

You're On Your Own, Kid

A study of the impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment

Lovisa Bergdahl

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to investigate the impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment and what aspects influence the behavior of this relationship.

Design/methodology/approach: Using a deductive quantitative approach, data from 507 participants from backgrounds with typically differing levels of power distance, namely India and the U.S., was gathered and analyzed with ordinary least squares regression-based path analysis. A number of moderators, namely job discretion, work-scheduling latitude, perceived organizational support, and the cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism-individualism, masculinity, and long-term orientation—with power distance being of most relevance—were tested in order to garner more detailed insight into the impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment.

Findings: A total significant negative effect of a change in remote working on affective commitment was found. However, a significant positive indirect effect of serial mediation via work-scheduling latitude and job discretion was also found, indicating that in addition to the negative direct effect, a change in remote working also has the potential to generate positive effects. None of the tested moderators turned out to have a significant impact, implying that this relationship held true and remained stable even in the face of contextual differences.

Originality/value: This paper contributes to the body of research on how to optimally make use of remote working in a post-Covid-19 context, with particular reference to generating affective commitment among employees. By testing a number of moderators, it adds further detail not previously mapped for this relationship. In particular, it fills the research gap on cross-cultural differences with regard to the link between a change in remote working and affective commitment.

Keywords: Affective commitment, remote working, culture, power distance, job discretion, work-scheduling latitude, perceived organizational support

Author

Lovisa Bergdahl (50649)

Supervisor

Wiley Wakeman, Associate Professor, Department of Management and Organization

Examiner

Sara Rosengren, Professor, Department of Marketing and Strategy

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Stockholm School of Economics

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1 Introduction

Upon being declared a public health emergency at the beginning of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic completely pulled the rug from under the feet of the entire world (Timeline: WHO's Covid-19 Response, World Health Organization, 2023). Social distance had to be instated and upheld, and as such, a severe shift to remote working took place. As of writing, the pandemic is no longer considered a global threat, hence organizations need to figure out how to handle their return to the office. Should remote working be abandoned entirely, to some extent, or not at all? While some organizations have made the decision to keep a certain measure of remote working, others are set on working towards a full-time return. Tech giants Google, Apple and Twitter are all determined to have employees return fully to the office eventually (Tsipursky, Forbes, 2023). Google, in particular, is wary of the potential negative effects of employees not seeing each other in person (Tsipursky, Forbes, 2022; Sander, The Conversation, 2023). The well-renowned tech company has made Glassdoor's (Best places to work, Glassdoor, 2023) list of best places to work fifteen years in a row (Jackson, CNBC, 2023)—a commendable achievement and a testament to the happiness of their employees, which they arguably would not want to lose. It thus follows to wonder whether these highly coveted organizations are on the right track in seeking to play a zero-sum game with the pandemic, or whether a more optimal “new normal” can be established.

A popular way of measuring employees' feelings towards their organization is that of organizational commitment, and particularly affective commitment, which has been identified as the most crucial component of organizational commitment (Mercurio, 2015). Defined as the emotional attachment of employees to their organizations (Allen & Meyer, 1990), affective commitment is a concept that has been extensively researched within a variety of fields (Sagituly & Guo, 2023). Of interest to researchers and practitioners of business, HR, social psychology and social sciences, amongst others, it has evolved into a crucial organizational component with a plethora of desirable outcomes, ranging from increased productivity (Meyer et al., 1989; Meyer et al., 2002) to decreased turnover intent (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Liu et al., 2022), thereby making it a suitable target concept to measure the effects of a change in remote working by. While research thus far implies that Google, Apple and Twitter might want to reconsider bringing back their employees full-time if aiming to foster affective commitment, the findings do not seem entirely clear-cut, and a need for further investigation exists. Hence the current study seeks to

disentangle the link between a change in remote working and affective commitment by investigating it in isolation and in relation to a number of potential moderators relating to work autonomy, perceived organizational support, and culture.

Working conditions like autonomy and perceived organizational support are highly relevant concepts to the study of organizational behavior (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Pierce & Newstrom, 1983; Langfred, 2000). Perceived organizational support is a commonly known and rather strong antecedent of affective commitment, in part due to the reciprocity principle, which states that upon receiving something (support), one wants to give back (affective commitment) (Eisenberger et al., 2001). As for work autonomy, two common concepts behind it are job discretion and work-scheduling latitude, of which higher levels give employees greater influence over their work (Langfred, 2000; Pierce & Newstrom, 1983). However, while these concepts seem consistently positive in a traditional work setting, the Covid-19 pandemic forced a steep increase of the utilization of remote working as an organizational strategy (Zhang et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2020; Simon et al., 2023), thus calling for a revisit of such traditional concepts under more unconventional circumstances. In light of this, it is interesting to investigate the interaction of these concepts with a change in the remote working condition in order to gauge an understanding of whether this alters the generation of affective commitment and thereby map further details of the nature of the main relationship investigated.

As for culture, both Google and Apple have offices and operations across multiple countries and continents (Our offices, Google, 2023; Careers at Apple: Join a team and inspire the work, Apple, 2023), yet most of our knowledge about affective commitment stems from studies carried out in western contexts (Yao & Wang, 2006; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007). Regardless of cultural orientation, balancing a virtual work environment is of relevance, not least during and in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only can optimal practices differ between different domestic cultural groups, but leading teams made up of culturally diverse individuals might require a high level of personalization as different cultures might respond differently in terms of affective commitment to changes in remote working. Out of Hofstede's (1980) well-established cultural dimensions, power distance measures how inclined a society is to accept unequal distribution of power, and is of particular interest to the investigation at hand given its impact on communication patterns that might change when switching to a remote work setting (Cheney et al., 2004; Chudnovskaya & O'Hara, 2016; Koc, 2013;

Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Hartman, Stoner, & Arora, 1992; Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999; von Hippel, 1994; Daft & Lengel, 1986). As such, the current study places great emphasis on the potential moderation of cultural dimensions—and mainly power distance—on the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment in order to determine whether certain cultural tendencies are more apt than others to develop affective commitment under changing remote working conditions. If this is the case, organizations need to incorporate this into their operations when determining their return-to-the-office strategy.

1.1 Purpose, contribution and disposition

The purpose of the current paper is to investigate the impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment and what aspects influence the behavior of this relationship. As such, this study contributes to the body of research on how to optimally handle remote working, with particular reference to generating affective commitment among employees. By testing a number of moderators, it adds further details not previously mapped with regard to this relationship, and by testing Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions—particularly power distance—it aims to fill the research gap on cross-cultural differences potentially prevalent in the link between a change in remote working and affective commitment. This, in turn, is highly relevant for international organizations as well as increasingly diverse societies. The paper will proceed as outlined: following this introduction, a theoretical framework will be presented based on literature detailing remote working (e.g., Hartman, Stoner, & Arora, 1992; Golden & Veiga, 2005; Simon et al., 2023), organizational commitment and the role of affective commitment as its core essence (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mercurio, 2015), perceived organizational support (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 2001; Eisenberger et al., 2002), job discretion (e.g., Langfred, 2000), work-scheduling latitude (e.g., Pierce & Newstrom, 1983; Baltes et al., 1999), and cultural diversity (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Yoo et al., 2011) with a focus on power distance (e.g., Hofstede & Bond, 1988), mounting up to the proposed hypotheses. Next, I outline the methodology and study design, which consists of a cross-national quantitative survey study distributed among employees in India and the U.S. to ensure different levels of power distance, followed by the results obtained being presented and analyzed using mediated- and moderated regression analysis. Finally, I will be discussing the findings, including theoretical and practical implications as well as limitations, and presenting a conclusion.

2 Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

2.1 Organizational commitment and its core construct

Organizational commitment rests on the three pillars of “(1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization” (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226) and reflects employees’ overall affective response to the organization at which they are employed (Mowday et al., 1979). It can be broken up into three components of attitudinal commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). While associated with a variety of effects, an important one is that of employee turnover, which is negatively linked with all three components of organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), particularly for remote workers (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). Relatively recently, Mercurio (2015) set out to define the core essence of organizational commitment in light of a previously fragmented body of research, with the aim of more effectively facilitating the positive effects stemming from the most useful components of organizational commitment. In doing so, he found that affective commitment is both historically and theoretically relevant, that it likely has a stronger impact on work behaviors than other commitment components, and, consequently, that it can reasonably be considered the core essence of organizational commitment (Mercurio, 2015). This confirms the importance of the affective commitment component in seeking out positive organizational commitment related effects. Hence affective commitment has been named the key commitment construct for the current study.

