Telework at future workplaces: COVID-19 enforced telework shaping young adults’ perception of telework

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**Title of thesis:**
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**Abstract:**
This master’s thesis was set to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the way young adults in Finland view telework. Acknowledging the novelty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the purpose was to create an overview of how the COVID-19 enforced telework was experienced among knowledge workers.

While researchers have previously studied voluntary and occasional telework, the concept of involuntary telework has remained rare in academic literature. Combining the preferences of young adults and the advanced ICT infrastructure of Finland with the under-researched topic of forced telework, this research addresses the urgent need to investigate full-time forced telework by focusing on the COVID-19 situation.

Moreover, this longitudinal research provides insight into the effects of the period of forced telework by engaging 95 individuals into two survey rounds, out of which the first survey took place during the first month of COVID-19 restrictions in March 2020, and the other one six months later. With these two qualitative surveys, the individual changes in perceptions and telework-related feelings and habits were analysed both on general and individual levels.

Briefly, the findings suggest that the period of forced telework has shaped the way telework is perceived. All in all, during the first six months of COVID-19 enforced telework, telework satisfaction increased due to several benefits the respondents associated with teleworking. In addition to perceived benefits, individuals also experienced challenges with full-time telework in terms of, for instance, the lack of social interaction. Consequently, the findings suggest a significant interest in the hybrid model of telework in the future.

**Keywords:** Telework, remote work, COVID-19, pandemic, millennials, young adults
“Work is something you do, not some place you go”

Woody Leonhard (1995)
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1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the existence of different work arrangements, working at employer’s premises has remained popular since the Industrial Revolution (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). In the era of rapidly developing technology, increasing interest in sustainability and awareness of potential global disruptions in everyday life, however, the notion of telework has become widely used and applied in the organizational context. Briefly, telework, or working remotely, broadly refers to the practice of working outside one’s conventional workplace with the help of electronic devices (Nilles, 1975, 1994; Ellison, 2004). While several studies have shown that teleworking may be environmentally and economically more sustainable than office work (e.g., Handy & Mokhtarian, 1995; Gao & Hitt, 2003), the number of teleworkers has remained marginal (Aguilera et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the reliance on telework has grown significantly since the beginning of 2020 due to the major global disruptions on untraditional work arrangements as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic (Rudolph et al., 2020). Consequently, the pandemic has been speculated to result in the breakthrough of teleworking and a new work culture appreciating telework (De Preter, 2020; Eurofound, 2020).

More specifically, the spread of COVID-19 has resulted in major national lockdowns, simultaneously affecting the work habits of a large number of employees (Rudolph et al., 2020). For instance in Finland, many companies have instructed employees to rely solely on telework as of March 2020 (Finnish Government, 2020). For firms and their employees, the quick transition from traditional office work to telework may be challenging. Firstly, acquiring the required skills to utilize online platforms can be resource-consuming, especially in terms of time. Moreover, several academic scholars have shown that telework can affect, for instance, one’s productivity and work-life balance in many ways (e.g. Bosua et al., 2012; Hill et al., 2008). On the other hand, the opportunity to explore new work habits can also be beneficial for the employees and thus the organizations, meaning that, for instance, the efficient use of technology may provide new alternatives and bring agility, innovation, and disruption to the everyday work life of employees. Thus, tackling the challenges and opportunities arising from forced telework can potentially affect the way employees feel about telework and the extent of which they would want to utilize it also after the special circumstances provided by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, such a radical push to involuntary telework can consequently shape the way the nature of work is viewed in general (Rudolph et al., 2020). In particular,
understanding how young adults experience the period of forced telework is interesting as they can be regarded as the future of workplaces and the ones shaping the work culture in the long run. Considering that young adults have grown up with technological devices and can hence navigate the digital world, the present telework period can either feel natural or it may not fit the needs of young people after all, ultimately shaping the way work is done in future workplaces.

1.1 Research problem

Previous academic studies have explored the notion of telework and made significant contributions to the understanding of telework in general. In addition to the above discussed economic, environmental and social elements of telework, existing literature has, for instance, explored the connection between teleworking and individual and organizational outcomes (e.g. Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Hill et al., 2008; Rudolph et al., 2020; Baruch, 2002).

However, previously the literature on telework has tended to focus on part-time teleworkers and individual workers in different work arrangements, consequently overlooking the question of how employees would perceive full-time telework (Biron & Veldhoven, 2016). Likewise, Rudolph et al. (2020) argue that despite existing research on telework, the effects of contextual factors vis-à-vis different telework arrangements have not yet been studied in detail. Interestingly, though, Lapierre et al. (2016) explored how involuntary telework is, in fact, perceived more negatively than that of voluntary, providing a fruitful pre-understanding of the field of forced telework. Nevertheless, acknowledging that this is only one study and that such studies are still rare, the field is currently still under-researched and thus needs more empirical support (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2010). Additionally, while telework has been studied previously, the previous literature has explored mainly on employees that telework only occasionally and not all the time and so that everyone else is also relying on telework.

Given the vast number of people relying on remote work during the pandemic, it is indeed a fruitful time to study the notion telework. The rapid and radical push towards telework due to COVID-19 is indeed a novel phenomenon and thus its effects on the employees’ attitudes and perceptions of telework are yet to be explored in detail (Rudolph et al., 2020). While many researchers have been quick to study this phenomenon, the effects are often investigated only at one occasion, overlooking the
The development of telework habits and employees’ feelings towards it, and hence suggesting the longitudinal implications of the situation are currently also under-researched (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2010).

Additionally, young adults and millennials, in particular, have been an interest of many researchers. Many scholars have shown that young adults have a tendency to enjoy, for instance, flexibility and autonomy in work-settings, which are elements often linked to teleworking (Gennamo & Gardner, 2008; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014). However, the effect that full-time telework and forced telework, both in regards to working and studying, might have on the young population is still lacking, again partially due to the novelty of the telework situation. This is especially interesting as young adults are the ones shaping the future workplaces, and hence the effect of the period of forced telework shall be further researched.

In other words, this research has identified two areas that can be regarded as gaps in academic research, namely how individuals, and young adults in particular, experience full-time telework as well as the effects of forced telework caused by COVID-19. According to Sandberg and Alvesson (2010), when considering existing academic literature to find gaps to fill with new research and specific research questions, the research is built on gap-spotting. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is toward filling the mentioned gaps in the previous literature and, as a result, contribute to the existing knowledge on telework.

1.2 Aim of the study

Thereby, to address the above-mentioned gaps, this research will longitudinally explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the telework habits of young adults with a focus on the employees’ and students’ view. The chosen focal group of young adults in Finland is particularly interesting as young adults and their preferences will shape the workplaces in the future, and they are known to enjoy elements often linked to teleworking (e.g. Gennamo & Gardner, 2008). The geographical decision to focus mainly but not solely on people residing Finland is also interesting as Finland is a technologically advanced nation with one of the world’s most sophisticated technological infrastructure (Pyörä, 2001; Pekkola, 2002).
Furthermore, this thesis will be guided by the following two research questions (later RQs):

**RQ 1: How has COVID-19 shaped the way young adults feel about telework?**

**RQ 2: How have young adults’ telework experiences evolved during the first six months of COVID-19 enforced telework?**

The purpose of the first RQ is to generate an overview of how, in fact, young adults feel about telework, how the period of forced telework has shaped that feeling, and ultimately to get indications whether or not teleworking is something they would like to utilize also in the future. The aim of RQ2, on the other hand, is to dive deep into the longitudinal experiences that young adults have gathered throughout the months of telework experience and to see whether or not the forced period of telework has created new work-related habits and challenges for young adults as well as how individuals have experienced work-related endurance and motivation during the pandemic.

