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Beyond the Pandemic: Exploring Quiet Quitting and Job Satisfaction

A qualitative research exploring job satisfaction in "the new workplace"

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped part of the labor market, causing an increase in remote work and consequently the rise of "quiet quitting". Quiet quitting refers to when an employee does the bare minimum at work, and the specific reasons for its rise, vary, however, there is reason to believe that remote work can be a contributing factor due to its effect on social connections and motivation.

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between working from home and quiet quitting, and how digital leadership can affect job satisfaction. This is because employers need to recognize and address the contributing factors of quiet quitting to be able to keep job satisfaction.

Method: This thesis is a qualitative study using an interpretivist method. The research has been performed though an inductive research approach. The primary data were gathered though 20 semi-structured interviews with 10 companies form various industries located in Småland Sweden. A person in a leading position and an employee were interviewed from each organization and a thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data.

Conclusion: The result from our findings showed that remote work has a significant impact on employee job satisfaction. Many employees experienced a lack of support and feedback from their managers and colleagues, as well as lower cohesion, which many perceived effected their motivation and increase the risk of quiet quitting. That is why managers should focus on creating "digital cohesion" by reworking their digital work, improving digital communication, and improving digital feedback. This may result in employees feeling more appreciated and committed to the organization, thus mitigating the risk of quiet quitting.

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1 Introduction

In this section, we will introduce the reader to the background of the research topic and the problematization. Thereafter, the purpose of the thesis will be presented.

1.1 Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the labor market over the past few years. Like many crises, it signifies a moment of evolution as it has led to a readjustment, recalibration, and reconsideration of priorities in the labor force (Lut, 2022). The initial effect of the pandemic in 2020 led to consequences that affected millions of people severely. Many lost their jobs, and many had to adjust to working from home. Because of the pandemic, teleworking, which is another word for working at home, has become an alternative for many employees who now demand the opportunity to work from home (WFH) to avoid discontent. This is evident in the case of H&M where a decision to require at least four days in the office sparked protests from 1100 employees (Brising, 2022). The pandemic has thus created a new market, where employees search for better conditions which put pressure on the companies' abilities to retain their workforce.

Instead of resigning from work, many employees have chosen to "take it easy at work" (Ito, 2022). This phenomenon is also called "quiet quitting" and is when "*One does not literally quit one's job, but rather simply does the work that is expected of the position, without going above and beyond"* (Scheyett, 2022, s. 5). Although the term quiet quitting has gained popularity, recent academic research suggests that it is not necessarily a new concept. Similar concepts like "work-to-rule" and "low engagement" have long existed in the labor market before COVID-19. However, the occurrence of quiet quitting has greatly increased post-COVID-19 (Hamouche, Koritos, & Papastathopoulos, 2023). For example, the inclusion of quiet quitting can be found in Randstad's annual "Workmonitor" poll (Randstad, 2023). The result showed that employee engagement has been negatively affected as dissatisfaction with work has led 31% of people in the survey to "quiet quit". Sweden was also one of the countries in the survey with the highest percentage of quiet quitting, at 38% (Randstad, 2023). Furthermore, changes to the workplace following COVID-19 may also indicate that the trend could persist and continue in 2023 and the subsequent years (Hamouche, Koritos, & Papastathopoulos, 2023).

This high percentage of quiet quitting in Sweden can be alarming as the development of the trend in the future is undetermined, which is why it can be beneficial for employees to recognize the causes of the problem to overcome them. The discussion about the reasons why employees quiet quit varies in conclusions. While there seems to be a consensus that the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst for the start of the phenomenon, other underlying causes must also be identified to be able to explain the phenomenon. Some debated that quiet quitting was because people started setting new work-life boundaries and priorities. Another view is that it is a way for employees to express their dissatisfaction with the organization (Scheyett, 2022). An article in Forbes discusses this point of view and states that many employees experienced more dissatisfaction and lower motivation due to being forced to return to in-office work after the pandemic. It is important to note that the same articles also discuss the negative impact of

remote work and how they believe it can be responsible for quiet quitting (Tsipursky, 2022a). An article from The Entrepreneur implies that working from home weakens the employee's social connections and sense of belonging to their organization which leads to lower motivation. (Tsipursky, 2022b). Lastly, in a Harvard Business Review article, it is stated that regardless of the working arrangement, quiet quitting depends on the manager's ability to create relationships with the workers which encourages motivation (Zenger & Folkman, 2022).

Undoubtedly, the causes of quiet quitting may not be straightforward, and different industries may be more affected, as some workplaces have experienced a more extensive reformation after the pandemic than others. Nevertheless, the topic of remote work and its effect seem to be a common theme. Modifications created by a company in response to the COVID-19 pandemic must consider the potential impact on employees' job satisfaction, and their well-being. Acting without having any regard for how employees' priorities have changed after the pandemic, or disregarding those changes and not intervening, can intensify quiet quitting. If the organization manages to keep its employees satisfied, quiet quitting can be mitigated (Formica & Sfodera, 2022).

There are various numbers of theories and concepts related to Human Resource Management and organizational behavior, that could be relevant to the topic of quiet quitting. We have chosen to specifically focus on the following three theories as they can contribute to complementary perspectives of our research: Organizational citizenship Behavior (OCB), Herzberg's Two-factor theory, and Theory X & theory Y.

1.2 Problem

The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly affected the labor market, and though the pandemic has diminished, the new experiences will continue to shape businesses in the future. The pandemic accelerated the trend of remote work, and now many employees are faced with the possibility to continue teleworking even if there are no restrictions. As many employees experienced remote work for the first time during the pandemic, this new way of working required adjustment, which in the end could have led to both positive and negative experiences. However, the emergence of quiet quitting indicates that there is an increasing dissatisfaction in the Swedish labor market and that it has consequently led to employers obliging to a more demanding workforce.

Given the limited knowledge of this new emerging trend, work from home's role regarding quiet quitting is undetermined. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of employees' and employers' experiences with remote work, focusing on how working arrangements have developed after the pandemic, and subsequently how this has affected job satisfaction and the rise of quiet quitting. Furthermore, already existing theories will be explored to understand different aspects and causes of quiet quitting.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between working from home and quiet quitting, and how digital leadership can affect job satisfaction.

2 Theoretical framework

In this section, the reader will first be introduced to how the literature review was conducted. Secondly, relevant previous research of the three theories, Two-Factor Theory, Theory X & Theory Y and Organizational Citizenship Behavior is presented.

2.1 Reviewing the Literature

To find a research gap concerning quiet quitting, the initial approach consisted of using Google Scholar and Primo to find existing literature relating to the topic. Since this is a phenomenon that has only recently acquired momentum, there was limited academic research about quiet quitting specifically. This opportunity could thus contribute to a greater understanding of the phenomenon in Sweden, with support from already existing literature regarding job satisfaction.

The three chosen theories were to facilitate attaining a comprehensive understanding of the factors that affect job satisfaction, which is important to consider when researching the causes behind quiet quitting. "Organizational Citizenship Behavior", "Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory", and "Theory X & Theory Y" all give insight into the relationship between job satisfaction and other factors, like motivation and engagement. The literature that was used to present and analyze theories was a combination of older and newer research, to be able to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the theory. Older research gives a greater understanding of the theories' origins, and these were sources of key contributions. Newer research can provide a more updated view and contradict or agree with the research of the theory.

2.2 Quiet Quitting

Quiet quitting is the phenomenon of disengaging from work, doing the bare minimum, and avoiding taking on extra responsibilities or initiatives (Nordgren & Björs, 2023). It is a recent phenomenon, with different theories regarding its explanation.

2.2.1 Work from home

Factors consider the hybrid-work model as a contributor to the phenomenon, which is a combination of in-person and remote work, as communication and collaboration become difficult to navigate. The model has become very prevalent, and many organizations are adopting the model, due to it granting a competitive advantage (Kossek & Thompson, 2016). The model, however, can lead remote workers to feel isolated and disconnected from colleagues and the organization, which in turn leads to a decrease in engagement and performance (Hom, Allen, & Griffith, 2019). This is evident in a study where a correlation could be observed between the percentage of people working from home and the negatively affected performance by the employee (van der Lippe & Lippényl, 2019). This is due to employees not feeling included or valued and might miss opportunities for recognition (Mahand & Caldwell, 2022). Another study found that when workers were not informed or included in decision-making, they feel disconnected and detached from the organization (Yuspahruddin, et al., 2020). However, a study from China showcased that remote workers in a Chinese travel agency increased their

performance when given the option to work from home (Bloom, Liang, Roberts, Ying, & Zhichun, 2013). Baker (2021) counteracts this with the notion that the work is very individual and does not require interaction between co-workers.

2.2.2 Communication

Additionally, communication is very important, as bad communication can become disorientating, with a sense of lacking guidance (Moretti, et al., 2020). If the option of working from home is considered, then there should be attention to addressing the communication difficulties that follow (Baker, 2021). A way to counteract negative effects is thus if communication is perceived as satisfactory. This could include providing frequent feedback to make employees more engaged, which has been shown to significantly correlate with work satisfaction and productivity (Baker, 2021). A lack of engaged employees can consequently lead to a higher level of quiet quitting (Nordgren & Björs, 2023). Furthermore, if leadership communicates the goals and strategy of an organization poorly, employees will feel uncertain about their future (Mahand & Caldwell, 2022). Another study found that employees that perceive an organization as not developing them, will more likely leave (Hom, Allen, & Griffith, 2019).

2.2.3 Culture

Furthermore, organizational culture can also be a contributor to quiet quitting. If an employee perceives that the organizational culture is not a reflection of their values and beliefs, they may feel disconnected and disengaged (Schein, 2010). This can in turn lead to quiet quitting, as the newly formed and incompatible culture takes over. There is a great importance of leadership in preserving the organizational culture, and leaders being able to influence it, positively and negatively (Hesselbein & Goldsmith, 2009; Schein, 2010). Trust in leaders and employee commitment are directly related, and mistrust in leadership decays the success of an organization (Clifton & Harter, 2019). Due to remote work, opportunities for employees to be a part of decision-making might have also declined, which makes employees feel disconnected from the company, and in turn, the culture (Yuspahruddin, et al., 2020). It might furthermore also be difficult to reward positive behaviour and commitment to those working from home, which normally contributes to higher levels of employee satisfaction (Hesselbein & Goldsmith, 2009). Schein (2010) further says that this negated work can lead to declining motivation, increased negativity, and lower trust in management. A neglected focus on culture can thus be a factor in quiet quitting.

2.3 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, also known as the "motivation-hygiene theory" or the "dual-factor theory", is a theory that was constructed by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman in their 1959 publication. The theory is further explained in Herzberg's 1968 publication, where he says that humans have an inherent driving force to avoid trouble or feelings of dissatisfaction, which he named the hygiene factor (Herzberg, 1968). He also explains the need for self-improvement and the ability to grow and develop as a person in your work is essential, which he named the motivational factors (Glennfalk & Carlström, 2017). The theory states that there is a difference

between motivation factors and hygiene factors, which contributes to different effects on the workplace, namely job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, Snyderman, & B, 1959). It suggests that humans have two categories of needs when it comes to their work, and whether it is satisfied or not (Alshmemri, Shahwan, & Maude, 2017). The theory is also one of the most significant that relates to job satisfaction (Dion, 2006).

The two requirements, according to the theory, are motivational and hygiene-related factors. The hygiene factor can also be called the "maintenance factor". When it comes to job satisfaction, hygiene factors are viewed as being less significant than motivational factors because their absence can only increase dissatisfaction among workers, who will nevertheless continue to work. However, unlike hygiene factors, the lack of motivational factors results in an absence of satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction. Thus, while hygiene factors are necessary, motivational factors are more crucial in creating a satisfying and motivating work environment (Herzberg, Mausner, Snyderman, & B, 1959).

An illustration would be that an employee works in a dimly lit environment with outdated equipment. These are hygiene factors, and the employee will only feel dissatisfied at work. However, if the workplace has repetitive tasks and limited opportunities to develop skills, and the employee is not recognized for their work, then they will not be motivated and have job satisfaction. Both factors contribute to the employee being dissatisfied with the work, as well as having no job satisfaction, which makes it very difficult to retain them. However, if the employee works in an environment where they are constantly challenged and are developing new skills, with new technology and good working conditions, they will be both satisfied and have job satisfaction, facilitating talent retention.

