructs”, are proven to be positively related to employee commitment in the organizational setting (Barak et al., 2001; Cho and Barak, 2008; Eisenberger et al., 1990; Raza et al., 2020; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002, Stella, 2014). However, a perceived lack of support, inclusion, belongingness and appreciation as well as a reduced productivity pose significant risks to employee performance, satisfaction and commitment (Barak et al., 2006; Carnevale and Hatak, 2020; Cartwright and Cooper, 1999).

Uncertainty is shown to have negative associations with many organizational attitudes such as satisfaction (Nelson et al., 1995; Rafferty and Griffin, 2006), and commitment (Hui and Lee, 2000). In the organizational context, the primary role of communication is to reduce uncertainty (Farace et al., 1978) and communication is a way to respond to information-seeking behaviors (Brashers, 2006). However, the mere provision of information might not be good enough to minimize uncertainty (Allen et al., 2007). Bordia et al. (2004b) indicated that effective communication is needed to foster openness and other positive attitudes to the extent that it effectively tackles employee uncertainty. In the highly uncertain situation of an organizational change, effectively communicating the information is essential to keep employees informed and secure (Bordia, 2007). Poorly handled change communication leads to widespread rumors, which usually magnifies negative aspects of the situation (Difonzo et al., 1994; Smeltzer and Zener, 1992). If timely communication is not provided, employees may be guessing or may learn about

it from other unofficial sources (Bastien, 1987; Smeltzer, 1991). The content of the communication also plays an important role in delivering useful information and reducing uncertainty (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999).

Effective communication is a vital factor to employee satisfaction and commitment as pointed out in numerous empirical research (Abugre, 2011; Sanzo et al., 2007, Yen et al., 2011) and at the same time employee satisfaction is also a driver of commitment (Mahmood Aziz et al., 2021; Matzlet and Renzl, 2007). The reason is that effective communication can aid in the resolution of disagreements/conflicts, the clarification of misunderstandings, and the promotion of healthy constructive discussion (Massey and Dawes, 2007). Hence, it is of great interest to investigate the interplay of these variables because it brings positive outcomes to organizations. Employees' perception of their organizations' communication method, the content communicated as well as the credibility of information will have impacts on their communication satisfaction as well as job satisfaction (Giri and Kurma, 2010) which in turn brings about affective orientations (Blegen and Mueller, 1987). Kurman and Giri (2009) prove that organizational communication has a significant impact on job satisfaction and some elements of communication such as trust and communication satisfaction can be prioritized as they contribute to the improvement of job satisfaction. Boon et al. (2006) show that organizational communication, besides teamwork and organizational trust, has a positive association with affective commitment while other research (Guzzo et al., 2021; Rajhans, 2009) contend that effective communication can result in such a sense of trust. The authors find it interesting and highly relevant to study the links between these constructs in the context of the uncertain situation when the pandemic is coming to an end, opening a new chapter for everyone, especially in the organizational setting.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a mixed exploratory sequential research method to be able to apply the combination of both quantitative and qualitative data to elevate the exploratory approach (Creswell, 2003). An exploratory sequential design is when the quantitative phase of data collection and analysis follows the qualitative phase of data collection and analysis (Fetters et al., 2013). A mixed-method approach is suitable in this research as it is particularly advantageous in terms of improved data accuracy and the creation of a more comprehensive picture of a new phenomena, such as the post-Covid-19 context (Collins et al., 2006). We want to have not only detailed answers with elaboration for deep interviews from a limited number of people (due to time constraints), but also overall opinions from a bigger sample of respondents. Therefore, having a “powerful mix” (Miles et al., 1994) allows us to promote both perspectives in our study especially when we seek to build on the strengths of both methods and thereby mitigating the risk of one-sided findings.

In Study I, data is generated from 20 in-depth interviews among white-collar workers employed in Sweden. This allows the respondents to freely express themselves around feelings evoked by the different levels of communication (or lack thereof), state the satisfaction and provide information around their commitment to the firm in their own words and to understand the underlying reasons why a respondent, for example, wants to telework 3 days per week. This first phase serves to generate ideas from open-ended interview questions that were then used to phrase and design the quantitative stage.

The succeeding Study II serves the purpose of exploring employee data from a larger population than Study I and thereby validating findings. As qualitative studies are also assumed to be hard to replicate, to generalize and are less transparent, the quantitative study will also add to credibility (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The quantitative data sample in Study II complements the qualitative results by generalizing and quantifying the observation (Maxwell, 1998), which is believed to address the risks of any bias in the qualitative study.

The studies interact nicely as validated findings as well as discrepancies can occur, adding value to further research. The data collection for Study I started on February 28th, 2022, more than two weeks after all restrictions in Sweden were fully lifted (on February 9th), so this phase has been considered “post-pandemic” in Sweden.

4. Study I

In this chapter, the methodology of the study is first described. The results and analysis are then presented, followed by the discussion of the findings from this study.

4.1 Methodology of Study I

4.1.1 Study design

The aim of Study I is to investigate the research question in an explorative manner to encircle the important aspects we further wish to investigate quantitatively in Study II. The study is an explorative inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) where Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014) has served as inspiration while coding the responses in the pursuit of identifying themes. This method is chosen to best provide a deep understanding of the effects of the communication around the future way of working from the employee's perspective.

4.1.2 Interview design

An initial set of 18 questions (excluding 10 demographic questions), about the interviewees' experience and feelings evoked by the communication around the future way of working, their view on employee satisfaction, ideal way of working and future plans in respect to work (Appendix 1) was prepared. After the initial three interviews, the question script was adjusted and expanded to better suit the purpose of the research. The final questions consist of twenty five questions (besides demographic questions) with the blocks: employee satisfaction and current employer, working habits, anticipated future way of working, communication around FWoW, support and purposefulness (importance of work).

4.1.3 Sampling

To ensure that interviewees have had enough experience working for the current company we only recruited respondents working for their current employer for a minimum six months. We relied on a system of referrals to promote participation where peer students and acquaintances were requested to provide names of potential people who were "full-time white collars, employed in Sweden and who have not changed work during the last six months". Along the

process, additional requirements, such as a specific gender or age group were added to ensure diversity and a as representative sample as possible. In the end, the sample included 8 women and 12 men between the ages 24 and 61 from different industries, backgrounds, geographical locations and with different personal traits. Due to this intentional caution to choose diverse interview objects, we believe the result from this Study I is generalizable for employees in Sweden.

4.1.4 Data collection

Data collection was conducted as semi-structured, in-depth one-on-one interviews. This allowed us to hold a natural and relaxed conversation with the interviewees aiming at them revealing more detailed information (Bryman, 2016), while it at the same time provided the interviewer with enough flexibility to adjust and follow-up based on the answers provided. Each interview took around 90 minutes and all sessions were recorded so that the team could focus on the task of interviewing, taking notes and focus on follow-up questions and the quality of the answers. The recordings proved to be highly valuable to catch nuances of answers for interviews where the notes were found to be ambiguous while analyzing the responses and grouping them into themes. All interviews were conducted within a three week time frame from February 28th, 2020 (i.e. more than two weeks after the restrictions were fully lifted by the Swedish government). Each interview started with the interviewer mentioning the importance of considering the communication around the future way of working in the responses throughout the interview and a reminder was sometimes stated in the middle of the interview if the interviewer felt that the subject was deviating from the research topic. The interview questions started with the demographics to warm up the respondents before proceeding to questions around more emotional aspects. All questions (Appendix 1) were asked open endedly not to steer the interviewees in any specific direction. If the interviewee's response did not answer the question, the interviewer would ask prompting follow-up questions to guide the respondent back to the question to successfully record an answer. All interviews were held in English, which is not the mother tongue for most interviewees, but very few language related misunderstandings occurred and could easily be remedied by a simple explanation.

4.2 Analysis

Each interview was transcribed and thereafter read thoroughly. One person in the research team then coded the responses into concentrated statements or single words enabling visibility of patterns. For example, a response to the question “What are your future plans related to your work/company?” reading “My plan is to stay where I am today as long as we have the possibilities to do what we do today, meaning developing the business area and see it takes off” was coded to “Stay and develop”. The coding of answers to that specific question resulted in three answer categories, where the remaining two were “Casually browsing”, and “Leave”. For correctness, the second member of the research team reviewed the codings before the names of interviewees were replaced by a randomly assigned letter between A and T to secure anonymity. A matrix was then created with the respondents as columns and coded interview responses as rows, where similar answers were color-coded to enhance the visibility of similarities throughout the matrix. Lengthy discussions around commonalities and observations of interest were thereafter conducted by the team, which resulted in a list of general observations and four main categories emerged from discussions and observations.

From our sample we interpret that around half had obtained clear information regarding the future way of working, and that around a quarter had not yet obtained any information. We also understand that almost all had expected to receive information about this topic by the day the restrictions were lifted in Sweden. Only a few demographic patterns can be observed, namely that the youngest employees with little working experience are more dedicated to stay in a company, even if the company provides little support and the employees are dissatisfied. Adversely, employees in the second part of their work life (with at least 17 years of working experience) are more likely to change jobs within the coming 12 month compared to interviewees in the earlier stage of their career. Unsatisfied employees remaining in the company also seem to have a shorter tenure, compared to employees leaving their employers. Our interpretation of this phenomena is that young professionals with short experience in their current role wish to gain experience and “build a CV” and therefore can remain longer in a company despite certain dissatisfaction than someone who already has a proper experience. We also notice that the interviewees with low employee satisfaction are all men, which in a small sample as this is not generalizable, but something we wish to test also in a larger sample.

4.2.1 Evoked feelings

The findings from the interviews show that respondents had different feelings when asked about their own opinion on employee satisfaction. The five positive emotional constructs i.e. inclusion, feeling of being important to the company, feeling productive, belonging and feeling supported, were all identified while the interviewees described employee satisfaction.