Together, these two research questions explore how COVID-19 has shaped the way young adults feel about teleworking. Consequently, these research questions allow an in-depth understanding of the issue by creating a deep overview of whether young adults’ perception of telework was shaped by COVID-19 and changed their work habits through allowing a comparative analysis of the situation before, during and after the pandemic. Additionally, it should be acknowledged that the research questions overlap to some extent, but the main difference between the two RQs is that RQ1 focuses on the general attitude towards teleworking and the feelings individuals had after working remotely for some time whereas RQ2 focuses more on the telework-related experienced gained during the period of forced telework.

To further understand the research aim as well as the connection between the set research questions, please refer to Figure 1 below.
1.3 Delimitations

This research carries delimitations in terms of its scope and its challenging nature arising from today’s uncertainty. Firstly, as mentioned, the study focuses mainly on young adults in Finland. Considering the special circumstances caused by COVID-19, many employees are not only working remotely but also instructed to avoid public places and practice social distancing. Acknowledging that most Finnish elementary schools were closed in March, employees that have children faced new challenges with managing work and children at the same time, affecting their telework experience significantly (Rudolph et al., 2020). Thus, this research will focus on young adults to minimize the extent to which having children at home shapes the results as it is not the aim of this research. In this research, young adults are individuals whose age falls in the range from 18 to 29 (Gennamo & Gardner, 2008). Additionally, the measures taken to hinder the spread of COVID-19 depend on the nation, and thus another delimitation to this study is geographical. Henceforth, the research will focus mainly on people who have resided in Finland during the pandemic and thus does not aim at creating a global and universal understanding of the issue.

Furthermore, this research will focus on knowledge workers who mostly do office work and/or study, simultaneously excluding workers who can be regarded as physical or manual labour. This approach is solely due to the differences in teleworking possibilities between people who have the opportunity to work remotely and those who must in most
cases be present at their workplace as this thesis explores how telework experiences are perceived.

The concrete delimitations arising from the uncertainty, on the other hand, are challenging to point out. However, it can be acknowledged, for instance, that the end of the lockdown and the measures taken to hinder the spread of this pandemic cannot be predicted, which can consequently cause challenges and delimitations to this research as well. Acknowledging that the COVID-19 situation has long-lasting impacts, it is thus vital to place this research into the timely context of March 2020 to January 2021.

1.4 Definitions

In order to gain a coherent understanding of the field, the key definitions of this research are briefly introduced in this section. The key definitions include telework and forced telework, pandemic and millennials. Other concepts that need clarification will be explained when the concept is first introduced.

**Telework and forced telework**

Acknowledging that the notion of telework carries different meanings and definitions, in this paper it will be approached as work that is done outside of employer’s premises, oftentimes from home (Gajedran & Harrison, 2007). Thus, in this paper, the terms “telework”, “working from home” and “remote work” will be used interchangeably. Moreover, forced telework, also known as involuntary telework, refers to the situation in which an employee has to rely on telework without choosing to do so themselves (Lapierre et al., 2016). The notion of telework will be further explored in the next chapters.

**Pandemic**

In contrast to an epidemic, a pandemic is an infectious disease that has spread worldwide and is continuously spreading (Harapan et al., 2020). During the temporal context of this paper, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID-19 a pandemic (WHO, 2020). Also, when only mentioned “pandemic”, this thesis refers to the COVID-19 pandemic unless otherwise stated.

**Millennials**
Briefly, despite the absence of a clear academic consensus, many scholars argue that millennials are a generation born between the early 1980s and the end of the 1990s (e.g. Anderson et al., 2017; Baum, 2019). In this research, however, the chosen focal group of young adults is between the age of 18 and 29. Due to the broad definition of and overlap with the definition of millennials, the focal group will be considered to belong to the generation of millennials in this research unless otherwise stated.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis will continue with a thorough literature review introducing the academic background of the research in chapter 2., focusing on the notion of telework, young working population and COVID-19. Next, chapter 3 will present the methodological approach of this paper through creating an understanding of, for instance, the research philosophy, research design and data collection methods applied in this thesis. Chapter 4, on the other hand, presents the results of this research. In chapter 5, one can find a discussion in which the established research questions are answered, and the theoretical and practical contributions of the research, limitations and suggestions for future research are also explored. In chapter 6, there will be a brief summarizing conclusion.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

To put this research in an academic context and to gain an understanding of the social value of this study, this research will be built on a theoretical foundation through a thorough literature review of relevant academic literature. More specifically, this literature review will explore how work habits have changed throughout the years and simultaneously lay a foundation to answer the established research questions. It is divided into three main sections that are then further divided into sub-sections. Namely, these sections are telework, young working population, and finally the effects of COVID-19 on telework. Thereafter, there will be a brief summary that revises the most valuable theoretical key take-aways that will then guide this research. Due to the aim of this paper, the sub-sections mostly consider teleworking on the individual level instead of the organizational or societal levels.

2.1 Telework

Previous academic studies have explored the notion of telework and made significant contributions to the understanding of telework in general, including for instance the history of telework as well as its effects on employees. Overall, however, the existing literature has a tendency to focus on teleworkers who only occasionally telework or people who have chosen to telework instead of individuals who are forced to telework during a period when others are also teleworking (Biron & Veldhoven, 2016; Rudolph et al., 2020). This section will begin with defining the notion of telework, move on to discussing the historical background of it. Thereafter, the features of today’s telework will be discussed, and finally this section will end with a brief outlook on how the teleworking situation is in Finland.

2.1.1 Definition of telework

Despite the large amount of existing research, the notion of telework still carries different, co-existing and even competing definitions. In fact, there is no clear or mutually accepted definition of telework (McCloskey and Igbaria, 1998). Instead, the notion of telework has become an umbrella term for working at home, telecommuting, flexible working, and other similar alternative working arrangements, such as distance working, remote working and satellite office working (Bergum, 2007; Qvortrup, 1998). The underlying common factor, however, is that work-related matters are done from a
place that is not one’s traditional office place (Gajedran & Harrison, 2007). Additionally, despite the name telework, most scholars agree that in fact, one does not need to include telecommunication (Mokhtarian, 1991). However, in today’s work-life telework and technology are often intricately linked (Ellison, 2004).

In some cases, the term is deliberately kept broad – such as in the case of the European Framework Agreement on Telework (2002). More specifically, the definition provided was the following: “a form of organizing and/or performing work, using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/relationship, where work, which could also be performed at the employer’s premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis” (Welz & Wolf, 2010, pp.3). Consequently, such definition covers different ways of executing telework and allows different interpretations of the notion.

