Empowering Choice: Exploring Workplace Motivation in the Era of Hybrid Work Environments

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ABSTRACT

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**Title:** Empowering Choice: Exploring Workplace Motivation in the Era of Hybrid Work Environments

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**Keywords:** Hybrid work, motivation, intrinsic, flexible work, SDT, psychological needs

**Research question:** How does hybrid work, regulated and unregulated, influence the intrinsic motivation of employees within knowledge-intensive organizations in Sweden?

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to explore employees experiences and perceptions of intrinsic workplace motivation with implemented hybrid work arrangements. Additionally, it seeks to compare two groups of workers: with mandatory work regulations and without.

**Method:** The thesis was formed by a qualitative research method where the empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews with knowledge-intensive employees from different companies. This paper also discusses the prevalent theoretical frameworks in motivation.

**Conclusion:** In both sample groups, fulfillment of autonomy as a psychological need is a prerequisite for relatedness and self-perceived competence. Relatedness is better met in the group with mandatory days at the office, whilst in the unregulated group this need was not fully satisfied. No major differences between the groups were noted in terms of self-perceived competence. Both groups expressed satisfaction of this need, and there was no strong indication saying it was influenced by hybrid work arrangements. Overall, regulated hybrid work settings were found to have a positive influence on intrinsic motivation.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

[SDT] Self-Determination Theory
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Today, it would be hard to find a person whose life has not been affected by COVID-19 in one way or another. As the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a global pandemic in the spring of 2020, remote work became the “new normal” almost overnight. Arrangements where employees of an organization perform their job responsibilities in times or places other than the traditional office setting can be referred to as “remote work” (Chong et al., 2020). The shift to remote work as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on office work (Waizenegger et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021), and the change allowed companies to overcome some barriers that arose due to the pandemic. A majority of firms adopted some framework to ensure continuous productivity, along with lessening the risk for individuals to contract the virus (Bonacini et al., 2021). As we moved away from the offices and into our own homes, various flexible work arrangements have become more than a temporary pandemic response - they are now a new feature of the modern-day workplace (Dua et al., 2022).

Before the pandemic, remote work was relatively uncommon in Europe, with only approximately 5.5% of workers embracing it by 2019 (Eurostat, 2022). This scarcity of remote work experience left the majority of workers and employers ill-prepared for the sudden transition to a remote work setting (Wang et al., 2021). An element that has been pointed out as being necessary for the success or otherwise of remote work is motivation, as this kind of working arrangement often involves changes in the way employees interact with each other, as well as their autonomy (Grant et al., 2013; Weizenegger, 2020). There have been both positive and negative effects of the pandemic-induced remote work. Some employees were struggling to find ways to focus on work from their home environment. Meanwhile, others moved cities with this newfound freedom. Some studies had yielded positive results when it came to employee well-being in remote work (Bonacini et al., 2021; Madsen, 2003), but it also came with some challenges that had to do with new work arrangements (Grant et al., 2013; Chong et al., 2020). While some people enjoyed a better work-life balance, there were also mentions of social and professional isolation (Weizenegger, 2020).

Unlike in many countries across the world, the Swedish government did not announce a complete lockdown due to the pandemic. In April 2020, Folkhälsomyndigheten, the governmental institution responsible for public health in Sweden, announced new recommendations to the public to hinder the spread of the virus and protect the most vulnerable citizens (SCB, 2022). The exhortation to the working population was clear: everyone who can work from home shall do so (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2023). Employers who did not take enough responsibility to ensure the safety of their employees were at risk of receiving fines (Täpp, 2020). A study done in January 2021 showed that of employees in Sweden, as many as 53% were working from home part-time or full-time (Netigate, 2021; SCB, 2022). Although there were some fluctuations over the coming year, statistics from the beginning of 2022 show similar numbers of employees working from home as in January 2021 (SCB, 2022).

Today, organizations are rethinking the traditional office work setup. Hybrid work models are adopted as a means to overcome the shortcomings of working from home (Sampat et al., 2022). These flexible work
arrangements offer adaptability in terms of the workplace (remote work), work hours (flexible scheduling), and the seamless flow of work (de Klerk et al., 2021). This comes as yet another change in the organizations. The success of any organizational change hinges on employees' positive attitude toward its implementation (Albrecht et al., 2023). Positive attitudes can be linked to intrinsic motivation or be an outcome of an employee feeling motivated (Deci et al., 2017). It is, therefore, important to create the right psychological conditions to support employee motivation (Albrecht et al., 2023).

Motivation is a key concept extensively discussed in diverse scientific fields, especially in work-related research (Deci et al., 2017). The relevance of exploring the motivation of people working in hybrid settings comes from the novelty of such working arrangements, and the research gap on the hybrid model is still in the embryonic stage (Ross, 2022). The latter raises a need to explore the effects it has on different aspects of influences on employees, motivation being one of them. Motivating employees is a significant factor evident across various organizational levels (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Management must take into account the factors that motivate employees to perform and design a system that acknowledges and rewards their efforts. Furthermore, employee motivation is a critical factor that contributes to the enhancement of job satisfaction and overall efficiency within organizations (Ross, 2022).

1.2 Problem Statement

The most recent development in the aftermath of the pandemic is that as society opens up, employees are no longer required to work from home. Many are offered flexibility with the option to continue working from home, return to the office, or combine the two. It is clear that the transition to remote work has consisted of more than just a change in physical location. It altered the character of tasks and interpersonal connections with coworkers, impacting aspects like human involvement and efficiency in work activities (de Klerk et al., 2021). Researchers argue that the full-time remote work present during the pandemic will likely shift to various hybrid work arrangements, which will be an important feature of the post-pandemic world (Bolino et al., 2023; Chong et al., 2020). However, a new workforce crisis seems to have emerged, as only 10% of European employees report feeling motivated at work (TeamStage, 2023).

As previously mentioned, the pandemic-induced remote work came with positive as well as negative outcomes to both personal- and work life. Some enjoyed the flexibility; others struggled to find their work-life balance (Weizenegger et al., 2020). There were also some who reported feeling closely supervised and micro-managed. These factors can have an effect on employee’s perceptions of autonomy (Jamal et al., 2021). Being forced to communicate solely through technology also had an impact on our social relations, and many experienced feelings of isolation (Weizenegger et al., 2020). The pandemic also caused many to reflect and reconsider their fundamental values in life going forward (Larsen, 2022). Individuals’ feelings of autonomy and their relatedness to colleagues are fundamental elements of motivation, according to self-determination theory. Insufficient satisfaction of these can lead to a decrease in motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which was the case for some employees (Sonnenschein et al., 2022). Further, organizational changes, as well as changes affecting personal life and values, are other factors that can have effects on motivation (Albrecht et al., 2023; Bolino et al., 2023).

Despite the issues with the pandemic-induced remote work, the flexibility it offered was greatly appreciated by many. As a result, flexible work arrangements have become sought-after in job
descriptions due to many people having reassessed their life priorities (Larsen, 2022). A study shows that a large majority, 73% of the respondents, want the option to work both from home and in the office after the pandemic (Netigate, 2021). Flexible work is of such importance that 40% of people would rather change jobs or industries than return to work in the office full-time (Hoff, 2023). It seems as though hybrid work is to become the new normal for employees worldwide (Dua et al., 2022; Smite et al., 2023), and Sweden is no exception (Netigate, 2021). This shift poses new challenges for organizations, as they might have significant variations in when and where employees choose to work and many expectations to cater to (Smite et al., 2023). However, not all organizations are willing to fulfill the wish of employees to be offered hybrid work arrangements in the era after the pandemic. Instead, some choose to ignore the need for autonomy and force their workers back into the office, and the employees have no choice but to comply with these demands if they want to keep their jobs (von Ehrenheim, 2022).

These new arrangements in the post-pandemic era, where some will have access to the flexibility of hybrid work and others will be forced back to the office, are yet another organizational change that will alter the dynamics for employees (Albrecht et al., 2023; Smite et al., 2023). Some argue that hybrid work may yield benefits to motivation and result in greater satisfaction when the employees themselves can control when and where they work and that employers should not force employees back to the offices (Flowscape, 2022; Rosengren, 2023). Tsipursky (2023) even went as far as stating, “The forced return to the office is the definition of insanity,” as forcing employees back to the offices has a detrimental effect on their autonomy.

However, a study showed that only 47% of employees recognize efforts made by their company to sustain motivation and engagement in their hybrid work (Deloitte, 2021). It is yet to be further addressed and explored how individuals will experience these changes, what repercussions might come with them, and what may happen to motivation due to this transition (Albrecht et al., 2023; Bolino et al., 2023). As the pandemic-induced shift to remote work was a major change affecting needs at work, employee motivation, job satisfaction, employee well-being, and other outcomes, it is plausible that a transition back to the office could also bring about such effects (Bolino et al., 2023; Kniffin et al., 2021).

It is important to note that various remote work arrangements are not new and that similar arrangements have been researched previously. However, due to the pandemic, remote work has gone from being an exclusive privilege only offered to a few individuals in the pre-pandemic times to something that all employees feel entitled to (Smite et al., 2023). Additionally, several researchers strongly argue that research on remote work conducted before the pandemic outbreak differs substantially from that carried out after (Chong et al., 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020).

Despite the many articles on various topics in connection to the COVID-19 pandemic that have been published, there are still calls for more research to be conducted. Future studies are recommended to explore further employee-related challenges that manifest in remote or hybrid work during and after the recent pandemic (Aleem et al., 2023; Bolino et al., 2023). Despite significant coverage in the media, arguing that management must understand how the pandemic has changed what employees expect from their work (De Smeet et al., 2021), there has been limited scientific research on employee motivation during and after the pandemic. More specifically, studies based on a comprehensive motivational theory analyzing more than singular aspects of motivation are insufficient and need to be revised. Bolino et al. (2023) call for coverage on whether hybrid work arrangements affect various groups of people differently,
as well as how the transition back to office work is managed by individuals, both of which can be studied in relation to motivation. Additionally, Kniffin et al. (2021) specifically call for studies on motivation as employees start to come back to physical offices.