2.3.1 Examples of Hygiene and Motivational Factors

Examples of hygiene factors range from salary and benefits, working conditions, company policies, job security, and supervision (Herzberg, Mausner, Snyderman, & B, 1959). On the contrary, the argument for motivation in the theory states that there is a need for self-growth in work, and that job satisfaction is closely linked to this. These motivational factors are what make employees decide to work harder, and examples are recognition and appreciation, challenging work, achievement, responsibility, autonomy, and advancement (Herzberg, Mausner, Snyderman, & B, 1959). As stated, a lack of hygiene factors in a workplace can only lead to employees feeling dissatisfied, it could never lead to satisfaction, as motivation does. A low salary might make you feel dissatisfied, but according to the theory, a high salary will never make you satisfied on its own.

This is relevant to the purpose, as there could be a discrepancy regarding whether or not quiet quitting relates more to working arrangements, or if it is due to motivation. The use of Herzberg's framework allows the study to explore factors that could explain the phenomenon.

2.3.2 Job Enrichment and Motivation

Herzberg further expanded on the theory through his 1968 publication, where he emphasized job enrichment as an important tool to create job satisfaction and motivation. The theory stated that by giving employees more autonomy, job variation, and control of their work, they would

become more motivated (Herzberg, 1968). Furthermore, by giving the employees opportunities for self-growth and development, the managers can create a more satisfying work environment (Glennfalk & Carlström, 2017). Herzberg further intensified the importance of motivation through achievement and personal growth, rather than motivation through salary and benefits, because an employee will only be motivated to seek the next wage increase (Herzberg, 1968). It is through the focus of managers to provide opportunities where one is motivated that you can create a more motivated workforce. Herzberg also stated that job rotation, or job variation, was not an effective way to create job satisfaction if done incorrectly, but only alleviated temporary relief from the boredom of mundane work tasks (Herzberg, 1968). He compared it to rotating one person from washing dishes to washing silverware. The tasks are nearly identical, and the job rotation has not enriched the employee or made them feel developed or satisfied in the long term (Herzberg, 1968).

Thus, Herzberg states that the only way to motivate employees is through challenging work that helps people take more responsibility and that they are recognized for their achievements. Herzberg also commented on ineffective ways of management, of which he named "KITA", or "Kick in the Pants". According to Herzberg (1968), KITA is a short-term and inefficient way to motivate employees for the long term. Herzberg named "reducing time spent at work", "spiraling wages", and "fringe benefits" as incorrect ways to inspire motivation, and even called them a myth (Herzberg, 1968).

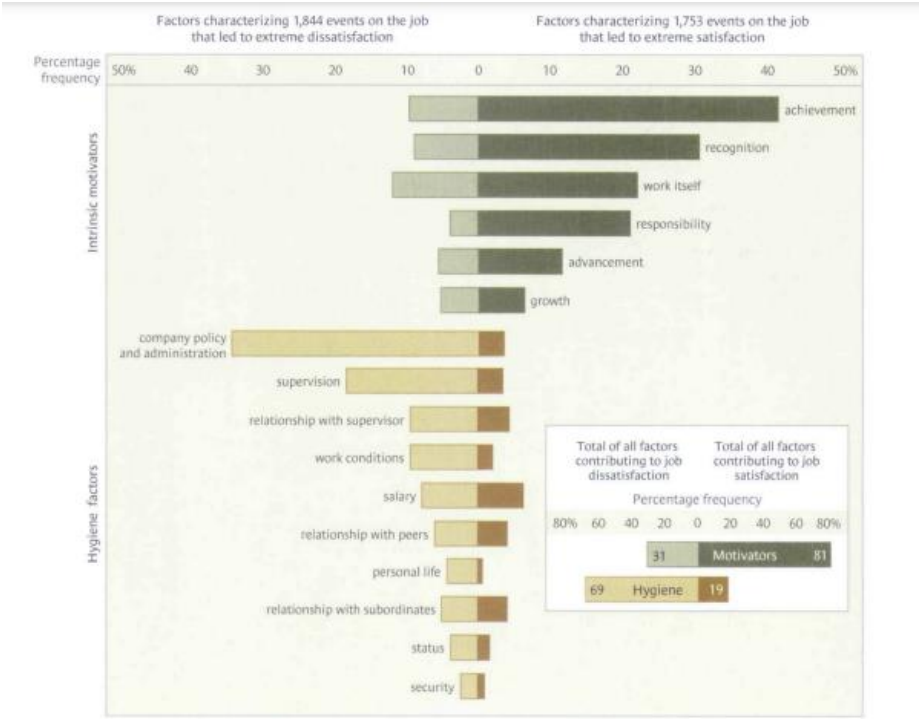


Figure 1 Factors Affecting Job Attitudes as Reported in 12 Investigations by Herzberg (1968)

2.3.3 Case Studies of Herzberg

In the publication "Job Satisfaction and turnover intent among hospital social workers in the United States", the author investigates what factors contribute to job satisfaction and turnover intention in hospital social workers (Pugh, 2016). Pugh (2016) argues that compensation,

workload, and positive supervision are deemed as a necessity, but are not sufficient when it comes to job satisfaction. If the industry wishes for higher job satisfaction, then Pugh (2016) claims that challenging work, autonomy, recognition for work, and opportunities for achievement are needed. Job stress and emotional exhaustion contribute to low job satisfaction, but through job autonomy, job variety, and support, one can significantly raise employee retention, and lower turnover intention (Pugh, 2016). Pugh (2016) further states that it "would be wise" to consider applying the Herzberg framework when discussing how to prevent job dissatisfaction, and what motivates job satisfaction. This is because, in the study, job satisfaction is the best predictor of turnover intent in the study, Pugh (2016) also explains that dissatisfiers are a different concept from motivation factors, which would confirm Herzberg's theory.

In their publication "Does Herzberg's Motivation Theory Have Staying Power?" (Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2005), Basset-Jones and Lloyd try to challenge the theory of Herzberg through their research. They compare different studies that provide evidence for the factors of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction and compare them to other studies that could not find support for it. They describe how salary does not motivate employees, but are one of the factors that prevent dissatisfaction, in accordance with the theory (Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2005). The authors continue by stating that the importance of managerial recognition has declined since the studies of Herzberg, which was an important motivator in the theory. They however suggest that this can be due to hierarchies being shallower, which leads to promotions becoming scarcer (Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2005). They also explain that, in accordance with the theory, a poor supervisory relationship still has a significant role in discouraging and making employees dissatisfied (Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2005). The authors however conclude that there is a need for further research to understand what contributes to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as individual differences are very diverse.

2.4 Theory X and Theory Y

2.4.1 Introduction

Douglas McGregor's theory is based on Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs and can be seen as both a motivation theory and a leadership theory (Hedegaard Hein, 2012). According to McGregor, human needs are organized into different levels according to their importance to humans: physiological needs, security needs, social needs, recognition needs, and self-actualization needs (McGregor, 1966). Just as Maslow believes, McGregor also believes that a lower need must be reasonably satisfied before a need at the next higher level begins to dominate the person's behavior, i.e., to motivate the person. In the context of work, this means that management must direct their attention to the right needs of each individual, or their efforts will be ineffective. Management satisfies the employee's lower needs through employment, pay, working conditions, and benefits. The management can also create a good relationship so that the employee is encouraged and as the opportunity to seek satisfaction for himself even for the higher needs (McGregor, 1966). According to McGregor (1966), management through command and control does not work to motivate people whose physiological and safety needs are reasonably satisfied and whose social, egoistic, and self-actualization needs are dominant. If people do not have the opportunity at work to satisfy the needs that are important to them,

then they will behave as if they were lazy, passive, irresponsible, averse to change, and have unreasonable demands for financial benefits (McGregor, 1966).

2.4.2 McGregor's Idea of Motivation and Leadership

McGregor's fundamental idea about motivation is that a person motivates themselves. Leaders cannot motivate employees, but they can create the conditions for employee motivation. In his work "The Human Side of Enterprise", McGregor (1966) writes about what he calls the human side of the organization, which is the perception of the company as a living organization, which can be designed in such a way that employees can develop and learn while striving for a common goal for the company (Hedegaard Hein, 2012).

With this basic idea, McGregor goes against many leadership theories and believes that leaders cannot manage their motivational and leadership tasks with the techniques and tools that leaders use as incentives and control tools. He believes that managers can control the behavior of employees by bribing them with financial rewards. However, this only leads to them doing exactly what they have been told to do, but not to them doing more or working in a better way (Hedegaard Hein, 2012).

McGregor believes that leaders should work towards getting employees to perceive work as meaningful and thus increase their natural desire to satisfy their own needs. Similar to Herzberg's basic thought, McGregor believes that motivation should be understood as something internal, which means that people act based on internal motivation factors and not external motivation factors (Hedegaard Hein, 2012).

McGregor (1966) uses the concepts of hard and loose management, which are two extremes in the view of managing employees. Hard management, aimed at controlling employee behavior, includes coercion and intimidation, close supervision, and strict control over behavior. Methods of controlling behavior through unrestricted control, on the other hand, involve being tolerant, satisfying people's needs, and achieving harmony. There are difficulties with both of these settings for steering.

2.4.3 Theory X and Theory Y

McGregor has formulated two theories, Theory X and Theory Y, which contain two sets of basic assumptions about human nature. With these two theories, McGregor wanted to make leaders reflect on their assumptions about human nature and make them realize how these mental models lead to a certain leadership practice (McGregor, 1960). Rai (2004) claims that the theories of Y and X can be categorized as non-monetary, where the individual should experience a reward for their performance, relationships with others, or satisfaction. This can be confirmed extent by the analysis of the description in this thesis (Rai, 2004)

Theory X is the traditional view of command and control and is based on three assumptions about human nature and human behavior, which lead to certain assumptions about the task of leadership. First, Theory X assumes that humans have an inherent aversion to work and will avoid it if possible. Furthermore, Theory X assumes that because of this human trait of aversion to work, most people must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened with punishment in order to exert effort to achieve organizational goals. Finally, Theory X assumes that man prefers

to be led, wants to avoid responsibility, has an aversion to change, has no ambitions, and prefers security above all (McGregor, 1960).

Unlike Theory X, Theory Y is based on a series of other assumptions about human nature that lead to other assumptions about the task of leadership. Theory Y assumes that man's physical and mental effort at work is natural. External control and the threat of punishment are not the only means of making people exert effort to achieve organizational goals. The person can direct and control himself or herself to achieve the goals to which she or he is committed. Commitment to goal achievement is a function of the rewards associated with goal achievement. Man learns, under the right conditions, not only to accept but also to want to take responsibility. The ability to show a high degree of imagination, curiosity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems is common among people. Under the conditions of modern industrial life, man's intellectual potential is only utilized to a limited extent (McGregor, 1960).

2.4.4 Misunderstandings of McGregor's Theory

McGregor's theory has often been misunderstood as if it were simply a description of two different leadership styles. What McGregor wants to highlight with his theories is that there is no set of correct leadership principles. McGregor himself advocates Theory Y according to his basic idea as described above, but at the same time believes that it is not possible to make too strong generalizations about human nature (Hedegaard Hein, 2012). Hedegaard Hein (2012) makes an important point that anyone trying to apply motivational and leadership theories must be aware that these kinds of generalizations result in leadership based on incorrect and simplistic assumptions.

What could be criticized in McGregor's Theory Y is that it rests on a somewhat romantic and blue-eyed notion of human nature, since the theory assumes that all people are intrinsically motivated. However, McGregor is aware of the too-strong generalizations of the theories and that the same leadership principles do not work in all types of organizations, and this is the message he wants to convey (Hedegaard Hein, 2012). Although it has taken more than 50 years, the present research successfully demonstrated that McGregor's substantive theorizing is valid and empirically supported (Lawter, Kopelman, & Prottas, 2015)

McGregor's Theory X & Y	
Theory X	**Theory Y**
Work Avoiding	Work is natural
Need to control	Capable of self-direction
Avoid responsibility	Seek responsibility
Workers seek security	Can make a good decision

Figure 2 McGregor's Theory X & Y

2.5 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

In 1977, Organ suggested that there is a possible connection between job satisfaction and actions at work that may not be included in the work description. Organ (1977) believed that job performance should be conceptualized more broadly and not only concerned with productivity. He argued that managers may also value other qualities in employees, like cooperation or following rules (Organ, 1977)

Since its first publication, the "Organizational Citizenship Behavior" (OCB) concept has been widely researched and can be defined as *"Discretionary contributions that go beyond the strict description or interpretation of job requirements and that do not lay claim to contractual recompense from the formal reward system"* (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2005, p. 34). Organizational Citizenship Behavior is the term that is used to describe all the positive employee actions that are not a part of their official job description. An employee who engages in "OCB" would for example take on more responsibility, initiatives and go above and beyond for their company and colleagues. Engagement in "OCB" is something that certain groups or people engage more in, which means that it can be found to a greater extent in some organizations compared to others. "OCB" is something that managers value, however, it is something that they cannot force employees to engage in (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2005). Organizational Citizenship Behavior is, according to Organ (1988), internally motivated, as it comes from the employee's desire to feel belonging or accomplishment. Research has argued for many different reasons for the positive correlation between "OCB" and organizational effectiveness. For instance, it can enhance co-worker productivity, help with improving the organization's performance stability and it can help free various resources (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997).