That being said, it should be acknowledged that, in practice, everyone who relies on remote work either full-time or only occasionally can be regarded as teleworkers (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Moreover, the ways of which individuals telework vary to a great extent, partially due to the development of ICT that enables firms to unbind tasks from traditional places, which consequently provides more forms to teleworking than the traditional WFH approach (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Khanna & New, 2008). For instance, while telework is often restrictively thought of as home-based telework, some researchers consider also nomadic workers, such as travelling salesmen or experts seconded to a customer organization to be teleworkers. Similarly, working overtime in a place that is not one’s office before or after business hours, such as checking the professional mailbox, can be regarded as telework (Aguilera et al., 2016). More specifically, Kurland and Bailey (1999) coined the following four types of teleworking offices:

1. The Home Office or “working from home” (Welz & Wolf, 2010), which refers to performing work from one’s home;

2. The Satellite Office, on the other hand, is an independent office space that is not located on the premises of the firm’s headquarters or branch offices;

3. The Neighborhood Work Center shares similarities with the satellite office, but is often less organized and open also for employees from other firms; and finally,
4. Mobile Working or “working on the go” applies to situations in which employees work from anywhere like cafés or airports. (Kurland & Bailey, 1999)

With these different aspects and ways of performing telework, the complexity of the notion becomes evident.

2.1.2 History of telework

To truly grasp the modern concept of telework, it is important to understand the wider societal context within which telework arose, its historical background, and how it slowly became a modern phenomenon.

The idea of teleworking, in fact, is far from being novel (Pyöriä, 2003). The first cases of teleworking can be dated back to the 1970s when simple technology enabled telecommuting mainly subsidiaries were linked to headquarters through the use of dumb terminals using telephone lines as a network bridge (van Meel, 2010). The initial main driver was then to let employees save time, and costs of commuting to work (Nilles, 1976). During the oil crises in 1973, American Jack Nilles coined the notion of telecommuting in a study, in which he concluded that teleworking would not only be feasible but also beneficial to firms due to saving monetary resources as well as time (Nilles, 1973; van Meel 2010). In this study, however, Nilles did not consider the downsides of telecommuting. To address this knowledge gap, Frank Schiff’s article “Working from home can save gasoline” in the Washington Post (1979) pointed out both the good elements of teleworking, such as saving gas during the OPEC oil embargo, and the possible challenges and shortcomings of working remotely. Despite the concept being new and held uncertainty, some large corporations chose to enable teleworking by providing the possibility for “electronic meetings” through video-equipped meeting rooms already in the 1970s (Welz & Wolf, 2010). Thereof, the popularization of telework had started.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the interest in teleworking grew, slowly, along with advancements in technology. With the rising popularity of having internet access, the possibility to telework became realizable for many. Similarly, the invention of WiFi in 1991 offered new opportunities to explore remote working. However, the majority of firms and managers were not ready to shift to teleworking, and thus the number of teleworkers remained marginal (Clear & Dickson, 2005; Welz & Wolf, 2010; Aguilera et
Additionally, Patricia Mokhtarian published several articles on telecommuting in the early 1990s, simultaneously providing information on telework both to the public as well as other scholars. Consequently, the concept of telework became more and more studied also among scholars.

In the 21st century, the rapid development of modern technology enabled efficient teleworking with innovations such as cloud computing technology, smartphones as well as laptops. With these, teleworking is also possible from new places, including e.g. cafés and vacation homes (Kurkland & Bailey, 1999). Additionally, Herman identified the economic boom of the early 2000s to play a significant role in the rise of telework, especially in the US (Herman, 2000). In particular, the economic growth resulting in surpluses coupled with the introduction of modern technology, employers sought to rethink traditional employments, which consequently resulted in telework habits (Herman, 2000). However, Welz and Wolf (2010) show that in 2000, 5 percent of workers in the EU teleworked regularly, and in 2007 that number had grown to be 7 percent. In 2018, the European Commission estimated that only fewer than 1 in 20 employees teleworked regularly and less than 1 in 10 occasionally (European Commission, 2020). Aligned with these numbers, Rasmussen and Corbett (2008) claim that teleworking has remained a fairly marginal phenomenon, and the reliance on teleworking is only growing slowly. Interestingly, Aguilera et al. (2016) state that in case there is no radical push towards it, teleworking will not become more popular in the future. The underlying reason for this, according to Pyöriä (2006), is the absence of teleworking culture.

However, some countries practice more teleworking than others (Peters et al., 2009; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). To illustrate this, a poll created by Reuters (Reaney, 2012) shows that, on a global scale, approximately 20 percent of workers telework regularly while almost 1 in 10 workers telecommute daily. Looking at these statistics from a geographic perspective, the results also indicated that teleworking is especially popular in the regions of the Middle East, Latin America and Asia, and that India has the densest teleworking population with approximately 50 percent of workers relying occasionally on remote work (Reaney, 2012). On the other hand, remote work was the least popular in Hungary, Germany and Sweden with less than 10 percent of telecommuting workers (Reaney, 2012).
2.1.3 The features of telework

Despite the increasing consensus on the importance of teleworking as well as its structural features, previous research has not arrived at a coherent conclusion on the effects of teleworking (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Biron & Veldhoven, 2016). Instead, scholars have found many important themes that often are linked to teleworking. In this paper, the focus will be on themes of flexibility and work-life balance, job satisfaction, productivity and the social aspect of work.

It has been shown that teleworking inherently provides employees with autonomy in terms of work time, when work-related tasks are done and flexibility in the location of work (Härmä, 2006). More specifically, such workplace flexibility provides employees with the opportunity to decide how, when, where and, to some extent, with whom the employee performs the work-related tasks (Hill et al., 2008). As a result of having the autonomy of controlling one’s work schedule and location, teleworkers are often argued to have a more positive perception on their work-family balance than those who do not telework due to ensuring integration between work and family (Hill et al., 2001; Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). On the contrary, in a rare study in which employees worked remotely involuntarily, it was found that working from home increased work-to-family conflict, meaning that the perceived work-life balance of the studied individuals suffered (Lapierre et al., 2016). This finding is supported by several scholars who argue that family conflict is of the imperative as teleworking increases the permeability of work and family boundaries (Standen et al., 1999; Sarbu, 2018; Baruch, 2002). Unfortunately, while most scholars agree that teleworking, indeed, affects the work-life balance of employees, empirical evidence that would clarify whether or not teleworking is beneficial for one’s work-life balance remains relatively inconclusive (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

Similarly to the other discussed themes of telework, also the theme of telework vis-à-vis job satisfaction is of intricate nature. The existing research on whether or not teleworking increases job satisfaction has explored job satisfaction from many perspectives. On one hand, having more autonomy and flexibility in regards to work has been liked to a decrease in stress, boredom and fatigue, and thus suggesting better job satisfaction (Hill et al., 2008; Barney & Elias, 2010). Approaching telework from a more critical perspective, however, Aguilera et al. (2016) found in their British study that teleworking was generally disliked and that the majority of the participants would not want to telework. Moreover, in Golden’s study (2008), it was concluded that the interplay
between the intensity of telework and job satisfaction is, in fact, curvilinear. This means that increases in job satisfaction drop off as teleworking becomes more extensive. In addition to the above-discussed feelings of social and professional isolation, Pyörä (2011) pointed out that home office often entails low ergonomic standards that, in turn, may affect job satisfaction.