1.3 Purpose

This paper aims to contribute to the body of research on various remote and flexible working arrangements. By exploring the most recent phenomenon of hybrid work emerging after the COVID-19 pandemic that significantly changed the ways of working for many individuals worldwide (Waizenegger et al., 2020), a deeper understanding of individuals' transition to a new normal can be gained. To increase the possibilities of a successful change to these new ways of working, organizations need to consider the psychological conditions of employees that are needed for change. When these conditions are created, positive outcomes such as employee motivation for transformation and innovation are significantly more likely to occur. In turn, a successful implementation tends to improve the organization's competitiveness (Albrecht et al., 2023).

This paper seeks to gain insights on employee motivation and the underlying facilitators contributing to positive attitudes, job satisfaction and well-being in times of great organizational change. To fulfill the aim of this paper, qualitative studies have been conducted with employees at knowledge-intensive organizations in Sweden. The employees held different perspectives of these new ways of working; some were free to choose their time and place of work, while others were not. This allowed for an in-depth analysis of their motivation experiences in these new hybrid arrangements. The different perspectives of the interviewees allowed for a deeper understanding of the patterns and characteristics that may be linked to their chosen work mode. It also provided insights into what psychological needs were most significant when the employees were not free to choose for themselves.

The findings were analyzed by applying the comprehensive framework of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci et al., 2017) about the universal needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. The insights this paper provides can help managers better understand how life-changing events can cause individuals to revise their values and perspectives, which in turn can cause effects in motivation. This can allow them to tailor the workplace or aid employees in their work-life, reaping benefits for both individuals and the organization (Meyer et al., 2004; Ross, 2022). Further, it can aid in the practical implementation of organizational changes and structural decisions onwards (Deci et al., 2017). With motivational levels decreasing, it is as important as ever to address the needs of employees to ensure that they stay motivated (Kniffin et al., 2021; TeamStage, 2023).

1.4 Research Question

By exploring the experience and perceptions of motivation out of an employee perspective, we can understand how their needs and motivators have been affected by the new hybrid work arrangements increasingly adopted by companies. Though not everyone has the choice to choose freely, and some employees are forced back part or full-time. Although these individuals might have been used to traditional office work before the pandemic, it is possible that some appreciated changes that came with
remote work, whilst others might long for what was before. This leads us to the question guiding the research presented in this paper:

*How does hybrid work, regulated and unregulated, influence the intrinsic motivation of employees within knowledge-intensive organizations in Sweden?*

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Hybrid Work Arrangements

Over the last few decades, remote work has gained increased attention as an integral work arrangement of organizations (Grant et al., 2013; Madsen, 2003). Due to the pandemic-induced rapid shift to working from home instead of in the office, the phenomenon received renewed attention and has lately been subject to study by researchers worldwide (i.e. Bonacini et al., 2021; Waizenegger et al., 2020; Wang et al. 2021). There is no standard definition in the literature on what term should be used to describe “remote work”. Instead, the latter is used interchangeably with other terms such as telework, telecommuting, work from home (WFH), work from anywhere (WFA), hybrid work, virtual work, flexible work arrangements, remote e-work, and more (Aleem et al., 2023; Chong et al., 2020; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Weizenegger et al., 2020). Despite variances in terminology, two distinct characteristics are most widely accepted to describe the phenomenon. First, work is conducted in a physical setting other than the designated workplace, be that from the home environment or elsewhere. Second, it encompasses the usage of information technology for the employee to fulfill their work responsibilities (Aleem et al., 2023).

Pre-pandemic, remote work was often discussed as a new organizational form (Grant et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2021). The research primarily focused on settings where employees themselves had the choice to work out of the office and often did so only part of their time (Chong et al., 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020). When physically present at the office, employees were able to access the infrastructure necessary for executing job responsibilities and coordinate work tasks with colleagues in person (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Traditionally, voluntary remote work has been associated with benefits such as greater flexibility and autonomy for employees, reduced stress, and increased work-life balance and well-being (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). However, many attempts at implementing remote work were unsuccessful, as organizations did not first take the time to assess, design and develop such an intervention (Madsen, 2003).

The pandemic-induced remote work, where employees were forced to work from home because of regulations installed by governments and organizations due to the pandemic, differs greatly from the voluntary telework commonly studied in previous research (Chong et al., 2020). Both employees and organizations, including those who never previously desired to implement remote work or were not allowed to because of policies or security reasons, were forced to overcome new obstacles (Chung, 2022). Employees were compelled to take innovative approaches to using technology to perform their work and communicate with colleagues (Waizenegger et al., 2020). Forced work from home limited access to resources and infrastructure, which were only available at the physical place of work. Additionally, many
faced challenges with managing their work-life balance and adapting their home environment to be functional for work purposes (Chong et al., 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020).

The most recent development in the area of flexible work is that many organizations are adopting what is often referred to as hybrid work arrangements (Bolino et al., 2023). As governmental restrictions were lifted, hybrid work emerged as a response to overcome the drawbacks that came with forced work from home while still allowing flexibility for the employees (Sampat et al., 2022). This phenomenon has become the new standard in many organizations, and it is no longer only a selected few that are allowed to work remotely (Smite et al., 2023). The new hybrid work arrangements share some commonalities with the remote arrangements researched pre-pandemic, as it is voluntary for the employee to work out of the office. However, employees may have the choice to do so part- or full-time, which was less common in past research (Chong et al., 2020). As a result, there could be great variances in the choice of workplace or time between individuals working in the same team. However, the extent of flexibility varies across organizations, with some forcing their employees back part-time or on set days, and some are required to align their choices with other team members or customers (Smite et al., 2023). The pandemic was also a time when many reflected on their core values, and the transition to a new normal will likely include carefully assessing both benefits and challenges to make strategic decisions allowing for a successful organizational change (Albrecht et al., 2023; Bolino et al., 2023; Madsen, 2003).

2.2 Motivation

2.2.1 Workplace Motivation

Motivation has since long been a subject for research by scholars in various disciplines of social sciences (i.e., Maslow, 1943; Deci & Ryan, 1985). For organizational scientists and practitioners, motivation studies are significant as findings show several benefits to having motivated employees (Meyer et al., 2004). Employees who feel supported also feel more motivated, generating job satisfaction and well-being (Deci et al., 2017). Thriving employees also tend to be more productive and perform better. An organization with a well-functioning workforce, therefore, has a competitive advantage (Jungert et al., 2018), as superior employee motivation and well-being “can contribute to long-term organizational health, customer satisfaction and loyalty” (Deci et al., 2017, p. 20), and is vital for financial and organizational success (Deci et al., 2017; Jungert et al., 2018).

Due to the various disciplines researching the concept, there is no singular consensus on the definition of motivation (Meyer et al., 2004). It is often characterized as something that drives individuals to action, forces coming from within or beyond the individual (Meyer et al., 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Further, the character of the force determines the way, intensity, and duration of which the individual feels urged to act (Meyer et al., 2004).

Several theories on motivation have discussed needs that must be fulfilled for an individual to feel job satisfaction and motivation (Furnham et al., 1999). Maslow’s (1943; 2013) hierarchy of needs theory argues that basic physiological needs must first be fulfilled before an individual can satisfy those on higher levels, with self-actualization needs at the top of the pyramid. Deci and Ryan (1985) also discuss the importance of three universal psychological needs for motivation and job satisfaction: autonomy,
competence, and relatedness. However, in contrast to Maslow’s (1943) theory of needs, Deci and Ryan (1985) argue in their Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of motivation that the three psychological needs are equally important for motivation. Further, the needs can be fulfilled independently as one does not prevail over another (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

2.2.2 Self-Determination Theory of Motivation

To remain competitive in the global market, businesses should structure jobs to minimize stress, boost employee motivation and satisfaction, and enhance overall performance (Rožman et al., 2017). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has been widely used to examine workplace motivation in various settings, including remote work environments (Islami & Nahartyo, 2019). It examines the amount of motivation and explores the type of motivation and its orientation that answers not only what but also why something motivates people, as well as their well-being, job satisfaction and engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

SDT is a macros theory born from the research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation a few decades ago. “Central to SDT is the distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation” (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 333). Autonomy means having a choice and acting with a sense of one’s will and intrinsic motivation is an example of autonomous motivation. In contrast, controlled motivation is acting from a place of pressure, such as external reward (Gagné & Deci, 2005). The fundamental difference lies in intrinsic motivation, where an activity is done for its inherent interest or enjoyment, and extrinsic motivation, where the focus is on doing an activity for the sake of a distinct, separate outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is a foundational framework, providing essential principles to shape environments, procedures, and policies that foster individual well-being and outstanding performance within organizational settings (Deci et al., 2017).