2.5.1 Examples of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Over the years, researchers have created many different conceptual frameworks that can help identify different types of OCB. One of the most prevalent concepts concerning OCB is the five themes that Organ (1988) developed:

(1) *Altruism* is when employees help their co-workers with their tasks. It can for example be when people assist colleagues who are overloaded, voluntarily assist new employees who may need help to get situated with their tasks or work overtime if needed.

(2) *Conscientiousness* is when the employee's dedication to their work exceeds the usual formal requirements. The individual will often exceed the employer's requirements by working extra hours, complying with rules and instructions, or not taking additional breaks.

(3) *Sportsmanship* is when the employee tolerates irritations and temporary inconveniences in the working environment, which often are unavoidable, without protesting, being tolerant, and not complaining

(4) *Courtesy* is when employees help others by preventing problems that may occur at work. Courteous behavior can for example be respecting co-workers' privacy, communicating with colleagues if you are taking a decision that may affect them, and helping others to solve conflicts.

(5) *Civic virtue* is the behavior and actions of an employee who cares for the well-being of the company. It includes actions like being involved in company events, like seminars, meetings, or fundraisers.

2.5.2 Job satisfaction and Organizational commitment

Research done by Demirel, Elhusadi, & Alhasadi (2018) identified important organizational factors that can affect OCB. Their results showed that employees may experience *Job satisfaction* if they respond positively to different job aspects, however, dissatisfaction with factors like salaries, promotion, and unfair supervision can hinder OCB (Demirel, Elhusadi, & Alhasadi, 2018). Research done by Bateman & Organ (1983) has also demonstrated a significant relationship between job satisfaction and higher levels of OCB. Their empirical examination concluded that employees who feel great satisfaction with their work will be more likely to engage in Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Bateman & Organ, 1983). A more recent study by Adeel & Din (2016) also shows that there is a significant relationship between job satisfaction and OCB. The results suggest that if an organization fosters OCB, their employees are going to be more satisfied with their work, have greater organizational commitment, and have fewer intentions of quitting their job (Adeel & Din, 2016).

Furthermore, Demirel, Elhusadi, & Alhasadi (2018) also indicated that *Organizational commitment* is an important organizational factor that effects OCB. Organizational citizenship behavior is also something that is heavily affected by management. If employees have a positive relationship with their organizations and they feel supported, there is a higher chance that they will engage in OCB, as *"Organizational commitment has consistently been found to be the most significant determinant of OCB"* (Grego-Planer, 2019). This positive relationship has also been

found by other researchers, who found that perceived organizational support had a positive relationship with OCB and that OCB is motivated by the employee's anticipation regarding what they possibly can receive in the future (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005).

2.5.3 'Dark' side of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Differentiating from those, a study by Koopman, Lanaj, & Scott (2016) investigated both the 'bright' and 'dark' sides of OCB. In their research, they found that daily OCB can increase daily job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. However, the study also indicates that daily OCB simultaneously can worsen emotional exhaustion, decrease job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study shows that OCB can both increase and decrease well-being. The reason for these results is that the negative or positive effects of OCB depend on different contextual factors and individual characteristics. For instance, promotion-focused individuals engaging in OCB often had a positive effect on their well-being (Koopman, Lanaj, & Scott, 2016). Other research has also been done on OCB's effect on employee well-being. Bolino, Harvey, Hsiung, & LePine (2015) found that too much OCB can lead to citizenship fatigue, which is when the employee feels exhausted and worn out. OCB was shown to be more likely to lead to citizenship fatigue when there was low organizational support, but less likely when there was low demand to engage in OCB and when employees had high-quality exchange between each other (Bolino, Harvey, Hsiung, & LePine, 2015).

2.5.4 Teleworking and OCB

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a rise in teleworking, something that can consequently affect the employee's working conditions. A study was done before the pandemic comparing the organizational citizenship behavior of remote foreign workers and local workers, which showed that the remote workers experience lower levels of job satisfaction and OCB compared to the local workers (Ang, Van Dyne, & Begley, 2003). Another recent study has investigated remote work's effect on OCB. The result showed that different dominant cultures in the organization affect OCB. A dominant market culture, which focuses on financial success showed small changes in OCB, with a decline in Civic virtue. In a dominant clan culture, which values collaboration in the team, there was a decrease in conscientiousness, while other dimensions increased. Lastly, a dominant hierarchy culture, which has clear authority, had the most negative effect on OCB, where all dimensions decreased expert courtesy (Krajcsák & Kozák, 2022)

3 Methodology

In this section, we will introduce the reader to the methodology, which will give the reader insight into how we have conducted our research and how we collected our data.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research is the scientific and systematic search for potential information which relates to a topic and is conducted through an investigation (Kothari, 2015). Scientific research consists of specific steps that are a necessity, which is why the "onion process" was chosen. The onion process consists of five layers, of which each represents an aspect of the research process and is an approach that aims to structure and guide research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Due to the approach of our research, we deliberately did not incorporate the "cross-sectional" and "longitudinal" methods as they were not deemed relevant to the research, and the data collection was sufficient and allowed us to disregard it. The inclusion of time-related aspects was thus negated.

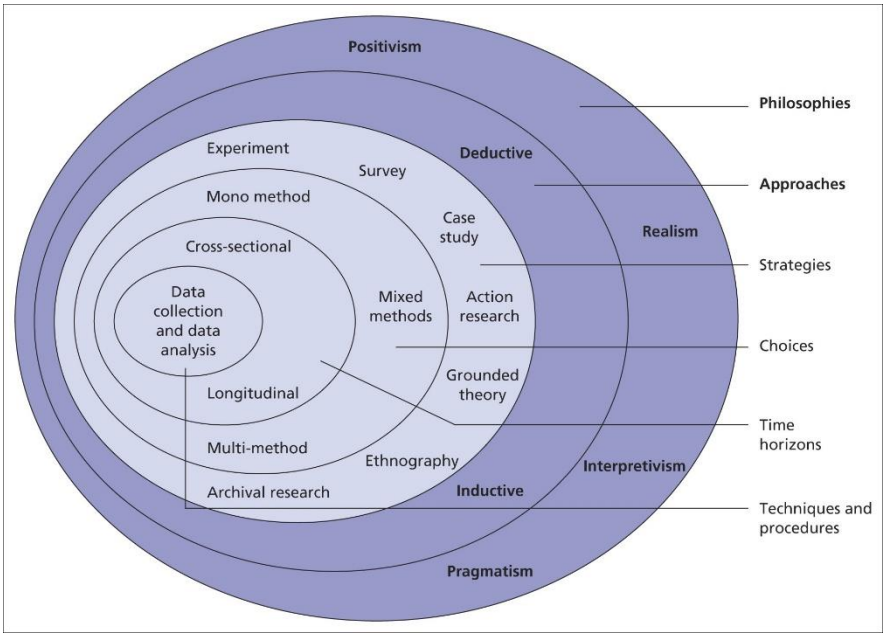


Figure 3 The Onion Process by Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2009)

The first layer is the research philosophy, which is the beliefs and assumptions, and the source of the process (Amerian & Pisarava, 2012). The research philosophy explores different concepts, such as realism, positivism, and interpretivism, and argues for which is 'correct' in the context of a study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Interpretivism is a paradigm that recognizes the human aspect and role as social actors, which makes it suitable for the study (Blazevic, Christensen, & Eriksson, 2015). Furthermore, it is more common that the interpretivism philosophy is linked to a qualitative approach, while positivism often uses quantitative research (Williamson, 2002). This study uses a small sample size, produces subjective qualitative data, and has findings that can be generalized from one set to a different similar setting. The findings can thus be interpreted, which was the reason for an interpretivist approach (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

As stated, the research philosophy that is applied in this thesis is the interpretivist method. This is because the study focuses on subjective interpretations of people being interviewed, and the recognition of the human aspect in the study, of which one can use the interpretivist method. Another argument for interpretivist philosophy is the ability to interpret the answer of an interviewee. It also encourages reflexivity, which can question own assumptions, biases, and preconceived notions. Through the use of qualitative methods, we could also capture detailed and context-specific data, and through flexibility, could also allow for adjustments based on emerging insight. The research philosophy can thus help us in explaining the purpose from the perspective of the people involved, with the use of open-ended questions.

3.2 Research Approach

The second layer of the onion process is the research approach, which includes an inductive and a deductive method (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). According to Collis & Hussey (2014), inductive research is a study where theory is developed from observing empirical data, and general interpretations are induced from specific occasions. This is the opposite of the deductive method, which involves moving from individual observations to general patterns (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Inductive research is often used in exploratory or qualitative research, where the purpose is to develop new theories, concepts, and ideas about a topic. (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

As the thesis covered a topic relating to management and because we first explored specific observations, an inductive research approach was selected. Furthermore, an inductive method often allows for the interpretivist paradigm, which allows us to explore individual experiences, and have a deeper understanding of the research context. We started our investigation by gathering empirical data from qualitative methods, primarily interviews. From the data provided, we could recognize patterns and themes that subsequently appeared based on the observations and their interpretations. The approach allowed us to deeper understand the topic and provided a nuanced perspective of the participants' answers. The inductive research approach was also aligned with the interpretivist philosophy, which highlights the prominence of contextualization. Additionally, the choice of an inductive research method was also appropriate for exploring new and intricate sections of uncharted research, where existing theories may not be applicable. Since quiet quitting was a new phenomenon, current theories would not be entirely applicable to it without some modification, which allowed us under the inductive approach to uncover insights and ideas in an exploratory manner, that can be used in other research.



Figure 4 Inductive Research Approach

3.3 Research Strategy and Method

3.3.1 Choice of strategy

The third layer of the onion process is the research strategy, which refers to techniques and methods the researcher uses to collect and analyze data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The layer consists of strategies that can be utilized, such as experimental research, action research, case study research, and ethnographic research. In this study, the emphasis was to observe subjective experiences with the collection of data through interviews. This allows for an in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon and enables the researcher to examine it in a natural setting. Furthermore, it also provides rich and detailed data. Thus, the case study research was the most appropriate.

3.3.2 Choice of method

The fourth layer is "choices", which considers what data types are being utilized. Options range from mono-method, mixed-method, and multi-method (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). These options consider the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. Therefore, a qualitative method was chosen, due to the research strategy being case studies, through interviews. Furthermore, since it was solely a qualitative study, the choice of the "mono" method was the most suitable. The approach involves the collection of non-numerical data such as observations, interviews, and case studies to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Qualitative research also plays a big role in case studies, where exploratory research is frequently used to formulate problems and gather insight (Amerian & Pisarava, 2012).

Contextualization is also acknowledged, and therefore, many of the companies are in geographical proximity, with Sweden being chosen as the country. Different industries with varying work are also explored. We chose to both interview employees and managers at a company, in order to find discrepancies among answers. The qualitative approach of collecting data is applied, and we attempt to examine aspects of the purpose and phenomenon, rather than to solely confirm the existence of the phenomenon in the work market.

3.4 Data Collection and Data analysis

Data collection and data analysis is the final layer of the onion process, and it consists of the tools and techniques that the researchers use to analyze and interpret the data collected in the study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Within research, there are two different ways of collecting data; secondary and primary. Primary data is data that is from an original source, such as an interview that you have yourself conducted. Secondary data refers to already collected data, such as articles, journals, and databases. Since this study explored a new phenomenon without as much previous research, the use of primary data was utilized, as it was largely done through interviews. The primary data consists of findings that were gathered from various people, all of which were from Sweden, and were working in different industries.

3.4.1 Primary data

To fulfill our purpose, a qualitative method was applied through the use of interviews. The interview consisted of open questions that were asked in a semi-structured interview, with people that work in different industries and do not have a relationship with each other. The benefit of open questions is that it allows for more depth and developed answers (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The interviews were conducted with one interviewer and one interviewee and could last between 5 minutes and 45 minutes, depending on the interviewee. 12 interviews were conducted in an office, 6 interviews were conducted through Teams, and 2 of the interviews were conducted through a phone. There was a preference for face-to-face interviews because they were more personal and allowed for more honest answers, and the recordings could be easily transcribed. Teams were also very effective since it allowed for video recordings. The use of phones was however not as appreciated, as transcribing was done in real-time, which could lead to missing information and making it harder to code the data.

Our primary data consisted of 20 interviews. We compared different industries, and the same industries, in order to find both similarities and oddities that have occurred with a new phenomenon. The interviews were designed to be shorter, as it would allow for more interviews and perspectives.