2.1.1 Affective commitment

Affective commitment has been defined as an “employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1). There exists a multitude of studies showing the myriad positive effects to reap from affective commitment. It has been shown to be positively related to job performance (Meyer et al., 1989; Meyer et al., 2002), job satisfaction (Yao & Wang, 2006; Meyer et al., 2002; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), organizational citizenship behavior (Liu, 2009; Meyer et al., 2002; Shore & Wayne, 1993), high-quality leader-member interactions (Hui & Rousseau, 2004), creativity (Mohammed et al., 2022) and in-group affect (Harris & Cameron, 2005), while being negatively related to absenteeism (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), workplace stress (Meyer et al., 2002; Schmidt, 2007), turnover intent—both

directly (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) and indirectly (Liu et al., 2022)—and actual turnover (Meyer et al., 2002). As such, it is reasonable to assume that managers would benefit from fostering a workplace culture in which employees experience a high level of such commitment. A number of well-established antecedents of affective commitment have also been mapped in the research literature, namely various demographic variables (Meyer et al., 2002; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), work positions and experiences (Meyer et al., 2002; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), individual differences (Meyer et al., 2002; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), perceived organizational support (Meyer et al., 2002; Bartlett, 2001; Rhoades et al., 2001), and trust (Nyhan, 1999).

2.2 Remote working

Remote working—also known as telecommuting—has been described as bringing the work to the workers rather than the other way around, by having employees work from an unconventional workplace, such as one's home (Nilles, 1994; Hartman, Stoner, & Arora, 1992). Telecommuting is, of course, not a new phenomenon, but one most of us have become increasingly familiar with in recent years, not least due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Zhang et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2020; Simon et al., 2023). In light of this global crisis, working remotely has rapidly spread and is expected to constitute a lasting component of what is expected to be “the new normal” (Davis et al., 2020). Many effects of remote working during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as mental health and work-life balance—two commonly researched topics in the context of remote working (e.g., Elbaz et al., 2022)—tend not to have a ubiquitous valence but seem to vary from person to person and depending on the context (Zhang et al., 2021). In other words, the general effects of remote working seem rather ambiguous, and more data also on its relationship with affective commitment would be of great use.

2.2.1 Remote working and affective commitment

In mapping how remote working impacts affective commitment, Kortsch et al. (2022) found a positive relationship between remote working and affective commitment in the German banking industry. Similarly, Simon et al. (2023) found a positive relationship between time spent working remotely and affective commitment, though said link was stronger when mediated by collective purpose. Mazzei et al. (2022) found that under remote working conditions, social isolation—which is common among teleworkers (Mann et al.,

2000)—inhibited the establishment of affective commitment among newcomers to an organization, although a high level of newcomer adjustment mitigates this (Mazzei et al., 2022). This finding is important to consider when hiring, even though existing employees and systems might work very well remotely. Additionally, Golden and Veiga (2005) set out to map the relationship between remote working and job satisfaction in order to shed clarity on its ambiguity, and in doing so found a curvilinear inverted U-shaped relationship moderated by job discretion and task interdependence, providing a more thorough explanation of this relationship. Given the significant correlation between job satisfaction and affective commitment (Rifai, 2005; Patrick & Sonia, 2012), which is particularly strong for telecommuters (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999), there would likely be some similarities between the relationship studied by Golden and Veiga (2005) and that between remote working and affective commitment. As such, there seems to be more to this relationship than a ubiquitously positive link, inviting further investigation into its nature. Moreover, the previous studies referenced have placed their main focus on an absolute level of remote working, rather than investigated the effects of a change in employees' time spent working remotely. The latter is of particular interest in order to gauge a thorough understanding of the telecommuting-related effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which, as stated, brought about a rapid increase in this way of working (Timeline: WHO's Covid-19 Response, World Health Organization, 2023). The current study aims to shed some clarity on the complexity of this topic, however, as few studies on how changes in remote working impact affective commitment have been carried out, literature on an absolute level of remote working has been used to form the hypotheses of the current study. To embark on this endeavor, the foundational main relationship is, in line with the above research, expected to be a positive association between a change in remote working and affective commitment. Formally,

Hypothesis 1: A change in remote working is significantly positively associated with affective commitment.

2.3 Moderating variables

The following variables are expected to influence the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment and thereby provide further insight into its nature.

2.3.1 Job discretion

Job discretion, also known as individual autonomy, describes a state in which individuals are allowed discretion in carrying out and implementing their tasks (Langfred, 2000). While higher levels of it typically reduce the need for contact with other members of the organization (Langfred, 2000), lower levels make employees more prone to seek out information from others (Norman et al., 1995). Given the changed communication patterns that come with a switch to remote working, which often result in less regular communication, this way of working may make employees with less job discretion more susceptible to communication difficulties, at least initially (Hartman, Stoner, & Arora, 1992; Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999; von Hippel, 1994; Daft & Lengel, 1986). In the previously mentioned study by Golden and Veiga (2005), job discretion was included as a moderating variable. The authors found support for the hypothesis that this variable positively moderates the relationship between remote working and job satisfaction, the latter of which, as previously stated, is strongly correlated with affective commitment (Rifai, 2005; Patrick & Sonia, 2012), particularly under remote working conditions (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). As such, I expect job discretion to moderate the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment so that affective commitment increases with the addition of job discretion. Formally,

Hypothesis 2: Job discretion positively moderates the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment.

2.3.2 Work-scheduling latitude

Work-scheduling latitude, also referred to as perceived time autonomy and work schedule flexibility, centers around employees being allowed the freedom to schedule their work as they see fit (Pierce & Newstrom, 1983). Typical components of the concept include the extent of carryover available to employees (i.e., the extent to which employees can rearrange working hours from one day to another, or, alternatively, to which they have to work a set number of hours each day) and the number and timing of core hours required per day (i.e., the times between which an employee has to be working and cannot move their hours around). This entails that those with much work-scheduling latitude have the opportunity to practice a lot of influence over the design of their workdays, while those with little work-scheduling latitude are bound by certain hours and regulations (Baltes et al., 1999). Such flexibility has

been found to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Baltes et al., 1999; Macan, 1994), and as such, would likely be positively related to affective commitment, given the close resemblance of these concepts (Rifai, 2005; Patrick & Sonia, 2012) and the particular strength of this similarity under telecommuting circumstances (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). Being able to work when one feels at their best has been named a major reason behind self-reported increased productivity when working from home (Hartman, Stoner, & Arora, 1992), and perceived productivity, in turn, is positively related to affective commitment (McCunn et al., 2018). In other words, when working more extensively from home, one's affective commitment should increase at the addition of work-scheduling latitude. Formally,

Hypothesis 3: Work-scheduling latitude positively moderates the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment.

2.3.3 Perceived organizational support

Perceived organizational support can be defined as “the extent to which the organization values [the employees’] contributions and care about their wellbeing” (Eisenberger et al., 2002, p. 565) and is, as has been touched upon, a known antecedent of affective commitment (Rhoades et al., 2001; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Bartlett (2001) further found that when employees perceived there to be support for them partaking in training and development, affective commitment increased. Due to the reciprocity norm, there is a greater tendency for employees to want to give back to the organization when they feel supported, contributing to said positive effects (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Moreover, the previously referenced study by Mazzei et al. (2022) found that perceived organizational support is positively associated with affective commitment even among newcomers to a hybrid organization. In general, perceived organizational support seems to contribute positively to a number of favorable outcomes in remote working contexts (e.g., Harunavamwe & Ward, 2022; Pham et al., 2023; Brown & Leite, 2023). As such, it seems previous research overwhelmingly agrees on the positive impact of perceived organizational support in situations relating to both affective commitment and remote working. Given these relationships, it is of interest to investigate the moderating role of perceived organizational support on the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment also in the current study. As such, perceived organizational support should moderate the effect of a change in remote working on affective commitment so that a higher level of perceived organizational support results in correspondingly higher levels of affective commitment. Formally,

Hypothesis 4: Perceived organizational support positively moderates the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment.

2.3.4 Cultural dimensions

The core concept of culture has been defined as “the collective mental programming of the people in an environment” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 43) and is said to derive from shared experiences, education, and societal beliefs (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede (1980) set out to map cultural diversity in terms of national cultures, and in doing so established four major cultural dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism-individualism, and masculinity. Said dimensions describe the national culture of a country, which, in turn, provides insight into how people view the world due to cultural conditioning. Since then, Hofstede’s (1980) doctrine has been updated to include two additional dimensions—long-/short-term orientation, and indulgence-restraint—in order to paint a more thorough picture of the entirety of the concept of culture (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011). For the current study, the original four dimensions, as well as long-term orientation, have been included, as these have been successfully translated into a consistent scale measuring culture at the individual level, and not only at the national level (Yoo et al., 2011). Hofstede’s (1980) original work was specifically designed to capture national culture, and as such, his measurements cannot validly be applied to individuals’ cultural values (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). However, for managerial practices and issues, measuring culture at the individual level is more relevant (Kamakura & Mazzon, 1991; Kamakura & Novak, 1992), as the individual approach is better suited to capture the properties of heterogeneous groups, which is important in increasingly diverse societies (Yoo et al., 2011). The following paragraphs will further elaborate on the various dimensions, with that of power distance being central. The remaining dimensions will be tested as moderators to control for potential other cultural effects.