Respondents expressed the need for a sense of inclusion directly with the word as well as in the shape of the diversity in their organizations.

“I want to work in an inclusive environment where everyone is valued.” - O.

“... having a great team of people around me where everyone can say anything without retaliation or hard feelings from others.” - K.

The feeling of importance in satisfaction was mainly represented by appreciation, being liked and being a valued partner, but also a direct understanding that the employee is feeling that the work done is important for the customers or the company, or even to the world.

“... I want to be able to support all our clients in a good way” - N.

“I want to receive positive feedback for what is done in a good way, feeling that what I do contributes to a better world” - A.

The feeling of being productive was described as their performance or output.

“It [work-life balance] is good for both me and the company because I could be more productive” - Q.

“That is, from our effort, we can provide a high-quality system...” - N.

Belonging was mainly expressed in different ways of being part of something here and now, through activities, common goals, achieving something together, being proud of the workplace and being part of something on equal terms.

“The management is important. I want to feel that we have shared value, and if this is not the case, there is less satisfaction” - K.

“Company core values aligned with personal beliefs and presence of a career roadmap” - H.

Interviewees also described how the organization cares about their well-being and their work life in different ways, which can be referred to as support.

“To me it is about colleagues, leadership and managers, whether they are supportive and good” - T.

“The working environment, like a place where there is a lot of cooperation, and a conflict-free and supportive atmosphere” - B.

Analyzing quotes relating to how the communication around the future way of working made the interviewees feel, we interpret that the most frequently mentioned emotions around the communication are inclusion, belonging and support:

Inclusion: *“I think my sense of inclusion has increased” - E.*

“I feel excluded as we have not been involved, or even invited to discuss” - H.

“It increased the feeling of inclusion as we were part of the process all the time” - N.

“It increased the sense of being included” - T.

Belonging: *“The lack of communication also affected my sense of being part of the company in a way” - P.*

“I feel less belonged to them because they didn’t ask for our opinions and demands on this issue” - K.

“I think I feel like the semblance between the company's values and my own is stronger” - E.

Support: *“It made me feel good, taken care of in a sense” - C.*

“I feel supported by my company” - D.

“It feels like the company does not really care about the employees” - F.

“I felt less supported” - P.

“My manager was really supportive about how I wanted it” - Q.

Interestingly, as much research around communication and organizational change is connected to anxiety, and we therefore expected to see anxiety among the top emotional constructs, we did not receive that many comments related to negative stressors. One reason for this could be that interviewees did not feel comfortable enough to discuss anxiety, while the positive emotional constructs are more neutral and less personal in their characters to disclose to the interviewer.

4.2.2 Communication, satisfaction and commitment

The respondents were thereafter asked whether and how a policy around the future way of working had been communicated. While almost all interviewees had expected to be communicated around the FWoW, not even half had received such communication, some with vague communication and a minority had not received any information at all. The ones lacking clear information believed some communication would arrive soon and that reasons for such delay could be that their employers are waiting to see what other companies on the market do before making a decision, or that the employer was simply not prepared to communicate anything as the management has not yet decided how to work in the future. Some also stated that the top managers' cultural background would probably hinder them from taking a decision in favor of the employees as *"...a German culture means that you need to show yourself in the office"*. Such responses mainly came from employees of large international corporations where the decision making process may be longer, but also imposed by organizational politics and a fear of being the first mover to make radical decisions of allowing employees teleworking to a larger extent. Such decisions may also be heavily dependent on the culture of the company, and where decision making happens. An example is:

"...the company is managed in a very old style where everything is concentrated to a few people in the headquarters in Italy..." - I.

The interviewees who had received some information before the third wave of the pandemic in Sweden and did not describe this clearly were coded as having received vague information unless they clearly stated they thought it had been sufficient.

A separate question also investigated emotions evoked by the communication, or lack thereof. During the evaluation stage it became apparent that the interviewees having the most negative comments also expressed very low employee satisfaction in general which may have tainted and amplified their negative bias in responses to other questions as well. We believe this is a consequence of a wider problem than the isolated event of the communication of the future way of working, but is rather connected to the Organizational Change Cynicism (OCC) (Brown and Cregan, 2008). OCC is a phenomenon where employees may perceive that management does changes mainly for their own benefits at the expense of others which is supported by the way “F” responds to company culture:

“Company culture is a bit “us vs. them” when looking at the top management and employees and there is a huge distance between these two. There is a huge gap in compensation and benefits and there is very little trust between these two lairs.”

From the array of emotions we have investigated earlier, only anxiety, inclusion, support and productivity could be interpreted from what was stated freely without further probing by the interviewer. However, continuing to ask the respondents about feelings, also revealed importance and a sense of belonging. A reason for this could be that interviewees also had more difficulty describing the attributes of such feelings and that the first mentioned four may be perceived as closer linked to the workplace and words commonly used in companies. Collectively these six emotional constructs do have a connection to job satisfaction and commitment, and are therefore of interest to observe.

Communication satisfaction and employee satisfaction were closely linked with the exception of a few cases. While the respondents who were satisfied with the communication had a positive general employee satisfaction, the interviewees with no communication experience were at best neutral, but mainly negative. We also note that a majority of people who received clear information were more satisfied in their comments than the ones who had received vague communication. Interestingly, one interviewee who had not yet received any information around FWoW was still very satisfied as an employee, while less so with the communication. Interviewees with low communication satisfaction expressed less favorable emotions from the communication, while this was not always the case for interviewees with low employee

satisfaction. The unsatisfied or neutral employees are also more prone to leaving the employer than the ones with a high employee satisfaction. We cannot observe any difference between gender, different company sizes, tenure or age in terms of employee or communication satisfaction. “Q” provides a voice for the satisfied employees when describing how his satisfaction is around the communication and as an employee:

“Yes I’m satisfied with the communication. As I said it was perfect timing, long, detailed discussions and perspectives from everyone were taken into account.”

“I’m satisfied as an employee at the moment, I don’t have much to complain about. I am in control of how and where I spend my days and have more flexibility to decide to work from home or the office.”

In general, there appears to be a positive relationship between the clarity of communication and communication satisfaction; employee satisfaction, and between communication satisfaction and employee satisfaction.

Whether the commitment depends on the future way of working policies (or not), was answered positively by half of the sample, while the remaining half stated that there was no such relationship, or that it may have an effect. Employees who have not obtained any information yet have expressed a neutral or reduced commitment level, which is very similar to the ones who have received vague communication on the topic within the sample. Two respondents, however, who obtained vague information conveyed very negative emotions. Clearly provided communication has a positive effect and influences the commitment positively for most subjects interviewed in line with our expectations. The link between the communication around the future way of working and commitment is of great interest as commitment in turn is connected to retention, so it therefore seems as if the communication efforts indirectly may be connected to the intention to remain with the organization. Table 1. contains samples of the three different communication levels, some frequently evoked emotions and the effect of commitment for six of the interviewees. One odd attitude was displayed by one employee who prefers the absence of communication as it provides the opportunity to interpret the rules as they wish. This fits well into the theory that uncertainty may actually provide a sense of hope or optimism regarding the impending outcome, rather than the certainty of a negative outcome (Brashers et al., 2002).

“I am quite happy with the way they have been doing it from my personal perspective as there has been very little communication and as a result I can still work from home just like during the pandemic. The longer this continues, the better for me.” - G, who currently works the majority of days from home.

Overall, there seems to exist a positive relationship between the clarity of information around the FWoW and commitment.

Table 1.
Communication levels around future way of working – evoked emotions – effect on commitment

Theoretical category	Themes	Communication	Evoked emotions	Effect on commitment
Communication clarity	No communication provided	<i>“It has not been communicated at all yet.” -A</i>	<i>“I am happy with my current arrangement and do not want to lose it. So, I am slightly worried for what will come, and when” -A</i>	<i>“If the communication will not be in favor of what I want, then of course it has a negative effect, and I will hurry to find a new job.” -A</i>
		<i>“There was a conversation around how we should try to come back at the end of the pandemic, but there has not been anything communicated after that” -J</i>	<i>“We are a very new and small company so I think we are pragmatic and accept a lack of clarity but of course, clear communication would make one feel better.” -J</i>	<i>“I am committed as long as I am allowed the flexibility, I need it to work with my private life, but if it would create tension then I would lose the commitment.” -J</i>
	Vague communication	<i>“It has been communicated that the company is following the FHM guidelines and that we will gradually go back to the old policy, until further notice, but it has not been stated WHEN it will be enforced.” -F</i>	<i>“It makes me feel plain stupid that the company treats us employees more as property as humans with whom they should integrate and hold a dialogue around this. It feels like they do not know what to do yet.” -F</i>	<i>“For me it has definitely decreased.” -F</i>
		<i>“We got an email and on the intranet between wave 2 and 3 of the pandemic.” -K</i>	<i>“I feel like the company does not really care about what the employees want, but rather just do the bare minimum.” -K</i>	<i>“Unfortunately, there is dissatisfaction with HR, so I am not expecting too much from the company. The commitment is low as it is, and this did not improve it – on the contrary.” -K</i>
	Clear communication	<i>“During the pandemic, the company sent out forms about how we would like to work in the future ... The managers also asked. They communicated this even before the pandemic ended and repeated it after all the restrictions were lifted.” -E</i>	<i>“I feel good because now I know what is expected. I think my sense of inclusion increased as I know the company considered our expectations and demands. My productivity increases because I have the ability to, now after the pandemic, plan the week better.” -E</i>	<i>“I think it positively affected my commitment. It makes me feel like I want to stay at the company due to the flexibility and autonomy as I explained before, I would like to have the ability to decide for myself.” -E</i>
		<i>“They communicated with us about their decisions by email and through the internal webpage.” -D</i>	<i>“I think the communication was proper... I feel supported by my company” -D</i>	<i>“I think it has a positive effect on my commitment. I think clear communication helps people see the vision, how it will work and how we will follow the plans accordingly.” -D</i>