3.4.2 Interview selection

Purposive sampling is a non-probability method that is frequently used in qualitative research. Participants were not entirely chosen at random, but selected based on specific principles and characteristics that were deemed relevant to the purpose (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Since our chosen sample needed to meet our predetermined criteria, purposive sampling was the most appropriate when choosing which method of sampling to be selected. This was because people that are relevant and can provide insight into the research can be identified, which made it more efficient than other sampling methods, which might give some undesirable findings that have no relevance. Since the study focuses on quiet quitting, and how leaders and workers have undertaken the topic, our sample needed to include a particular set of people. Therefore, we had made some predetermined criteria, that were to be fulfilled in order to conduct an interview:

- The respondent must have experienced covid-19.
- The respondent must have experienced work-from-home, or a hybrid model, in one way or another.
- The leader and the worker must work at the same company (worker preferably with the same leader that is being interviewed)

Other smaller criteria were that the different companies had to vary in revenue, personnel, and industry. Upon looking for interviews based on these criteria, we stored the information in a shared document. The way of searching for interviews varied since we used both emails and asked the company directly if there was an opportunity to interview them. Our sample consisted of leaders and workers from the same company, so we could compare their answers.

3.4.3 Interview design

Upon starting our interviews, we always asked for verbal consent to record or document the answers. We also added that anonymity is guaranteed and that the results are not handled by anyone else than the people involved in the study. Our interviews consisted of two parts, that were meant for either a leader or a worker. The questions that were answered depended on who the respondent was, and which role they had in the company. Most questions were open-ended questions, with a few questions being the exception. These few questions, however, were often followed-up with a question that asks them to elaborate further. The reason for choosing open questions is that it allowed the interview to become more insightful and in-depth (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The questions were through a pilot interview that was not documented, which made us make changes in accordance with the results. The changes were to make the questions differentiate in answers and not relate as much to each other and try to make them more open-ended.

Utilizing the interpretivist model, the purpose of interviews was to explore "data on understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings and the like, that people have in common" (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The interviews could therefore be unstructured or semi-structured. The study, however, would use a semi-structured interview, with questions prepared beforehand, and with the opportunity to deviate from the questions. Since accessibility was limited, the interviews would both be conducted "face-to-face", and online, with the use of video conference software. Since the people that were being interviewed were fluent and preferred talking in Swedish, the interviews were subsequently conducted in Swedish. Afterward, we translated the answers into English.

Table 3.1 Interview Questions

To the employer	**To the employee**
• To what extent is work done digitally, that is, in front of a screen? • How did you handle the situation during the pandemic? Did you send people home or let them stay? • What was the initial reaction to sending people home/keeping them at work? • Do employees want to work more from home now, and if so, how do you handle it? • Are you considering the possibility of transforming the work so that it can be done from home? For example, a hybrid model? Why/why not? • Have the tasks been adapted to working from home, or is it the same as when it was on site? • Do you find it difficult to recognize work that has been done from home? Meaning, to give recognition to good employees. • Is it easy to measure results from people working from home? • How do you conduct meetings? How do you conduct important meetings, are they on site?	• What percentage of your work is done digitally, that is, in front of a screen? • Can a majority of the job be done from home, or is it necessary to be on-site? What factors determine this? • Does the possibility of working from home enhance your job satisfaction? • How would you feel if your job took away this "privilege"? • Does working from home make you feel less appreciated as an employee? • If you have worked from home, have you ever felt dissatisfied with your work, and if so, has it contributed to your being less willing to help colleagues and the organization? • If you are/were looking for a new job, do you consider whether the company has a hybrid model? • If Company X and Company Y were the same, but Y had a hybrid model, which one would you choose? • Have you noticed changes in how your manager communicates with you since the pandemic?

- How do you communicate with each other? Do you use Teams, or is it another service?
- Have you had to adjust the way you work due to the pandemic?
- Did you find it more difficult to reach your employees during the pandemic?
- How did coaching, encouragement, and follow-ups work digitally, that is, how did your leadership work during the pandemic? Do you perceive that your employees felt the same way?
- Do you think your employees took more responsibility and initiative at home than in the office? What do you think is the reason?
- How much time do you spend encouraging and following up with your employees, and did that increase or decrease during the pandemic?
- Do you think that many people were happy to come back to the office?

- Do you find it difficult to stay motivated when working from home?
- Did you find it more difficult to reach your boss while working from home?
- Did you receive the same amount of unconscious and conscious encouragement and support during the pandemic?
- Did you take more responsibility at the office or when working from home?
- Do you think that many people were happy to come back to the office?

3.4.4 Data analysis

To analyze our data, we used a thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report themes within the qualitative data (Morse, 1994). This is because it is considered a flexible and interpretive approach to analyzing qualitative data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). As this aligned with our research approach and method, it was the most suitable way for us to interpret the answers. We also used the software "Delve" to easier access and code the data since it allowed for effective and productive use of highlighting and the use of key phrases.

However, the stages for analyzing our data consisted of Saunders et al. (2009) approach to analyzing qualitative, inductive, and interpretivist research with interviews as the main data. Stages are:

1. **Data preparation:** For this stage, we first organized the data to be easily accessible in a shared document. Subsequently, a joint coding system through Delve was created to deliver a consistent and accurate interpretation of transcripts. The transcribed interviews were written and accessible through a shared document. The transcribed interviews followed the same template, for convenience and consistency. This is also where we coded the interviews.

2. **Data familiarization:** For the second part, an emphasis on becoming familiar with the collected data was pursued, to identify patterns and themes that could later be used. The themes that were found were done so by Gioia, Corley & Hamilton's (2012) data structure method. This is where you identify a concept, make it a theme, and then have it as an aggregate dimension (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012). This method is suitable for qualitative data analysis. The data were subsequently examined to find relevant patterns, in line with the purpose, and coded.

3. **Developing a thematic framework:** For the third stage, a framework was created to capture the themes and categories that were the most relevant to the data. The use of

thematic analysis was the most relevant, because it could be applied to qualitative data, and involves identifying and interpreting patterns.

4. **Indexing:** Furthermore, the framework was then applied to the data to identify the themes more clearly. Data reduction was used in order to discard irrelevant data, but also to summarize and simplify the data.

5. **Charting and interpretation:** Lastly, the data was summarized and interpreted, through the use of Delve. The core questions were structured to showcase the findings.

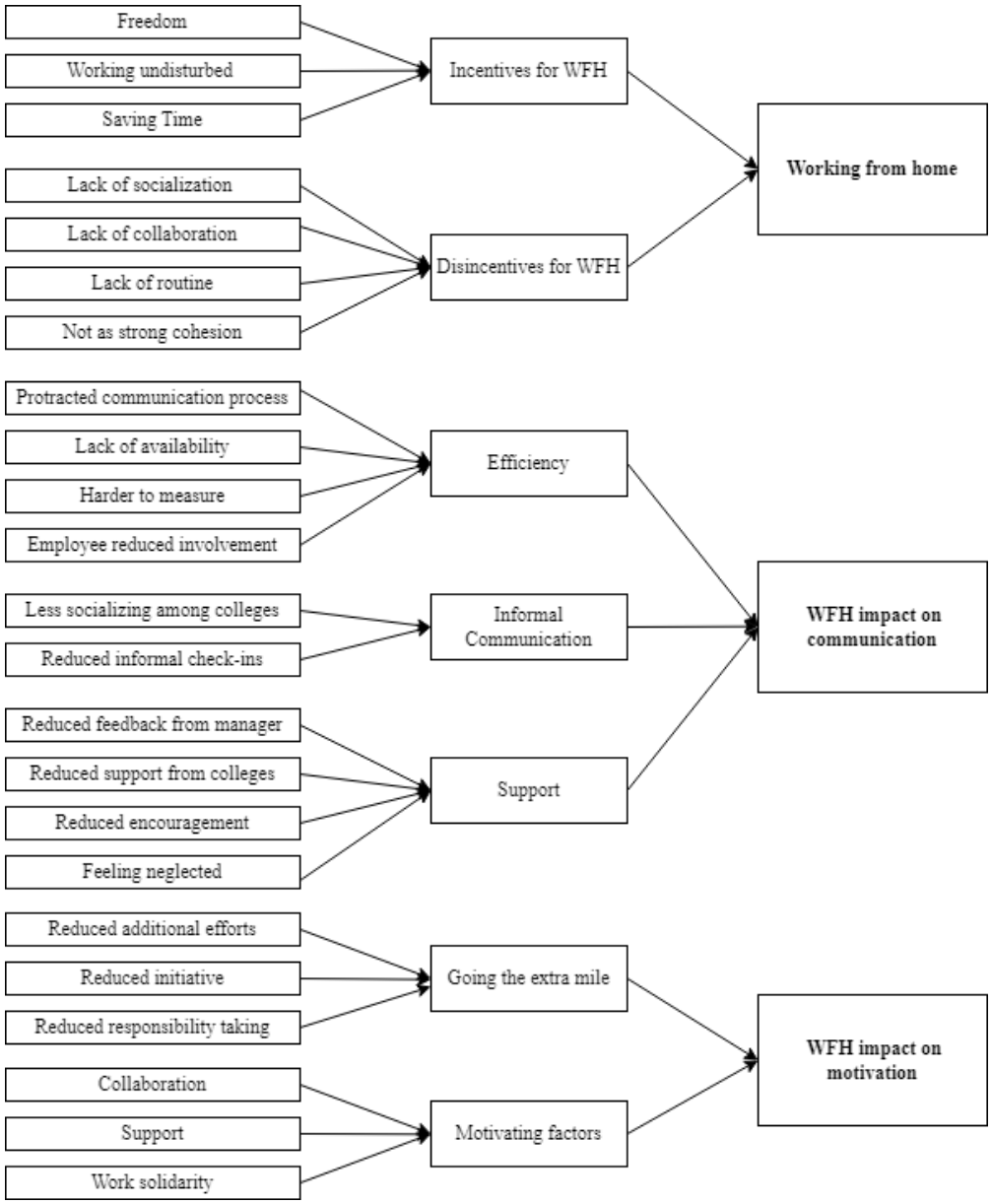


Figure 5 Gioia Method approach for our thematic analysis

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Research must be conducted ethically and professionally (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Collis and Hussey (2014) also write about different ethical principles that are needed to ensure an ethical research approach. These are: informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, harm, and respect.

Therefore, before the interview, we obtained explicit consent from the participants that they agreed to be a part of the interview. They were not coerced to participate and did not get any rewards for their participation, as this can lead to a biased result (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The interviewees were also informed about the related topics that would be discussed, but not the purpose of the thesis as this could distort our findings (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Lastly, while composing the questions, we made sure not to include subjects that are harmful or violating.

At the beginning of the interview, we also asked the participants if they agreed to be recorded, both through video and audio. The recordings would only be accessed by us and were safely stored on a computer. After the research paper was concluded, the recordings were deleted. The participants were also offered anonymity and confidentiality, as this encourages honesty and a more open conversation. Anonymity reassured the interviewees that they will not be named in the research paper, and confidentiality gave the organization and participants assurance that no information is traceable (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The participants were treated with respect and were ensured that they were not exploited or coerced into participating in the interview. If participants were limited by time or did not wish to continue the interview, then it would be respected.

3.6 Research Quality

3.6.1 Reliability

Reliability indicates how accurate and precise measurements are, and that there will be an absence of differences if the research is repeated (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The same study based on the same methodology and data should therefore be able to produce similar results, which in turn allows for high reliability. In a positivist study, ‘replicability’ is important. On the contrary, an interpretivist study has lower reliability, due to the nature of the interpretation of data, and the importance of contextualization. Therefore, reliability is more appropriate when it comes to the evaluation of quantitative research but is not exempt from the use of qualitative research as well (Amerian & Pisarava, 2012).

In this study, managers and workers that have been part of the workforce since before the pandemic of 2020 were chosen, to reduce bias towards topics such as “work from home”. This use of a purposive sample can increase the depth and richness of the data collected (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). According to the same study by Guest et al. (2006), 12 interviews were sufficient to achieve data saturation. This study consists of 20 interviews, which makes it more comprehensive and representative, with a risk of saturating data. Letting the interviewee also determine the time of the interview was important because it allowed interviewees to be more comfortable and willing to participate, which can lead to a better result (Halkier, 2010). To ensure reliability, questions were planned, and all questions were to be answered. A pilot study was also conducted to identify and correct potential errors and to better formulate the

questions. This allows the study to be more focused on relevant data. An attempt to secure more interviews was done for multiple observations, to ensure consistency and representativeness. However, the choice of interpretivism tends to produce findings with low reliability, but high validity (Collis & Hussey, 2014). It also allows findings to be generalized from one setting to another similar setting. Furthermore, since the interviews were conducted in Swedish instead of English, there could be an error in accuracy in the translation of the transcribed interviews. This could lead to less reliable results as there is a higher risk of misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

3.6.2 Validity

Validity is the degree to which a test measures precisely what a researcher wants to evaluate. If the phenomenon being studied is complex and difficult to measure, interpretivist studies may be more likely to produce valid results than positivist studies (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The validity of structured interviews seems to be larger than unstructured interviews (Campion, Pursell, & Brown, 1988). However, we conducted our interviews in a semi-structured manner, with a purposive sample. A challenging aspect of conducting interviews is that interviewees can either give an opinion or make a policy statement, which does not necessarily provide accurate or truthful information (Lee, 1993).