The dimension of uncertainty avoidance captures the “extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules, not tolerating deviant ideas and behaviors, and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). Worth mentioning is that high levels of uncertainty avoidance tend to result in higher levels of anxiety, aggressiveness and drive to work hard. Additionally, high levels tend

to inspire people to develop rules and guidelines to keep them on track (Sabri, 2012). Worth noting is that in comparisons of the application of Hofstede's (1980) original cultural dimensions between the East and the West, uncertainty avoidance seems to be a mainly Western cultural trait, as it is not consistently prevalent in Eastern cultures (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). This is likely due to the different ways in which different religions and doctrines view the concept of truth, which is central to the dimension of uncertainty avoidance. However, this dimension still remains included in most cultural research, and as such, it will be included also in the current study.

Collectivism-individualism portrays a scale ranging from "a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups; they expect their in-group (relatives, clan, organizations) to look after them, and in exchange for that they feel they owe absolute loyalty to it" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45) to "a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care of themselves and of their immediate families only" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). A highly collectivistic society prioritizes putting the group before one's own needs, whereas in a highly individualistic society, one would be likely to put their own needs and achievements above those of the group. These differing characteristics have been termed allocentrism and idiocentrism, respectively, with the former being valued in collectivistic societies and the latter being of more relevance in individualistic societies (Triandis et al., 1985).

Masculinity describes the "extent to which the dominant values in society are 'masculine'—that is, assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and *not* caring for others, the quality of life, or people" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 46). High levels of masculinity imply a large focus on performance and challenging work (Sabri, 2012). In cultures high in masculinity, the attitudinal differences between men and women tend to be larger than in cultures low in masculinity (Hofstede, 1980).

Long-term orientation was added in 1988 as a fifth cultural dimension (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Initially originating from a Chinese culture measurement, it derives from an attempt to lower the Western bias in culture research. It refers to people's tendency to focus their efforts on the long- or the short run and was first designed to capture

traits predictive of economic growth. While initially seen as a mainly Eastern cultural concept (Hofstede & Bond, 1988), it has later been successfully used also in Western contexts (Yoo et al., 2011).

Power distance—the main dimension for the current study—measures the “extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). A society high in power distance accepts a hierarchical structure in which certain individuals possess the majority of the power and are consequently entitled to supremacy and privilege. This division is not only accepted and perpetuated by those with much power, but also by those less powerful (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Such power may be acquired through friendships, family relations, or even force (Sabri, 2012). Power distance has been chosen as the main cultural dimension of the current study due to its influence on relationships and communication patterns in an organization (Cheney et al., 2004; Chudnovskaya & O’Hara, 2016; Koc, 2013; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Bond, 1988), which, in turn, tend to change when remote working is adopted (Hartman, Stoner, & Arora, 1992; Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999; von Hippel, 1994; Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Affective commitment rarely differs significantly between different national-level cultures, and when it has been shown to do so, it has not been recorded in relation to Hofstede’s (1980) culture scale (Meyer et al., 2012; Gelade, Dobson & Auer, 2008; Gelade, Dobson & Gilbert, 2006; Vandenberghe et al., 2001). The exception is the results of Randall (1993), who found indications of certain tendencies, such as national-level power distance being negatively correlated with organizational commitment, though this investigation was based on a flawed sample and should thus not be too heavily relied upon. However, what is less neutral is the relationship between power distance and remote working. It has been shown that managers high in e-leadership—leadership aimed at fostering personal and organizational improvement by encouraging the use of information technology, thereby centering around aspects of telecommuting—have the potential to enhance communication with their employees and, consequently, increase employees’ affective commitment (Li & Xiao, 2023). However, this relationship is moderated by employees’ individual power distance orientation, of which a higher level makes employees less receptive to said positive effects. Similarly, Adamovic (2022) found that individuals in high power distance environments—as measured by individual cultural leanings—tend to have a more negative attitude towards telework, which could arguably have a negative effect on affective commitment given its close resemblance to

workplace attitude variables like job satisfaction (Rifai, 2005; Patrick & Sonia, 2012). Trust has further been named one of the most crucial aspects to the success of virtual teams, as has combating social isolation (Zhang et al., 2010). The former has been shown to be negatively associated with national-level power distance in a number of contexts (e.g., Kaasa & Andriani, 2022; Thanetsunthorn, 2022; Rabayah et al., 2022). As for the latter, higher individual levels of power distance have been shown to lead to stronger beliefs about social isolation in the face of telecommuting (Adamovic, 2022). Meanwhile, both trust and social isolation have been shown to be related to affective commitment; trust positively so (Agyare et al., 2019), and social isolation negatively so (Marshall et al., 2007; Mazzei et al., 2022). As such, it follows to expect that a change in remote working will influence affective commitment negatively in environments where high power distance prevails. Though the referenced studies report a mix of individual- and national-level cultural effects, the dimension of power distance tends to generate quite similar effects regardless of unit of analysis in organizational settings, why both types of studies are useful in forming an expectation of the behavior of power distance as a variable (Mao & Guo, 2020). Formally,

Hypothesis 5: Individual-level power distance negatively moderates the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment.

An illustration of the hypotheses proposed based on the reviewed literature can be found in Figure 1.

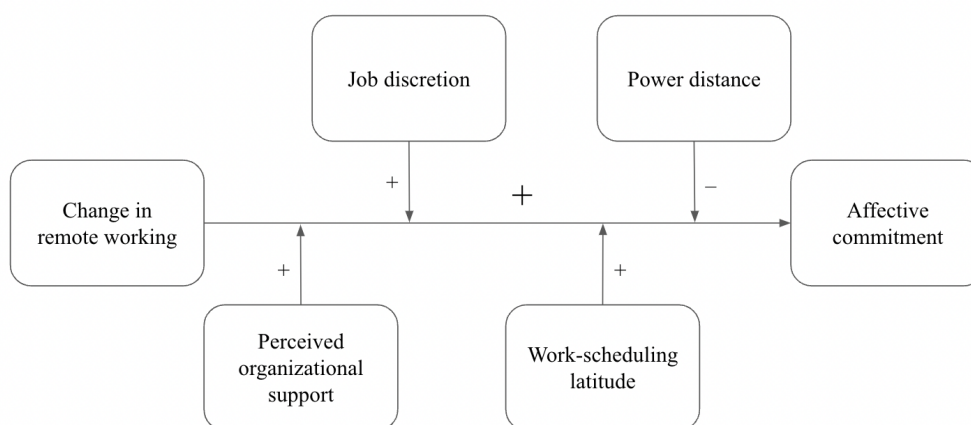


Figure 1, Conceptual framework

3 Methodology

The current study takes a deductive quantitative approach (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). Data was gathered using a survey, which can be found in Appendix A, and analyzed using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression-based path analysis, including mediation- and moderation analysis (Coutts & Hayes, 2022). This approach is useful for studying organizational behavior as it allows for the more complex analyses required to capture real-world processes (Coutts & Hayes, 2022; Hayes et al., 2017).

3.1 Participants and sampling

642 participants were recruited by convenience sampling via CloudResearch, approximately half of which were recruited from India and half from the U.S (Stratton, 2021). Participants from India were paid 2.5 USD for their participation, and participants from the U.S. were paid 2.28 USD for their participation. These groups were chosen to ensure differing cultural values with regard to power distance, as India tends to display high levels of power distance while the U.S. tends to display low levels of power distance, and the impact of cultural differences with particular reference to power distance was to be studied as a potential moderator (Country Comparison Tool, Hofstede Insights, 2023). An independent samples t-test was performed to further establish the validity of said two countries as different with regard to power distance, and significance was obtained at the .01 level ($p < .001$). What added to the suitability of the chosen samples was that both groups are native English speakers, ensuring sufficient understanding of the survey and its questions, which is important when working with participants from different countries (Söderlund, 2018). To ensure the quality of responses, an attention check was included at the beginning of the survey (Kees et al., 2017). Participants were asked about their frequency of participation in CloudResearch surveys, but instructed to instead of answering, mark “other” and write the word “dolphin” in the space for comments. This is a so-called Instructional manipulation check (IMC), which made it possible to identify respondents who did not read the questions properly and thereby reduce the amount of noise recorded (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009). Participants who failed to type the word “dolphin” in the free text box were taken out, reducing the sample by 62 participants from India and 70 from the U.S.. Upon closer inspection, three additional participants (one from the Indian sample and two from the U.S. sample) were deleted due to obvious cases of inattention (all free text answers consisted of a single digit, “2” or “3”, repeated a number of times). This left me with a

sample of 507 participants (n = 507; female = 292; male = 215), of which 261 were collected in India (n = 261; female = 147; male = 114) and 246 in the U.S. (n = 246; female = 145; male = 101). The described process has been mapped in Table 1.