4.2.3 Future way of working communication - expectations and de facto

To obtain a full picture of the expectations among interviewees, we thereafter explored how they had been included in the policy making for the future way of working, how large teleworking freedom they either knew their employer would allow, or thought it would allow. The absolute majority had expected to be included in the shaping of the new working policy framework in some sort of way, but only close to half of all interviewees were actually invited to participate in such development. We identified two themes here. First, the ones who had their expectations met or exceeded, i.e. (i) the ones who did not expect involvement to happen and either were not, or were involved, and (ii) the ones who expected involvement and were involved. Regardless of combination, this group felt very satisfied with the communication. Second, only the ones who had expected involvement and were not involved were in the other group and were much less satisfied. Although this finding is not part of our research question, we find it interesting as non-fulfilment of such involvement expectations seem to have a strong relationship with low communication satisfaction, while meeting or exceeding expectations is met with a positive attitude towards the information. We do not investigate this potential moderating effect further, but note it as an interesting topic for future research. In a similar manner, when comparing the desired and expected allowance of teleworking against each other, two groups emerged also here, these were (i) the respondents where the allowed teleworking days either met or exceeded the desired number of days, or (ii) where the desire was not fulfilled. We again note this observation, but as it falls slightly outside of the research question we will not pursue this further in this thesis. For the reader interested in building on our research we provide answers related to the fulfillment of desired policy involvement and teleworking days from eight of the interviews in Appendix 2.

In their description of the ideal communication around the future way of working, the respondents mostly included involvement of employees in the decision process, flexible working conditions, early timing of communication and clarity, to make sure everybody knows how many days (if any) are required in the office. They described involvement with phrases such as *“a space for employees to express their needs”*, *“discuss together”* or *“consider employees’ opinions”* while flexible working as *“work flexibly”*, *“freedom”* or *“give open options”*. Early timing was expressed with *“before all the restrictions are lifted”*, *“beginning of January”* as

well as “*in advance*”; and clarity as “*clear*” or “*transparency*”. However, when mentioning these elements, interviewees expressed different feelings, either positive or negative towards the same aspect. The quotes from two respondents below capture the essence of many interviewees in their statements. Even though they mentioned some common elements, they showed different attitudes towards a “clear communication” with a specific number of days.

“I think the timing should be at least a few days before all the restrictions are lifted so that people know the plan. Employees’ demands or expectations should also be considered, top managers should not just reach a decision themselves. The content, I think, must be elastic to suit all employees, like “you can decide your way” is fine as I think providing clearer policies with specific days to be at work could even make some people more unhappy. The importance is that it is clear about what the level of freedom is.” - R, who was informed about 100% office work with flexibility.

“During this uncertain time of course it’s good to communicate as soon as possible before the restrictions are lifted about what the plan is to the employees... They communicated that they expect the employees to come back but I don’t see any clear announcements. It would have been better with clear information on which day to be at work... There should also be a space or a place for the employees to express their needs and wants when it comes to the future working style.” - P, who did not receive a clear communication.

We continue the last part of our analysis by looking at the ultimate action an employee can take in showing his or her commitment to an organization, namely leave or remain employed.

4.2.4 Groups

The future plans in relation to work among the respondents were mainly to stay and develop within the current company, but some had also decided to leave within the coming 12 months due to different reasons. Companies have seen a surge in employee turnover amid Covid-19, even named “the great resignation“, during the later part of the pandemic as employees seem to have had a chance to reflect over their work situation from another perspective (Sull et al., 2022). We believe that such a perspective is easy to neglect when a person is in the middle of building a career and trapped in a daily office routine. This opportunity to reflect also seems to have had an impact on our interviewees intending to leave, except for one who changes employers in an

opportunistic manner based on better benefits. Some others, however, had realized they disliked the corporate culture, others wanted to pursue a career in a new setting as they felt a resistance for further career advancement with their current employer and one needed more free time due to a different family situation. The mid-career crisis phenomena (Setiya, 2019) could also influence most of these individuals due to the matching age. According to Setiya (2019) the mid-career crisis is a phenomenon where commonly mid-aged employees reflect over their values and meaning of their work and may feel an urge to change work or even career path.

A weak majority states that the future plans in relation to work depended on the FWoW communication, others state that this only partly or does not affect the future plans at all. Theory holds that employee retention is reduced with lower employee satisfaction (Bobbitt et al., 1991) and hence, we compared the general employee satisfaction among the respondents and compared to their plans related to work for the coming year. Four themes emerged from this analysis: satisfied employees who will remain with their current employer, satisfied employees who will anyway leave for reasons not connected to the future way of working, dissatisfied employees who for some reason decide to stay with the employer, and finally dissatisfied employees who will leave their current employment. Excerpts from interviews with these groups can be found in Table 2. and these themes are further explored below. Only one interviewee had not yet made up his mind and decided to browse around for opportunities:

“I have no real plans to change company but I am more prone now than before the pandemic due to the loss of colleagues and I have got some job opportunities lately which have opened up my mind to that, but still not found anything making it worth to take the leap, but I am ready once an opportunity comes along.” - A.

Table 2. Employee satisfaction and retention			
Theoretical category	Themes	Employee satisfaction	Future retention plan
Intention to stay	Satisfied Stayers	<i>"From 1-10 it is around 7.5. What makes me satisfied I already explained in the previous questions. [flexibility, challenging tasks, colleagues, leadership, trust, support, autonomy, communication]" -S</i>	<i>"In the short term, I have committed myself to the company. As long as I develop, I am committed and we are having an open dialogue..." -S</i>
		<i>"I am very satisfied, and this is mainly due to the tasks I am doing, flexibility and salary." -B</i>	<i>"Now I want to do my job well I want to stay in this company for sure and maybe develop in another department if that opens up for a nice career." -B</i>
	Satisfied Leavers	<i>"I would say it is max. I still like my employer... this one I have now is almost like having my own business. The things I value are difficult to find freedom and responsibilities and possibilities to act as you see fit without answering to somebody else. I do not believe I could find another company where I would have this in the same way." -L</i>	<i>"I will probably quit soon as the hours required are too much compared to what I am willing to work now with a small daughter." -L</i>
		<i>"I was quite satisfied with my colleagues, even though it was a very workload and many different roles that I did because I learned a lot there. And it was also interesting to do different things." -M</i>	<i>"I'm changing my job in a month. I got an offer from another company" -M</i>
	Dissatisfied Stayers	<i>"I'm not satisfied with my job. I like the fact that it's international, so I feel inclusive, I don't feel like an outsider. But I don't know a lot of people here, just know my team members, so I don't feel belonging in that sense. But I feel like the company has done its best to make everyone feel comfortable. It's also a big company so the pay is good." -P</i>	<i>"I plan to stay here for 1-2 more years and then I'll try to find another place where I have a better chance to grow. I am staying for the moment because it fits my plan of stability right now." -P</i>
		<i>"In general, I'm not so satisfied with my employer but I'm happy working with my co-workers and the working environment at my company. But the benefits for employees are still limited, as you can see, we don't have non-monetary support while there is something in other companies. And my pay is not so good." -R</i>	<i>"I think I'll stay at my current company for 1-2 more years and then I will find other opportunities in another company" -R</i>
	Dissatisfied Leavers	<i>"How low can you go? I in a 1-10 scale." -F</i>	<i>"I am leaving as soon as possible." -F</i>
		<i>"My personal level of satisfaction has dropped a lot during the last years as the company is managed in a very old style where everything is concentrated to a few people in the headquarter... and as the pandemic held us from meeting people, this made us realize that there is no appreciation internally from the management - the positive interactions came from elsewhere. We never received this from the company." -I</i>	<i>"I have decided to change my job and now I am waiting to find the right proposal that I can accept. The reason is the management style, and I do not see the future for me in this company." -I</i>

Satisfied Stayers

This is a group with high employee satisfaction and communication satisfaction and they intend to stay. The employers have mostly communicated clearly about the future way of working and included these employees in the development of the FWoW. Commonalities for these employees are that they are in the beginning or middle of their career, and have only worked for a few years in their current company. All state that their plans depend on, or partly depend on the future way of working policy stipulated by their employer, which is positively received with a high amount of allowed telework flexibility. As a result, they are mainly working very few days per week from the office.

Most in this group also received the communication before the restrictions were lifted and mainly in a meeting. All mentioned positive feelings, or that they were neutral to the communication provided. Half stated the communication had a positive effect on commitment, while the remaining part said it had no effect. The absolute majority had their expectations fulfilled by the company in respect to the level of flexibility and they also thought their expectations were in line with their beliefs on what will be the market norm going forward.

Many in this group stated that the ideal way of communicating for them would be in line with how it was done by their employer with clarity and allowed teleworking.

Satisfied Leavers

This group has decided to leave the company despite being satisfied. It contains only men, mainly in their later part of the career: managers who have worked rather long in their current company. This constellation is very surprising as it contradicts an earlier study proving that men, older employees, and employees with higher positions were more committed to the organization than women (Cho and Mor Barak, 2008). Otherwise many characteristics of this group are very similar to the Satisfied Stayers, e.g. they work mainly from home, have received clear communication, were satisfied with the communication as well as their jobs in general.

One difference is that this group mainly state their colleagues as the source of feeling important and supported, while the Satisfied Stayers mentioned management as the main source of feeling meaningful and important. Interestingly, while the group claims to be satisfied, we see a few indicators that are connected with dissatisfaction, i.e. not being included in shaping the future

way of working and not receiving appreciation from management and we therefore suspect that the satisfaction in this group is lower than for the Satisfied Stayers. We also believe the reason for the behavior of this group can partly be found in the concepts of mid-career crisis discussed earlier as well as the reasons behind the great resignation touched upon earlier.