Another problem is that interviewees might give answers that they perceive as the "correct" or "acceptable" answer in the social context in which the interview is conducted. This can however be overcome by increasing the depth of the interview (Lee, 1993). This could also improve the validity of the research. Furthermore, the sampling method chosen makes it so none of them had any relationship with each other, as there were different industries, with predetermined criteria to be met beforehand. Furthermore, the choice of an inductive approach can also make it seem that findings are more representative than they are. This can lead to findings having biases and skewed results. An example would be that each company that was interviewed had a hybrid model, while logically true, it is not realistically true to assume that every company has a hybrid model.

4 Results

In this section, the reader will be familiarized with the findings from the interviews conducted with 10 different companies, that are relevant to the topic of quiet quitting. The findings have been grouped into three sections, Work from Home, Communication, and Job Motivation. Under each section, further themes have been developed.

Table 4.1 Companies and Industries that were Interviewed.

Company Pseudonym	Industry	Revenue	Employees	Role
Assistance Company	Healthcare	SEK 10 mil	900	CEO
Assistance Company	Healthcare	SEK 10 mil	900	Employee
Finance Company A	Finance	SEK 15 bil	16 000	Manager
Finance Company A	Finance	SEK 15 bil	16 000	Private Advisor
Finance Company B	Finance	SEK 6 bil	11 000	Manager
Finance Company B	Finance	SEK 6 bil	11 000	Private Advisor
IT Company A	IT	SEK 15 mil	5	Head of Sales and co-founder
IT Company A	IT	SEK 15 mil	5	IT-technician
IT Company B	IT	SEK 50 mil	50	COO
IT Company B	IT	SEK 50 mil	50	UI/UX Designer
IT Company C	IT	SEK 1,5 bil	780	CEO
IT Company C	IT	SEK 1,5 bil	780	Employee
Manufacturing Company	Manufacturing	SEK 200 mil	130	Head of Machinery
Manufacturing Company	Manufacturing	SEK 200 mil	130	Machine Service
Real Estate Company	Real Estate	SEK 6 bil	450	Technical Manager
Real Estate Company	Real Estate	SEK 6 bil	450	Technical Administrator
Staffing Company	Staffing	n.d	10	CEO
Staffing Company	Staffing	n.d	10	Employee
Tobacco Company	Tobacco	SEK 1 bil	150	Logistics and Distribution Management
Tobacco Company	Tobacco	SEK 1 bil	150	Supply Chain Management

Upon coding the interviews, some themes could be identified. These themes are recurring events of the correspondents and the companies.

Sections	Themes
Working from home	Incentives for WFH Disincentives for WFH
WFH impact on communication	Efficiency Informal communication Support
WFH impact on motivation	Going the extra mile Motivating factors

Figure 6 Section and Themes

4.1 Working from home

In this section, we will interpret and present the findings regarding the employees' opinions on working from home. The relevant themes identified for this section are *Incentives for work-from-home* and *Disincentives for work-from-home,* which include opinions regarding the option to telework.

4.1.1 Incentives and Disincentives for Work-from-home

Many of the companies that were interviewed have decided to return to the office after the pandemic. While most of the companies still allow work-from-home to different extents, many of the managers still preferred that their employees are at the office as much as possible. From the findings, there seems to be a consensus that the employees appreciate having a hybrid model, or at least the opportunity to sometimes work from home, as this gives them a sense of freedom.

The employee at the **'Assistance Company'** for instance, described that "*I love to work at the office, but if it is going to become obligatory and that you have to be there, it feels like I would not enjoy it the same way anymore"*. They further explained that despite their having the right to work from home, it would not necessarily mean they would use that privilege. The manager of **'IT Company A'** said that *"they can work from home, but the social aspect makes it, so you're drawn to the office"*. The manager of the company states that *"a lot of people remain at the office",* and the employee corroborates this by saying that they prefer working from the office. However, the employee also said that removing the ability to work from home would *"decrease the freedom"*, and subsequently "*lead to the work being less attractive"*. The employee at the **'Manufacturing Company'** additionally believed that removing work from home would bring down morale.

Even if the employees may enjoy the freedom of working from home, some employers have conflicting opinions regarding it. The CEO of **'IT Company C'**, for example, is not entirely satisfied with their increase in remote workers as they said the following: *"We would like to have them at the office all the time, and therefore we are working towards getting employees to voluntarily want to come here every day"*. **'IT Company C'** has thus invested more in their office. **'Finance Company B'** has also invested in the offices to make "*employees want to return to the office*". The preference for employees to willingly come to the office instead of mandating it likely stems from management's awareness of employees valuing the flexibility offered by the hybrid model and not wanting to create dissatisfaction.

The employee of **'Finance Company A'**, however, explained that they like the idea of separating work from home and that the hybrid model does not fit them. This can however be explained as the employee not having the opportunity to use the hybrid model, which would make them not value it as much.

The employee of the **'Staffing Company'** say that they enjoy working at the office but would probably prefer having the opportunity to work from home in the future. This might be because the company is in its early stages, and that cohesion is valued, but as the employee becomes more comfortable with individual tasks, some degree of freedom is wanted. Similarly, to '**IT**

Company A', the workforce is smaller. This might be the reason for the preference of working from the office, despite the work being different.

The employee of the **'Assistance Company'** also says that the freedom of having the opportunity to work from home is not utilized in their case, as they dislike working from home. However, they say that if working solely from the office becomes obligatory and a must, then they would not appreciate the work as much. There is freedom that comes with the responsibility, and the removal of it makes the employee very dissatisfied. Furthermore, the office consists of ten workers, which would make it more cohesive.

The **'Tobacco Company'** had the opportunity to work from home pre-COVID, which meant that they were more familiar with it. The employee also says that there is a huge responsibility with working from home and that the privilege can be revoked if they do not do their work. As with many of the interviewed companies, the manager would also like to have the employees working from the office more, despite knowing that they had more job autonomy.

There is therefore a consensus that the removal of work-from-home brings dissatisfaction. The employees of **'IT Company B'** even stated that they would possibly look for other jobs if their company removed its hybrid-model. This can be important for companies to be aware of, regarding the risk of employees starting to quiet quit due to, employees' dissatisfaction with working arrangements and feeling that their "freedom" has been taken away from them. The removal of the option will thus make employees quiet quit to a higher degree, despite not using the service. The notion of having it is valued more than doing it. Continuing with the ability to work-from-home may make these employees less likely to quite quit.

4.2 Impact of Work-From-Home on Communication

In this section, we will present and interpret the findings from the interviews regarding work-from-home's impact on communication. The relevant themes for this section are *efficiency*, which entails people's perception of how communication remotely effect their work efficiency, *informal communication*, which is the casual conversations between colleagues and supervisors, lastly *Support* which is the interviewee's perception of receiving help from colleagues or managers.

4.2.1 Efficiency

The opinions of '**IT Company A'** and **'IT Company B'** on teleworking's impact on the effectiveness of communication differ the most from the others. Both companies have reported significant improvements in communication due to the use of digital tools such as Teams and Slack, which has led to an increase in revenue and more time spent on bringing in new clients. For '**IT Company A'**, external communication has also been improved since many clients wish to communicate online through the same tools. There is better connectivity between co-workers, and they describe it as a better way to communicate, due to having more tools. The COO of '**IT Company B'** said that they had worked digitally in many IT companies before and said that employees valued *"that there was clarity"*. Therefore, they made the term "digital inclusion". The COO said the following:

We work with 'digital inclusion' to make sure that the people that work from a distance are included, and that can be everything from dialogue and career and such, because you tend to easily be forgotten, to making sure that sound and light work when you are at a distance compared to when you are in office.

This also explains why, despite their size, many of the workers are comfortable with working from home. These companies were also the companies showing fewer signs of quiet quitting, as employees could help each other better and communicate more efficiently with each other.

The employee at the **'Manufacturing Company'** also thinks that digitalization has improved communication internally as it saves a lot of time, but communication externally has become worse, and there is still a preference for meeting people. Furthermore, the employee of **'Finance Company A'** said that they have become better at working with Teams and with Mail, and that communication has become more effective internally. They also believe that communication with customers will become more digitalized in the future. While positive, these companies did not experience the same degree of efficiency as '**IT Company A'** and **'IT Company B'**, which could be due to the nature of their work.

A lot of companies expressed that a disadvantage of communication while remote working is that it takes a lot of time to connect with the correct people. **'IT Company C'** experienced that some are more active on Teams and mail than others, which simplifies communication, but the other half makes it difficult and hinders effectiveness. The manager of **'Finance company B'** perceives that communication in-office has become more efficient due to the availability of everyone as it is easier for colleagues to get quick help from others which otherwise can hinder employees from progressing with their work. This was not as present as when they were working from home, which is evident in the employee of the company. The employee said that there is better communication at the office and that the manager was easier to connect with outside of digital tools.

The employee at the **'Tobacco Company'** explained that one of the biggest challenges with working remotely was also getting in contact with the manager. They further said that it was frustrating when you wanted a quick response to easier questions like a technical issue, which is something that affected the efficiency of communication. This was also the case for the employee of the **'Real Estate Company'**, as they said that "*it was clearly more difficult to reach my manager at home than at the Office*", due to meetings having to be booked, instead of simply speaking with them directly.

The manager at the **'Staffing Company'** also said that communication could sometime be unilateral, as *"on Teams, for example, it is easy that as a manager that you are the only one talking",* which they said would not occur at the office since all the employees would give comments and opinions on ideas. This opinion can also be found in the interview with the employee at the **'Assistance Company'** who deemed that conversations through Teams became unilateral, explaining that *"only the manager was talking, and a dialogue was not created"*. This creates inefficient communication, and slow responses may also build up frustration in the organization which can increase the risk of quiet quitting as lack of efficiency can be demotivation. Furthermore, questions that are left unanswered can be connected to

feelings of isolation in the organization, which in turn leads to a decrease in engagement, and thus performance. The decrease in engagement for organizational matters is a sign of quiet quitting, as one does not participate as much anymore.

Overall, this indicates that digitalized communication does not fit all organizations, as some may be more equipped to the adjustment during the pandemic. Companies should choose a communication style that fits them. For example, the **'Assistance Company'** had problems with communication due to work-from-home, however, they also had some positive experiences with digital communication, leading them to implement a combination of both methods after the pandemic. **'IT Company A'** and **'IT Company B'** both increased their usage of digital channels, and both also increased their effectiveness as an organization as a result. One could speculate that it has to do with the organizations being smaller, which enables easier communication. Furthermore, both companies stated that their work became more digitalized, while others returned to a similar approach as before. This might be because the work of **'IT Company A'** and **'IT Company B'** allows for better use of digital channels, as they have implemented it to a higher degree than other companies. Furthermore, **'IT Company B'** also focuses on "digital inclusion", which means that every worker is informed about decisions and such, despite working online. The transparency of these companies can thus simplify the work. Since their employees were engaged in the company through efficient ways of digital communication, there were fewer signs of quiet quitting for them.

4.2.2 Support

Due to digital communication, some employees observed that they received less feedback and encouragement from their supervisor. The employee from the **'Assistance Company'** commented the following: *"I think it is super important that the manager follows up conversations, talks about how things should be delivered and gives feedback (...) to have feedback shows that somebody they care for my work"*. Furthermore, the employee from the **'Real Estate Company'** had similar opinions, stating that *"Praise and encouragement are important for me as it motivates and ensures that I am doing a good job"*. The employee at the **'Tobacco Company'** enjoyed returning to the office, as they felt like their work "*is being seen and you get direct feedback on what you are working on",* something the employee at the **'Finance Company B'** also agreed on.