Teleworking has also been shown to yield benefits to productivity due to several reasons (Khanna & New, 2008). Firstly, in the event of telework, it is often assumed that the number of distractions such as spontaneous chats with co-workers and disruptive noise decreases. As a result, teleworkers may have more time to focus on work-related tasks, and hence be more productive (Pyörä, 2011). Another reason why some scholars claim that teleworking results in higher productivity is due to the fact that it often requires less commuting and thus saves employee’s time (Brion & Veldhoven, 2016; Sharbu, 2018). However, in order to ensure increased productivity, employees must receive satisfying guidance, instructions as well as clear policies regarding telework from the employer (Allen & Shockley, 2009; Nordbäck et al., 2017; Baruch & Nicholson, 1997).

Furthermore, not working from the same location often yields to distance between co-workers and one’s workplace community, both in terms of physical and social distance (Pyörä, 2011). Henceforth, according to a study on 80 Canadian “flexworkers”, being the employees who work both from home as well as from the office, having the opportunity to perform work from home or other non-traditional workplaces requires maintenance of social interactions with one’s colleagues (Richardson & McKenna, 2013). Interestingly, Richardson and McKenna (2013) also pinpointed that the “flexworkers” did not find today’s online communication tools such as Skype as replacements the face-to-face interactions. Accordingly, social and professional isolations are, indeed, often found as the challenges of teleworking and thus teleworkers may experience loneliness (Biron & Veldhoven, 2016). However, Gajendran and Harris (2007) concluded that being a teleworker does not, in fact, affect one’s social ties *per se*. Instead, in a study conducted by Olsewski and Mokhtarian (1994), full-time teleworkers reported to interact with co-workers significantly less than those who did not telework at the beginning of the teleworking experience, which is also illustrated by the fact that full-time teleworkers experience more social isolation than part-time teleworkers (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Though, the extent to which teleworkers interacted with co-workers increases with teleworking experience, suggesting that also full-time teleworkers can upkeep social
interaction with increased effort and in nonstandard ways (Richardson & McKenna, 2013; Olsewski & Mokhtarian, 1994).

2.1.4 Telework in Finland

The phenomenon of telework in the Finnish context is interesting particularly due to the technological advancements, national preferences as well as access to education. Acknowledging that Finland is considered as an advanced nation in regards to technological infrastructure and simultaneously as one of the world’s leading information societies, the Finnish employees have a fruitful foundation for working remotely (Pyörä, 2011). As a nation, Finns are often said to value work-life balance, which, again, can be linked to interest in telework (Nordbäck et al., 2017). Additionally, as a highly educated nation, the popularity of the idea of teleworking per se and the possibilities to execute knowledge work remotely are high (Pekkola, 2002; Pyörä, 2003).

Consequently, in comparison with other European countries, the reliance on telework is relatively common within Finnish employees and the idea of teleworking sounds appealing to many (Gareis et al., 2006). This is especially true in large urban areas such as Helsinki and Tampere, where the proportion of teleworkers is the highest in Finland (Helminen & Ristimäki, 2007). Additionally, Helminen and Ristimäki (2007) stated that the probability of being a teleworker in Finland is highest among young adults aged 25 to 40. Similarly to the global telework phenomenon, also the Finnish teleworkers tend to be highly educated individuals who do administrative, managerial or professional knowledge work (Felstead et al., 2002; Helminen & Ristimäki, 2007).

In spite of the technological advancement allowing teleworking, however, the phenomenon has remained marginal and limited in regards to the number of regular teleworkers (Pyörä, 2003). Hence, in a technologically advanced country like Finland, the underlying reason for the limited usage of telework does not lie in the challenges of organizing it, but rather in the lack of a “need-driven” approach to it as well as the absence of a teleworking culture (Pyörä, 2003; Pyörä, 2006).
2.2 The young working population

Understanding the work-related attitudes of young adults, this section will be heavily built on existing research on millennials. In brief, millennials represent a generation, meaning that they share specific features, such as approximate birth years, the shared history of the generation as well as the approximate societal context within which they were introduced to the workforce (Gennamo & Gardner, 2008). Despite the lack of a full consensus among scholars (Levenson, 2010), millennials are often regarded as individuals born between the early 1980s and the end of the 1990s (e.g. Anderson et al., 2017; Baum, 2019). However, in this paper, the exact definition of millennials is not of necessity but rather used to understand the preferences and ways of viewing work through the lens of today’s young adults, meaning those who belong in the age range of 18 to 30 as stated before. Acknowledging that the chosen age group overlaps greatly with the millennials’ age group, the existing literature focusing on millennials is valuable when trying to understand the preferences of young adults. Finally, this section will begin with how the generation of millennials acts in work life, and later discuss how millennials and telework are connected.

2.2.1 The generation of millennials in work-life

The differences between millennials and other previous generations have been of interest for many scholars (e.g. Twenge et al., 2010; Williams, 2020). Overall, compared to previous generations, many studies have found that millennials do not consider work as the most significant aspect of their personal identities but rather as something that supports the experiences taking place during those hours that are not spent working (Marston, 2007; Anderson et al., 2017; Twenge, 2010). Thereof, millennials often prioritize maintaining a satisfying work-life balance and career is thus only the supportive element required to maintain one’s lifestyle (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Martson, 2007).

Furthermore, previous research has shown that millennials are more likely to engage with new job opportunities outside of one’s firm than previous generations (e.g. Lyons et al., 2012; Kilber et al., 2014). This is due to the millennials’ individualistic lifestyle as well as the tendency to seek a job that fits their needs and that has the potential to advance their careers, teach new skills or, interestingly, provide happiness (Lyons et al., 2012; Frankel, 2016). Hence, in the organizational context, millennials are often seen to be
more disloyal to their employees in comparison to previous generations (Thompson & Gregory, 2012).

Another aspect differentiating the millennials from the previous generations is that millennials are more likely to hold knowledge-intense positions. This is due to, for instance, the growing service sector and the increasing number of highly educated young individuals (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). In turn, millennials often have the opportunity to work from non-traditional locations remotely as knowledge work can often be performed without being physically present at the traditional workplace (Alvesson, 2000).

### 2.2.2 Millennials and telework

The above discussed generational preferences can be seen as the millennials’ desire for autonomy, flexibility and dislike for being controlled (Gennamo & Gardner, 2008; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Stewart et al., 2017; Frankel, 2016). As mentioned earlier, autonomy refers to the degree to which the individual is responsible for their work, and it is heavily supported by teleworking as telework allows individuals to control and monitor the working conditions (Nicholas & Guzman, 2009). Additionally, in Kultalahti and Viitala’s study (2014) millennials tend to value flexible working locations and schedules when it does not interfere with one’s private life, which are elements often linked to teleworking. While the preference for autonomy and freedom can be linked to teleworking, some scholars have also pointed out that, in fact, not all millennials prefer working remotely. Nicholas and Guzman (2009) conducted a survey on 263 individuals, and found that not all millennials do not directly prefer teleworking due to, for instance, living with one’s parents. Interestingly, the study also concluded that educated men view teleworking more positively than women and/or non-educated people (Nicholas & Guzman, 2009).