Furthermore, distinct types of motivation are associated with varying triggers, outcomes, and consequences, as Deci et al. (2017) outlined. Intrinsic motivation is a highly regarded autonomous motivation known for its ability to boost creativity and learning; it is therefore important to find what gives rise to it and what undermines it (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The theory suggests that employee well-being and performance are influenced by their motivation for work activities (Deci et al., 2017). It is a natural-born characteristic of people to be curious and have a need for exploration. This interest in novelty is a significant feature of human nature, affecting persistence, performance and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In one sense, it has been outlined that intrinsic motivation comes from within, but in another sense, it also exists in relation between activities and individuals (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

SDT is framed around social and environmental factors that support versus undermine intrinsic motivation. This is because of the assumption that humans are naturally inclined towards this type of motivation, and conditions around them work as a catalyst rather than a cause (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In contrast, striving for money, power, and status is a value picked up through socialization; these motives have been internalized (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Nonetheless, people are intrinsically motivated for some activities but not others; that is often where the extrinsic, more controlled type of motivation will step into the forefront to aid with task motivation. Ryan & Deci (2000) observe that in SDT, extrinsic motivation can also come in different forms: one where a person is propelled to an activity due to reward but feels resentment and another that comes from one’s
own volition and acceptance. Understanding the difference between the two is important when intrinsic motivation for the task is lacking. Extrinsic motivation can become autonomous or self-determined through internalizing and integrating behavioural regulations and their underlying values (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is imperative to outline this aspect at the current juncture of the thesis, as doing so may afford the incorporation of findings that may not immediately appear intrinsic upon initial observation.

**Figure 1. The basic self-determination model in the workplace (Deci et al., 2017, p. 23).**

SDT's mini-theories, with broad implications for organizations, have been extensively studied in work organizations (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Figure 1 depicts the general SDT model of work motivation. The model begins with two main sets of independent variables: workplace context (influenced by managerial styles) and individual differences. Regarding workplace context and need support, autonomy support, in particular, positively correlates with the satisfaction of all three needs (Deci et al., 2017). The lower box with Individual differences contains variables used to study workplace motivation and satisfaction (Sheldon & Krieger, 2014). The latter variables also play a role in motivation.

The model has two separate mediators: basic psychological needs and motivations. Organizational support for employees' psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy plays a crucial role (Deci et al., 2017). The model suggests that satisfaction of basic psychological needs acts as a mediator, influencing outcomes such as work behaviours (performance and quantity/quality), health and wellness (well-being or ill-being) and motivations (autonomous, intrinsic, controlled, introjected, and external). Researchers often use either the set of need satisfaction or motivation variables, predicting one from the other or examining their relationships (Deci et al., 2017). Dependent variables include both performance variables, such as quality and quantity of performance, and well-being/ill-being variables. Studies may focus on specific variables or explore relationships between SDT variables and other organizational perspectives, such as transformational leadership (Deci et al., 2017).
2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study used the mechanisms of Self Determination Theory (SDT) to analyze and discuss employees' motivation in the context of hybrid work. To answer the research question, the paper will dive more into intrinsic motivation and related psychological needs. Some research claims that all behaviour is motivated by reward (Skinner, 1953) while learning theory (Hull, 1943) asserts that all activities are motivated by psychological needs. SDT researchers Ryan and Deci (2000) approach this from three universal and innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to Deci et al. (2017), autonomy refers to the need for individuals to have a sense of control and choice in their work tasks and decision-making processes. Autonomy is often intrinsically motivated, meaning it comes from within, without external drivers. According to SDT, establishing a workplace environment that fosters employee autonomy is not only an intrinsic goal but also yields positive side effects by increasing overall organizational effectiveness (Deci et al., 2017). While autonomy is sometimes linked with loneliness (Wang et al., 2021), Hornung and Rousseau (2007) state that autonomy on the job is likely the central work characteristic in forming worker motivation, attitudes and behaviour as well as employee positive responses to organizational change. Meanwhile, the lack of autonomy satisfaction is associated with increased turnover (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

Competence is the need for individuals to feel capable and proficient in their work, while relatedness is linked to the need for individuals to have meaningful connections and relationships with their colleagues and superiors in the workplace (Deci et al., 2017). Cognitive evaluation theory (part of SDT) argues that communication, feedback and rewards that contribute towards the feelings of competence enhance intrinsic motivation, but only if autonomy is also present. Therefore, individuals need not only to perceive competence (or self-efficacy) but also to perceive their behaviour as self-determined to sustain or improve intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The two needs of competence and autonomy are often studied together as having the most influence on intrinsic motivation, especially in compensation literature (Olafsen et al., 2015).

Little evidence has supported that relatedness has been as essential for intrinsic motivation as competence or autonomy (Olafsen et al., 2015). However, according to the findings of Olafsen et al. (2015), the influence of the interpersonal climate significantly outweighed that of any analyzed compensation factors when predicting intrinsic motivation in the workplace, proving that relatedness is incredibly significant. Tapani et al. (2022) indicated that the sense of connection was significantly compromised during the mandated remote work period. In the aforementioned research paper, leadership has been appointed to be destructive rather than supportive, and many meetings have been perceived as micromanagement and a lack of trust. This was perceived as a lack of care under the umbrella of relatedness.

Furthermore, while there was a virtual community feeling during remote work, employees expressed not feeling like part of the team due to the lack of face-to-face communication (Tapani et al., 2022). Tapani et al. (2022) outline that when it comes to relatedness, there were some conflicting outcomes: while working remotely, individuals experienced a sense of longing for an in-person community, leading to feelings of loneliness. However, they also reported a heightened ability to concentrate on their work when alone. In accordance with the self-determination theory, relatedness involves a reciprocal experience encompassing both caring for others and being cared for (Tapani et al., 2022). Overall, the researchers found that even autonomous employees need support from their supervisors and leaders. The latter aligns with the
principles outlined in the self-determination theory, indicating that the needs for autonomy and relatedness are not in opposition but complement each other, playing crucial roles in motivation, productivity, and well-being (Tapani et al., 2022).

An extensive literature review on Self-Determination Theory unanimously outlines the importance of need satisfaction in the workplace. It has been apparent that social and environmental conditions that support an individual's feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are the basis for staying intrinsically motivated and becoming more self-determined concerning extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

3 Method

3.1 Choice of Method

The empirical research in this paper employs an interpretative approach with qualitative data gathering. In empirical terms, interpretivism concentrates on the lived experiences of individuals and cultural artifacts, aiming to incorporate not only the researchers' interpretations but also those of the participants into their research (Saunders et al., 2019).

Considering the research objectives, the qualitative approach chosen for this paper was semi-structured interviews. Research interviews are helpful in gathering reliable and valid data that are relevant to the aforementioned research question and purpose (Saunders et al., 2019). Additionally, through the interview process, interviews helped to refine the ideas that might not have been fully formulated. Moreover, this method is well-suited as it not only provides an avenue to uncover the rationales behind participants' decisions but also allows for the inclusion of supplementary questions as necessary (Saunders et al., 2019). The semi-structured format further offers flexibility during the interview, facilitating a more dynamic conversation. Since the interview theme is rooted in previously studied theories, the data collection process will follow an interpretative approach. Interpretivist ways allow us to analyze the meanings to generate fresh and more comprehensive insights into the realities of organizations (Saunders et al., 2019). This decision is supported by the fact that semi-structured interviews of this nature can be effectively employed in conjunction with a previous theory-testing approach to thematic analysis (Saunders et al., 2019).

The theory under examination is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), specifically exploring its application to hybrid work settings in workplaces. The choice of this theory is rooted in its significant role as a determinant of individuals' motivation—shedding light on why and how people are motivated. In this particular aspect of the case study, only qualitative (non-numeric) research data will be gathered through interviews (Saunders et al., 2019). Analyzing qualitative data will involve identifying patterns or themes through thematic analysis. The selection of this analytical method is also based on its flexibility, as it does not adhere to any specific theoretical or epistemological framework (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Furthermore, in exploring the research question, SDT was employed to understand how intrinsic motivation shows up in hybrid work arrangements, particularly in relation to the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Environments that enable the fulfillment of all three
fundamental psychological needs will bolster individuals' intrinsic engagement, foster optimal motivation, and result in favourable psychological, developmental, and behavioural outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

**Figure 2. Research model adapted from self-determination theory.**

As this research is looking into hybrid work arrangements, the model is simplified to illustrate the relationships between hybrid work arrangements and basic psychological needs and how these needs contribute to intrinsic motivation. Figure 2 model has been modified after the Figure 1 model by Deci et al. (2017) to explore certain SDT variables and relationships among them. While this paper explores the influence of basic psychological needs on intrinsic motivation, it does not explicitly address workplace context or individual differences. In this case, individual differences were irrelevant since the study compares two groups rather than focusing on individual employees. Therefore, the box with individual differences was left out of Figure 2.

Furthermore, the nature of the research question has led to the exclusion of the controlled motivation aspect, as it falls beyond the scope of this study. It's important to note that controlled motivation is distinct from intrinsic motivation and, therefore, is not considered within the context of this research.

In conclusion, Figure 2 does not incorporate variables related to performance or well-being, as this research does not specifically explore or measure these aspects. At the same time, an observable trend suggests that employees under the policy experience greater well-being due to enhanced satisfaction with their needs; it is important to note that this research does not quantitatively measure these variables. Consequently, the boxes representing Work Behavior and Health and wellness have been omitted in the adapted model, emphasizing the focus on the reinforcement of intrinsic motivation when basic psychological needs are fulfilled in hybrid work arrangements.
3.2 Data Collection

Interview questions were created based on the literature review, and information was gathered using semi-structured interviews with two sections. The initial section included demographic information like age, gender, education, and experience. The second section gauges various variables relating to SDT. A pilot interview was conducted with one participant to validate the interview question selection. Following the pilot study results, the research interview was refined, resulting in a final questionnaire with 13 questions and some subquestions. Any additional questions were raised spontaneously during an interview as interviews progressed. Subquestions, however, remained more or less the same throughout each interview. The prepared interview questions, together with their relevance and connection to the concepts presented in the theoretical framework, can be found in Appendix A.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were held with employees working in companies that implemented hybrid work settings. Each interviewee was contacted electronically or in person with a brief description of the study and its purpose. They were allowed to pick the most convenient time for the meeting. The interviews were conducted as one-on-one, face-to-face, or internet-mediated meetings through Microsoft Teams. Each interview was recorded, transcribed and anonymized after getting the interviewees' consent.