The employee of the **'Staffing Company'** said that "*work is good from both home and at the office",* but that they are more recognized and encouraged at the office. They also say that they do more work and do more than demanded at the office, because they are "*on fire [sic].*" They also explain that since the company is smaller, it is much easier to measure results. This is thus translated directly to positive feedback and encouragement, which makes the employee feel *"a sense of belonging and being a part of something bigger"*. This ties in with quiet quitting and might explain why some silently disengage from their work, as they are not supported, and are ultimately not engaged in the company. The manager also agrees as they feel that it is much easier to encourage people at the office and support them in their work. Something that the manager of **'Finance Company A'** also believed. This manager says that it is very difficult to engage employees and encourage them digitally, so all meetings that are 'sales-related' are in-person. This is because "*you need to give each other energy or, builds on that you need to give*

energy". They also describe that it is also hard to give feedback since it is difficult to measure results from home. One can only see if one does not do their work, which leaves little room for positive feedback for those that would do their work good.

It should however be noted that not everybody perceived that they gave less feedback. The CEO of **'IT Company C'** said that they tried to give feedback as much as possible through digital channels, like Teams. The employee of the company felt as if the feedback was unchanged from working at the office, which could mean that management tried to encourage employees as much as possible. The employee said that the feedback and encouragement from his manager *"were very good because it was motivating"*. This can indicate that this manager had a working strategy when it comes to reaching out and encouraging employees while working remotely.

Overall, some employees experienced reduced feedback and encouragement due to digital communication. For these employees, it can be observed that encouragement from supervisors helps motivate them. However, if they do not receive the feedback they require, the employees may be left feeling unappreciated, neglected, and demotivated, contributing to the possibility for quiet quitting. Some managers also admitted to having problems with giving sufficient feedback while employees were working from home.

4.2.3 Informal Communication

Due to working from home, some organizations have experienced a decrease in informal communication, which is casual conversations in the workplace. From the interviews, it can be observed that casual conversations are deemed as important between coworkers, but also between employees and supervisors. The manager from the **'Assistance Company'** commented that they felt like it was harder to know how the employees were feeling due to work-from-home, as at the office *"you can always talk during 'fika', or in small exchanges when you walk by the coffee machine".* Similarly, the manager at the **'Real Estate Company'** also mentioned "*the small exchanges by the coffee machine"* and how that is an important opportunity to give feedback and see how the employees are feeling. Additionally, the employee of '**Finance Company A**' also commented that you lose the social aspect of the work, and that "*you are not in the fika-room"*, being able to small-talk. This can be referred to as the *Support* theme, indicating that the more casual conversations at the office also can work as a moment of reconciling between departments, employees, and employers.

Another point of view is that informal communication helps with cohesion. The CEO at **'IT Company C'** explained that the cohesion has become very good being back at the office after the pandemic: *"a lot of small talks, happy faces, and much joy"*. Something he experienced had disappeared when they were teleworking. This is corroborated by the **'Tobacco Company'**¸ where they said that "*you can joke and talk about everything from 'heaven to earth'* ". While some may consider the 'small talk' as a distraction, for others it is an important part of why they may enjoy their work.

This informal communication can be an important part of the company's ability to create a community and overall increase the employee's sense of job satisfaction. Similarly, to the *Support* theme, not feeling seen and appreciated by the employer may affect their performance increasing the risk of quiet quitting. Face-to-face interaction can also help the employer to

"spot" a quiet quitter if they could talk about the employee's well-being and overall job satisfaction more often.

4.3 Impact of Work-From-Home on Motivation

In this section, we are going to present the findings from the interviews that are regarding job motivation, and how working from home may impact it. From the findings, we identified the following theme, "*Going the extra mile"* and *Motivating factors*, which will be presented together as the motivating factors explain the reasons why people perceived they put in extra effort.

4.3.1 "Going the Extra Mile" & Motivating Factors

While some of the employees and managers in the interviews did not perceive any difference in the initiatives being taken when working at home, others experienced a decline. There was a reoccurring belief among the interviewees that you are more inclined to put additional effort into your job when working in an office, and that you take more responsibility.

Many interviewees expressed that the increased collaboration and support from colleagues and supervisors due to face-to-face interactions increased motivation. This is evident for **'Finance Company A'**, as they started to have all their important meetings face-to-face, instead of virtual meetings. This is due to the increased motivation that was observed when working in-office, which consequently has encouraged employees to "go the extra mile" and take more initiative and responsibility. The manager of **'Finance Company B'** expressed that "*Once in the office, everyone worked on and did that 'little extra' when you had employees to help and communicate with*". Furthermore, the same observations had been made at the **'Assistance Company',** as the employee states that while working from home, you *"only do what you're supposed to do"*, because the work did not allow for helping other people, due to less cohesion between departments. This can be interpreted as there is a will and wish to help co-workers, but due to an absence of communication between departments and people, fewer people are likely to assist. This can create an uneven workload which impacts both sides, where one side has too much work, and one side has too little work, both leading to disengagement. This ultimately leads to quiet quitting, as disengagement leads to a decline in productivity. The employees at the **'Assistance Company'** also state that they did not receive any encouragement from the manager. They also saw a "*bigger change in performance*" when they could return to the office, as they "*got more energy, more cohesion, united work, and united teams"*. Working from home drastically reduced their motivation to work.

The CEO at the **'Staffing Company'** believed that employees take more initiative at the office as *"their supervisor is available and can communicate with you, encourage and give support if you need help"*. He further explained that the collaboration and visualization of your colleagues may also motivate employees to work harder. The employee at **'IT Company B'**, said that *"The coworkers make a big difference when it comes to motivation, and you do not get that at home"*, further adding that it is harder to support colleagues remotely. The employee of the **'Real Estate Company'** also agrees with this, expressing the following:

> *I believed that most people take bigger responsibility and initiative at work than they would at home because at the office, we are many people who can support each other, and help each other and we have a boss that we can confine in and can support us*.

The **'Tobacco Company's'** manager also said that "*employees took more responsibility in the office, of course, due to always having me and their colleagues at hand*", further confirming the notion that the increasing support and collaboration at the office, motivate employees and give them more incentive to "go the extra mile". This was not evident as the employees worked from home because work became isolated.

The **'Manufacturing Company'** strengthens the idea that work-from-home may lead to taking less responsibility. Their manager believes that many employees who work from home have their goals for the day, and "clock out" as soon as they finish. They further elaborate on the following:

> *If you were at work, you would have a lot of other things that you could have done to 'oil the machinery.' I think that it is so that you fill your day, you might not do as many things yourself, but you help a lot of others.*

This implies that employees take more responsibility and initiative in-office rather than at home. Furthermore, the manager of the **'Manufacturing Company'** says that it "*is impossible*" to measure results from people working from home, but that employees know what needs to be done due to the way of work, and thus does not contribute to feelings of dissatisfaction. The employee at the **'Manufacturing Company'** also agrees with this statement, as they also believe that when working at home, they often do their tasks for the day and then "clock out". They say, "*When you are done at 3 o'clock… then I can stamp out"*.

Furthermore, the employee at the '**Real Estate Company'** says that they became very tired and lost their routines while working from home. They also add that some co-workers were playing PlayStation instead of working and that they have heard of people developing alcoholism. This is a clear sign of Quiet Quitting, as they were not engaged in their work at all. One could presume that the inability to measure the performance of the work contributes to lacking meaningful feedback from the manager, which could explain feelings of disengagement with the employees. The employee also said that they deem it as important to continually have a dialogue with their manager, for confirmation that one is doing a good job. The employee of the **'Tobacco Company'** further states that *"You work differently at the office and perform better, because of everyone being there and watching"*. This could be interpreted as an employee will feel motivated if they are obligated to perform under surveillance.

Overall, the notion of "going the extra mile", which entails taking more responsibility and initiative, is an indicator of a dedicated and committed employee, who has not quiet quit. Several of the interviewed people showcase that their motivation and willingness to 'oil the machinery' increases as they are in an office, with co-workers and supervision. On the contrary, employees who limit themselves to completing basic tasks, and not having extra challenges or responsibilities, signal that there is a lack of enthusiasm and commitment. This ultimately leads to disengagement, as one does not see the work as captivating, and consequently leads to quiet

quitting, where one would rather play the PlayStation, as in the **'Real Estate Company'**. However, according to the employee of the **'Assistance Company'**, there was no cohesion to be able to help other people, which led them to not do it.

This proves that there is an obligation for management to provide an environment where employees feel as if they are contributing and that there is an opportunity to help other co-workers. Being motivated on the job leads to employees who are more willing to assist and "go the extra mile."

5 Analyse

In this section, a theoretical discussion about the findings and the three theories, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Two-factor theory, and theory X & theory Y will be made in an effort to complete our purpose, which was to investigate the relationship between working from home and quiet quitting, and how digital leadership can affect job satisfaction.

In order to implement a work-from-home model, a manager needs to be able to make sure the workforce understands digital communication, is able to recognize them more through feedback, and increases job enrichment for the role. The findings from our interviews show that most of the companies still have some sort of teleworking to various degrees. However, findings also suggest that even if the employees seem to enjoy this freedom, they often enjoy working at the office more. While the sense of *freedom* was one of the most relevant themes regarding peoples' perspectives of work-from-home, the other themes of *efficiency*, *feedback*, and *informal communication* were identified as items that were affected both negatively and positively due to work-from-home. Lastly, the "*Going the extra mile*" theme presented how people perceived how the work efforts changed due to working arrangements.

As the purpose of this paper is to provide knowledge about how quiet quitting may occur and the steps managers have taken to mitigate it, in relation to work-from-home, it is necessary to know what behaviors may indicate that someone is quiet quitting to be able to locate the reasons behind it. In our qualitative research, we did not enquire specifically if employees have "quiet quit", instead we based our results on the findings regarding the interviewee's discussion about job satisfaction, motivation, and job performance, to interpret its relationship to quiet quitting. A focus on finding discrepancies between managers and employees was also prioritized.

5.1 Working From Home

Depending on the employee, work-from-home impacts job satisfaction and motivation differently. According to the two-factor theory, there exist both hygienic factors that can decrease job satisfaction, and motivation factors that can motivate a workforce (Herzberg, Mausner, Snyderman, & B, 1959). Hygienic factors, such as working arrangements, supervision, and interpersonal relations, can all be found in our findings. With working arrangements, many of the people that had the option to work from home, or had a hybrid model, seemed to value the notion of having it more than actually working from home.

This could make the notion of *freedom* an ambivalent factor, as the absence of it causes dissatisfaction, but not enough to stop working (Herzberg, Mausner, Snyderman, & B, 1959). What makes it ambivalent, can be explained as 'job autonomy', which means that employees are given freedom and independence in their work, which is linked to higher job satisfaction, engagement, and creativity (Herzberg, 1968). This would explain why employees prefer having the option of working from home, despite not doing it, as it is a sign of responsibility. This in turn makes employees more motivated since they are tasked with more trust. This in turn would make the job linked to job enrichment, where more responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities are present for a job, which makes the employee more motivated than the other companies interviewed.

Some employees experienced increased motivation and accountability in the office, where personal interactions and support from colleagues and managers increased cohesion. These observations support McGregor's Theory Y, which assumes that employees are self-motivated and take initiative when they feel a sense of belonging and support (McGregor, 1960). On the other hand, some employees expressed that they were more comfortable in the office and that working from home made them tired and lost routines. This sense of needing a structured work environment and support from leaders is consistent with McGregor's Theory X, which assumes that employees need external structure and encouragement to be effective (McGregor, 1960).

Removing the option for work-from-home may for these people create backlash and dissatisfaction towards the organization. Consequently, this may mean that the employees' willingness to put in effort towards the company can be impacted, as they feel like the organization is not listening to their demands. The feeling of being isolated and disconnected from the organization is evident to cause employees to quiet quit (Yuspahruddin, et al., 2020). This can be interpreted as a reduced organizational commitment, which is impacting the employees' willingness to engage in OCB, and ultimately increasing the risk for quiet quitting. The dimension being affected would in this case be that of conscientiousness. Essentially, employees' lack of engagement spreads, which in turn leads to quiet quitting (Nordgren & Björs, 2023).

Van der Lippe & Lippényl (2019) have drawn the conclusion that performance is correlated with the number of people that work from home and states that a workforce that mostly works from home, will in turn perform worse. Many of the companies' managers and employees explained that their performance increased as everyone returned, confirming the assumption. This can be due to organizational culture, where some companies have more demanding tasks or job enrichment, or it is due to how digitalized the work is. Furthermore, companies with more measurable work, and less customer-centric roles were fonder of working from home and even preferred it. However, the notion that there is a possibility to work from home, a great responsibility, means that people value it more than they use it.