	India	The U.S.
Original sample	324	318
Removed due to failing the IMC	62	70
Removed due to obvious cases of inattention	1	2
Final sample	261	246

Table 1, Data cleaning process

Additionally, the age of the participants ranged from 18 to 77, with a mean of 42.49 and a standard deviation of 13.3. 24% reported being single (n = 122), 4% reported being in a relationship but not married (n = 20), 62% were married (n = 314), and 10% were divorced (n = 51). With regard to whether one is the primary wage earner in their household or not, 73% answered that they are (n = 369), 12% answered that they are not (n = 62), and 15% answered that they and their partner earn about the same (n = 76). 33% of the respondents reported not having any children (n = 166), 30% had one child (n = 153), 29% had two children (n = 147), and 8% had three or more children (n = 41). As for income- as well as industry distribution, the group sizes for several of the response options were insufficient for statistical inference to be carried out, hence these control variables were left out of the remaining statistical analyses (Staiger & Stock, 1994). These distributions can be seen in Appendix B.

3.2 Measures

Both samples received identical survey questions, all of which can be found in Appendix A. The measures used were exclusively adopted from previous peer-reviewed studies, thereby ensuring their validity. Aside from the control questions, all items were measured on 5-point likert scales, except for that of remote working, which was measured by asking the respondents to indicate the average number of hours as well as the proportion of their work week they typically spend working remotely. This was measured for two points in time, and then combined to form the measure of change in remote working. A multi-item approach was taken to all variables in order to ensure their reliability, and subsequently indices were created

for those variables whose Cronbach's Alpha exceeded .7, in line with common practice (Söderlund, 2018). An overview of this process can be found in Table 2, and further explanation of all measures included follows below.

To measure affective commitment, a shortened version of Allen & Meyer's (1990) scale was used: the Affective Commitment Scale (ACS). The variable was measured using four items (see Appendix A: Commit 1-4), chosen among the original eight for having the highest factor weighting from the original study. Participants were asked to rate a number of statements on a scale ranging from Completely Disagree to Completely Agree, with item 1, 2 and 4 being reverse coded. The results from these items were thus reversed back in SPSS before any analysis took place. Upon checking the reliability of the affective commitment variable, it was deemed reliable, with a Cronbach's Alpha of .829. Thus an index variable was created for affective commitment.

Change in remote working was measured by recording respondents' level of remote working at two points in time. Level of remote working was measured as the number of hours one worked away from one's office in an average week as well as the proportion of one's work week spent away from one's office, in line with the approach taken by Golden and Veiga (2005). Participants got to drag a marker to their answer on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. The two points in time used to measure this were 2019 (pre-pandemic, see Appendix A, Q10 and Q11) and 2023 (post-pandemic, see Appendix A, Q14 and Q15), for both of which the two measures showed convergent validity ($r = .655, p < .001$ for 2019; $r = .695, p < .001$ for 2023). New variables indicating the respondents' changes in remote working (as measured by subtracting the 2019 score from the 2023 score) between the two points in time were then created for both measures and used going forward, with proportion of work week spent away from the office acting as the main measure of remote working unless otherwise stated. Number of hours worked away from one's office was subsequently used to check the robustness of the measure.

As for the topic of workplace autonomy, measured by the variables of job discretion and work-scheduling latitude, the measurements were adopted from Langfred (2000) and Pierce and Newstrom (1983), respectively. Respondents got to rate their amount of discretion with regard to a number of autonomy aspects from Very little to Very much. Both variables were measured for two different points in time, namely 2019 (pre-pandemic) and 2023

(post-pandemic), to capture the changes in these conditions. Job discretion was measured using three items and generated Cronbach's Alphas of .840 for 2019 (see Appendix A, WorkAutonomy2019 1-3) and .855 for 2023 (see Appendix A, WorkAutonomy2023 1-3). The original scale developed by Langfred (2000) contained four items, however, Golden and Veiga (2005) decided to leave one of them out of their study for the sake of reliability, and the current study has taken the same approach. Work-scheduling latitude was measured using five items and generated Cronbach's Alphas of .927 for 2019 (see Appendix A, WorkAutonomy2019 4-8) and .946 for 2023 (see Appendix A, WorkAutonomy2023 4-8). As such, both variables were made into indices for 2019 as well as 2023 and then combined into one job discretion variable and one work-scheduling latitude variable through the subtraction of the 2019 indices from the 2023 indices. As such, job discretion and work-scheduling latitude indicate the differences between the two points in time with regard to these variables. In other words, when "a high (low) level of job discretion" is mentioned, it refers to a large increase (decrease) in job discretion. By the same token, when "a high (low) level of work-scheduling" is mentioned, it refers to a large increase (decrease) in work-scheduling latitude.

Perceived organizational support was measured using fifteen items developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) (Appendix A, OrgSup 1-15). The full version of the scale includes 36 items, however, the items selected for the current study have been deemed a valid abbreviated alternative by the authors themselves (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Participants rated their agreement with each of the fifteen statements along a dimension ranging from Completely Disagree to Completely Agree. Items 2, 3, 5, 6, 11 and 12 were reverse coded and were thus reversed back in SPSS before any analysis took place. When checking the reliability, a Cronbach's Alpha of .921 was obtained and thus an index was created.

The cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism-individualism, masculinity, and long-term orientation were all measured using Yoo et al.'s (2011) CVSCALE. Said scale was developed as a way of measuring Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions on an individual level. As stated, individual-level cultural measures were preferred due to their higher relevance for managerial settings (Kamakura & Mazzon, 1991; Kamakura & Novak, 1992; Yoo et al., 2011). When working with multi-national participants, it is important to ensure that the variables and items being measured are perceived the same across the groups (Söderlund, 2018; Candell & Hulin,

1986). As Hofstede's (1980) dimensions have been thoroughly researched and deemed very well-established with regard to national-level culture (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011; Soares et al., 2007), and Yoo et al.'s (2011) development of the individual-level CVSCALE underwent and passed extensive validity checks, this matter has been thoroughly attended to. Power distance was measured using five items obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha of .872 (see Appendix A, CulDim 1-5), uncertainty avoidance using five items obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha of .842 (see Appendix A, CulDim 6-10), collectivism-individualism using six items obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha of .862 (see Appendix A, CulDim 11-16), masculinity using four items obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha of .874 (see Appendix A, CulDim 17-20), and long-term orientation using six items obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha of .719 (see Appendix A, CulDim 21-26). Participants were asked to rate their agreements with the statements presented from Completely Disagree to Completely Agree. As acceptable Cronbach's Alphas were obtained for all five variables, indices were created.

As for control variables, gender, age, marital status, income, industry, whether one is the primary wage earner in the household, and whether one has children were included as control variables (see Appendix A). However, as stated, income and industry ended up not being included in the analyses due to the low number of respondents for certain response options. The first six hold particular importance in cross-cultural contexts, as they can potentially influence the measure of one's cultural orientation (Lenartowicz & Roth, 1999). Furthermore, gender (Yucel & Chung, 2023; Chen et al., 2022), marital status (Yucel & Chung, 2023), whether one is the primary wage earner (Bornatici & Heers, 2020), and whether one has children (Woodall et al., 2020) may influence the dilemma of work-family conflict, the nature of which generally changed under the remote working conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic (Xu et al., 2022), making these control variables highly relevant. Lastly, age is an important control variable as it may impact employees' levels of the various components of commitment (Angle & Perry, 1981; Mahoney, 2015).

Construct	Items (see Appendix A)	Source	Cronbach's Alpha
Affective commitment	Commit 1-4	Allen & Meyer, 1990	.829
Power distance	CulDim 1-5	Yoo et al., 2011	.872

Uncertainty avoidance	CulDim 6-10	Yoo et al., 2011	.842
Collectivism-individualism	CulDim 11-16	Yoo et al., 2011	.862
Masculinity	CulDim 17-20	Yoo et al., 2011	.874
Long-term orientation	CulDim 21-26	Yoo et al., 2011	.719
Job discretion, 2019	WorkAutonomy2019 1-3	Langfred, 2000	.840
Job discretion, 2023	WorkAutonomy2023 1-3	Langfred, 2000	.855
Work-scheduling latitude, 2019	WorkAutonomy2019 4-8	Pierce & Newstrom, 1983	.927
Work-scheduling latitude, 2023	WorkAutonomy2023 4-8	Pierce & Newstrom, 1983	.946
Perceived organizational support	OrgSup 1-15	Eisenberger et al., 1986	.921

Table 2, Measures

4 Results and analysis

The current section will be presenting the results obtained by the study. The value of .05 has generally been used as significance level, however, it ought to be kept in mind that significance levels are rather arbitrary (Preece, 1990). Descriptive statistics and two-tailed Pearson's correlations are presented in Table 3.