3.2.1 Participants

First, the right group of people had to be defined to find participants. Once the topic was chosen and the right respondent’s description was clear, respondents who did not fit the bill were filtered out. To explore the research topic, the study included participants who worked knowledge-intensive jobs in Sweden and were not in managerial positions, as the focus was on employees’ take on the subject. The respondents were required to work in organizations that offer a hybrid work arrangement with the option to work from home or in a physical office.

The decision to delimit this study to employees of Swedish organizations was made as the scope of this study does not incorporate variances that might occur due to cultural differences possibly affecting values or work ethics, diminishing the risk of that affecting the results (Gladwin, 1981). Further, a delimitation was made to include knowledge-intensive organizations solely to clarify the scope of this study and limit the range of relevant firms. Work in such firms is of intellectual nature, and can be characterized by critical elements including problem solving and dependence on the minds and loyalty of the employees. As defined by Alvesson (1995, p. 6), “There is an emphasis on knowledge-intensive operations, as opposed to labour-intensive or capital-intensive. Human capital is the dominant factor in knowledge-intensive firms”.

The respondents were not difficult to find as many companies have moved onto hybrid work arrangements, and we found many people in our environments willing to partake in the interview. The sampling technique chosen for this study is heterogeneous purposive sampling, and the determined sufficient diversity included individuals of different ages as well as from more than one gender. Purposive sampling also means one can use one's judgment to find the right respondents to achieve the objectives of the study (Saunders et al., 2019).

As previously presented, some organizations offering hybrid work enforce regulations requiring employees to be present at the office, others are not. To explore if there were any noticeable differences in
workplace motivation between the two sample groups, the study includes participants from both groups. Table 1 provides a summary of the respondent demographics and the interview details.

Group A - employees working in organizations with no policy of mandatory office presence
Group B - employees working in organizations with a policy of mandatory office presence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Mandatory Policy</th>
<th>Weekly Work Setting</th>
<th>Meeting Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Software as a Service (SaaS)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 day at the office</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>SaaS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2-3 days at the office</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Tech</td>
<td>Yes, 3 days</td>
<td>3 days at the office</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Yes, 3 days</td>
<td>3 days at the office</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 days at office</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>SaaS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4 days at the office</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Yes, 2 days</td>
<td>2-3 days at the office</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Yes, 2 days</td>
<td>2 days at the office</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Yes, 2 days</td>
<td>3-4 days at the office</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>Yes, 3 days</td>
<td>3 days at the office</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Yes, 4 days</td>
<td>4-5 days at the office</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Yes, 2 days</td>
<td>2-3 days at the office</td>
<td>Microsoft Teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Participant distribution.
3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

This study involved analyzing data collected from interviews that specifically addressed workplace motivation, with a particular focus on employees' perspectives. Once interviews were done, the method to analyze the data was through thematic analysis, as this type of analysis allows one to look for patterns and themes across a data set (Saunders et al., 2019). Thematic Analysis provides a structured yet adaptable and user-friendly method for examining qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In searching for themes, a six-phase framework guide by Braun and Clarke (2006) was utilized, as it is a useful framework for conducting this type of analysis. Semi-open coding was used, indicating that some themes were developed a priori, and others emerged as the coding progressed to suit the research and enrich the results.

The concepts utilized for thematic analysis were adopted from SDT in the context of workplace motivation, with a focus on intrinsic motivation and three psychological needs: Autonomy, Relatedness and Self-Perceived Competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Initial codes were formulated by identifying recurring themes in the interview responses relevant to the research question. These were later analyzed and aggregated into primary- and sub-themes, resulting in three primary themes corresponding to the needs in SDT and a total of three sub-themes. Figure 3 depicts how the initial codes were aggregated into primary- and sub-themes, together with interview samples. The instructions for coding the sub-theme Work-Life Balance were according to the definition “the dilemma of managing work obligations and personal/family responsibilities” (Lockwood, 2003, p. 3). The coding instructions guiding the sub-theme Focus were circumstances influencing employees’ possibility to regulate their level of concentration, and for Personal Development: personal and professional growth that aligns with one’s values and provides a sense of purpose.
3.4 Reliability and Validity

3.4.1 Ensuring Validity

To ensure validity, this research process and findings were subject to peer scrutiny. Peer review helped identify potential errors, shortcomings or alternative interpretations, contributing to the overall validity of the study. Consistency was maintained in data collection and analysis procedures. Research methods, coding schemes, and analytical techniques are clearly documented to ensure the process is replicable and reliable.

3.4.2 Ensuring Reliability

According to Saunders et al. (2019), the absence of uniformity in semi-structured and in-depth interviews can raise issues regarding reliability and dependability. Since all of the research design details are described, this paper can provide a research plan for other researchers to pick up and conduct an analysis on a bigger scale. To improve the credibility and reliability of the paper the coded transcripts are added to this thesis. In the data extraction phase, direct verbatim responses are extracted without alterations to preserve the authenticity of the data. All responses to interview questions are transparently presented in the Findings chapter, complemented by suitable quotes.

3.5 Ethical Concerns

Informed consent was received by informing every respondent of the purpose of the research, how the interviews will be conducted and how the information will be processed. The data retention time was limited to a few days until transcripts were edited and anonymized. While editing, any mention of names was anonymized to protect the identity of people in the interview. For the same reason, company names were not mentioned. Once the transcripts were completed, the voice recordings were deleted.

There should not be any power imbalances in the interviews. The respondents were assured that none of this information would ever be submitted to their employers. In addition, the respondents were contacted directly and not through their company/managers; their participation in the research is not disclosed to anyone else at their workplace unless they disclose it themselves. Furthermore, participants had the right to withdraw at any point without facing negative consequences.
4 Findings

4.1 Descriptions of Participants

The study participants were all employed in private organizations in Sweden, with their current place of work in the same country. They had various lengths of employment in their current position and different job titles. All of the respondents were employed in organizations that are considered to be knowledge-intensive organizations. Participants drew upon their experience of working in positions allowing for hybrid work. They gave their answers based on their personal perceptions of how this working arrangement influenced their intrinsic motivation. The study had a total number of 12 respondents. The total sample size consisted of 5 females and 7 males, with ages ranging from 29 to 60 years of age. Of the respondents, 4 individuals had no policy of mandatory office presence and 8 individuals with mandatory office presence, ranging from 2 to 4 days per week being mandatory. All respondents spend time in the office every week, both those with a regulation and those without. More than half of the regulated respondents, 4 out of 7, chose to sometimes or often go to the office more days than they were required.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

From the 12 participant narratives, the segmentation done according to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) reflected the universal psychological needs presented in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000). All three needs were represented in the findings to a varying extent. These themes were developed a priori, based on the needs in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and later analyzed. Within these, a total of 3 sub-themes emerged. In the theme of Autonomy, the sub-themes of Work-Life Balance and Focus were discovered. In Self-Perceived Competence, Personal Development was found as a sub-theme. No relevant sub-themes emerged in Relatedness.

Table 2 presents a summary of how the two sample groups fare in terms of the themes and sub-themes. Autonomy in both groups was high, indicated by a positive sign in the table. The narratives from Group B display both high and low focus, therefore marked by both signs in the table. The feelings of relatedness were low in Group A, indicated by a negative sign.
Table 2. Summary of the findings.

4.3 Autonomy

The most represented answer among the responses from the participants of both sample groups within the theme of autonomy was that hybrid work allows for flexibility. In both groups, there were also several mentions of hybrid work contributing to their feelings of freedom, and sense of control. R2 expresses the autonomy she feels in her work as follows:

“Hybrid work is good because of its freedom and if I am annoyed I can just go home.”

A pattern found across all of the regulated respondents, Group B, was that although they were required to be physically present a certain number of days of the week, the policy was not strictly enforced. Some respondents expressed that they notified management or their team if they were not going to be present at the office, others needed to ask for permission to stay at home. Examples of this are found below.

R12: “If you have something else to do, then both the team and managers think that it’s okay to not come into the office, so it’s quite flexible.”

R9: “It can also be flexible sometimes [...] I asked the manager about it and it was OK to be at home. [...] but as a general rule we should be there if there are no obstacles.”

R11: “Sometimes if I have a dentist appointment or something else, then I just ask if I can work from home that day and that’s never a problem. So it’s not strict at all.”

The respondents in Group B all agreed that a main component of the policy working well is that it is not strongly enforced. R8 would rather not have a policy at all, but explains why the policy still works for him:
“I feel like it's OK because it's not so harsh. You can actually skip one day, or one week, and not go. There's not gonna be any punishments or something. So I think it's OK but I would prefer that they would say like everyone can be home 100%, but it's fine.”

The findings show that autonomy is central in the choice of workplace. R5 expresses a current problem with her too heavy workload that has made her consider changing to another job, though expresses the importance of flexibility in times and place of work as key. In the words of R5:

“none of the jobs that I've been looking at have the flexibility, so that is why I've actually chosen to stay.”

There was also a pattern of feeling independent in hybrid work arrangements. R1, R2, R4 and R7 all mention independence as an element of their autonomy. Several also express that trust is another element. As expressed by R2:

“I feel that everything, flexibility, independence and autonomy, it's really high in every point, we are allowed to work from wherever we want. And there's a trust within the company [...] If my work schedule allows, nothing is set in stone, it's just a balance, and they trust you to do your work. And that gives us so much freedom and flexibility.”