Dissatisfied Stayers

The Dissatisfied Stayers are a rather small group of employees who are unhappy with the communication around the FWoW, but despite poorly received support and poor employee satisfaction, they are staying with their current employer. They constitute the youngest participants in our survey, are mostly single households and are at the beginning of their career, having worked 3 years at most. We believe that there may be several reasons for this behavior originating from their demographics. First, as single households and early on in their career, there may not be a financial buffer allowing unemployment, which is a realistic threat when changing jobs as most organizations impose a trial period for new recruits. Second, these interviewees stated that they would continue to develop before leaving. It may be that the positive element of self-realization of developing in the profession outweighs the negativity of poor job satisfaction, or that the job satisfaction has fluctuated over time and, while currently low, the employee hopes that it would improve. The latter was exemplified by one interviewee who really appreciated the corporate traveling that he was hoping would return now after the pandemic. This group generally works the vast majority of days in the office every week, something that may be connected to the otherwise rather lonely nature of being a single household.

The members in this group all mentioned the pandemic made them enjoy the freedom and flexibility. However, the clear or vague communication has mainly conveyed either 100% work from office, or that this is the expectation going forward creating a negative discrepancy between their expected future share of telework as expectations mainly include full flexibility. This is the only group where members experience anxiety.

Dissatisfied Leavers

This group's members are dissatisfied with both communication around the future way of working, but also as employees in general and they have decided to leave the current employer. They are a gender mix, but very heterogeneous age group in their mid 40's, and cohabitating with their partners. They are all around the middle of their career and have worked around 5 years in their current company, which is a large corporation.

Just as the Satisfied Leavers, this group says the communication has negative or no effect on the commitment. This group currently works extremely little from the office and have only received vague communication that the future way of working will be limited to maximum 50% flexible working conditions which is less than they expected, but it also seems as if this group have the highest expectations in terms of flexibility as the lion part also expressed a wish of geographical flexibility. All expressed negative feelings around the communication, stating emotions such as feeling "stupid" and "excluded". This group also does not feel the importance of their work in terms of appreciation from others as they lack the appreciation from management, and only some receive it from their colleagues. Again, in a similar way as when explaining the behavior of the Satisfied Leavers, we see that the mid-career crisis is a good fit to this group, and that such may have been accelerated by the perspective that Covid-19 imposed, i.e. the same triggers as for the great resignation.

4.3 Discussion Study I

Study I provides us with many interesting findings. First, the most prominent theme we can observe is the communication levels, where many employees we spoke to had received clear, and other either vague or no information. The employees who obtained clear communication are mainly satisfied with the communication and state that such information is either positive or neutral for their commitment. With reduced clarity we tend to observe a more negative attitude both in terms of perception of the information, but also towards satisfaction and commitment. There is, however, one exception from this pattern, namely an employee, who received no information but is still satisfied both with such lack of communication and has a high employee satisfaction in general. While the main pattern is in line with theory that strong internal communication may strengthen the job satisfaction and commitment of employees (Sharma and

Kamalanabhan, 2012), including employees in the decision making process also seems to have a positive effect that may even offset the negative effects that absence of clear information can bring about.

Second, we find it surprising that only half of respondents had obtained clear and thorough information about the FWoW at the time of the interviews - on average one month had lapsed since the restrictions were removed in Sweden - and there has been frequent information in the media about the stressing effect of the pandemic. During the pandemic, Swedish authorities have sustained a frequent and thorough communication campaign around Covid-19 which may have created a higher expectancy among people and hence, also amplified the negative perception of not obtaining information related to the FWoW. As uncertainty is a stressful psychological state which individuals are motivated to reduce through seeking information (Kramer, 1993), not supplying the employees with enough information in such a situation may also create additional pressure on middle managers, and reinforce the frustration and confusion if they cannot provide the employees with clear answers, leading to a vicious circle. The reasons for not supplying information were quite homogenous and were believed to be that employers were waiting for other companies in the industry to make a decision they could later follow, or that the employer simply had not yet made up its mind around telework and the FWoW.

Third, through open-ended questions, we can identify a relation between the six emotional constructs and communication satisfaction, supported by earlier presented research (e.g. Cho and Mor Barak, 2008). By analyzing the answers we find that the most commonly stated emotions in terms of communication satisfaction are inclusion, belonging and feeling supported. In this analysis we also understood that inclusion was very closely linked to both the emotional construct of belonging, but also to whether participants had expected to be involved in the creation of a new policy for the future way of working or not.

Last, we found a link between communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction and to a certain degree the intention to stay where four themes emerged. The two most interesting groups are the ones with a discrepancy between satisfaction and retention. The Satisfied Leavers seem to be less satisfied than what they mention, sharing certain attributes with the dissatisfied respondents,

mainly connected to less appreciation and hence, less feeling of the importance of one's work (Sverke and Hellgren, 2002) and excluded from shaping the FWoW policy. Drawing on literature, our gender balance in these themes is a bit contradicting the earlier research stating that women are less committed than men. As this again strongly relates to expectation fulfillment, which is outside of the research question we note this for future research, but will not pursue the four identified groups further in Study II.

This qualitative study has extended our interest in quantitatively exploring some relationships we have found indication for as our sample size has been narrow and we wish to verify our findings in a larger perspective. With the insights gained, we are well positioned to further explore the relationships between communication around the FWoW and emotional constructs, communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction, commitment as well as intention to stay, and to briefly look into demographics in our quantitative Study II.

5. Study II

This chapter presents the quantitative study. A conceptual framework drawn from study I findings as well as extant literature is presented, continuing with the hypothesis development. The method of the study is then illustrated, followed by the result presentation and analysis. The chapter ends with the discussion of the findings from this study.

5.1 Conceptual framework

Study II draws on the insights from the earlier research and the observations recorded from Study I. Specifically, as Study I was exploratory and based on broad open-ended questions, Study II serves to verify such results quantitatively, building on the knowledge acquired and further investigating these relationships. By doing so we hope the result will bring us closer to the answer to the research question, i.e:

“How does the clarity and content of communication around the future way of working affect communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction and employee commitment?”

To simplify the process of exploring these relationships we created a conceptual model which draws on a concept that organizational commitment is affected by communication satisfaction and moreover that these variables are positively correlated, proven by Ammari et al. (2017). As a starting point, we have an independent variable originating in the communication around FWoW: the three communication stages identified from Study I. We are interested in exploring the relation between this variable and communication satisfaction as well as employee satisfaction. But, we also wish to see the relationship between the communication levels and emotional constructs that we could detect in Study I and insert the emotional constructs directly after the communication levels. We expect the correlation between the clarity of communication and anxiety to be negative, while the positive emotional constructs (i.e., inclusion, productivity, importance, belonging and support) will be positively correlated to the variable researched. The next dependent variable to be explored is commitment, and we wish to see the links between communication levels and commitment. As we believe the commitment is a result of satisfaction constructs, we insert it after employee satisfaction in our conceptual model. Finally, we expect there to be a positive relation between the perceived clarity of communication and intention to

stay in the company. As we could see from Study I that a high commitment in some cases still leads to the employee leaving an employer, we wish to see the intention to stay separately from commitment. The conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 1, which also includes the hypothesis presented in the next section.

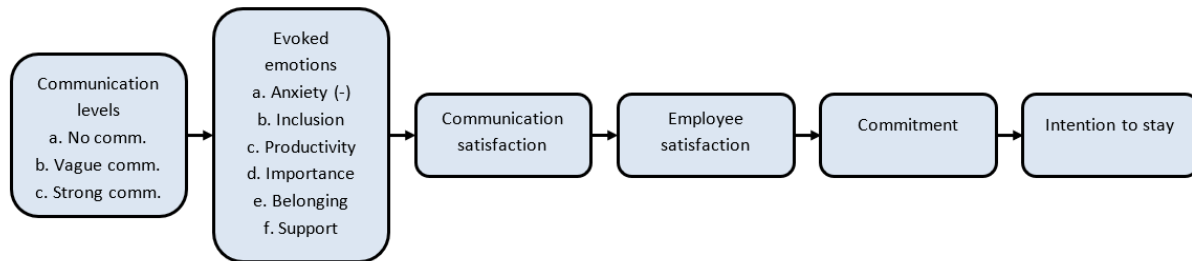


Figure 1. Conceptual model used in Study II.

5.2 Hypotheses formulation

Study I indicates that receiving communication is positively linked to a higher degree of communication satisfaction. Angwin et al. (2014) also suggested richer communication brings better satisfaction than lean communication does. We posit that no communication is a lower communication level than obtaining vague information, and that obtaining clear information implies a higher level than receiving vague information. From this also follows that clear communication means a higher level than obtaining no information. We will henceforth refer to these three groups of communication levels as “as communication level increases” which means that No < Vague < Clear communication level when hypothesizing. Feelings and emotions evoked by the communication in Study I differed between respondents and we are therefore interested in seeing the interaction between the communication levels and such feelings. Starting with anxiety, two respondents in Study I felt anxious with the communication they received from their employers. Organizational communication has been argued to be one of the most common ways to reduce uncertainty and anxiety (Farace et al., 1978). However, if the communication is inadequate and vague, this leads to confusion and increased anxiety (Amundson et al., 2011). In response, employees will seek information from unofficial sources and might get overwhelmed by information that is uncensored for quality, resulting in higher levels of anxiety (Bastien, 1987; Eroğlu, 2005; Smeltzer, 1991). Yet, effective communication can reduce anxiety (Difonzo and Bordia, 1998). We therefore propose that:

H1a (-): Higher levels of communication clarity will be negatively associated with anxiety.