4.1 Main relationship

Hypothesis 1 was rejected, as the opposite effect to that hypothesized occurred. Regression analysis showed a significant negative relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment ($\beta = -.004$, $p = .005$). Going forward, the dependent variable is that of affective commitment, while the main independent variable is that of change in remote working.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 Affective commitment	3.88	.97	(.83)														
2 Change in remote working	3.97	30.1	-.13**														
3 Work-scheduling latitude	.13	.8	.04	.14**													
4 Job discretion	.09	.87	.11*	.05	.51**												
5 Power distance	2.32	1.04	-.09*	-.08	.02	.02	(.87)										
6 Uncertainty avoidance	4.17	.68	.29**	-.11*	.05	.05	.06	(.84)									
7 Collectivism- individualism	3.52	.87	.23**	-.09*	.07	.02	.35**	.36**	(.82)								
8 Masculinity	2.62	1.2	-.02	-.16**	-.02	-.08	.62**	.09*	.52**	(.87)							
9 Long-term orientation	4.14	.56	.27**	-.04	.05	.03	.01	.62**	.46**	.18**	(.72)						
10 Organizational support	3.66	.8	.71**	-.08	.05	.10*	-.11*	.31**	.25**	-.04	.29**	(.92)					
11 Age	42.49	13.3	-.07	.07	-.10*	-.01	-.29**	-.15**	-.31**	-.34**	-.17**	-.06					
12 Gender	1.58	.5	.05	.02	-.04	.04	-.17**	-.04	-.23**	-.30**	-.07	-.03	.03				
13 Primary wage earner	1.42	.74	.10*	-.01	.02	.09*	-.16**	.03	-.14**	-.20**	.05	.08	< .01	.25**			
14 Marital status	2.58	.96	.06	.05	.05	.07	.01	.08	-.06	-.03	.04	.05	.26**	-.03	.10*		
15 Have children	2.12	.96	.07	.04	.01	.03	-.03	.05	-.09	-.02	-.01	.03	.29**	.01	.03	.49**	

Table 3, Correlations matrix. Note: N = 507; Numbers given in parentheses indicate the Cronbach's Alphas of the respective variables; Gender was coded as 1 = Male, 2 = Female, 3 = Other; Primary wage earner was coded as 1 = Yes, 2 = No, 3 = My partner and I earn about the same; Marital status was coded as 1 = Single – Not married, 2 = In a relationship – Not married, 3 = Married, 4 = Divorced; Have children was coded as 1 = No, 2 = One child, 3 = Two children, 4 = Three or more children; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

4.2 Moderation analysis

Following the above results, Hypotheses 2, 3, 4 and 5 were tested through Model 1 moderation analysis (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% confidence interval) using change in remote working as the independent variable and affective commitment as the dependent variable. Job discretion ($\beta = -.001, p = .572$), work-scheduling latitude ($\beta = -.002, p = .181$), power distance ($\beta = .001, p = .69$), uncertainty avoidance ($\beta < .001, p = .98$), collectivism-individualism ($\beta = .002, p = .273$), masculinity ($\beta < .001, p = .682$), long-term orientation ($\beta = .001, p = .574$), and perceived organizational support ($\beta < .001, p = .839$) were applied, one by one, as moderators of the relationship between change remote working and affective commitment. No significant interaction effects on the relationship being studied were recorded, as shown in Table 4, and as such, Hypotheses 2, 3, 4 and 5 were rejected.

Moderating variable	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Job discretion x Change in remote working	-.001	.002	-0.565	.572
Work-scheduling latitude x Change in remote working	-.002	.001	-1.341	.181
Power distance x Change in remote working	.001	.002	0.399	.69
Uncertainty avoidance x Change in remote working	< .001	.002	0.013	.98
Collectivism-individualism x Change in remote working	.002	.001	1.098	.273
Masculinity x Change in remote working	< .001	.001	0.41	.682
Long-term orientation x Change in remote working	.001	.002	0.562	.574
Perceived organizational support x Change in remote working	< .001	.001	0.203	.839

*Table 4, Moderating effects of variables on the relationship between change in remote working and affective commitment. Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$*

4.3 Exploratory analysis

While Hypotheses 1 through 5 were all rejected, the results generated still yielded some interesting properties. Hence further analysis of an exploratory nature was carried out, the processes and results of which have been mapped below.

4.3.1 Main effects of moderating variables on affective commitment

Although the moderating variables did not have any significant interaction effects on the relationship between change in remote working and affective commitment, several cultural variables, as well as perceived organizational support and job discretion, had significant main effects on affective commitment when applied as predictors (independent variables) of affective commitment. Power distance had a significant negative effect on affective commitment ($\beta = -.096, p = .035$), indicating that higher levels of power distance tend to imply lower levels of affective commitment. Uncertainty avoidance had a significant positive relationship with affective commitment ($\beta = .39, p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of uncertainty avoidance also lead to higher levels of affective commitment. Collectivism-individualism also had a significant positive relationship with affective commitment ($\beta = .242, p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of collectivism also imply higher levels of affective commitment. The same goes for long-term orientation ($\beta = .462, p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of long-term orientation imply higher levels of affective commitment, as well as for perceived organizational support ($\beta = .849, p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of perceived organizational support imply higher levels of affective commitment. The only cultural dimension not generating a significant main effect on affective commitment was masculinity ($\beta = -.033, p = .402$). As for work autonomy, job discretion did, as stated, have a significant positive main effect on affective commitment ($\beta = .134, p = .007$), indicating that as one's job discretion increases, so does their affective commitment, whereas work-scheduling latitude did not have a significant main effect on affective commitment ($\beta = .088, p = .112$). Said main effects have been mapped in Table 5.

Variable generating a main effect on affective commitment	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Job discretion	.134	.049	2.721	.007**
Work-scheduling latitude	.088	.055	1.593	.112

Power distance	-.096	.045	-2.11	.035*
Uncertainty avoidance	.39	.063	6.231	< .001**
Collectivism-individualism	.242	.056	4.333	< .001**
Masculinity	-.033	.039	-0.839	.402
Long-term orientation	.462	.07	6.568	< .001**
Perceived organizational support	.849	.038	22.637	< .001**

Table 5, Main effects of variables on affective commitment.

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

4.3.2 Mediation analysis

While no moderating effects were found for job discretion and work-scheduling latitude on the relationship between change in remote working and affective commitment, serially mediating effects of said variables were identified. Given the significant main effect of job discretion on affective commitment, and the significant correlations between job discretion and work-scheduling latitude and, in turn, between work-scheduling latitude and change in remote working (as seen in Table 3), it was deemed of relevance to explore how these factors may contribute, in series, to the (unexpected) impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment. A Model 4 parallel mediation analysis (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% confidence interval) was conducted using job discretion and work-scheduling latitude as mediators between the independent variable of change in remote working and the dependent variable of affective commitment. While no significant indirect effects were obtained, the results confirmed a significant positive relationship between change in remote working and work-scheduling latitude ($\beta = .004$, $p = .026$), as well as between job discretion and affective commitment ($\beta = .137$, $p = .031$). Taken together with the aforementioned strong correlation between job discretion and work-scheduling latitude ($r = .51$, significant at the .01 level), these links suggested that there might be a more advanced serial effect present. As such, Model 6 mediation analysis (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% confidence interval) was performed and revealed a significant positive indirect effect of the independent variable of a change in remote working on the dependent variable of affective commitment through serial mediation via work-scheduling latitude and job discretion (effect = .0003), as well as a significant negative direct effect of a change in remote working on affective commitment (effect = -.0042). Additional insignificant indirect effects of change in remote working on

affective commitment were obtained via work-scheduling latitude (effect = .0000) and job discretion (effect = -.0001), respectively, for a total significant negative effect of -.0040. A summary of these effects can be found in Table 6.

Effects	Path	Effect	Lower limit, confidence interval	Upper limit, confidence interval
Direct effect	Change in remote working → affective commitment	-.0042	-.0071	-.0014
Indirect effect 1	Change in remote working → work-scheduling latitude → affective commitment	< .0001	-.0006	.0006
Indirect effect 2	Change in remote working → job discretion → affective commitment	-.0001	-.0005	.0003
Indirect effect 3	Change in remote working → work-scheduling latitude → job discretion → affective commitment	.0003	.0000	.0007
Total effect		-.0040	-.0068	-.0012

Table 6, Direct and indirect effects of change in remote working on affective commitment

Further descriptive properties of the serial mediation at play have been mapped in Figure 2 as well as in Table 7. The explanatory power of the illustrated model on affective commitment was found to be significant ($R^2 = .03, p = .002$). Significant positive relationships were found between change in remote working and work-scheduling latitude ($\beta = .004, p = .026$), work-scheduling latitude and job discretion ($\beta = .558, p < .001$), and job discretion and affective commitment ($\beta = .137, p = .031$), together generating the significant positive indirect effect mentioned. The direct association between change in remote working and affective commitment, was, as stated, significant and negative ($\beta = -.004, p = .002$).