Respondent 12 specifically explained how hybrid work had affected her autonomy at work:

“I think that because people are not working from the office, and all the managers, they want to have more control, because they are not meeting the people every day. I think that perhaps the hybrid working situation makes things more strict. The flexibility is less now than before and it could be a bit due to the hybrid working situation. [...] The different roles in the organization are not empowered enough, so if I want to make a decision, I cannot make it on my own. [...] Even if I have enough knowledge, there is some micromanagement going on.”

4.3.1 Work-Life Balance

Within the theme of autonomy, two sub-themes were found, work-life balance and focus. The findings of these are presented as follows. All participants in both sample groups were in agreement that hybrid work arrangements make their work-life balance easier. This was displayed through comments such as R8: “solve the puzzles in life” and R5: “easier to combine with life”. There were several reasons related to their work-life balance that were common in both sample groups, for why participants chose to stay at home on any given day. One response that frequented often was that they save time on not having to travel that could instead be spent on other things, R12: “You save time, travel time”, R7: “I like to spend some of the time that I would spend sitting on the train or riding the bike just having lunch with my kids instead”. R8 expresses that he would like to go to the office more, but it is better for his work-life balance to stay at home:

“I mean if I had my work like here across the street, I could go to work every day basically, it's just about this traveling time”.
Another reason for why several respondents chose to work from home, was that it allows for extra sleep. It was mentioned by R2, R5, R8, R11 and R12. An example of this is found in the words of R5:

“I like to sleep in, and not have to get up that early and not have to get ready. But pretty much to save time so I can have more free time.”

However, R1, a respondent without policy, voices a positive effect on mental health on the days when he works from home:

“i can take mini breaks at home that are good for my well-being”

4.3.2 Focus

The findings show that respondents in both groups have varying opinions on whether the home or office environment is better for their focus. There are mentions in both groups of the importance of the environment that they are working in. Several participants mention daylight as an important factor, as well as ergonomics.

Respondents in both groups express that being at the office can affect them negatively because they get disturbed by their coworkers. Several of the respondents without a policy express that they chose to stay at home on days when they need to focus. In the words of R2:

“if it's messy at work, like a lot of people having meetings. And it's a little bit of a disturbance like that you can't find your focus. Then it's better at home.”

Some of the respondents regulated by a policy also voice that they get disturbed by their colleagues, and that this affects their ability to focus in a way that it would not do if they were working from home or had better seating arrangements at the office.

R12: “we have been listening to everybody else in the environment. If we had a dedicated area at work where we wouldn't be disturbed by others then it wouldn't matter as much, then we could maybe be as concentrated in the office.”

R3: “My office is located right outside the office kitchen and people walk to the coffee machines and have their small talks and what not outside and it absolutely wrecks my concentration”

Of the respondents in Group B, several express that they have deficient seating arrangements in the office. There are multiple mentions in this group that they do not have their own desks, due to the organization having downsized office space after the pandemic. Others comment on their assigned seating area being unsuitable for work due to insufficient lighting, or as in the examples above, that they get disturbed by colleagues. There are also issues with finding suitable areas to have meetings.

Some individuals in both groups express that they are more productive in the office environment, while others feel that they get more done at home. R6 expresses this as a tradeoff:
“I'm very happy to come to the office and work from here. I mean, of course, that means that you're less productive at times, but at the same time, you're more productive at other times, I think it balances itself out and generally have less of their procrastination where you're just on your phone and you're like, I feel bad about doing this but I don't want to work and instead it's we're gonna have a fika we're gonna chat and then five minutes later we go back to work.”

4.4 Relatedness

All but one of the interviewed spend two or more days per week in the office, and several of the participants chose to go to the office even when they are not required to. The most important element, present in the narratives of all but one of the respondents, were the social aspect. Respondents expressed that social relatedness is a key aspect for motivation on the mandatory days at the office too. The findings also show that many important benefits of going to the office are to be reaped from the interactions, relations and connections created by physically meeting other people.

R6: “The primary reason for me to come to the office is, I think, social reasons. Because it's nice to hang out with coworkers”

R7: “It's just that after the pandemic years, everything has changed. Even the social life. I missed the colleagues and the private dialogues we have. [...] If you're gonna have a hybrid solution, it needs to be coordinated with other team members when to be at the office.”

R9: “I prefer to be in the office as much as I possibly can. [...] It creates a different vibe in me. So I guess that it gives me a little bit more energy, I would say cannot pinpoint exactly why, but yeah, you meet a lot of people [...] the atmosphere to have people around you. Even if you're not talking to them all the time, that could be one factor.”

R2: “Some weeks I need the energy of my colleagues around me to boost my motivation, then I go to the office.”

R10: “If I come here but have no one to bounce ideas off or have social connections with because I'm sitting alone, it wouldn't benefit me”

R10: “you can't always quantify the value of social belonging.”

The narratives identified another key aspect of relatedness, being the support system that having colleagues enables. Respondents across both groups express that they ask colleagues or management for help when it is needed or they are stuck. Respondents also voice that colleagues support them through questions about their personal life and well-being. The example from R1 presented below is a representation from Group A, and R12 represents Group B. However, similar narratives were found across all respondents.

R1: “I think it's like the support and availability are key factors for me. [...] Also to feel like people care about you. Both about the work that you do and, but also like your wellbeing. And show that it is very important like having that good culture with people caring for each other, working as a team.”
R12: “I have a fantastic team. [...] I think that everyone in the team can be themselves. [...] in my case it's absolutely the team members and that we work together in such a good way, it's not a one person by itself [...] That we can approach things and help each other, or like a positive atmosphere.”

Most respondents across both sample groups enjoy spontaneous and informal interactions that occur when meeting in person. According to the findings, they appear when passing each other in the hallway, grabbing a coffee or some fika, as well as at events and after work.

R6: “I think it is, for one, doing it from the office, that you will have these social breaks.”

R5: “What has motivated me is being at the office and socializing with my coworkers. So having work not being just work, but taking breaks with my coworkers and just going to have a coffee.”

R11: “We usually have some fun stuff at the office some of the days, so everyone wants to be there. We have breakfast, we have different kinds of events and stuff like that. [...] it's a community at the office”

R12: “It's easier to talk about other things than work, and we try to sit down and drink coffee together and talk about the children or the sport we have done. Maybe someone has made a cake or brought some fika.”

Two respondents, R3 and R4, did not agree with the narratives of the other respondents.

R3: “There's a certain recurring pattern in workplace small talk, i.e. we talk about the weather and news in general and I don't really get anything out of that.”

However, the narrative of both R3 and R4 changes somewhat throughout the interview. Despite expressing no benefits from small talk, R3 still enjoys seeing his colleagues. R4 also expresses positive elements of social interaction.

R4: “it's a good motivation to meet the colleague. I can interact, you can have some food and going to lunch and talking about things”

R3: “It's fun to see them from time to time in our break room but that's about it. [...] I think it's fun to see my colleagues once or twice a week. [...] I need more time to engage in discussions with people in my subject area [...] you need outside peers.”

Participants were at large in agreement that relationships formed through digital communication were different from those formed in person. The findings also display variances in communication conducted in person or online through technology. Several respondents, R1, R6, and R10, raised the issue of a digital barrier affecting communication and relations.

R12: “You notice that, and you cannot be so connected to other people because you only see them sometimes in the Teams meeting you don't meet them in the office.”
R9: “even if you meet people on teams, it's not the same thing that if you meet a person in real life. [...] Another one that I think of is that the people that I work closely with, it's much easier to start a conversation if you sit next to a person in real life.

R1: “it's much harder to pick up how people are feeling in mixed settings when some people are at the office and some are away. It's much easier, like if we all meet in the office and you had a bad day, I will be able to tell on your face that you are having a bad day.”

R6: “I would say that these online meet-ups and online after works they're not very effective. Because I mean, you can always only have one person talking. You don't have the subgroups, sub conversations. So yeah, that we had that at the time, and then it stopped as well, because people just were just not as nice.”

Some respondents felt that the relationships formed online were sufficient. Though, it was also pointed out that some physical connection could be beneficial.

R8: “I see them at the office, it's nice you know, to see them but I think it would be the same even if we were speaking through teams all the time. [...] Maybe it helps at least see them once in a while. Yeah, that's true. It helps us a little bit, somehow to make them more real.”

In Group A, the findings displayed how hybrid settings forced the responsibility of meeting with colleagues onto the individual. Some respondents report that management seemingly has no interest in making people connect. Out of the 4 participants in this study that belong to this group, 2 individuals expressed feeling lonely, alienated or having feelings of isolation.

R1: “I don't think I have felt this bad and the like isolated in for a very long time. And I think that has to do with working from home.”

There were no reports of currently feeling lonely in Group B. However, one respondent reflected on a previous job that also offered hybrid work with a mandatory policy, but that policy had no mention of which day the team was supposed to come to the office. She expressed how this made her feel lonely and missing a connection with her coworkers.

R4: “So even at my last job, if it was two days a week that we needed to be there, 50% of the time, there wasn't really structure on who was there. So the days that I was there, there's like nobody there, because now you show up at the same time. [...] I didn't need to go to the office. The whole point. What's the point?”

Two respondents, R4 and R10, expressed that part of the reason why they chose their current job positions were because of the social connections that they had within the company.

R10: “I actively chose this workplace because I knew people here whom I want to socialize with and who I believe make me a better person.”

R4: “I may feel more connected even at this new job in four months than I did it the three years I was at another company. Ultimately it’s because everyone is in the office more. A part of the reason why I even chose this job was also because I knew someone working here, so I already had one connection.”
4.5 Self-Perceived Competence

When asked about how hybrid work affects their perceptions of their own competence, several of the respondents struggled to express an answer. However, the findings display several examples of participants' own perceptions of their competence while they were working in hybrid arrangements. R7, reflected upon occasions whilst being subject to hybrid work when he felt competent, as shown:

“I can come up with several occasions where we've managed to deliver some big projects which me and my team has worked with and we've actually been very proud of ourselves as a group and celebrated. But I'm not sure if it has anything to do with the fact that it was hybrid or not.”