Accordingly, the growing interest in work-life balance together with the desire for flexibility has resulted in the notion of work-life blending (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). This means that instead of having strict divisions between work and life, millennials shift between work-related tasks as well as private responsibilities, in some cases also during evenings and weekends (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). One enabler for such is technology. Additionally, the fact that millennials have grown with the constantly and rapidly developing modern technology has shaped the millennials’ perception of work
Thereby, millennials are often described as “digital natives” and expected to understand and navigate the digital world (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Again, as millennials value work-related flexibility, technology has enabled the millennials to explore teleworking opportunities (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Consequently, among millennials work is often viewed as something you do, not as a physical place you go to (Leonhard, 1995; Thompson & Gregory, 2012).

### 2.3 COVID-19 and telework

Briefly, COVID-19 (also known as Coronavirus and SARS-CoV-2) is a disease caused by a novel secure acute respiratory syndrome that originates from Wuhan, China (Harapan et al., 2020). Having spread around the world and significantly impacted the everyday practices of many due to governmental restrictions, researchers have found the research area topical and important, and hence research on the effects of the pandemic is starting to accumulate (Rudolph & Zacher, 2020; Sibley et al., 2020). However, due to the novelty of the virus, the existing literature is still relatively limited and often based on quickly conducted studies rather than longitudinal research. This section begins with exploring the period of forced telework, and later moves on to the projected effects of the said period.

#### 2.3.1 The period of forced telework

Acknowledging that such pandemics have historically shaped the nature of work, as in the case of similar pandemics, such as Black Plague and the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, also the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to shape the way work and work-life are viewed (Rudolph et al., 2020). Thereof, Eurofound (2020) claims that the COVID-19 pandemic yielded an opportunity for an ad-hoc “telework revolution” that has been anticipated for decades but had thus far failed to materialize (pp. 59). Indeed, governmental COVID-19 restrictions and organizational recommendations to refrain from working at one’s traditional office have lead many knowledge workers and students to involuntarily rely on telework, providing a fruitful platform especially for working from home (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Carcés, 2020).

From an organizational perspective, assigning employees to work from home may appear as beneficial, as teleworking decreases the infection risk. For employees, the
period of forced telework can offer new experiences of working remotely, and consequently widen one’s understanding of telework. However, the unusual setting may also cause challenges, additional stress and increase well-being in case the employees e.g. face economic uncertainty or lack the teleworking skills or required equipment (Rudolph et al., 2020; Anicich et al., 2020). According to Rudolph et al. (2020), the rapid transition to teleworking has resulted in an increased amount of autonomy, which, at least in the early stages of COVID-19, caused problems with structuring daily tasks. In contrast, however, Anicich et al. (2020) argue that the period of forced telework did actually not increase the sense of autonomy for everyone due to high amounts of stressed caused by the pandemic, indicating that autonomy is not necessarily the sole reason for structuring daily tasks during the pandemic. Additionally, relying solely on remote work and not having the possibility to meet colleagues due to governmental restrictions can cause feelings of social isolation (Rudolph et al., 2020). Consequently, in the event of experiencing such radical life changes, individuals often feel additional stress (Carver & Scheier, 1989; Anicich et al., 2020). Such psychological effects of the pandemic, however, were preliminarily shown to only last for a while, meaning that psychological recovery can begin even during the pandemic (Anicich et al., 2020). Interestingly, Zacher and Rudolph (2020) studied the psychological consequences of COVID-19 in the early stages of the pandemic, and found that while the German participants’ life satisfaction declined, their subjective well-being had not changed significantly between December 2019 and March 2020 (Zacher & Rudolph, 2020). Thus, it is important to note that the emerging literature on the effects of COVID-19 are still limited and partially contradicting.

Moreover, bearing in mind that the first case of COVID-19 in Finland took place in early 2020, existing academic research on the phenomenon in Finland is currently limited. Nevertheless, in a study conducted by Fast Expert Teams networks, in which 5540 Finnish employees participated in an online survey, it was found that many Finns have turned to remote work for the first time and gained positive experiences of forced telework during the pandemic in terms of, for instance, productivity and flexibility (Blomqvist et al., 2020). However, Blomqvist et al. (2020) also pointed out that the forced telework period has resulted in increased stress, loneliness and feeling of being separated from one’s co-workers.
2.3.2 Projected effects on telework

Interestingly, the forced telework period has been argued to shape work not only on the short term but also in the long-run. For instance, a qualitative study on Flemish employees that took place at the beginning of the COVID-19 restrictions showed that employees believe that telework and the use of digital meetings will be more used in the future than prior to the COVID-19 restrictions (Baert et al., 2020), indicating a radical push to teleworking. Similarly, an increased interest in teleworking in the future was also found in among Finnish workers (Blomqvist et al., 2020).

In 2020, Eurofound conducted a longitudinal study on the life and work during the COVID-19 pandemic by surveying individuals from the 27 member states of the European Union. This survey showed that the pandemic had pushed almost half of the young employees relying on telework in the months of April and July 2020 to telework for the first time in their career. Despite the fact that 20 percent of the young participants reported being lonely or feeling excluded from the society, the overall telework experience had resulted in a wish to continue teleworking also in the future. In fact, 78 percent of all employees in the EU area that participated in the study indicated that they would prefer working from home occasionally also in case of no COVID-19 restrictions. The extent to which employees wanted to utilize remote work in the future, however, depended on the intensity of the gained teleworking experience during COVID-19 so that individuals who worked more from home, would like to do more so also in the future. (Eurofound, 2020). To gain a deeper understanding of how the preference to work remotely differed between groups who gained an intense teleworking experience (worked at home exclusively) and those who did not telework (worked at employer's premises / not at home), please refer to Figure 2: Preference regarding regularity of working from home if there were no COVID-19 restrictions, by teleworking status, EU27 (%) below.
Aligned with this, Boston Consulting Group concluded that after the COVID-19 restrictions, employees would like to adopt a “hybrid model”, allowing the employees to work both from home and from the office (Dahik et al., 2020). According to Baert et al. (2020), the desire to work remotely also in the future was especially true for females as a positive perception of telework was more commonly linked to females. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns have potentially caused challenges in terms of work-family conflict especially for women, shaping their overall experience of the forced telework period (Rudolph et al., 2020).

Furthermore, some effects of the telework experience can already be seen in practice. For governments and organisations, increasing possibilities to work from home would indicate cost-savings as well as decrease environmental harms that originate from traditional office work and commute (Rudolph et al., 2020). In Germany, the future of telework has been discussed through the introduction of a law that considers working from home as a legal right (Elliott, 2020). In the US, large companies such as Twitter, Microsoft and Square have already declared that their employees are allowed to continue working from home, at least occasionally, also after the pandemic-related measures are lifted (Gilbert, 2020). Also, Facebook aims at having at least 50 percent of its employees working from home by 2030 (Johnson & Suskewicz, 2020). Such governmental and organizational changes originating from the organizational cultural paradigm shifts.
arising from the period of forced telework indicate that teleworking, perhaps, has its place also in the future workplaces (Rudolph et al., 2020).

2.4 Theoretical approach summary

The purpose of this literature review was to shed light on existing academic literature on telework, the work-life preferences of young adults as well as the effects of COVID-19 on teleworking, focusing on the individual level. Consequently, having an understanding of previous academic literature, the findings of this research can be analysed in their theoretical context.