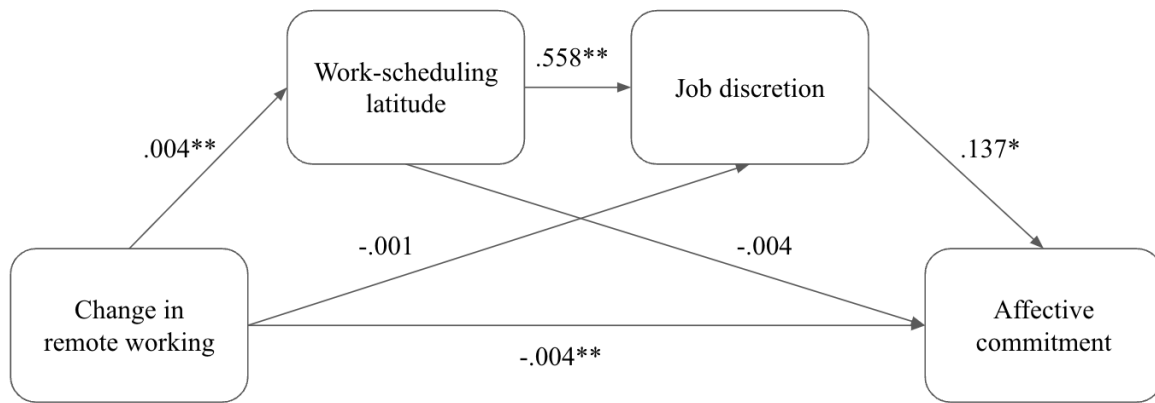


Figure 2, Serial mediation. Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

These relationships remained stable even with the inclusion of the control variables as covariates. In other words, regardless of one's age, gender, marital status, whether they have children, and whether they are the primary wage earner, a change in remote working has a significantly negative direct effect yet a significantly positive indirect effect serially mediated by work-scheduling latitude and job discretion on affective commitment. However, age had a significant negative effect on work-scheduling latitude ($\beta = -.008, p = .007$) as well as on affective commitment ($\beta = -.007, p = .048$), indicating that younger people experienced more work-scheduling latitude and a greater level of affective commitment. Though no other significant effects were recorded for the control variables, their inclusion strengthened the explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = .052, p < .001$).

4.3.3 Robustness of remote working

To ensure robustness of the variable of change in remote working, the above relationships were tested using the alternative measure included to document this aspect, namely number of hours one worked away from one's office in an average week. Regression analysis of the relationship between this way of measuring change in remote working and affective commitment generated significant numbers very similar to those obtained when using the proportion of one's work week spent away from one's office as the measure of remote working ($\beta = -.006, p = .002$).

Consequent	Work-scheduling latitude				Job discretion				Affective commitment			
Antecedent	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Change in remote working	.004	.002	2.234	.026*	-.001	.001	-0.418	.676	-.004	.001	-3.09	.002**
Work-scheduling latitude					.558	.054	10.305	< .001**	-.004	.068	-0.051	.959
Job discretion									.137	.063	2.169	.031*
Constant	.113	.035	3.234	.001**	.018	.033	0.538	.591	3.884	.043	89.774	< .001**

Table 7, Serial mediation. Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Upon obtaining these results, mediation analysis was run in accordance with section 4.3.2, and the same effects were obtained, with a change in remote working having a significant effect on affective commitment both directly and indirectly, indicating the robustness of the measure of change in remote working. Similarly, the two indirect paths not generating a significant effect of change in remote working on affective commitment before remained insignificant also when using number of hours worked away from one's office as the measure of change in remote working. These effects have been mapped in Table 8

Effects	Path	Effect	Lower limit, confidence interval	Upper limit, confidence interval
Direct effect	Change in remote working → affective commitment	-.0064	-.0103	-.0026
Indirect effect 1	Change in remote working → work-scheduling latitude → affective commitment	.0000	-.0007	.0006
Indirect effect 2	Change in remote working → job discretion → affective commitment	.0001	-.0006	.0006
Indirect effect 3	Change in remote working → work-scheduling latitude → job discretion → affective commitment	.0003	.0000	.0008
Total effect		-.0061	-.0099	-.0022

Table 8, Direct and indirect effects of a change in remote working on affective commitment using an alternative measure of remote working

4.4 Summary of hypotheses testing

Table 9 provides an overview of the results of the hypothesis testing in the current study. None of them were supported, however, a number of other interesting effects were found, which will be elaborated on in the discussion section (i.e., section 5).

Hypothesis		Result
Hypothesis 1	A change in remote working is significantly positively associated with affective commitment	Opposite effect
Hypothesis 2	Job discretion positively moderates the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment	Not supported
Hypothesis 3	Work-scheduling latitude positively moderates the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment	Not supported
Hypothesis 4	Perceived organizational support positively moderates the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment	Not supported
Hypothesis 5	Individual-level power distance negatively moderates the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment	Not supported

Table 9, Summary of hypothesis testing

5 Discussion and implications

This study both confirms and adds clarity to the complex nature of the relationship between remote working and affective commitment. While no support was found for the various hypotheses, a number of interesting findings contribute greatly to a more detailed understanding of the impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment.

Contrary to what was formulated in Hypothesis 1, the total effect of a change in remote working on affective commitment turned out to be significantly negative rather than significantly positive, indicating that as employees move to work more remotely, their affective organizational commitment decreases. This was unexpected given the results found in earlier studies. When looking at this finding in isolation, one might be tempted to claim that switching to remote working should be avoided, and that fully going back to on-site operations is the most beneficial way of handling working conditions in the wake of the

Covid-19 pandemic if aiming to foster affective commitment. However, the current study also revealed that this is not the full story, and that there are additional implications to consider, to be discussed below.

While the concept of job discretion did not moderate the link between a change in remote working and affective commitment as hypothesized—and consequently, Hypothesis 2 was rejected—it still turned out to be highly relevant for the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment due to its mediating properties. By the same token, work-scheduling latitude proved of great importance as a mediator, in spite of Hypothesis 3 being rejected due to a lack of moderation. I hypothesized significant interaction effects of a change in remote working and job discretion as well as work-scheduling latitude, respectively, on affective commitment, however, what was found was a series of significant direct effects combining to form a significant positive indirect effect of change in remote working on affective commitment due to serial mediation. This suggests that one's increase in remote working leads them to experience a greater level of work autonomy with regard to the flexibility of their schedule and, in turn, the execution of their tasks. Following this, one's affective commitment increased due to the accumulated effect of these links. As such, it seems that autonomy is an attractive concept that tends to elicit a strong positive emotional response towards one's organization, and one that is brought on by a change in remote working. Indeed, when looking at research on general autonomy and its effect on affective commitment, there seems to be a consistent positive link (e.g., Zeshan et al., 2022; Houle et al., 2022; Lambert et al., 2022). It is useful to know that this effect not only remains when switching to a remote working context, but that the remote context in and of itself has the potential to set these desirable effects in motion. However, the negative direct effect of a change in remote working on affective commitment is still stronger than the positive indirect one. As such, Google, Apple and Twitter are currently doing well in bringing their employees back to work, but they could also potentially be missing out on desirable effects.

The above findings proved robust, as no significant effects were recorded for any of the control variables. As stated, this goes to show that the direct and indirect effects between a change in remote working and affective commitment are applicable regardless of one's age, gender, marital status, whether they have children, and whether they are the primary wage

earner in their household. This robustness suggests a high generalizability of the results, particularly given the wide dispersion of respondent profiles obtained by sampling across cultures and demographics.

The current study also sought to understand further detail as to why the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment behaves the way it does. As such, a number of moderators were tested. In addition to the two mentioned above (job discretion and work-scheduling latitude), perceived organizational support and power distance were hypothesized to have a moderating effect on the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment. To control for other cultural effects, the cultural dimensions of uncertainty avoidance, collectivism-individualism, masculinity, and long-term orientation were also tested.

No significant moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the main relationship was recorded. The fact that Hypothesis 4 was not supported was quite surprising, given the strong significance obtained in previous studies for perceived organizational support as an antecedent of affective commitment, as well as its positive properties in relation to remote working, leading up to the hypothesized interaction. This suggests that regardless of how much support one feels they receive from their organization, it does not impact how a change in remote working instills affective commitment in them. This further adds to the robustness of the link between the main variables, and goes to show that if wanting to foster affective commitment when switching to a remote work setting, organizations should place their efforts on tending to other aspects than simply providing general support for their employees. The significant positive main effect of perceived organizational support on affective commitment, however, was not unexpected, given the substantial body of research pointing out the former as an antecedent of the latter.