Agreed upon by R5, R10, R11, and R12 were the overall importance of competence for their intrinsic motivation. The narratives showed that by accomplishing one thing at a time, a perception of competence can be achieved.

R10: “Finding something you excel at and can offer others is very motivating. You gain a sense of mastery. Feeling competent is important for a person.”

R11: “I got a feeling that if I could do that, then I can also do the next thing. It keeps building up accomplishments.”

Participant narratives from both sample groups showed that feedback was an element connected to their self-perceived competence. It was mentioned multiple times that feedback, particularly in the form of praise or positive feedback, was something that created happiness.

R10: “My feeling of competence consists partly of external confirmation”

R11: “It boosted my confidence a little bit”

R5: “of course you become happy when someone is giving you praise”

A pattern was found across both sample groups, showing a preference of receiving feedback in person was found in the narratives of some respondents. The importance of delivering it personally was emphasized when the feedback was in the form of constructive criticism, as voiced by R5:

“Some people are really good at giving the constructive criticism at a good time and in a good form. For example, I don't like it when I get it in an email, perhaps because it can sound very harsh.”

However, others were of the opinion that an email with feedback could be a sign of the sender going the extra mile. R11 expressed this:

“I was actually just happy and because it's not often the people acknowledge you in that way, cause that time it was an email, it was someone that we’re thinking about it and took the time to send it”

Although feedback can be positive, the two respondents R10 and R11 voiced that the most important factor to feel competent is to believe in yourself. In the words of R11:
“it's more on me to actually acknowledge that I am good at my work. That's more confidence in myself and nothing that my management can do. They can say things to me, but I need to believe it as well, and that's something that I'm working with.”

A specific experience from R1 showed how hybrid work arrangements can affect competence.

“If I was in the office I could just walk up to the person and ask for it. But if I have to write an email to get help I feel less independent, because now I have to wait for the reply. I feel less competent and capable because I cannot solve the issue right away and I also feel alienated at that moment.”

4.5.1 Personal Development

The findings showed that the participants in both groups of the study did not only perceive their current competence as an important element of motivation, they also frequently expressed a wish for personal development, resulting in this sub-theme. Respondents of both groups had similar perceptions, as there were no apparent differences between the two groups. A large majority of the respondents, R1, R2, and R5 - R11, in various ways all mentioned that they want to “invest in my personal development”, as expressed by R5. Some respondents elaborated on why they considered personal development to be an important aspect of competence, as displayed below.

R9: “I'm basically still learning new stuff on a regular basis and it feels very good when you actually find a solution.”

R1: “For me it's very motivating to see that I am still evolving and it makes me feel better and be better at my job.”

R10: “Feeling competent is important for a person. But it's also essential not to be fully knowledgeable about everything, putting yourself in situations where you're challenged and stimulated to learn new things.”

Participants mentioned goals, values and purpose in relation to their personal development. R4 and R11 both expressed that they feel motivated by working towards their goals.

R4: “So my personal goals drive me to push harder and are my motivation.”

R11: “my goals for next year, I'm working with that and that's what I need to do to stay motivated and stay on the growing side.”

Several respondents expressed that they wanted to discuss their goals with management, and for their goals to be aligned with those of the organization. An example of this and how it was affected by the hybrid arrangements was given in the response from R9:

“regular meetings with our manager like once per month and there we also like to discuss the overall work situation, like personal development goals […] if both me and the manager are at the office, then we normally have them in person. As we only normally are in like 2 days a week, it can also be on teams quite frequently as well. […] I prefer real life meetings, like meeting in person. At least for those regular
meetings that we have, with specific topics [...] The conversations are also much more natural in real life."

As presented in the previous section, feedback was an element related to some of the participants' self-perception of competence. Feedback also played into personal development, according to R5:

“feedback is something that it's making me better. [...] I have some people in my team that are working in offices in different places [...] Because I don't know how they talk when they're happy. I don't know how they talk when they're mad or anything. It's quite difficult to know if they're giving me feedback, for example, I don't know them as a person, so it's difficult to read them sometimes.”

5 Analysis and Discussion

This chapter builds upon thematic analysis to examine interview responses, exploring identified codes derived from data analysis. Predetermined themes of autonomy, relatedness, and competence, formulated to explore intrinsic motivation, revealed sub-themes such as work-life balance, focus, and personal development during the coding process. Firstly, it has been determined that several identified psychological needs characteristics are important and overlap to some extent. For example, autonomy can have characteristics that might also be found in relatedness. Analyzing overlapping instances gave this research a deeper understanding of connections and dependencies between needs.

The results revealed that employees are highly motivated by flexibility at work and social interactions. Above all else, they want autonomy, but they derive additional benefits from regularly working from the office, as long as it is on their terms. After analyzing the findings, the psychological needs are better met in the group with mandatory office days.

Findings generated from the interview study disclosed that a sense of autonomy is a great source of intrinsic motivation in hybrid work; it emerged as a fundamental prerequisite preceding the fulfillment of other needs. Despite certain drawbacks, the perceived benefits of flexibility and freedom appeared to outweigh them. Notably, even employees expressing feelings of loneliness or isolation still preferred the autonomy to work from home rather than being obligated to go to the office. Hybrid work arrangements appear to address meeting employees' psychological needs by empowering individuals to take responsibility for their well-being. This will also be further explored later in the paper regarding relatedness.

In the case of autonomy, the need was fulfilled through a sense of independence, control over one’s tasks and a sense of management’s trust in employees. The latter made people happier, but also more motivated to give extra time to work. The flexible arrangements were perceived as the organization’s generosity, and people felt more generous back with their time. From SDT, we know that any activity done without applied pressure is intrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Furthermore, this generous exchange results in productivity, supporting Deci et al. (2017) claim that autonomy increases overall organizational effectiveness. The observations made in this paper second the opinion of Hornung and Rousseau (2007) that the independence experienced in the workplace is likely the key factor in shaping employee motivation, attitudes, and behaviour, as well as their positive reaction to organizational changes.
Autonomy has also been identified as very beneficial to work-life balance, resulting in increased intrinsic motivation. It showed up not only as a control over one’s work tasks but also as a control over one’s chores at home and time spent with family. Individual respondents exhibit varying priorities regarding how they choose to spend their leisure time; nevertheless, a common motivation among them is the desire to save time for self-directed activities. According to Kühnel et al. (2016), replenishing self-regulatory resources during periods outside of work is essential for the capacity to commence tasks in the work environment. Many interviewees get motivated by the ability to sleep in and take rest breaks. In fact, multilevel analyses carried out by Kühnel et al. (2016) showed that employees procrastinate less on days when they have slept better.

Another sub-theme that arose from autonomy-related questions is focus. Respondents in both groups show different takes on which environment, home or office, they find better for focused work. The flexibility provided to the group with no policy allows them to choose the best environment in order to meet the day's objectives. Therefore, annoyances or discomforts of interrupted concentration can be solved by changing the environment. The obstacle is harder to overcome for the group in hybrid work settings with mandatory days and poor seating setups. This could be associated with management issues, where they do not take employees' comfort needs into consideration. For some, having colleagues in near physical proximity aids in their ability to focus, suggesting an interplay between some of the respondent's ability to focus and their need for relatedness. This reflected the findings of Wang et al. (2021), suggesting that social support can influence concentration and lessen procrastination.

Surprisingly, the analysis of the findings revealed that there might be a point where too much freedom and autonomy brings the intrinsic motivation down. However, not directly, but as a result of not fulfilling other needs. Group B, which has a regulation in place, expressed a lot of positivity towards enforced visits to the office. On the contrary, the findings of Group A suggested that perhaps too much freedom can be demotivating at some point as the sense of relatedness decreases. When not putting in the effort to go to the office for extended periods, respondents recalled feeling lonely, isolated and indifferent to work.

Contrary to the expectation that regulations might lead to retaliation, the results indicate otherwise. The key distinction lies in the difference between being regulated by the employer and being an employee who maintains control over their autonomy. In this context, control remained firmly in the hands of employees, as every respondent subject to a mandatory days policy had a lot of flexibility. Furthermore, respondents were not only able to skip a day when needed but, in most cases, did not even require formal permission to do so. This suggests that hybrid work setups characterized by lenient policies may not be perceived as imposing pressure or control by the organization, thereby avoiding a detrimental impact on employees’ intrinsic motivation. On the contrary, the benefits acquired from these mandatory days appear to strengthen intrinsic workplace motivation as regular visits to the office inadvertently feed into some other psychological needs.

It is equally important to mention that there was a noticeable linkage between autonomy and loneliness, specifically in Group A, which did not have a policy. This aligns with the analysis conducted by Wang et al. (2021), wherein the researchers observed that when the responsibility for addressing loneliness, such as organizing meetings, rests on employees and requires self-initiation, individuals are less likely to take the initiative. Some of our respondents clearly conveyed that they recognize the potential risk of loneliness and acknowledge the responsibility lies with them to proactively address it. However, the
commitment required to commute to the office demands a certain level of discipline. Consequently, some individuals opt to prioritize more time at home, albeit at the cost of a diminished sense of belonging.