In addition to the negative emotional construct above, Study I also clearly showed that the five positive emotional constructs could be derived from the way respondents felt from receiving no, vague or clear communication. Theory related to these emotional constructs also reinforce the suspicion that there should be a strong link between communication and these feelings. In particular: communication effort with employees have shown to be positively correlated to various extent with a feeling of inclusion (Yammarino and Naughton, 1988) and insufficient communication has been linked to the negative impact on productivity (Michac, 1997). Employees' feeling of doing something important is closely related to the sense of being valued by their organizations. Prior studies maintain that employees develop the sense of being important by actions from the employers or organization, such as communicating their appreciation or showing that the employees are important. Keeping employees informed can be one such action (Proctor, 2014; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Belonging can be conceptualized as the extent to which an individual feels "personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others" (Goodenow, 1993, p.81). Communication is proven as an effective means of support and expressing appreciation and recognition (Cloutier et al., 2015; Rasool et al., 2022) and perceived support has a strong relationship with organizational communication (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Cumulatively, we therefore posit that:

H1b-f: Higher levels of communication clarity will be positively associated with stronger feelings of: **b:** inclusion, **c:** being productive, **d:** importance of one's work, **e:** belonging, **f:** being supported.

Communication has been shown to have a positive effect on satisfaction, and communication satisfaction can positively influence commitment (Ammari et al., 2017). More notably, rich communication and transparent information have been proved in academic research to be a source for improving employment satisfaction and organizational commitment (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Stranzl et al., 2021). Also drawing from the three different communication levels identified from Study I, we propose that:

H2: Higher levels of clarity of communication around the future way of working will be positively associated with higher levels of communication satisfaction.

H3: Higher levels of clarity of communication around the future way of working will be positively associated with higher levels of employee satisfaction.

H4: Higher levels of clarity of communication will be positively associated with higher levels of commitment.

From Study I we also learned there may be many different underlying causes to leave an organization and thus we intend to investigate the intention to stay separately from commitment. We therefore posit that:

H5: Higher levels of communication clarity will be positively associated with stronger intention to stay in the current position.

5.3 Methodology of Study II

5.3.1 Survey design

An online survey among full-time white-collar workers employed in Sweden was conducted between March 22th and April 30 2022. The questionnaire was distributed through LinkedIn, Facebook, and via direct emails to some managers at companies as well as to faculty members at universities based in Sweden. The survey was structured as follows and the list of questions are presented in Appendix 3:

- (i) An introduction to the topic and the purpose of this study, GDPR information followed by a question for the informed consent;
- (ii) Main questions regarding organizational communication around the future working conditions after the pandemic and employees' (participants') expectations as well as feelings and their commitment, communication and employee satisfaction;
- (iii) Socio-demographic questions.

The criteria for a valid response are that respondents (i) Are working in Sweden; (ii) Have been working full-time in a Sweden-based organization for at least six months; (iii) Responded

correctly to the control question. In addition, outliers, i.e. respondents with shorter survey duration than 118 seconds were removed (duration mean 433,56 seconds). From the 234 people who participated in the survey only 140 respondents fulfilled these criteria of being valid cases.

5.3.2 Measurements

The survey was mainly constructed by a 1 to 5 Likert scale to record communication satisfaction, evoked emotions, commitment, employee satisfaction and intention to stay. Scales from earlier research were used where 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree for the questions related to emotions where the question also reiterated the purpose of the survey by stating “The level of communication around the future way of working...” and then each question followed, e.g. “...is causing me worry or anxiety”. While measuring satisfaction of communication and job (employee) satisfaction the scale ranged from 1 = Extremely dissatisfied and 5 = Extremely satisfied. For each measure, two items from verified scales were used, and to ensure validity a Spearman correlation check was done, shown in parenthesis next to the scale reference. Scales used were anxiety - similar to the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scales (DASS-21; Lovibond and Lovibond (1995): corr. coeff=0,723, $p<0,001$), inclusion (corr. coeff=0,632, $p<0,001$) and productivity (corr. coeff=0,684, $p<0,001$) which were adapted from Srivastava (1977), belongingness (Jena and Pradhan, (2018): corr. coeff=0,646, $p<0,001$), importance of one’s work (Maduka and Okafor, (2014): corr. coeff=0,612, $p<0,001$) and finally perception of being supported (corr. coeff=0,674, $p<0,001$), which is also adapted from Jena and Pradhan (2018). The approach of using few items from validated scales increased the risk of lower reliability, but this was a tradeoff we had to take in order to keep the survey short enough. As each item combination shows a strong correlation (corr. coeff>0,500), we consider the scales adequately reliable.

In a similar manner the questions related to employee satisfaction and willingness to recommend the employer to a friend were combined into one index variable (Mathieu, 1991; Singh and Onahring, (2019): corr. coeff=0,722, $p<0,001$). Commonly, intention to stay is part of a wider commitment measure, but due to the findings in Study I that the Satisfied Leavers claimed they were committed to their employer, but were anyway leaving, we decided to keep this separately

and instead test the commitment against this planned action. The single item from the intention to stay scale was derived from Fernandez-Lores et al., 2016.

5.3.3 Assessment of validity and reliability

To ensure the respondents fit our criteria we included questions to sort out people not suitable at the beginning of the questionnaire (i.e. “Do you work in Sweden?”, “Do you work full-time or part-time?”). A control question was also embedded in the survey stating “This question was about...” and the respondents had to actively choose the correct answer of multiple choices to filter out non-attentive respondents. We distributed the survey through different social media channels and asked employees of various ages and in different industries to assist in spreading the link to the survey. By doing so, we partly left the control of who the respondents were and this contributed to a slight overrepresentation of IT professionals taking the survey. Investigating this further, it can be concluded that IT professionals have a significantly higher communication satisfaction ($t(138)=3,352$, Mean_IT=3,870, Mean_other=3,140, $p<0,001^{***}$) and commitment ($t(138)=2,340$, Mean_IT=3,900, Mean_other=3,506, $p=0,022^*$) than the rest of the respondents, while there is no proven difference for the intention to stay. To conclude, the high concentration of IT professionals in this study may have affected the communication satisfaction and commitment slightly positively. In terms of other demographics, we have not found any outliers or bias in the data.

Reliability of this study could have been further improved by a larger sample and by having the survey in Swedish, however, as we are both non-native Swedish speakers we found that computer aided translation of the questionnaire would pose a higher risk of misinterpretations of the answers. However, with no outliers identified in the data, we believe that any potential share of misinterpretations among the respondents is low.

As disclosed in the Measurement section, the questionnaire was based on earlier validated scales, even though some of these were slightly adapted to fit our research question. To ensure the scales were proper measurements of what we intended to evaluate, the scales were validated by a strong Spearman’s correlation result. In addition, the questionnaire was reviewed by a faculty member of the Stockholm School of Economics before the survey was published. With the above in mind,

we consider the study to have been performed in such a way that it can be considered valid and reliable.

5.3.4 Sampling

The final sample comprised N=140 respondents including 67 (47,9%) women and 71 (50,7%) men and 2 people (1,4%) preferred not to say. Age ranged from 22 to 63 years old (mean = 38,6; sd=10,57). The highest finished education was mainly BSc/MSc (78,6%) followed by high school diploma (9,3%), professional education (8,6%) and PhD degree or higher (3,6%). The respondents came from 25 various industries with telecom being the most common (21,4%) followed by governmental, finance & insurance and manufacturing (each 9,3%). Next, 45,7% work as specialists, 22,1% hold a middle management position with personnel responsibility, 22,9% were top managers and 9,3% preferred not to say. The number of years of working experience ranged from 1 to 40 years (mean =14,8; sd =10,57). As the survey only targeted white collars we consider the high share of university educated participants to be expected as many office roles are suitable for employees with higher education. An unexpected observation was the high number of respondents identifying themselves as top managers, but as the survey link was also shared by our acquaintances who to certain extent are executives, this may have contributed to this phenomena. All in all, despite this last note, we do consider our sample to be representative.

5.4 Analysis

Throughout this thesis we have used $p=0,05$ as a threshold for significance in accordance with common research practice and have also denoted significance at the $p=0,05$ level as *, $p=0,01$ level as ** and $p=0,001$ level as ***. For correlations we have considered a correlation coefficient (corr. coeff) $> 0,500$ as strong correlation, and $< 0,500$ as weak correlation.

From our sample (N=140) only 47,9% perceived that they had obtained clear; 29,3% vague and 22,9% had received no information about the FWoW, which is a similar distribution as in Study I. The vast majority (82,9%) had expected to receive information, while 17,7% had not expected to receive any particular information related to the future working principles. Also this was similar to Study I, reinforcing our beliefs of having a representative sample in both studies. The

respondents in Study II have very high desires to work from home, only 12,9% wish to work only from the office in the future and the mean desired days of teleworking for the full sample is 3,57. In addition, 39,3% knew or believed they will be allowed to telework less days per week than they desire, 29,3% thought their desired number of days will be met, and 31,4% have had, or believed they will be allowed to telework more than they desired. Women's desire to telework is stronger than men's with a higher number of days desired ($t(136)=2,143$, $\text{Mean_F_telework}=3,840$, $\text{Mean_M_telework}=3,310$, $p<0,001$), but there is no proven difference in what has been communicated ($p=0,098$). Women are also less satisfied with communication ($t(136)=-2,846$; $\text{Mean_F_comm_sat}=3,010$; $\text{Mean_M_comm_sat}=3,540$; $p=0,005$) as well as commitment ($t(136)=-2,373$; $\text{Mean_F_comm_sat}=3,373$; $\text{Mean_M_comm_sat}=3,765$; $p=0,020$).