The lack of support for Hypothesis 5 was another surprising finding. As power distance, contrary to expectation, proved not to have a moderating effect on the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment, yet exhibited a significant main effect on affective commitment, there seems to be some property in the former relationship that inhibits a negative interaction effect. In other words, the positive properties of the indirect effect identified seem to mitigate the negative implications of previous research on remote

working and power distance when focusing specifically on the change in remote working. In addition, no other cultural dimensions had any significant moderating effects. Again, this points to the strength of the effect of a change in remote working on affective commitment.

This lack of moderation—for power distance as well as the other cultural dimensions, which were tested to control for other cultural effects—has some highly relevant implications. The absence of cultural moderation suggests that regardless of one's orientation with regard to power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism-individualism, masculinity, and long-term orientation, the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment holds true. This, in turn, implies that companies can apply the same approach to changes in remote working across international operations as well as culturally diverse work teams without having to balance differing consequences for their employees' levels of affective commitment. This conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that cultural diversity was measured at the individual level in the current study, as it thus implies that not only cultural differences, but individual differences with regard to culture, are accounted for, and as such, that a common fallacy of national-level cultural measurements is avoided. This is a novel finding with regard to the link between a change in remote working and affective commitment and hence constitutes a valuable contribution.

Given the existing body of research, it was not expected to find the many significant main effects of the cultural dimensions on affective commitment. This is interesting, despite not affecting the main relationship of the current study, as it contradicts previous studies, which have not found any direct effects of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions on affective commitment. Meanwhile, the current study found such effects for four out of the five dimensions measured, thereby adding a new perspective to the body of research available. This implies that certain cultures are more apt at developing affective commitment than others, and is an important finding for managers, who consequently need to take particular caution to ensure that diverse workforces are successfully on board. Moreover, it could potentially imply a culture clash for employees from culturally different environments, as they would view their emotional relationship with their workplace differently, adding another challenge for managers.

Taken together, these findings imply that practitioners would, as of now, benefit from bringing their employees back to the office, but that there are also benefits to be reaped from an increase in remote working in terms of affective commitment. Should the strength of these benefits by means of some strategy come to outweigh that of the weaknesses, this implies, in addition to what has been outlined above, an effect on the ease by which organizations practice long-distance operations. In this case, a change in remote working could be successfully applied to such collaborations in order to both instill affective commitment among employees and allow for resources to be saved with regard to travel costs. Lastly, the implications of the current study generally seem generalizable, and as such, contribute greatly to both theory and practice.

5.1 Limitations and future research

As stated, none of the hypotheses proposed were supported. Although not showing the expected results, the findings obtained make interesting contributions, not least with regard to potential future research avenues.

As for the opposite effect obtained for the relationship outlined in Hypothesis 1, I see two potential reasons as to why, the first one being what was stated already in section 2.2.1: namely that the relationship at play is rather complex, and merits further investigation in order to be thoroughly understood. The second pertains to the way of measuring remote working in the current study, namely by measuring each participant's personal change in remote working rather than simply measuring the current level of remote working among participants, which is otherwise common among studies centering around this concept. As such, it might be that high levels of remote working in other studies are a reflection of a group that has actively chosen a lifestyle and a workplace containing this way of working and are thereby happy with it, whereas a large increase in remote working in the current study might result in a different outcome due to the event of the change itself impacting one's experience with it. A limitation of the current study is thus its inability to reliably compare these different approaches and their respective results with regard to remote working, and, as such, this is a research avenue recommended for the future, including the recording of more contextual information regarding one's motivation for working remotely. Indeed, this

limitation goes for the entirety of the current study, given the centrality of the variable of remote working, as well as for the variables of job discretion and work-scheduling latitude, which were also measured for two different points in time.

Furthermore, the interplay between the direct and indirect significant effects for the relationship between remote working and affective commitment is a highly interesting finding and merits further investigation. The significant indirect effect via serial mediation suggests that increasing the amount of remote work may be a winning concept in fostering affective commitment, if the direct negative link can somehow be attenuated. It thus follows to suggest for future research a thorough investigation into this negative link. Wang et al. (2020) found that psychological isolation—which has been shown to correlate with social isolation (Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014), which, in turn, is common among telecommuters (Mann et al., 2000)—in the face of remote working significantly decreases affective commitment. In addition to Mann et al.'s (2000) findings with regard to the connection between social isolation and telecommuting, both Wang et al. (2020) and Wut et al. (2022) found links between physical isolation and psychological isolation that were significant at the .1 level, and, as physical isolation can arguably be assumed to follow an increasing level of remote working, the concept of psychological isolation might very well be a contributing factor to the negative relationship found between a change in remote working and affective commitment in the current study. It would thus be interesting to map this link in a model containing both this and other potential negatively contributing variables and the positive findings of the current study, and, from there, investigate whether and how these effects can be affected in a way that decreases the strength of the negative link and/or increases the strength of the positive link, in order to be able to reap the positive properties that autonomy brings to an increase in remote working.

The lack of moderating effects present in the current study also comes with some interesting implications, as discussed above, however, for further insight into the dynamics of the tested variables, additional research is required. Moreover, the current study applies moderation- and mediation analyses separately. As such, it is limited in that details with regard to the potential moderation on certain mediating paths are not explored. Moderated mediation analysis (e.g., Model 92 analysis) would thus be a useful way to gather further insight into the complex nature of the impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment. By exploring in greater detail the constituent parts of this relationship, future research might be

able to identify a way of achieving the hypothetical net positive link mentioned in the previous paragraph. By the same token, a limitation of the current study is that it only tests one moderator at the time. Meanwhile, power distance and perceived organizational support—which were both tested for moderating effects, individually—have been shown to be negatively related to each other (e.g., Farh et al., 2007; Zhong et al., 2016), indicating that their mutual application might generate a different effect. As such, future research would benefit from testing multiple moderators together in order to gauge a more thorough understanding of the more complex properties of the effects at play.

As for the lack of moderation caused by power distance, a potential explanation may be the mediating effect of job discretion. Job discretion has been found to be significantly positively related to affective commitment in both high power distance contexts (Lambert et al., 2022) and (through a mediator) in low power distance contexts (Galletta et al., 2016). As such, the mediating properties of job discretion might interfere with the potential moderation of power distance, thereby rendering it insignificant. To further investigate this link, it would be interesting to perform moderated mediation analysis to uncover potential moderating effects on the direct link between a change in remote working and affective commitment, despite there not being a significant moderation on the total effect.

Continuing on the topic of culture, a potential contributor to the stark contrast between the findings of previous studies and those of mine with regard to cultural main effects on affective commitment could be the unit of analysis used to consider the cultural dimensions. While many of the previously mentioned articles used national-level culture in their studies, I used individual-level culture. It may thus be that while cultural differences at the national level do not impact individual-level affective commitment, there are differences between how employees display affective commitment depending on their individual cultural values and tendencies. While not directly applicable on the impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment, this is a novel finding and thus interesting to consider also in relation to other attitudes and behaviors in future research. Additionally, this limitation might also have an impact on the lack of moderation of the cultural dimensions on the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment, and it would thus be insightful to compare the results of the current study with those of one applying national-level cultural measures.

Another limitation of the current study is that of how the different points in time were accounted for. Measuring the participants' perceptions of their extent of remote working as well as work autonomy for 2019 and 2023 in immediate conjunction carries the risk not only that participants remember incorrectly their conditions and perceptions of 2019, but also that carryover effects from the first question color their responses to the second. As such, future research would do well to carry out a similar study, but of a longitudinal format, with responses being recorded at two different points in time, and not just for two different points in time in order to more accurately record the change in remote working taking place.

Furthermore, as has been stated repeatedly in the current study, communication tends to change as an organization moves to remote working, which, naturally, affects those communicating. It thus follows to assume that employees in greater need of extensive communication with others are more affected by this aspect than those who work more independently. Task interdependence can be defined as the extent to which the work and tasks of employees intersect and flow into each other, and, thereby, require increased communication (Kiggundu, 1981). As such, extensive remote working could potentially make the inherent characteristics of task interdependence difficult to navigate. Investigating how the concept of task interdependence affects the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment might thus be a relevant future extension of the current study in order to garner further understanding of the impact of a change in remote working on affective commitment.

Lastly, although the most important one for the sake of generating positive effects, affective commitment is but one of the components of organizational commitment. While aiming to foster this kind of commitment is undoubtedly a beneficial endeavor—hence its central status in the current study—practitioners should not neglect to consider other commitment components when aiming to reap the benefits of committed employees. This as particular actions and strategies might impact other components of commitment in different ways, and such effects need subsequently be balanced with those generated by affective commitment to ensure they do not interact in a disadvantageous way. In other words, future research would benefit from investigating organizational commitment in its entirety by also looking at normative commitment and continuance commitment, in order to gauge an understanding of the extent to which the benefits resulting from generating affective commitment are enhanced and/or attenuated by other intended and/or unintended effects.