To summarize the key takeaways of the literature review, the above-discussed theories are discussed together by creating a theoretical framework. Firstly, instead of a clear, universal definition of telework, there are several different approaches to the practice. Thereby, in this research, the concept of telework will be approached flexibly, covering all forms of teleworking. Taking into account that the research takes place in a time period when organizations have recommended employees and students to rely solely on telework, however, the focus of this research will naturally be on teleworkers working from the “home office” (Rudolph et al., 2020; Kurland & Bailey, 1999). Moreover, it is noteworthy that due to the rapid development of modern technology since Nilles (1973) coined the definition, this thesis will consider the use of advanced technology in the form of, for instance, laptops and mobile phones to be intricately linked to teleworking as Ellison (2004) pointed out.

This literature review pointed out that the reliance on telework has not been growing significantly in recent years despite the development of modern technology. Correspondingly, scholars such as Aguilera et al. (2016) have claimed that telework will not become a large phenomenon at workplaces without a radical push towards it. Now, however, recent studies that were introduced in chapter 2.4. show that the COVID-19 pandemic can be regarded as the “radical push” that was called for by opening doors to teleworking possibilities to many, consequently having the potential to spark a “telework revolution” (Eurofound, 2020). In turn, this can even create a telework culture that has been lacking for decades (Aguilera et al., 2016; Pyöriä, 2006).

Interestingly, though, this literature review pointed out that in order to increase productivity and job satisfaction, teleworking requires active upkeeping of social
interaction as well as instructions and guidance from one’s employee, which has been challenging due to the unexpected and quick change from traditional office work to telework in the case of COVID-19 restrictions (Rudolph et al., 2020). Furthermore, keeping the complexity of the effects arising from teleworking in mind, it should be noted that Pyöriä (2011) highlighted the fact that teleworking does not suit everyone, and all teleworkers should have the possibility to tailor their telework arrangements to fit their individual needs. Therefore, it is interesting that different studies have found that teleworking during the pandemic, in fact, has generally increased the individual, organizational as well as the governmental interest in remote work (e.g. Baert et al., 2020; Eurofound, 2020; Elliott, 2020; Gilbert, 2020).

Moreover, due to the chosen focus group of this thesis, it should be acknowledged that Finland has potential in being at the frontline of creating a teleworking culture due to its sophisticated technologic infrastructure, highly educated people as well as work-life preferences supporting telework (Pyöriä, 2003; Helminen & Ristimäki, 2007). It should also be kept in mind that based on existing literature, young adults seek work opportunities that offer flexibility and work-life balance that often are linked to teleworking (Gennamo & Gardner, 2008). As Millennials have been shown to value some elements of telework but not necessarily everything (Nicholas & Guzman, 2009), the findings of this paper will be interesting in determining which aspects of forced teleworking young adults enjoyed and which they did not like, and whether or not young adults consider teleworking to be significant at future workplaces after the period of forced telework.

To gain a deeper understanding of the interplay of the above-discussed aspects, please see Figure 3: Theoretical foundation below.
Finally, with this theoretical background, the aim is to evaluate whether or not the findings of this research are aligned with the earlier academic findings. Also, the theoretical foundation will inspire the methodological approach and function as reference points throughout the analysis and discussion sections. Acknowledging the inconsistencies in previous telework research, this thesis will also provide more information on the key elements of telework during the fruitful period of forced telework. In turn, the findings will generate more insights into the effects of teleworking and contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical results and, potentially, generate new insights.
3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To investigate the set issue further and to finally answer the established research questions, this thesis is guided by a research plan consisting of the applied research philosophy as well as the methodological approach to increase the validity, reliability and consistency of the findings when collecting and analysing the data. This sections begins with a discussion of the applied research philosophy and process and moves onto the data collection methods. Later, the ways of analysing data will be introduced, followed by ethical considerations as well as methodological limitations. Finally, the quality of this research will be discussed.

3.1 Research philosophy and process

The research philosophy underpinning the development and the nature of knowledge throughout this research holds utmost importance as it can be regarded as the “basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigation” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, pp. 105). Moreover, as research philosophy portrays the researcher's view by acting as a guiding hand when considering research strategies and methodological choices, it is vital to understand the philosophical approach of this research (Saunders et al., 2016).

As the purpose of this study is to understand human-generated opinions and meanings in regards to forced telework, the hermeneutical philosophy can be seen as suitable for this study (Egholm, 2014). Through the lens of hermeneutics, the nature of reality is considered to be realistic and context-dependent, suggesting realistic ontology (Saunders et al., 2016). Moreover, the epistemology, meaning the nature and production of knowledge, linked to hermeneutical research philosophy is heavily tied to understanding and interpreting (Egholm, 2014).

For this research, the considerations of ontology and epistemology can be seen throughout the study, for instance in the process of analysis as well as portraying the findings. For instance, when creating the survey questions and analysing the gathered answers, I will aim at having an open but not empty mind (Eisenhardt, 1989). In practice, this means that the research will be contacted by having a pre-understanding of the field through e.g. personal experiences and academic literature (Gummesson, 2000). Thus, the epistemology of the survey results must be consciously considered as they are subjective and sensitive to my own attitude (Egholm, 2014).
Looking further into the research process of formulating the gathered data into comprehensible results through the constructed philosophical lens, it should be noted that research process portrays the relationship between theory and research as well as the ways of developing and potentially arriving at theory (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Generally, research can be approached through three different ways, being inductive, deductive and abductive approach (Egholm, 2014). Briefly, inductive research process means that one starts from collecting data and moves on to develop theory whereas deductive refers to the practice of testing previous theory through hypotheses that are further developed and tested (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Abductive research approach, in turn, is a combination of these two practices (Saunders et al., 2016). This research is not strictly limited to testing an existing theory nor developing a completely new theory based on new data. Instead, the research is inspired by both the earlier introduced theoretical foundation of existing research as well as the themes that emerge through the empirical data collection process, the chosen approach for this research is abductive (Egholm, 2014; Corley & Gioia, 2011). Further, the inductive elements of this research can be seen in the research timeline as the data collection process was begun before the literature review and by having a guiding research question instead of a strict hypothesis. On the other hand, the deductive elements of this research lie in having a clear, theoretical setting. Consequently, through constant comparison of the data and previous findings, this thesis seeks to generate new insights into an existing phenomenon of telework. Therefore, this research can be seen as a dynamic process moving back and forth between induction and deduction, again illustrating an explorative, abductive approach (Egholm, 2014). This abductive approach is particularly suitable due to having both existing literature on the phenomenon of telework as well as a new perspective offered by COVID-19 that can be regarded as a surprising fact (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010).

### 3.2 Data collection methods

Briefly, quantitative research is often used when working with numbers and numeric data whereas the approach of qualitative research is used with words and other non-numeric data (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). As this research seeks to understand what individuals think and feel as well as explore how they perceive the period of forced telework, this study is qualitative. Nevertheless, the qualitative analysis
will be complemented by numerical survey data as the aim is also to get an understanding of how the situation has changed. While such numbers provide insights into telework-related trends, the qualitative approach explains potential shifts in numerical values and thus trends over time. Moreover, conducting an empirical study requires careful consideration of methodology and how the methodological choices shape the study and the results. Therefore, the most important aspect when choosing the research method is to consider which method is likely to the greatest extent possible to lead to gaining answers to the research questions and meeting the overall study aims (Saunders et al., 2016).