This observation leads the discussion to the next significant psychological need - relatedness. While there is limited evidence to substantiate the notion that connectedness is as crucial for intrinsic motivation as competence or autonomy (Olafsen et al., 2015), the findings of this study suggest otherwise. Hybrid work arrangements were started as a solution or an adaptation in a post-pandemic world to acclimate workers to return to work and bring a sense of normalcy and structure (Sampat et al., 2022). Therefore, it is a very new circumstance in which research regarding workplace motivation is lacking. The findings of this study reveal that the primary driver for individuals returning to offices has been a desire for social connection. This inclination is likely intensified by the deprivation of social interactions experienced during the pandemic, prioritizing the fulfillment of this fundamental need. Previous research strengthens this notion by claiming that when coworkers and management were supportive of relatedness, the employees were more autonomously motivated and more creative at work (Deci et al., 2017). The thesis findings emphasize the prominence of relatedness through abundant codes, revealing a noticeable difference between the two groups.

The second most common observation that falls under the relatedness umbrella is support. Asking for help is important to not only meet daily goals but also build trust. From the discourse, it becomes evident that fostering a sense of team belonging hinges on feeling supported and assured that someone has your back, especially in times of crisis. According to Wang et al. (2021), social support holds significant importance as it serves as a "negativity buffer," aiding individuals in managing stress and maintaining concentration on their tasks. Connecting back to the findings on focus under the autonomy umbrella, underlining the importance of autonomy as a hygiene factor prevailing the other needs. Keeping in mind that not all respondents experience increased focus from colleagues, the autonomy to adapt their work environment is essential.

Half of Group A’s participants mentioned feelings of loneliness and isolation. However, both of those respondents have full access to the office space if they have a desire to go and work with their colleagues. As mentioned before, this leads one to believe that either the employees are not willing to give up their flexibility and commuting time in return for connectivity to people, or they need assistance from their managers to plan the office days. These findings to some extent show that Tapani et al. (2022) observations made about remote work are still present in hybrid work arrangements: even with arranged virtual community meetings employees expressed not feeling like a part of the team due to lack of face-to-face interactions.

On the contrary, Group B did not express any feelings of loneliness, demonstrating that the need for relatedness has been fulfilled in that group. Established rules of being physically present at work have provided people with support from their peers and helped build friendships and have in-person conversations that are not work-related. A brief interlude with a friendly chat seems to be motivating in both Groups A and B. The two outliers from group B expressed a dislike for socializing and opposed the existence of mandatory office days. However, both of them acknowledged finding enjoyment in occasionally interacting with colleagues. Whilst respondent R4 called that type of policy “archaic,” she reaped benefits, confessing to finally making a friend thanks to the mandatory days’ policy. This permits
an interpretation that although policy might not be perceived as a positive, it has provided only advantages so far.

It is important to note that benefits connected to relatedness in hybrid workplaces with regulations are only there if the organization has set specific days when employees should be physically present. This means that the policy is structured to assist in working together on the same day at least once a week. There has been an observation that when there are no days set, people miss each other and often sit at the office alone, which, for most, defeats the purpose of going to the office.

The results have additionally shown that the importance of interpersonal connections is so profound that it plays a substantial role in job selection. This may be influenced by the understanding that having at least one acquaintance in a new job position offers immediate support and a feeling of belonging when commencing a new role. Tapani et al. (2022) findings showed that the sense of connection was harmed greatly during the forced remote work during the pandemic, leading to a number of various side effects of remote work such as micromanagement and lack of care from the context of relatedness. Micromanagement was mentioned only once during the interviews, with a respondent expressing a sense of disempowerment in decision-making despite possessing the necessary competence. This instance further underscores the interconnectedness of psychological needs, illustrating how a deficiency in autonomy can negatively impact one's self-perceived competence.

While overall self-perceived competence was obviously an important determinant for intrinsic workplace motivation, the results did not indicate that hybrid work arrangements had a significant effect on it. However, there were minor indications that competence may be negatively impacted if there is limited access to resources, such as quick communication with colleagues, which is typically available in the office. This tendency is more likely to manifest in organizations without a mandatory policy, where employees lacking the physical presence of their peers may perceive a reduced ability to promptly address problems due to communication delays. In turn, this makes individuals feel less capable and proficient in their work and, therefore, less competent (Deci et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the findings do not provide sufficient evidence to conclusively assert that hybrid work arrangements significantly impact self-perceived competence.

There are some extrinsic factors that can contribute to intrinsic motivation. As stated previously, cognitive evaluation theory asserts that feedback, communication, and rewards contributing to the feelings of competence enhance intrinsic motivation, but only if autonomy is also present (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is represented in the findings as respondents feel more competent when they have control over their work situation. Further, this would explain why feedback came up repeatedly when participants were asked about their self-competence. It would seem like respondents need external validation to believe they are competent. Several studies concluded that positive performance feedback enhanced intrinsic motivation (Deci & Cascio, 1972). When rewards are interpreted as informative, they communicate positive competence-related information, fulfilling the recipient's fundamental psychological need for competence and boosting intrinsic motivation. Positive feedback typically serves this functional purpose, aligning with the findings of this study (Deci et al., 2017).

The findings also uncovered a preference for receiving constructive criticism in person rather than through email, as the latter is perceived as sounding harsh, potentially due to the absence of body language and tone of voice cues. This may be attributed to people's tendency to default to a harsh and
discouraging tone when reading feedback. In such instances, body language and tone of voice would be a form of external confirmation needed for a person to get through a challenging conversation. Moreover, while negative feedback typically erodes intrinsic motivation, constructive feedback that offers an opportunity for growth has the potential to enhance it (Fishbach & Woolley, 2022). This aligned with narratives displaying requests for frequent feedback sessions in order to accelerate personal growth and feel motivated.

Potentially, some individuals have never reflected on how competent they think they are and have not evaluated themselves in the context of a work setting. Hence, the findings were not plentiful relating to hybrid work. Typically, people are used to their job title, their performance review and salary to reflect their competence. Nonetheless, a couple of respondents acknowledged that they do not give themselves enough credit or do not celebrate their accomplishments.

Furthermore, through the examined responses, a parallel observation arises: akin to the context of loneliness, individuals have the agency to take action, but it requires self-initiation. To a certain degree, self-encouragement and recognizing personal achievements emerge as actions individuals can undertake independently to elevate their intrinsic motivation. In the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) framework, internal drives play a pivotal role in fortifying intrinsic motivation, rendering it more robust and less reliant on external support. Worth mentioning is that when asked about what makes people feel more competent, answers were correlated to accumulating knowledge and experience, which also depicts professional growth as a source of self-perceived competence. The two groups also did not display any noticeable difference when it comes to self-perceived competence.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Research Limitations

This research paper faced several limitations. Primarily, the time constraints imposed on the study, particularly in data collection and analysis, constrained our ability to gather more data through interviews. The window for reaching out to potential respondents, conducting interviews, and transcribing them fully was limited. Considering the time allocated for these tasks, there is a restriction on the number of responses we could gather. The challenge here revolves around the generalisability and transferability of findings, given the limited size of the study group, rendering this paper not suitable for statistical generalizations about the entire population. Nonetheless, by incorporating relevant theories, this paper established connections with prior research, demonstrating the significance of the topic under discussion and can provide insights for future research. Moreover, even with 12 respondents, we were able to answer the research questions with patterns and themes that emerged.

6.2 Concluding Remarks

The goal of this paper was interpretative in nature, and focused on employees’ experiences and perceptions of their intrinsic motivation according to the universal psychological needs in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The findings of this paper answered the research question:
How does hybrid work, regulated and unregulated, influence the intrinsic motivation of employees within knowledge-intensive organizations in Sweden?

While all three psychological needs play a crucial role in fostering intrinsic motivation, it is apparent that the fulfillment of the autonomy need serves as a prerequisite for relatedness and self-competence. The connection is evident: it is challenging to feel competent when one lacks control over tasks and decisions. Interestingly, this dynamic remains consistent in the hybrid work model, echoing findings from prior research in different work environments (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The theme of relatedness emerges frequently in the study, with individuals expressing a desire for connection but still prioritizing freedom in deciding when to engage with colleagues. However, it is important to highlight that in organizations with mandatory office days, autonomy is preserved if the policies are flexible, allowing employees to maintain a sense of control over their work arrangements.

Hybrid work arrangements seem to meet the need for autonomy equally in both research groups, as well as its sub-theme work-life balance. People are satisfied with their freedom to choose and make autonomous decisions. While only Group A had full flexibility in their schedule, Group B showed no dissatisfaction in having to be physically present a few times a week, as the rules were rather flexible and did not impede their sense of autonomy. Nevertheless, within the sub-theme of focus under the autonomy category, the findings suggested that in Group A, hybrid work had a somewhat more positive impact. This was attributed to the freedom they had to choose their work environment, allowing them to tailor it to their daily needs.

Additionally, Group B was more satisfied with the need for relatedness as organizational regulation has provided them with opportunities to see their peers. However, Group A still struggles with a sense of relatedness as they are not required to be at the office. Meanwhile, Group B displayed both positive and negative influences on their focus in hybrid work settings.

Self-perceived competence was left more or less unaffected by hybrid work arrangements, though the need was satisfied in both groups. The sub-theme of personal development was satisfied across both groups. However, there are hints from Group A towards delayed communication, which can obstruct the sense of competence over time.

The first of two surprising findings of this study was that a regulating policy did not affect intrinsic motivation negatively, as suggested by several sources and studies arguing that regulations would be detrimental to autonomy (Rosengren, 2023; Tsipursky, 2023). On the contrary, this study found that the group subject to regulation was overall more intrinsically motivated. Autonomy was not infringed on, though this study showed that some flexibility to the policy was present and inquired for.
As the research findings unfolded, the second unexpected discovery was revealed. As discussed, autonomy serves as a prerequisite for addressing other psychological needs—individuals must have autonomy to reach relatedness and, subsequently, achieve intrinsic motivation. This principle also applies to competence. However, it's important to note that autonomy alone can reinforce intrinsic motivation. This led to the adjustment of the research model to fit the findings accurately. The outcome is showcased in Figure 4.