6 Conclusion

The current study aimed to map the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment, in general and in more detail. This, in turn, allows for a recommendation as to how to handle future changes in telecommuting policies to be made, and thereby adds insight into whether to return to the office or remain remotely. The results showed that as of currently, fully going back to the office seems to be the winning strategy, implying that Google, Apple, and Twitter are on the right track. However, there is more to the relationship between a change in remote working and affective commitment than this total negative effect brought on by a negative direct effect. A significant positive indirect effect shows that a change in remote working is an effective way of allowing employees work autonomy, which, in turn, increases affective commitment. As such, an increase in remote working might, in the future, be a path to affective commitment, should strategies to attenuate the negative direct link be discovered and established. This reasoning holds true even in the face of cultural differences, making it universally applicable regardless of location and workforce diversity. As such, this is an important contribution for managers to take into account when deciding upon their return to the office and/or “new normal” strategy.

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Study Title: Work Flexibility

Researcher: Lovisa Bergdahl, Student, Stockholm School of Economics

What is the purpose of this research? We are interested in your perception of work and work flexibility.

What can I expect if I take part in this research? In this survey you will be asked to indicate your perceptions of remote working

What should I know about a research study? Whether or not you take part is up to you. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you. Your refusal to participate will not result in any consequences or any loss of benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to? If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team at 50649@student.hhs.se

Consent: If you consent to participate in this research, please click yes to continue, or not to exit the survey.

- Yes
- No

AC: We are interested in understanding how often you participate on CloudResearch. It is important that you pay attention to the survey, so in this question, instead of indicating how often you participate, please select “other” and type in the word dolphin. This will help us know how you complete the tasks we give you.

Please indicate how frequently you participate on CloudResearch.

- 1-2 times per year
- 1-2 times per month
- 1-2 times per week
- 1-2 times per day
- 3-5 times per day
- > 5 times per day
- Other (Fill in the blank)

Intro: In this study, we are interested in how you think about your workplace, particularly how your work has changed (or has not) since prior to the Covid pandemic. We will ask you two questions about your work flexibility prior to Covid and afterwards.

Q8: For the questions below, please think about how your work was prior to Covid. Please answer all the questions about your work in 2019.

WorkAutonomy2019: How much job discretion did you have over your work in 2019?

1. Control over pace of work
2. Authority in determining tasks to be performed
3. Authority in determining rules and procedures for own work
4. How much are you left on your own to define your own work schedule
5. To what extent are you able to act independently of your supervisor in defining your work schedule
6. To what extent are you able to define your work schedule independently of others
7. To what extent can you exercise independent thought, judgment, and action in determining when you will work
8. How much discretion can you exercise in defining your work schedule

1 = Very little, 5 = Very much

Q10: Please indicate the average number of hours per week you consistently spent working away from your office in 2019 (in hours)

Number of hours, slide between 0-100

Q11: Please indicate the proportion of your work week (from 0% to 100%) that you spent away from your office in 2019 (in percentage)

Percentage of work week, slide between 0-100

Q12: For the questions below, please think about your current work as it exists now.

WorkAutonomy 2023: How much job discretion do you have?

1. Control over pace of work
2. Authority in determining tasks to be performed
3. Authority in determining rules and procedures for own work
4. How much are you left on your own to define your own work schedule
5. To what extent are you able to act independently of your supervisor in defining your work schedule
6. To what extent are you able to define your work schedule independently of others
7. To what extent can you exercise independent thought, judgment, and action in determining when you will work
8. How much discretion can you exercise in defining your work schedule

1 = Very little, 5 = Very much

Q14: Please indicate the average number of hours per week you spend working away from your office (in hours)

Number of hours, slide between 0-100

Q15: Please indicate the proportion of your work week (from 0% to 100%) that you spend away from your office (in percentage)

Percentage of work week, slide between 0-100

Commit: Please rate your agreement with the following statements about your work:

1. I do not feel like “part of the family” at my organization
2. I do not feel “emotionally attached” to this organization
3. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me
4. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization

1 = Completely disagree, 5 = Completely agree

OrgSup: Please rate your agreement with the following statements about your work:

1. The organization values my contribution to its well-being
2. If the organization could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would
3. The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me
4. The organization strongly considers my goals and values
5. The organization would ignore any complaint from me

6. The organization disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me
7. Help is available from the organization when I have a problem
8. The organization cares about my well-being
9. The organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor
10. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work
11. If given the opportunity, the organization would take advantage of me
12. The organization shows very little concern for me
13. The organization cares about my opinions
14. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work
15. My supervisors are proud that I am part of this organization

1 = Completely disagree, 5 = Completely agree

CulDim: Please rate your agreement with the following statements about life in general:

1. People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions
2. People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently
3. People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions
4. People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions
5. People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions
6. It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I am expected to do
7. It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures
8. Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me
9. Standardized work routines are helpful
10. Instructions for operations are important
11. Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group
12. Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties
13. Group welfare is more important than individual rewards
14. Group success is more important than individual success

15. Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group
16. Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer
17. It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women
18. Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition
19. Solving difficult problems usually requires an active, forcible approach, which is typical of men
20. There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman
21. Careful money management is important
22. It is important to resolutely go in spite of opposition
23. It is important to have personal steadiness and stability
24. Long-term planning is important
25. It is worth giving up today's fun for success in the future
26. Working hard for future success is important

1 = Completely disagree, 5 = Completely agree

Born: What country were you born in?

Fill in the blank

Live: What country do you currently live in?

Fill in the blank

Age: What is your age?

Fill in the blank

Gender: What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Income: The question distributed to the participants from India can be seen to the left, and the question distributed to the participants from the U.S. can be seen to the right.

What is your gross household income per year in Indian Rupees?

- < 2.5 Lakhs INR
- 2.5-4.99 Lakhs INR
- 5.0-7.49 Lakhs INR
- 7.5-9.99 Lakhs INR
- 10-12.49 Lakhs INR
- 12.5-14.99 Lakhs INR
- 15.0-19.99 Lakhs INR
- 20.0-29.99 Lakhs INR
- 30.0-49.99 Lakhs INR
- > 50 Lakhs INR

What is your gross income per year in U.S. dollars?

- < 10,000 USD
- 10,001-20,000 USD
- 20,001-40,000 USD
- 40,001-75,000 USD
- 75,001-100,000 USD
- 100,001-150,000 USD
- 150,001-250,000 USD
- 250,001-500,000 USD
- > 500,000 USD

Industry: What industry do you work in?

A drop-down menu offered the following:

- Agriculture
- Utilities
- Computers
- Wholesale
- Transportation
- Software
- Broadcasting
- Real Estate
- Education
- Health Care
- Service Industry
- Legal Services
- Homemaker
- Construction

- Retail
- Finance
- Arts
- Government
- Other

Children: Do you have any children?

- No
- One child
- Two children
- Three or more children

Q26: How many hours did you spend with your kids per day prior to Covid-19?

Fill in the blank

Note: this question was not displayed to those answering “No” to “Q25: Do you have any children?”

Q27: How many hours do you spend with your kids per day now?

Fill in the blank

Note: this question was not displayed to those answering “No” to “Q25: Do you have any children?”

Q28: To what extent has your ability to spend time with your kids changed since Covid-19?

1 = Not at all, 7 = An extreme amount

Note: this question was not displayed to those answering “No” to “Q25: Do you have any children?”

Q29: To what extent do you share your parenting duties with your partner?

1 = I do most of the work, 7 = My partner does most of the work

Note: this question was not displayed to those answering “No” to “Q25: Do you have any children?”

Marital: What is your marital status?

- Single – Not married

- In a relationship – Not married
- Married
- Divorced

WageEarn: Are you the primary wage earner in your household?

- Yes
- No
- My partner and I earn about the same

Q32: What do you think this study was about?

Fill in the blank

Q33: Do you have any comments?

Fill in the blank

Appendix B: Additional descriptive statistics

The income distribution among the respondents was reported per country, as the respective native currencies were used.

Industry distribution

Industry	n
Agriculture	2
Utilities	6
Computers	19
Wholesale	9
Transportation	8
Software	94
Broadcasting	1
Real estate	13
Education	59
Health care	61
Service industry	20
Legal services	7
Construction	17
Retail	35
Finance	31
Government	19
Other	106

Table 10

Income distribution

India		U.S.	
Lakhs INR	n	USD	n
< 2.5	8	< 10,000	0
2.5-4.99	35	10,001-20,000	4
5.0-7.49	34	20,001-40,000	30
7.5-9.99	49	40,001-75,000	73
10-12.49	23	75,001-100,000	44
12.5-14.99	19	100,001-150,000	59
15.0-19.99	30	150,001-250,000	23
20.0-29.99	28	250,001-500,000	7
30.0-49.99	27	> 500,000	6
> 50	8		

Table 11

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