Moreover, this study is of longitudinal nature, meaning that the study involves repeated observations of the same variables (Patton, 2015). In this study, this is achieved by engaging a group of people in this research twice with approximately 6 months between the observations. This way, the two data sets can be compared to each other, and the potential changes that have happened after the first observation can be noticed. To capture the immediate impact of the pandemic on the way young people in Finland view work, this research began in March 2020, when the first COVID-19 restrictions were set in place in Finland.

### 3.2.1 Online survey

As the main purpose of this research is to explore how individuals feel about forced telework and to gain an overview of how COVID-19 has affected the way work is viewed, the data will be collected through an online survey that contains structured interview questions (Patton 2015; Jansen, 2010). Acknowledging that the prevailing data collection method in qualitative research are interviews, relying on a qualitative survey is atypical (Alasuutari et al., 2008; Jansen, 2010). As qualitative surveys are used to explore meanings and individual experiences as well as find diversity within a sample (Fink, 2003; Jansen, 2010; de Vaus, 2013), this data collection method yields interesting information on the forced telework experiences of young adults. In addition to the qualitative structured interview questions, the survey also measured quantitative trends in regards to the themes of telework satisfaction, perceived productivity and motivation.

Furthermore, as this research wanted to efficiently capture the immediate impact of the pandemic on the way young people in Finland view work, this data collection process had to be started rapidly. Thus, sending out an online survey during the COVID-19
restrictions enabled reaching out to a large sample and to engage with individuals in spite of the strict governmental rules on social distancing. Also, as the research considers also elements that some might be hesitant to talk about, such as loneliness and productivity at work, sharing these experiences through an impersonal survey may yield to more interesting answers than interviews would (De Vaus, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Due to the longitudinal nature of this study, the research participants answered two different questionnaires on Webropol. More specifically, the survey consisted of two parts; the initial survey COVID-19 & Forced Telework (appendix 1) and the follow-up survey COVID-19 & Forced Telework: Follow-Up (appendix 2). Additionally, prior to distributing the surveys, a preliminary version was tested on one person that was teleworking due to COVID-19. The final version of the survey was then adjusted with the feedback from the pilot participant. This way, the potential weaknesses as well as my own presumptions were limited, and the insights from someone who was undergoing the period of forced telework were utilized to efficiently capture the phenomenon. (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The first round of surveys was sent out in March 2020, when the first COVID-19 restrictions and remote work recommendations were given in Finland. The aim of this survey was to see how the participants perceived their telework habits and to understand how those had changed after the COVID-19 restrictions and the potential period of forced telework. The survey consisted of 21 questions, out of which the first 6 questions concerned contact details and background information. Questions 7 to 20 explore how the participants telework, how they perceive it both now but also prior to the COVID-19 period and how productive and satisfied they are with teleworking. Finally, the last question called for additional comments with the purpose of allowing the participants to engage with the survey. Moreover, as this survey contained both closed and open-ended questions, it consequently provided both simple data on e.g. frequencies and ratings of telework habits but also allowed the participants to freely share their own thoughts and ideas. This way, my own prejudices as well as biases were limited as the open-ended questions brought up new perspectives to the issue. (Appendix 1: Survey Round 1)

The second survey round took place in October 2020, when the Finnish COVID-19 guidelines still recommended remote work over traditional office work whenever possible. In this survey, many of the questions from the first survey round remained the same to ensure that the results from the two rounds can be compared to each other and to obtain a more thorough understanding of the participants’ attitudes towards
teleworking. Additionally, the second round contained new questions that explored the learning points and potential coping methods that the participants had gained throughout the period of forced telework as well as a question that allowed the participants to predict how likely it is that the use of telework will increase in the future due to the pandemic. Also, the questions were done so that in case the respondent had not worked remotely, they received different questions than those who were teleworking. Similarly to the first survey, also this round contained both closed and open-ended questions to ensure efficient data generation. (Appendix: Survey Round: 2).

Please find a summary of the surveys below in Table 1: Survey Information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What?</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey Round 1: COVID-19 &amp; Forced Telework</td>
<td>March, 2020</td>
<td>To capture how the participants view telework right after the beginning of forced telework as well as before it started.</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Round 2: COVID-19 &amp; Forced Telework: Follow-Up</td>
<td>October, 2020</td>
<td>To gain an understanding of how the perceptions have changed, how the respondents currently feel about teleworking and their experiences.</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Survey Information

3.2.2 Sampling strategy

In order to attract a sufficient number of people, the survey participants were recruited in several ways. Acknowledging that this is a qualitative study, I am using purposeful sampling rather than random sampling in order to gain credible and interesting data (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Initially, the sampling strategy used was purposive sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2016). In practice, this means that the survey was shared with 18-29 year-old individuals to ensure that the respondents fit the research focus and can generate interesting insights. While
the survey was promoted especially for young adults residing in Finland, it was not closed for other demographic groups as having a larger sample offers an opportunity to compare the young adults in Finland to other groups. Thereby, I also relied on convenience sampling, meaning that I utilized my networks and shared the survey link on platforms such as the email list of Hanken, LinkedIn and Facebook. To ensure that the sample did not only represent people that I know personally, I finally used snowball sampling. This means that the already recruited participants shared the survey with their networks to recruit new participants (Bryman & Bell, 2016). Acknowledging the longitudinal nature of this study, the participants received a link to the second survey through email and no new participants were recruited. To those who did not take the survey within 7 days of receiving the link, a friendly reminder was sent. The survey was closed after it had been live for three weeks to ensure that all the responses can be set in the same temporal context.

With these three strategies, the surveys reached suitable individuals as well and people representing different backgrounds in terms of, for instance, geographical location, age, gender and occupation. The first round of surveys reached 126 participants. Due to allowing participants to drop out at any stage, the second survey round reached fewer people, resulting in 95. This indicates that the overall response rate after both rounds was 75 percent. As the final sample only consists of those who participated in both rounds, the sample size of this study is 95. Out of those, 68 respondents met the criteria of being 18-30 of age when the first survey took place and 62 young adults lived in Finland while those not belonging to the focal group are used as a reference group for comparison reasons. According to Silverman (2005), a sample size is large enough if it provides meaningful and insightful information, and thus the sample size can be regarded as sufficient for this research.

When considering the whole sample, 66 percent of respondents were women and 34 percent men. Considering only the young adults (those of 18 to 29 of age), 70 percent of respondents were women. Moreover, in the whole sample, 77 percent did not have any children whereas 10 percent had at least one 0–6 year-old child, the youngest children of 2 percent of the respondents was between the age of 7 to 12 and that of three percent of respondents was between 13 and 17. Additionally, eight percent of the participants had children over the age of 18. Nevertheless, when controlling for age, 97 percent of young adults did not have any children and the remaining three percent had a child between the age of 0 and 6. Also, the sample contained students, part-time office workers, full-
time office workers, part-time physical workers as well as full-time physical workers. Acknowledging the focus on young adults, 56 percent of the participants overall were students. Some students, however, also held either part-time or full-time positions. Considering the geographic locations of the overall 95 respondents, the majority of the sample resides in Finland (N=80). The survey reached also several respondents living in Denmark (N=4), USA (N=4) Germany (N=2) and Sweden (N=2). Additionally, individual respondents participated from the Czech Republic (N=1), Slovakia (N=1) and Norway (N=1).