Each of the three communication stage groups (no, vague and clear communication respectively) had more than 30 respondents. To test H1a-f, H2, H3, H4, and H5 we performed a one-way ANOVA (Scheffe) test with the communication levels as the independent variable. While each of the tests were significant with $p<0,001***$ level, the mean differences were significant at least at $p=0,031*$ level between all groups for hypotheses H1a, H1c, H1f, meaning these are fully supported. For each of the remaining hypotheses, there was an insignificant difference between two groups in the ANOVA (indicated within parentheses): H2 (1-2, $p=0,390$), H3 (1-2, $p=0,181$), H4 (1-2, $p=0,323$), H5 (1-2, $p=0,427$) see Table 3 for details. This means that these hypotheses are only partly supported and we will need to interpret each of these separately.

Table 3.

One-way ANOVA with Scheffe post-hoc group comparison

Hypothesis	Independent / Dependent variables	One-way ANOVA Scheffe	Test sig.	Group Mean	Mean diff.	Post-hoc sig.
H1a (-)	Comm. Level / Anxiety	$F(2,137) = 38,767$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 3,047 2: 2,183 3: 1,306	1-2: 0,864 2-3: 0,877 1-3: 1,741	1-2: $p < 0,001^{***}$ 2-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H1b	Comm. Level / Inclusion	$F(2,137) = 31,265$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 2,516 2: 3,024 3: 3,948	1-2: -0,509 2-3: -0,923 1-3: -1,432	1-2: $p = 0,060$ 2-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H1c	Comm. Level / Productivity	$F(2,137) = 22,407$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 2,547 2: 3,146 3: 3,828	1-2: -0,599 2-3: -0,682 1-3: -1,281	1-2: $p = 0,024^*$ 2-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H1d	Comm. Level / Importance	$F(2,137) = 14,971$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 2,406 2: 3,073 3: 3,545	1-2: -0,667 2-3: -0,472 1-3: -1,139	1-2: $p = 0,054$ 2-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H1e	Comm. Level / Belongingness	$F(2,137) = 17,610$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 2,469 2: 2,988 3: 3,679	1-2: -0,519 2-3: -0,691 1-3: -1,210	1-2: $p = 0,087$ 2-3: $p = 0,003^{**}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H1f	Comm. Level / Support	$F(2,137) = 20,729$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 2,375 2: 3,244 3: 3,784	1-2: -0,869 2-3: -0,540 1-3: -1,409	1-2: $p = 0,002^{**}$ 2-3: $p = 0,031^*$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H2	Comm. level / Comm. satisfaction	$F(2,137) = 35,257$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 2,410 2: 2,950 3: 3,930	1-2: -0,545 2-3: -0,974 1-3: -1,519	1-2: $p = 0,390$ 2-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H3	Comm. Level / Employ. satisfaction	$F(2,137) = 16,034$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 2,880 2: 3,290 3: 3,970	1-2: -0,418 2-3: -0,677 1-3: -1,095	1-2: $p = 0,181$ 2-3: $p = 0,002^{**}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H4	Comm. Level / Commitment	$F(2,137) = 13,970$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 3,031 2: 3,358 3: 4,000	1-2: -0,326 2-3: -0,642 1-3: -0,969	1-2: $p = 0,323$ 2-3: $p = 0,003^{**}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$
H5	Comm. level / Intention to stay	$F(2,137) = 13,134$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	1: 2,560 2: 2,950 3: 3,840	1-2: -0,399 2-3: -0,885 1-3: -1,273	1-2: $p = 0,427$ 2-3: $p = 0,002^{**}$ 1-3: $p < 0,001^{***}$

To further investigate the relationship between variables in the model, the correlations were tested between the variables upon which the hypotheses are made. We tested correlation between the ordinal groups of communication levels against emotional constructs using the non-linear bivariate Spearman's correlation test ($r(138)$, $p < 0,001^{***}$ for each result). The strongest correlation is the negative between the communication levels and (a) anxiety with a correlation

coefficient of -0,616, but also the correlation between the communication levels and (b) inclusion as well as (c) productivity were also strong with correlation coefficient $>0,500$. The relationship between communication clarity and (d) importance of one's work, (e) belonging, as well as (f) being supported showed weak correlations ($<0,500$). We propose two potential reasons for this occurrence. One could be that the relationship is not linear for the independent and dependent variables in these connections, which could also explain the non-significant mean difference of the feeling of belonging and importance between no or vague communication levels. Another explanation could be that the variance is too great in comparison to the sample size.

Correlations between variables measured on an interval scale, i.e. between evoked emotions and communication satisfaction, communication satisfaction and employee satisfaction, employee satisfaction and commitment, as well as commitment and intention to stay with the current employer, were investigated using bivariate linear correlation tests (Pearson). The tests revealed significant strong negative correlation between anxiety and communication satisfaction, and significant strong positive correlations for all other tests, each test $r(138)$, $p < 0,001^{***}$. The strongest correlation between an emotion and the communication satisfaction was the feeling of inclusion with a correlation coefficient of 0,753 (Table 4.). Notably, there is a remarkably strong correlation between employee satisfaction and commitment (correlation coefficient = 0,897) while the relationship between communication satisfaction and employee satisfaction as well as between commitment and intention to stay are still strong, but slightly weaker with a correlation coefficient of 0,630 and 0,731 respectively. This could be explained by the fact that employment satisfaction and intention to stay are influenced by a number of different factors other than communication satisfaction and commitment. This result verifies the positive and negative commonalities between the variables as hypothesized.

Table 4.**Bivariate correlation tests results**

Relationship between	Degrees of freedom	Significance	Correlation coefficient
Communication levels and anxiety	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	-0,616
Communication levels and inclusion	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,571
Communication levels and productivity	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,529
Communication levels and importance of work	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,439
Communication levels and belonging	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,475
Communication levels and perceived support	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,477
Anxiety and communication satisfaction	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	-0,601
Inclusion and communication satisfaction	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,753
Productivity and communication satisfaction	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,665
Importance of work and communication satisfaction	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,606
Belonging and communication satisfaction	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,677
Perceived support and communication satisfaction	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,656
Communication satisfaction and employee satisfaction	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,630
Employee satisfaction and commitment	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,897
Commitment and intention to stay	$r(138)$	$p < 0,001^{***}$	0,731

Table 5. summarizes each hypothesis result based on the analysis we have done in Study II. Only three Hypotheses, namely H1a, H1c and H1f are fully supported. The remaining hypotheses H1b, H1d, H1e, H2, H3, H4 and H5 all lack the significance between Groups 1 and 2, underlining the fact that there is not any significantly proven benefit of vaguely communicating compared to providing no communication for these variables.

Table 5. Summarized result of Hypotheses testing		
Hypothesis	Result	Reason if only partly supported
H1	a. Supported b. Partially supported c. Supported d. Partially supported e. Partially supported f. Supported	- Insignificant between Groups 1 and 2 (no or vague communication) - Insignificant between Groups 1 and 2 (no or vague communication) Insignificant between Groups 1 and 2 (no or vague communication) -
H2	Partially supported	Insignificant between Groups 1 and 2 (no or vague communication)
H3	Partially supported	Insignificant between Groups 1 and 2 (no or vague communication)
H4	Partially supported	Insignificant between Groups 1 and 2 (no or vague communication)
H5	Partially supported	Insignificant between Groups 1 and 2 (no or vague communication)

5.5 Discussion Study II

Study II has statistically validated several of the observations we set out to investigate from Study I, but has also revealed new findings. First, validating our observations from Study I, it is of great importance to communicate the future way of working clearly to employees as for all the relationships investigated, there is a significant difference between clearly communicating and not doing so (i.e. not communicating or vaguely communicating). In Study I, we anticipated that vague communication was more positively perceived than no communication, but we could not find support for this in Study II as only anxiety, productivity and feeling of support showed a significant difference between no or vague communication. This applies not only to the relationship between communication clarity levels and emotional constructs but is also valid between communication levels and the satisfactorial constructs and commitment variables, meaning that vague communication, compared to no communication, does not bring any significant additional values to communication satisfaction, employment satisfaction, commitment and intention to stay. However, as employees experience clear communication, this holds remarkable positive effects for satisfaction constructs, commitment and intention to stay.

Second, we have verified strong positive correlations between the communication levels and two emotional constructs: inclusion and productivity, but also between all five positive emotional

constructs investigated and the communication satisfaction, between employee satisfaction and commitment, and finally between commitment and intention to stay. There are also strong negative correlations between the communication clarity and anxiety, as well as anxiety and communication satisfaction. While the strongest correlation between the communication levels and the emotional constructs is the negative relation to anxiety, the emotion of inclusion is strongest correlated with communication satisfaction. The former has in another context also has been proven by DiFonzo and Bordia (1998) where two different communications by organizations facing structural changes were studied. Delayed and incomplete information led to both increased anxiety, but also to rumors in the organization. The strong correlations between communication satisfaction and employee satisfaction, between employee satisfaction and commitment, and between commitment and intention to stay are in line with the result of earlier research on the effects of a more generalized communication satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ammari et al., 2017).

Next, the potential non-linearity of providing no/vague or clear communication may partly describe the differences in the measured correlation coefficients whereas weaker correlations are mainly observed among the relationships where such non-significance between two groups occurs. Another explanation to why the latter relationship is weak may have an explanation in earlier findings that commitment mediates the relationship between initial reaction to stressors, like anxiety and intention to leave (Glazer and Kruse, 2008).

6. General discussion

This thesis has researched how the clarity and content of communication around the future way of working affect communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and commitment of employees in Sweden. The explorative Study I provided insights that shaped our conceptual model to be used in Study II (Figure 1.). We report that, at the time of the survey, a surprisingly low share (48%) of companies had clearly disclosed the future way of working to their employees and almost one quarter had not informed about it at all. We also notice that this proportion was very similar to what it first was at the time of the qualitative study six weeks earlier. The lack of progress on future ways of working communication clearly shows the importance of revealing the results of our thesis for managers.