5.2 Communication

Furthermore, people also valued working from the office since it meant that they could meet employees and have some informal communication. This ties in with the hygienic factor of interpersonal relationships, which were difficult to have during COVID, since communication was negatively impacted for many companies. Many of the interviewed companies explained that once they returned to the office, a lot of the employees were happy to see each other again. Additionally, they also explained that they started to "go the extra mile", which meant that they were satisfied with the work itself, which is also a motivation factor. As people said that their productivity increased once they returned, one can assume that their engagement was not on top while working from home. This is confirmed by Hom, Allen, & Griffith (2019), which stated that as engagement in work decreases, so does performance. The most successful companies are those that have effectively engaged and connected their personnel, through digital channels. Interestingly, these companies often had a smaller number of employees, but there were exceptions. To improve cohesion, thus mitigating quiet quitting, it is crucial to

prioritize inclusion and ensure that everyone is aware of each other's roles and responsibilities, and also engage in informal communication. This inclusive approach promotes a sense of unity and clarity within the organization and also enables better communication.

Additionally, the interviewed employees confirmed that it was more difficult to communicate with their managers during the pandemic and that it would consequently lead to receiving less feedback. Jobs that were deemed difficult to measure the results of were the most severely impacted, as managers could not encourage employees or give representative feedback. This was also explained by (Baker, 2022), who described that more feedback generates more work satisfaction and more productive employees. This ties in with the motivation factors of recognition and achievement, as the manager could not see these factors as visibly. Shein (2010) describes this in detail, as he says that negated work leads to a decline in motivation to continue working. This lack of recognition of their work has led to feelings of not advancing or growing, which are also factors for motivation. In the context of the study, this would confirm Basset-Jones & Lloyd (2005), as they said that managerial recognition has declined.

5.3 Job Motivation

The motivational factors can be best observed with employees who disliked work-from-home admitting to "going the extra mile" while returning to the office. As employees return, they are not isolated and thus are more connected to their organization (Yuspahruddin, et al., 2020). The employees also felt as if they started to help their co-workers more, that there is more assistance between departments, and that people possess altruistic behavior, going out their way to "oil the machinery". They felt inclined to take more initiative or responsibility when working at the office. This is in line with the finding of Ang, Van Dyne, and Begley's (2003) and Krajcák and Kozák's (2022) studies about the work-from-home effect on OCB. It however goes against the belief that people who feel job satisfaction are more likely to engage in OCB behavior which Bateman & Organ (1983) argued. Demirel, Elhusadi & Alhasadi (2018) also mentioned the relationship between OCB and job satisfaction, however, they indicate that dissatisfaction with other factors can hinder OCB. From our findings, the explanation for this discrepancy can be that the organization has yet to optimize its new working arrangements, as companies that have focused on digital inclusion have succeeded more. Reduced visibility, distance from colleagues, and reduced feedback are some of the more prominent factors perceived that may be the cause of why people engage less in OCB while working at home.

It also emerged that some employees developed negative behaviors during remote work, such as playing PlayStation during working hours or developing alcohol addiction. These examples of "quiet quitting" can be linked to both Theory X and Theory Y, where some employees need stricter supervision and control to avoid unwanted behaviors, while others may be more comfortable with the presence of leaders and colleagues to feel responsible and belonging (McGregor, 1960).

5.4 Concept of 'Digital Cohesion'

Overall, the main premise for mitigating quiet quitting is for managers to ensure "digital cohesion" upon introducing a model of working from home. Digital cohesion allows employees

to work better with each other, as they are more connected. This can lead to less informal communication, which is evident by the study to provide a feeling of a unified culture. Furthermore, many employees became more motivated when returning to the office. This was mainly due to the people that were present. If a leader enables smooth communication for personnel, then more people will be more motivated. This would also make employees closer to the decision-making, through "digital inclusion", which allows for more engagement in organizational matters. The engagement of employees is a way to rapidly lessen quiet quitting. In order to continue improving and having a sense of growth, there should be a focus on digital feedback, as it proves a motivational way for employees to continue working and become connected. The work also needs to allow working from home, with tasks that are challenging and interconnected with other people, which challenges an employee and makes them communicate better. Once cohesion is achieved, people feel more responsible and thus, are less likely to quiet quit. This is because the disengaging part of work was that there was a lack of cohesion between both departments, employees, and leadership.

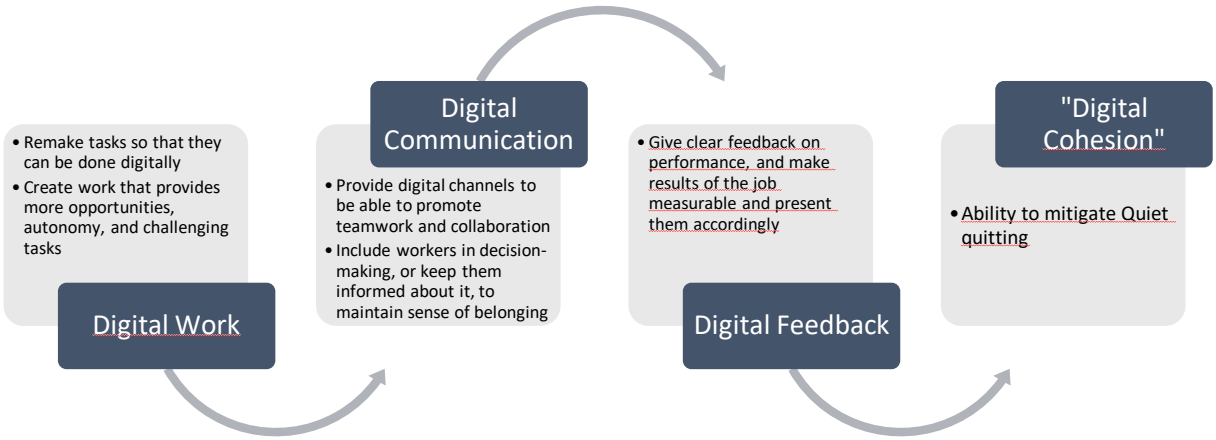


Figure 7 Requirements leaders must ensure to mitigate quiet quitting in a digital environment with employees.

6 Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on organizations from various industries around the world. While many companies were forced to adapt to remote work during the pandemic, some have continued with the remote working arrangements to different degrees. As we observed a potential connection between the rising phenomenon of quiet quitting and teleworking, we decide to study the relationship between working from home and quiet quitting, and how digital leadership can affect job satisfaction.

The results show that remote work can have a significant impact on employees' job satisfaction. Some employees highly valued the freedom of having the opportunity to work remotely. This has become a dilemma for some organizations, as they perceived that there is increased motivation and initiative taken while employees are working in the office. Something that many employees also expressed. This indicates that remote work can increase the risk of quiet quitting as employees who work remotely can feel isolated and disconnected from their workplace and colleagues. They may also experience a lack of support and feedback from their managers and other employees and these factors can lead to the employee feeling less committed to their work.

The analysis emphasizes the importance of "digital cohesion" and interpersonal relationships to counter quiet quitting, especially in the context of remote work. The results show that employees valued working in the office because it enabled informal communication and a sense of belonging with colleagues. Returning to the office also led to increased productivity and motivation, suggesting that engagement was lower when working from home. However, as many employees still enjoy the freedom of working from home, companies need to optimize their digital workspace to be able to achieve the same engagement remotely as in-office.

The importance of inclusion and clear communication is emphasized to promote cohesion within organizations. Employees must be aware of each other's roles and responsibilities and engage in informal communication to foster a sense of unity and clarity. Organizations that effectively engage and connect their workforce through digital channels, even if they have fewer employees, have succeeded in improving cohesion. This is why companies may consider providing technology tools that facilitate remote collaboration and communication, such as video and conference calls, chat programs, and project management tools. These tools can help employees feel more connected and engaged in their work, both in the office and remotely.

In summary, remote work can have both positive and negative effects on employees' job satisfaction and quiet quitting. To reduce the risk of quiet quitting companies should focus on creating a strong corporate culture that promotes communication and collaboration, providing support and feedback to employees both in the office and especially remotely. The company should also provide technical tools that facilitate remote collaboration and communication.

6.1 Future Research

Future research in the field of the digital workforce could explore which means are best for managing a fully digital workforce. This may include research into which technologies are most

effective in facilitating remote communication and collaboration. It may also involve examining what leadership strategies are most effective for managing a fully digital workforce, including how to foster remote employee engagement and motivation.

Another important future research could be how age differences and technological gaps affect employees' ability to work remotely and if people from different generations have varying experiences. It might be important to examine how different generations adapt to digital work environments and what challenges they may encounter, as this can also give insight into what people are more inclined to quiet quit. You could further examine how to help employees who have difficulty adapting to digital work environments and how to foster a culture of learning and development in a fully digital work environment, as this knowledge can also help managers mitigate quiet quitting.

Further studies can also investigate how different countries handle the transition to a fully digital work environment. It may be important to examine which factors influence how well organizations from certain countries manage the transition to a fully digital work environment, including access to technology. Because a well-thought-out transition may mitigate the risk of quiet quitting. You could further investigate how different countries deal with the social and cultural challenges that can arise when working remotely.

To summarize, future research in the field of the digital workforce could examine a range of topics, including which technologies and leadership strategies are most effective in managing a fully digital workforce, as this knowledge also can give more insight into overall job satisfaction and quiet quitting.

6.2 Limitations

A limitation of this study is that it was limited to a specific area, Småland, and a specific number of industries. This means that the results cannot be generalized to other areas or industries. Furthermore, the study was based on interview data from employees and managers. This can lead to the results being affected by subjectivity and bias.

Another limitation is that the study did not examine other factors that may influence employee job satisfaction, such as pay and job duties. Future research should examine these factors to gain a more complete picture of how leadership influences employee job satisfaction. We also acknowledge that the study did not examine how different types of leadership affect employee job satisfaction. Future research should investigate this to gain a better understanding of how different types of leadership can affect employee job satisfaction.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Tables

Table 3.1 Interview Questions 18
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8.1.1 Table 3.1 Interview Questions

To the employer	To the employee
- To what extent is work done digitally, that is, in front of a screen? • How did you handle the situation during the pandemic? Did you send people home or let them stay? • What was the initial reaction to sending people home/keeping them at work? • Do employees want to work more from home now, and if so, how do you handle it? • Are you considering the possibility of transforming the work so that it can be done from home? For example, a hybrid model? Why/why not? • Have the tasks been adapted to working from home, or is it the same as when it was on site? • Do you find it difficult to recognize work that has been done from home? Meaning, to give recognition to good employees. • Is it easy to measure results from people working from home? • How do you conduct meetings? How do you conduct important meetings, are they on site? • How do you communicate with each other? Do you use Teams, or is it another service? • Have you had to adjust the way you work due to the pandemic? • Did you find it more difficult to reach your employees during the pandemic? • How did coaching, encouragement, and follow-ups work digitally, that is, how did your leadership work during the pandemic? Do you perceive that your employees felt the same way? • Do you think your employees took more responsibility and initiative at home than in the office? What do you think is the reason? • How much time do you spend encouraging and following up with your employees, and did that increase or decrease during the pandemic? • Do you think that many people were happy to come back to the office?	• What percentage of your work is done digitally, that is, in front of a screen? • Can a majority of the job be done from home, or is it necessary to be on site? What factors determine this? • Does the possibility of working from home enhance your job satisfaction? • How would you feel if your job took away this "privilege"? • Does working from home make you feel less appreciated as an employee? • If you have worked from home, have you ever felt dissatisfied with your work, and if so, has it contributed to your being less willing to help colleagues and the organization? • If you are/were looking for a new job, do you consider whether the company has a hybrid model? • If Company X and Company Y were exactly the same, but Y had a hybrid model, which one would you choose? • Have you noticed changes in how your manager communicates with you since the pandemic? • Do you find it difficult to stay motivated when working from home? • Did you find it more difficult to reach your boss while working from home? • Did you receive the same amount of unconscious and conscious encouragement and support during the pandemic? • Did you take more responsibility at the office or when working from home? • Do you think that many people were happy to come back to the office?