7 Future Research

Considering the time limitation in which this paper was written, longitudinal research is recommended, where participants could be observed for a longer time while they adjust to hybrid work arrangements. Further research could also benefit from gathering data in other countries or bigger data samples. A comparison of personality types and their motivation in hybrid work arrangements would be interesting to look into to figure out if the people who do not come to the office are introverted or if there are structural problems in organizations when it comes to arranging comfortable workplaces and opportunities for colleagues to meet.

A need that should be looked into closer is competence. Respondents were not very eager to talk about their accomplishments, bringing up the possibility that the culture in Sweden might have something to do with it. Researchers would benefit from exploring if self-perceived confidence differentiates across cultures. Moreover, there was mention of slowed-down communication affecting self-perceived competence; this connection could be further explored as the findings of this paper were limited. Finally, a study with a strict mandatory day regulation should be conducted to observe employees’ intrinsic motivation, when they do not have flexibility to choose their preferred week days.

7.1 Recommendations

This paper provides managers and organizations insight into what works and what is lacking in hybrid work arrangements. The overall recommendation is for organizations to consider implementing mandatory office days. However, the team should be allowed to choose when those days are, and the rules should be somewhat lenient to not add excessive pressure. Additionally, proper work setup should be offered on those days. The office should provide everything employees need, including an environment
that is good for focused work and where seating arrangements are well thought out so that teams can sit together. This should also be discussed with team members to hear any specific needs.

Additionally, companies should consider arranging opportunities for employees to meet, for example, lunches at the office, “after works,” kickoffs, celebratory dinners or at least a virtual mandatory fika once a week. Goal setting as a team can also be helpful to improve the feeling of belonging in the group. Finally, allow employees to gain competencies, provide positive feedback, and regularly review employees’ goals in order to support their sense of growth and competence.
Reference List


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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

The table below contains an overview of the prepared interview questions, together with a breakdown of the related theories and concepts to each question. The questions written in *purple text* are only asked to respondents who have at least one day with mandatory office presence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Theory and Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1               | Does your workplace have established any policies as to how **often** you must show up at the office?  
**If yes:** Are there set days or just a minimum per week?  
How well do people adhere to these rules?  
How much flexibility is there in these rules? | Hybrid Work Arrangements, SDT - autonomy |
| 2               | Where are other members of your team choosing to work from?              | Hybrid Work Arrangements, SDT - autonomy |
| 3               | Why do you prefer to work from home or from the office?                  | SDT - autonomy, competence, relatedness  |
|                 | How do you feel about the policies of mandatory days in the physical office? How does it affect your motivation? |                                          |
| 4               | How do you perceive the level of autonomy you have in your job, and to what extent does it contribute to your motivation at work? | SDT - autonomy                           |
| 5               | Have you experienced situations ( whilst working in a hybrid setting) where you felt a lack of autonomy or control over your tasks? | SDT - autonomy                           |
| 6               | What do you need from your superiors and your colleagues to be motivated and supported at work? | SDT - autonomy, competence, relatedness  |
| 7 | To what extent do you feel a sense of relatedness and connection with your colleagues nowadays, and how does it influence your motivation within the workplace?  
How has the mandatory office days affected your relationships with colleagues?  
How do you feel about having to meet your colleagues during mandatory office days? | SDT - relatedness |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Can you describe instances while working in HWA where you felt a strong sense of competence and accomplishment in your work? How did it impact your motivation?</td>
<td>SDT - competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>What would you need to feel more competent?</td>
<td>SDT - competence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10 | Could you describe how well you think you perform at your job, and are you happy with your own performance?  
Has it been affected by the mandatory office days? | SDT - competence |
| 11 | What do you do in situations at work that you feel you cannot handle? | SDT - autonomy, competence, relatedness |
| 12 | In what way do you think HWA affects motivation (both positive and negative)? | Hybrid Work Arrangements  
SDT - autonomy, competence, relatedness |
| 13 | What could be improved at your workplace for you to feel more motivated? | SDT - autonomy, competence, relatedness |
# Appendix B: Code Tables

A table of codes for a group of respondents who DO NOT have mandatory days at the office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Autonomy</th>
<th>Theme: Self-Perceived Competence</th>
<th>Theme: Relatedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codes:</td>
<td>Codes:</td>
<td>Codes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>I feel less competent and capable because I cannot solve the issue right away and need to ask for help</td>
<td>I am more isolated, alienated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Independently</td>
<td>I'm super proud of the work and development I have had</td>
<td>I also get energy and motivation from my colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self reliant at work</td>
<td>try new things</td>
<td>people caring for each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have a lot more autonomy</td>
<td>I feel competent</td>
<td>We compliment each other, give encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Evolving</td>
<td>feel connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am in control of this situation</td>
<td>Happy with my performance</td>
<td>Help each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual responsibilities</td>
<td>Asking for help makes me feel like a burden and incompetent</td>
<td>mutual trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to choose</td>
<td>Proud, sense of accomplishment.</td>
<td>Some of them I don't feel any connection to at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self managed</td>
<td>When making decisions</td>
<td>friendship, talk about anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-theme: Work-Life Balance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>to be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes:</td>
<td>when I feel that I've been useful</td>
<td>to show you support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easier to combine with life</td>
<td>performing it and proposing a solution</td>
<td>we are never all at the office together again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can take mini breaks at home that are good for my well being</td>
<td>I know what I'm talking about,</td>
<td>to have somewhere to go to meet the co-workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid is great because it caters to everybody's needs</td>
<td>Sense of accomplishment</td>
<td>The sense of team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it feels like I'm treating myself because I can sleep one hour</td>
<td><strong>Sub-theme: Personal Development</strong></td>
<td>we agree to meet up at the office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>save time so I can have more free time</td>
<td>Codes:</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't have to travel to work</td>
<td>develop and be better at the work</td>
<td>To be together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-theme: Focus</strong></td>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>to feel needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes:</td>
<td></td>
<td>In person quickly ask questions, get their perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
disturbing each other
staying home is sometimes great for the focus
focus point of view, home is better
I'm very happy to come to the office, that means that you're less productive at times, balances itself out

growing as a professional
feel fulfilled
you feel like you're doing something that is worth doing
gives me purpose

feels like you're in a family
we also write to each other everyday
plan their workday together
we know each other
understanding
Inclusion
have lunch together
Relate over struggles
Harder to connect with people who are not physically present
social breaks
Digital meetings don’t allow for sub conversations
A table of codes for a group of respondents who have mandatory number of days at the office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Autonomy</th>
<th>Theme: Self-Perceived Competence</th>
<th>Theme: Relatedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codes:</td>
<td>Codes:</td>
<td>Codes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual responsibilities</td>
<td>I have knowledge</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free to choose.</td>
<td>When I am able to see the problems.</td>
<td>does not get energized from social interaction, I get drained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flexibility</td>
<td>people listen to what I have to say in my area in expertise</td>
<td>I feel seen and heard when i do presentations and get feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there’s zero involvement from my superiors</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>I can always request support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>I was identified as a top performer</td>
<td>I don’t have any close colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a lot of autonomy</td>
<td>personal development,</td>
<td>it’s fun to see my colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we can come and go from the office as we please</td>
<td>Delivering big projects</td>
<td>small talk, coffee talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>proud of ourselves as a group</td>
<td>need outside peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>starting off without someone holding my hand</td>
<td>Engaging discussions with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>Trying new things</td>
<td>A better work platform for communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time for family</td>
<td>Finding a solution</td>
<td>to meet other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>You gain a sense of mastery</td>
<td>to build friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>option to choose</td>
<td>external confirmation</td>
<td>in order to cultivate those relationships, you need to be in the office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there's a never have the feeling that someone is sitting over my shoulder and observing what I do</td>
<td>Meeting expectations</td>
<td>Meetings in person go very well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being able to do household chores between tasks or during breaks</td>
<td>Sense of pride</td>
<td>I feel like I need to be where everyone is present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be available</td>
<td>building up accomplishments</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more control</td>
<td>I can use my skills very good</td>
<td>We need to work together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guidance and support
Can get other things done during lunch

More control

The (task) flexibility is less now than before

not empowered enough (1)

I cannot make it on my own (1)

there is some micro management(1)

**Sub-theme: Work-Life Balance**

**Codes:**

the life puzzle gets easier

easier to adapt your private life when you work from home

I think we should be free to choose

stressed knowing that I have to go to work

wary of my mental health

the extra hour that you can sleep in the morning is really good

stress going up early in the morning

I win so much time

**Theme: Focus**

**Codes:**

(office) it absolutely wrecks my concentration

need to feel that I have some sort of power or responsibility

I perform well

**Sub-theme: Personal Development**

**Codes:**

personal goals

challenged and stimulated to learn new things

it gives me purpose

everything I do contributes to the big picture

My feeling of competence consists partly of external confirmation

understanding

Ability to have an open and honest conversation

Feel more connected

I have one colleague that I really like

A talk about things that are not work related

Some people are exhausting

going to lunch together

Encouragement

I feel like I am one of them

I don't like socializing

nobody's here-no point

I missed the colleagues and the private dialogues we have

Social

Like family

Care

reach out

we share our common pains and challenges.

Contact

if someone's unhappy in some way, it makes me unhappy as well

it's much easier to start a conversation if you sit next to a person in real life.

Availability
some people that are very exhausting to be around
I actually feel like I get so much more done at the office
when working from home you can do more work and more concentrated
distractions
not being possible to sit as a group (office)
being able to take a banana and a coffee
daylight (both good and bad, office and home)
equipment set up (both good and bad, office and home)
The creativity process is better in person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindness</th>
<th>Helpful colleagues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>social belonging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital barrier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team work</td>
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