The results of the research show that communication around the future way of working is widely needed, especially in the earlier stages of change implementation, because there is an expectation of a change in the organizations after the pandemic is over. This is in line with several extant studies that have discussed the importance of communication in the context of organizational change. Even though research on different types of changes, Angwin et al. (2014) and Appelbaum et al. (2000) demonstrated the importance of timely communication in the pre-change stage as well as rich and continuous communication during the entire process, and that more effective communication helps build satisfaction and organizational commitment. Our research also reveals that the majority of respondents of both studies expected communication around the future way of working from their employers. This implies that most employees considered this uncertainty a stressor and they started seeking information to cope with uncertainty. This is understandable as people have an intrinsic desire to know about what to expect when a change is about to happen, and meeting this need is crucial. We believe that it is not difficult to fulfill this desire, and communication can be a simple but helpful tool. Many change management theories emphasize communication as key from an early stage of the change, even before the change actually happens (Pryor et al., 2008). By not informing, too many employers impose uncertainty onto their employees, risking reduced satisfaction and commitment as well as higher turnover with loss of talent and increased replacement costs.

The significant positive impact between a clear, compared to a vague future way of working communication is an important divider. Even though from Study I we anticipated that there was a gradual improvement in perception and satisfaction from no communication to vague, and clear communication, Study II statistically shows that there is no such relation, as vague communication is not significantly better than not providing any information in respect to satisfaction and commitment. Therefore, it is of great importance that companies make the effort to communicate around the future way of working in a clear and concise way to avoid being perceived as making a poor attempt which may be met with negative reactions by employees. In the work domain, employees rely on their organizations to have resources to facilitate coping behavior (Li et al., 2021). The availability of information and quality communication in this case provides employees with better support and resources (Callan and Dickson, 1993). If there is a lack of information, it signals the shortage of resources to support employees.

The findings from the research illustrate the feelings evoked by the communication (or the lack thereof) and their connection with communication satisfaction. Anxiety is the only negative emotional state that was mentioned but a reduction in the other five so-called positive constructs (inclusion, productivity, perceived support, belongingness, and perceived importance of one's work) is also a negative signal, which has detrimental effects. While we could not identify anxiety as one of the main predictors of communication satisfaction qualitatively, we detected it in our quantitative analysis. This may partly be explained by the fact that interviewees may have felt uncomfortable talking about feelings related to anxiety during the interviews, while the other emotional constructs explored were of more neutral nature. These negative emotions were triggered from the case where there was no or vague communication, which means that managers failed to communicate what is required to fulfill the need for obtaining information. Information serves as fundamental guidance for employees but little information may even lead to a higher level of anxiety and other unfavorable emotional states, which may cause resistance.

As the clarity of communication increases, anxiety decreases while the opposite holds for the investigated positive emotional constructs, which plays an important role in improving communication satisfaction, employment satisfaction and ultimately commitment. Firms need employees' acceptance, support and conformity for changes, and this can be achieved from

reducing anxiety and improving positive emotions, especially strengthening the emotional and psychological bond of employees with their organizations by effective communication. From there, human resources will be more committed not only to the change but also the organizations in general (Angwin et al., 2014).

7. Conclusion

This research was conducted to investigate the effects of the communication around the future way of working on communication- and employee satisfaction as well as commitment. The findings show that there are positive relationships between the clarity of communication and three aforementioned dependent variables. It is well worth noting that there is no significant benefit between providing no or vague information to the employees in respect to most of the dependent variables, underlining the importance of ensuring a clear and timely communication in respect of FWoW. While this imposes a large responsibility on internal communications, it also unlocks great potential for companies with awareness and willingness to go the extra mile in terms of communication clarity.

7.1 Contributions and implications

7.1.1 Academic contributions

The current research studies a phenomenon that has not received much attention in academia to date, namely investigating the transition from the mid-pandemic phase to the post-pandemic phase. This study contributes to the organizational change management literature in understanding employees' reactions to the way their employers provide communication around the future way of working. The context of this research is unique because the Covid-19 pandemic has caused organizational changes not only when it first happened but also at the end of the pandemic when public expectation was to come back to the normal ways they were living and working before. However, after two years of a different working style and due to some positive aspects of telework and the changed preferences, the “normal” is not as before the pandemic, which entails decisions from organizations on how the future will look like. Also, a macro-approach has been primarily adopted in extant research on change management, and the main subjects of those studies were elements such as change pressure, environmental factors, strategic orientation, etc. (Cunningham, 2002; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Meanwhile, recognizing the potential limitations of the one-sided emphasis (Cunningham, 2007), other authors concentrated more on a micro level, studying people-oriented issues related to change

(Herscovitch). This research also contributes to the latter by integrating and extending the existing studies in this field.

7.1.2 Practical and managerial implications

Given that communication is important in any organization, this research provides a deeper understanding regarding the role of communication around a new type of organizational changes compared to the widely-investigated topics on changes. Managers can make use of this study to apply on their decision making process for changes and leverage the opportunity of increasing or maintaining the employee commitment through the usage of clear communications. Consultants who work closely with change/transformation strategy can also use this knowledge to give advice to their clients, facilitating clients' success in their business activities.

The findings of this research emphasize the importance of organizational communication clarity and effectiveness. This suggests that decision makers in organizations should have a clear plan for the communication around the future way of working. They need to take into account not only the quality and richness of information but also the time that is appropriate for the announcement. By utilizing this insight, companies can ensure a high employee satisfaction and commitment which, in turn will lead to keeping talent and hence, reduces company recruiting costs.

7.2 Limitations

This research has a number of limitations. First, this study has concentrated only on respondents' real experiences. However, linguistic proficiency and a decent ability for self-reflection are necessary for individuals to effectively report their self-concept (Butler and Gasson, 2005). These two elements, by coincidence, are extremely sensitive to human feelings. This poses a risk of bias and correctly interpreted responses. Second, even though this research is conducted using a mixed-method approach with the intention to reduce bias and compensate for weaknesses of adopting either of the two separate methods, the research design leads to inconsistency in the findings between two studies. However, we understand that this issue results from the differences in questions tailored for each study.

Third, the data is mostly generated from metropolitan areas which poses a risk that the study has not captured any potential specificities of employees in rural Sweden. Furthermore, the sample of the quantitative study is rather small (140 valid responses). This challenges the reliability of results drawn from the current study because a small sample of data brings a higher level of variability. Finally, even though it is conducted cross-industry, we have not been able to take into account the differences in various aspects subjected to different industries. For instance, when it comes to the nature of industries, the IT industry appears to have prominent characteristics to facilitate telework, even before the pandemic, which may explain the higher satisfaction levels of IT professionals compared to other employees in Study II.

7.3 Future research

Our study has pioneered in identifying the effects of organizational communication around the future working conditions in an academic setting. However, more research could be done to further investigate this topic. First, replicating Study II in this thesis with a larger sample would contribute to potentially removing some of the limitations we have declared, and thereby draw comprehensive and more generalizable conclusions. Second, it would be interesting to investigate the different mediation or moderation effects as the authors have not been able to test those due to the time constraints of this thesis. One suggestion is to investigate the mediation relationship of commitment between anxiety (being the strongest evoked emotion) and intention to stay, or potential moderating effects of different demographics or industry on communication level and communication satisfaction. Adding specificity of industries would assist managers in further tailoring their approaches for post-pandemic communication.

Third, our research has not focused on the causality in the relationship between variables. Revealing the causality of variables in our conceptual model can further assist managers in managing communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction and commitment by adjusting the input variables that have an impact. Fourth, as employees in Sweden probably have higher expectations in terms of being involved in shaping the policy due to the flat leadership style (Beño, 2021), additional research is needed to also reveal specificities of other markets. We propose such research to also investigate how different expectations related to involvement moderates other variables, such as satisfaction measures and commitment. This topic is highly

relevant for future research as restrictions are still in place or are about to be lifted in many geographies and such research would contribute to managers' efforts in retaining employees.

Fifth, as Study I reveals, "expectation fulfillment" in respect to desired teleworking days and provided teleworking days and the involvement of employees in the policy making of FWoW is an area that can further the understanding of communication satisfaction, employee satisfaction and commitment. Future research can either replace the communication levels in our conceptual model with a measure of expectation fulfillment, or investigate the moderating effects of such applied on our existing model. In addition, it would be interesting to check the groups identified in Study I quantitatively by running a cluster analysis with the independent variables discussed in the analysis for study I. Finally, our results show general conclusions of the effects that three levels of communication clarity have on satisfaction; however, which forms of communication are effective is also important to examine. Why companies have not clearly communicated or have not communicated at all with their employees around the policies of future working conditions is also of great interest to explore.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Qualitative Study I interview questions

Demographics

- Gender:
- Age:
- Do you live in Sweden? (qualifying question)
- Highest finished education?
- Part-time, full-time, self-employed? (qualifying question)
- Is your position permanent or are you filling in for someone? (qualifying question)
- Do you consider yourself introverted, extroverted, or neutral (or how does it make you feel being around people?)
- Can you please describe your family situation?
- How long working experience do you have in total and how long have you been working for this company?
- Are you a manager, i.e. do you have ppl in subordination (if yes – how many?)

Interview questions

1. Please tell me about your current company and work? (Occupation/position in the company, company size / industry, innovative/traditional, hours)
2. What is employee satisfaction for you? (meaning what factors contribute most to your employee satisfaction and why?)
3. Can you describe your ideal way of working?
4. What components of your work-life lead to you being satisfied at work?
5. Could you tell me some about your company culture and your colleagues?
6. What are your future plans related to your work/company?
7. Do these plans depend on what the future way of working policies and rules set by your employer will look like?