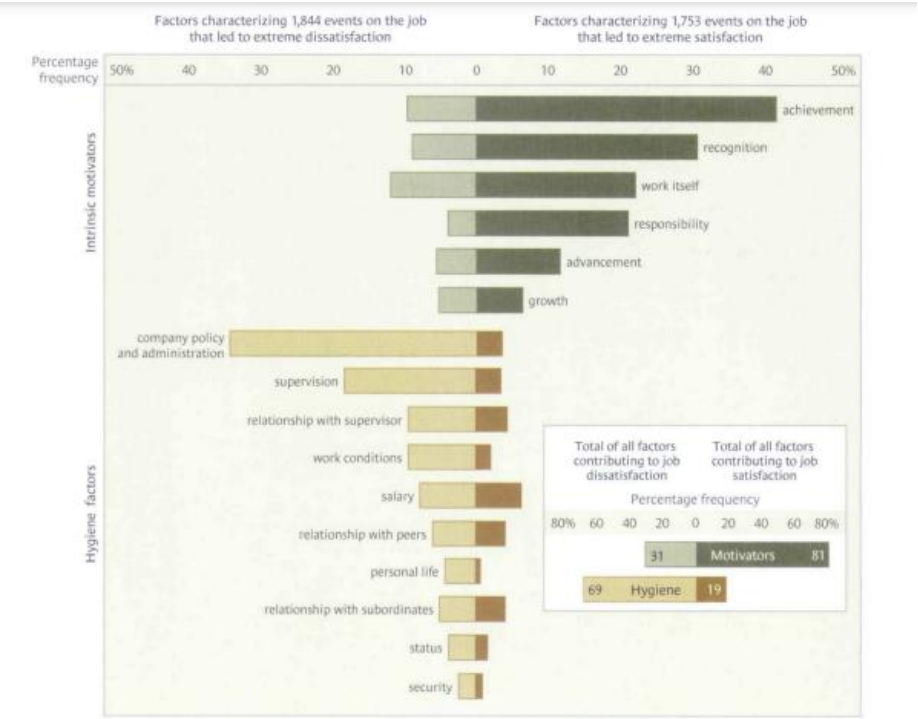
8.1.2 Table 4.1 Companies and Industries that were Interviewed

Company Pseudonym	Industry	Revenue	Employees	Role
Assistance Company	Healthcare	SEK 10 mil	900	CEO
Assistance Company	Healthcare	SEK 10 mil	900	Employee
Finance Company A	Finance	SEK 15 bil	16 000	Manager
Finance Company A	Finance	SEK 15 bil	16 000	Private Advisor
Finance Company B	Finance	SEK 6 bil	11 000	Manager
Finance Company B	Finance	SEK 6 bil	11 000	Private Advisor
IT Company A	IT	SEK 15 mil	5	Head of Sales and co-founder
IT Company A	IT	SEK 15 mil	5	IT-technician
IT Company B	IT	SEK 50 mil	50	COO
IT Company B	IT	SEK 50 mil	50	UI/UX Designer
IT Company C	IT	SEK 1,5 bil	780	CEO
IT Company C	IT	SEK 1,5 bil	780	Employee
Manufacturing Company	Manufacturing	SEK 200 mil	130	Head of Machinery
Manufacturing Company	Manufacturing	SEK 200 mil	130	Machine Service
Real Estate Company	Real Estate	SEK 6 bil	450	Technical Manager
Real Estate Company	Real Estate	SEK 6 bil	450	Technical Administrator
Staffing Company	Staffing	n.d	10	CEO
Staffing Company	Staffing	n.d	10	Employee
Tobacco Company	Tobacco	SEK 1 bil	150	Logistics and Distribution Management
Tobacco Company	Tobacco	SEK 1 bil	150	Supply Chain Management

8.2 Figures

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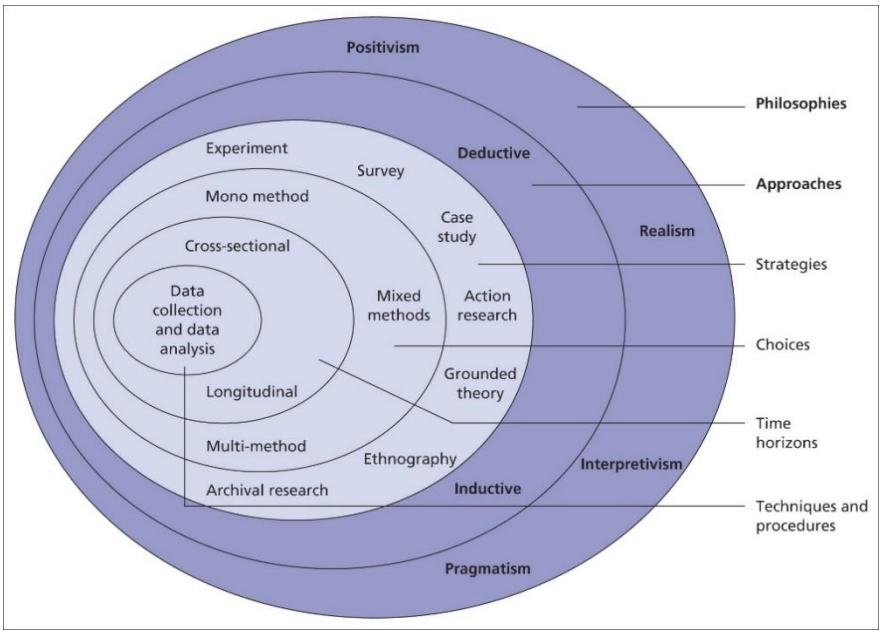
8.2.1 Figure 1 Factors Affecting Job Attitudes as Reported in 12 Investigations by Herzberg (1968)



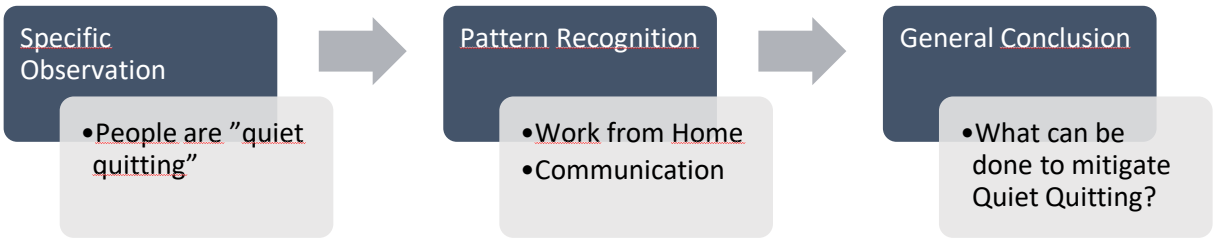
8.2.2 Figure 2 McGregor's Theory X & Y

McGregor's Theory X & Y	
Theory X	**Theory Y**
Work Avoiding	Work is natural
Need to control	Capable of self-direction
Avoid responsibility	Seek responsibility
Workers seek security	Can make a good decision

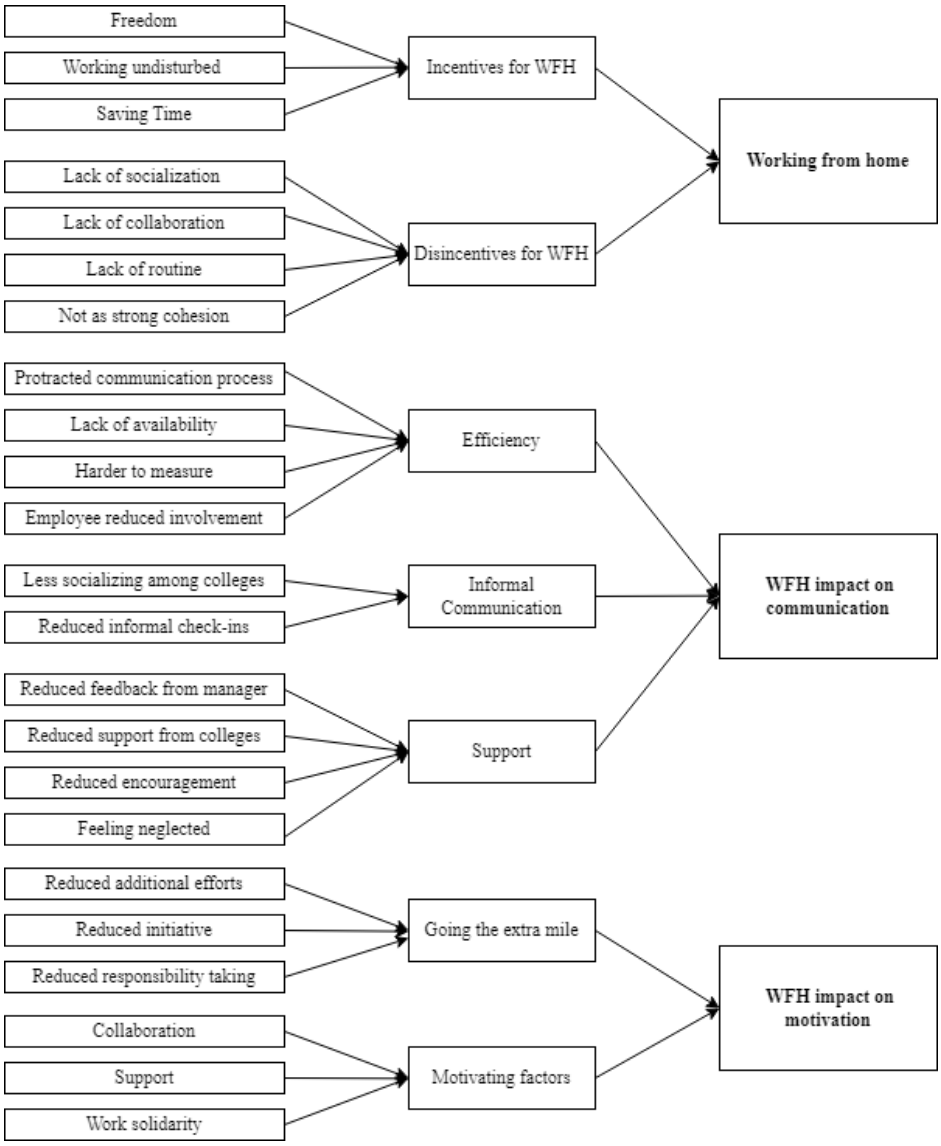
8.2.3 Figure 3 The Onion Process by Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2009)



8.2.4 Figure 4 Inductive Research Approach



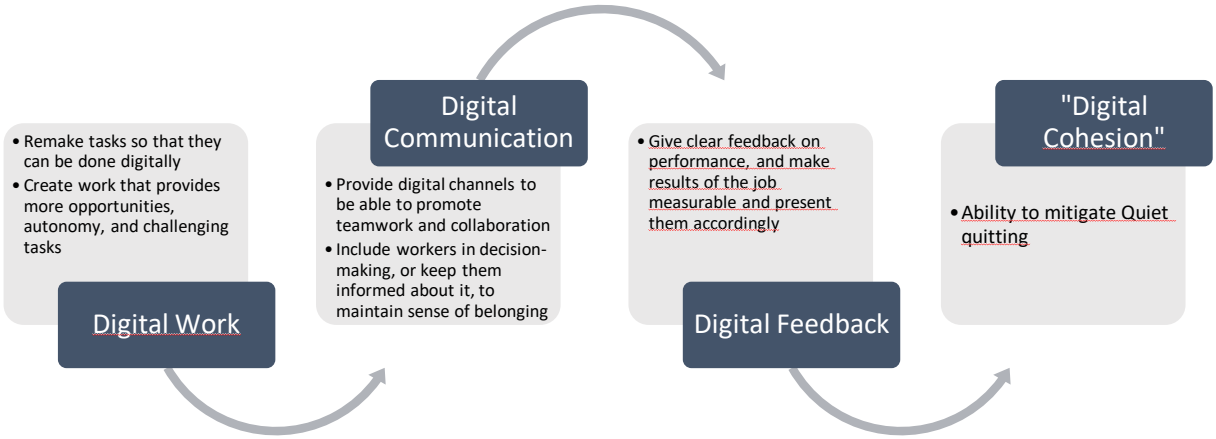
8.2.5 Figure 5 Gioia Method approach for thematic analysis



8.2.6 Figure 6 Section and Themes

Sections	Themes
Working from home	Incentives for WFH Disincentives for WFH
WFH impact on communication	Efficiency Informal communication Support
WFH impact on motivation	Going the extra mile Motivating factors

8.2.7 Figure 7 Requirements leaders must ensure to mitigate quiet quitting in a digital environment with employees.



8.2.8 Codes

WFH impact on Communication	Code	WFH impact on Motivation	Code	Working from home	Code
Efficiency		**Going the extra mile**		**Incentives for WFH**	
Protracted communication:	9	Reduced additional efforts:	13	Freedom:	6
Lack of availability:	8	Reduced initiative:	4	Working undisturbed:	4
Harder to measure:	6	Reduced responsibility taking:	5	Saving time:	2
Employee reduced involvement:	2				
		Motivating factors		**Disincentives for WFH**	
Informal communication		Collaboration:	10	Lack of socialization:	9
Reduced informal check-ins:	5	Support:	7	Lack of collaboration:	3
Less Socializing among colleges:	6	Work Solidarity:	4	Lack of routine:	4
				Not as strong cohesion:	9
Support					
Reduced Feedback from manager:	8				
Reduced support from colleges:	6				
Reduced encouragement:	8				
Feeling neglected:	6				