8. Can you please tell me about your working habits and company's policies around working from home before the pandemic?
9. How are the working habits and the company's policies now after the pandemic?
10. What has been communicated around the future way of working in terms of policies? Has the company "required" a certain number of days in the office, how many, and what do you feel about this?
11. How and when has it been communicated?
12. Why do you think it was/was not properly communicated, how does that make you feel? What do colleagues say about the communication or lack of communication?
13. How has the communication or lack thereof affected your commitment to your organization?
14. May a change in commitment lead to you considering changing your employer?
15. What would an ideal communication about the future way of working look like? Content, timing and how it is produced?
16. To what extent were employees or the organization involved in shaping the policies for FWoW? Did you expect the company to involve the employees in the FWoW policy?
17. Are you satisfied with the way your company has communicated around the future working conditions and how do you feel about this? (Why/why not)
18. In relation to "way of working" - what do you think will be the market norm going forward?
19. What are your expectations about the future way of working? Elaborate about all aspects that you find important conditions to stay with your current employer.
20. Can you describe the relevance or importance of your work tasks for the company?
21. How do you experience appreciation as an employee at your workplace?
22. Can you describe your company's support strategies during the pandemic?
(non-monetary)
23. Are there any changes to these strategies now after the pandemic, elaborate?
24. Can you tell me about how satisfied you are with your job now, after restrictions were fully lifted in Sweden? (And what was making your job satisfying? What factors?)
25. What did/do you like about your job pre-, during the pandemic and now?

Appendix 2

Table 3.
Expectations fulfilment of policy participation and telework, and communication satisfaction

Theoretical category	Themes 1	Expectation	Actual outcome	Communication satisfaction
Expectations regarding future way of working policy	Expectation of involvement in creating the future way of working policy met or exceeded	<i>"Yes, I did, and I think this will increase even more in the future as the office is now only 25-30% full only. So, if this will continue, then it would make more sense to also reduce the office space and here, again, I think the employees will be included in deciding how this will be arranged." -B</i>	<i>"There is an office committee that comprises people from all departments involved in all policy work so policies touching employees are made with full involvement of the employees." -B</i>	<i>"Yes, and I think they have done the maximum they can do." -B</i>
		<i>"No, I did not expect to be involved, they cannot listen to all the employees in large organisations" -C</i>	<i>"Not at all, that was done at management level" -C</i>	<i>"Yes, I am, it is perfect." -C</i>
	Expectation of policy involvement was not met	<i>"Yes of course. I expected it a lot because I really need to know what the case would be. If 100% working at the office I need to mentally prepare myself." -P</i>	<i>"No, they've never asked us or sent out any survey to ask about our demands when it comes to ways of working." -P</i>	<i>"No, I'm not satisfied because of all the reasons I've been talking about." -P</i>
		<i>"Yes, I did. I wanted to know what the case would be and to see if it's something I want." -R</i>	<i>"We didn't really get involved as they didn't ask for our opinions or suggestions" -R</i>	<i>"I'm not 100% satisfied with it because I would have been happier if they before coming up with the decision asked for our opinion." -R</i>
	Expectation of telework met or exceeded	<i>"I expected to be able to choose which days I want to come to the office instead of getting a fixed schedule from the company like on Monday, Tuesday you should be at the office and the rest you can work from home. I want to have flexibility as much as possible." -T</i>	<i>"No, they haven't required anything, we have full flexibility" -T</i>	<i>"I'm okay with it, I was just a bit tired when I had to fill out too many surveys which I don't see any necessity of but the result is good." -T</i>
		<i>"I would prefer a hybrid working model with 20-30% working at the office and 70-80% working from home. -N</i>	<i>"No required number of days in the office at all" -N</i>	<i>"Yes, I am. I think they did a good job for the entire process." -N</i>
	Expectation of telework was not met	<i>"I think the company should trust the employees and there should not be any strict policies about working from home. I do my job regardless and go to office when I have a meeting. I want full discretion in this question." -H</i>	<i>"So far, they have not said anything clearly, but they are referring to the old policy stating maximum 50% at home." -H</i>	<i>"It would have been good to involve the employees. I would feel much more involved in the company's decision. It may affect my commitment." -H</i>
		<i>"Like 3 days at work, 2 days at home, that would be the best for me." -O</i>	<i>"It wasn't communicated clearly that we must be there a certain number of days. But I get "See you tomorrow" or "See you next Monday" so it's like we are supposed to be there always." -O</i>	<i>"I'm not totally satisfied. I'm expected to show up at a certain time and feel a bit stressed in the morning. I mean if I was provided a clear schedule for the way of working, I would feel better." -O</i>

Appendix 3

Quantitative Study II survey questions

- Block 0

This survey is conducted by two students at Stockholm School of Economics for our Degree Project (Bachelor's Thesis). The survey is about the communication of your employer regarding the future working conditions and your feelings about the communication as well as your satisfaction. It would take only 3-4 minutes to complete.

GDPR information

Confidentiality: Your responses are fully anonymous and will only be made available to supervisors, and the Examination Council. No personal data will be published: The thesis written by the students will not contain any information that may identify you as a participant in the survey.

Secured storage of data: All data will be stored and processed safely by the SSE and will be permanently deleted when the project is completed. By proceeding to the next page, you consent to the aforementioned GDPR information and give us permission to use your responses in our research. If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at 50647@student.hhs.se

We thank you in advance for your participation!

- Default Question Block

Q1. Do you work in Sweden? (qualifying question)

1. Yes
2. No

- Block 1*¹

Q9. If you could choose freely, on average how many days per week would you like to work from home in the future?

0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

¹ We changed sequence of background questions mid-study due to respondents' feedback, hence Q2-Q8 will appear in the end of the survey

Q10. According to your best estimate - how many days per week do you believe your employer will allow you to work from home in the future?

0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

- Block 2

Q11. My employer has communicated the future way of working (the expected amount of days per week in the office and how much work from home is allowed) when the decision about lifting the restrictions was made.

1. Not communicated at all
2. Vaguely communicated
3. Clearly communicated

Q12. I expected that my employer would have communicated a clear statement about the future way of working when the decision about lifting the restrictions was made.

1. Yes
2. No

- Block 3

Q13. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

1 Strongly disagree ... 5 Strongly agree

The level of communication around the future way of working...

- 1 ... is causing me worry or anxiety.
- 2 ... makes me fear I may be terminated from my job.
- 3 ... makes me feel included.
- 4 ... makes me feel employees of my company are treated in the way we should be treated.
- 5 ... helps me perform my job effectively and efficiently.
- 6 ... makes me feel I get enough opportunities to improve and display my ability and efficiency.
- 7 ... helps me see how my performance affects my organization's success.
- 8 ... makes me feel my company appreciates me in my job.
- 9 ... makes me feel that there is a semblance between my organization and my own values and beliefs.
- 10 ... makes me feel my career goals are well considered by my organization.
- 11 ... makes me feel that my personal needs are well met by my organization.
- 12 ... makes me feel that my employer extends necessary help and support whenever I have any personal or professional issues.

- Block 4

Q14. How does your feeling of ANXIETY CHANGE due to the (lack of) communication?

1. Decreases
2. Remains unchanged
3. Increases
4. I don't feel anxious at all

Q15. How does your sense of INCLUSION CHANGE due to the (lack of) communication?

1. Decreases
2. Remains unchanged
3. Increases
4. I don't feel anxious at all

Q16. How does your PRODUCTIVITY CHANGE due to the (lack of) communication?

1. Decreases
2. Remains unchanged
3. Increases
4. I don't feel anxious at all

Q17. How does your sense of the IMPORTANCE OF YOUR WORK to the company CHANGE due to the (lack of) communication?

1. Decreases
2. Remains unchanged
3. Increases
4. I don't feel anxious at all

Q18. How does your sense of BELONGINGNESS CHANGE due to the (lack of) communication?

1. Decreases
2. Remains unchanged
3. Increases
4. I don't feel anxious at all

Q19. How does your feeling of being SUPPORTED by your employer CHANGE due to the (lack of) communication?

1. Decreases
2. Remains unchanged
3. Increases

4. I don't feel anxious at all

Q21. How satisfied are you with the level of communication around the future way of working?

1 Extremely dissatisfied ... 5 Extremely satisfied

- Block 5

Q22. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

1 Strongly disagree ... 5 Strongly agree

1 ... I remain firm in my commitment to my employer.

2 ... I am not planning on changing my job in the near future.

3 ... I would definitely recommend my current employer to my friend as a great place to work.

Q23. How satisfied are you with your job?

1 Extremely dissatisfied ... 5 Extremely satisfied

Q24. This survey was about

Employer communication

Animal welfare

Gastronomical taste combinations

Economic downturn in Europe

- Block 6

Q26. Do you work full-time or part-time? (qualifying question)

Full-time

Part-time

Self-employed

Q2. Which industry are you working in?

1 IT

2 Construction

3 Travel

4 Retail

5 Financial/Insurance

6 Telecom

7 Governmental

8 Manufacturing

- 9 Energy
- 10 Media
- 11 Biotech/Medical
- 12 Other (Please type here)

Q3. Number of years of working experience (Please type here)

Q4. Company position

- 1 Specialist
- 2 Mid-level manager (Head of a small team)
- 3 Top manager (Head of department or executive)
- 4 Other (Please type here)

Q7. Your highest finished education level

- 1 High school (gymnasium)
- 2 Professional education (yrkeshögskola)
- 3 Higher education (BSc/MSc)
- 4 Ph.D. or higher

Q5. Your age (Please type here)

Q6. Your gender

- 1 Female
- 2 Male
- 3 Rather not say

Q27. Do you consider yourself introverted, extraverted, or neutral?

- 1 Introverted
- 2 Extroverted
- 3 Neutral

Q8. How many people were there in your household during the pandemic?

- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, More than 5