Furthermore, the telework-related backgrounds of the participants varied to a great extent. As seen in Figure 4 below, 35 percent of young adults did not telework at all prior to COVID-19 restrictions whereas 26 percent of those who were not regarded as young adults did not telework at all. Interestingly, many respondents worked remotely at least once a week, indicating that over 60 percent had at least some prior experience from remote work, also when controlling for participants’ age. Additionally, those who worked 6 or 7 days a week remotely or were, for instance, on parental leave, are grouped into one category, being “other” with less than 10 percent of the respondents.

Figure 4 Previous telework experience
3.3 Data analysis

The data analysis was begun already during the data collection as they often tend to proceed together (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985; Gioia et al., 2012). In the case of this research, a preliminary analysis was done after the first survey round to re-design the questions for the second round of data collection. After conducting the two survey rounds, the collected data was finally processed and analysed in a systematic and structured way (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994). Oftentimes when conducting qualitative research, the gathered data is initially unstructured and thus the raw data must be taken through several stages to make sense of it (Spiggle, 1994; Miles & Hubermann, 1994).

As the surveys were administered online, the answers did not have to be transcribed, and thus the analyzing operation started with going through the responses to get an overview of what the data looks like and to translate those answers that were either in Finnish or Swedish. Thereby, I moved on to thematic analysis as it is often applied in qualitative research (Patton, 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015). I conducted initial line-by-line coding to find patterns and emerging ideas, which I then labelled. In other words, at this stage I identified the 1st order concepts, meaning that all respondent terms are explored with no attempt to create strict categories (Gioia et al., 2012). To gain a deeper understanding of how this was done, please refer to Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you like about teleworking?</th>
<th>1st Order Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Flexibility, less time used in commuting, peace at work&quot;</td>
<td>more flexible, no commute saves time, peace at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Flexibility. And you are able to sleep longer.&quot;</td>
<td>more flexible, more sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It enables more efficient work and life, especially as you don't have to wake up early to get ready for work. Instead, you can sleep longer and relax in the morning. Sometimes it's also easier to focus when teleworking as there are not as many distractions&quot;</td>
<td>more efficient, relaxed atmosphere, more sleep, home-office environment, easier to focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;If your day is busy, you have more time to reach people through teleworking as you don't have to travel anywhere.&quot;</td>
<td>no commute saves time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Flexibility to multitask on some chores, less time spent commuting, easier to focus on my work&quot;</td>
<td>flexibility to multitask, no commute saves time, easier to focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The possibility to prioritize the duties within studies, and not have them pile up a ridiculous amount. Also the studies are more effective now.&quot;</td>
<td>New ways to prioritise, more effective,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;More flexibility in regards to studies. For instance, no mandatory attendance (or you can participate from your own home)&quot;</td>
<td>flexibility with studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Do not have to put time on transportation to/from office or school. Also, it is quite silent and calm back home, not a stressful environment.&quot;</td>
<td>no commute saves time, peace at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ability to mix work with other things such as making food /doing other household chores&quot;</td>
<td>flexibility to multitask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;More freedom and less time wasted on travelling to and from the office/school&quot;</td>
<td>more freedom, no commute saves time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's chill, nice not to have to get ready for school in the morning. I can sit in sweatpants and a t-shirt and drink coffee while joining a lecture via Teams&quot;</td>
<td>relaxed atmosphere, relaxed clothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 1st Order Analysis

Modified from Gioia et al., 2012
Next, I proceeded to focused coding and created larger themes through assessing the interconnectedness and patterns between the codes as well as identifying differences and similarities between the answers. This process can also be called 2nd order analysis (Gioia et al., 2012). I aimed at abstraction by grouping the labelled units of data into simple general categories that represent a more general phenomenon (Spiggle, 1994). As there are two rounds of surveys, both of them were handled the same way and finally compared to each other. Consequently, these findings are used as the basis for the conclusions of this research (Saunders et al., 2016).

Further, all the codes were assessed and they were placed into 6 categories or “aggregate dimensions” (Gioia et al., 2012), which simultaneously became the main themes of this thesis guiding the analysis and discussion. Namely, the themes are the following: overall telework satisfaction, perceived benefits, future aspirations, new habits, experienced challenges and endurance & work-related motivation. Under each main theme, there are several sub-categories that contain more specific codes as shown in the table above. To further understand the data structure and to see the relationships between the 1st order concepts, 2nd order themes and the final aggregate dimensions, refer to Table 3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Some) 1st Order Concepts</th>
<th>2nd Order Themes</th>
<th>Aggregate Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial challenges, no guidance, rapidly...</td>
<td>Initial shock</td>
<td>Telework Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate it, done with it, “not my thing”...</td>
<td>Dislike towards telework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of telework, satisfaction...</td>
<td>Enjoy telework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multitasking, freedom, flexibility...</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Perceived Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace at home/work, focus, relaxed...</td>
<td>Home-Office Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time saved, no commute, more sleep...</td>
<td>Time Saved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase telework in the future...</td>
<td>Interest in telework</td>
<td>Future aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online meetings, online lectures, chat...</td>
<td>Electronic communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and home office, combination...</td>
<td>The hybrid model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New telework habits, unique experience...</td>
<td>Teleworking per se</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual teleworking platforms, Teams...</td>
<td>New technological skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal routines, time management...</td>
<td>Organizing work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned to dislike, not for me...</td>
<td>Personal dislike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness, lack of face-to-face contact...</td>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>Experienced challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad ergonomics at home, boring...</td>
<td>Ergonomics and boredom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children at home, longer work days...</td>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less / more productive, efficient...</td>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation, more motivated...</td>
<td>Changes in motivation</td>
<td>Endurance &amp; Work-motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated to perform, deadlines...</td>
<td>No effect (intrinsic/external)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online team meetings, support...</td>
<td>Organizational routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Data Structure Modified from Gioia et al., 2012
As the focal group of this study is young adults, respondents who belong to that group were grouped into one. Similarly, those who did not belong to the focal group were grouped into a reference group that is later referred to as “others”. Considering the longitudinal aspect of this study, the 1st Order concepts arising from the two surveys were compared to each other, and similar codes were emerged into larger 2nd order themes. Additionally, the longitudinal aspect was also explored so that the potential changes in answers of individual respondents were assessed in light of the research questions, choosing individuals whose answers presented the overall popular trends arising from the data. In practice, this was done by categorizing those individuals whose responses showcase one of the above-discussed themes into groups and comparing the individuals’ answers from March and October 2020 to find similarities and changes. Additionally, these individuals were numbered to identify the respondents from each other.

Now, as the surveys also generated numerical data, I simultaneously identified trends that fit the qualitative themes, and conducted a comparative analysis between the first and second survey. More specifically, the quantitative approach was done by finding changes and similarities in percentages when measuring the constructs of telework satisfaction, productivity and motivation. When assessing changes in regards to these contracts, the changes among the groups of “young adults” and “others” were compared to each other. As this research is of qualitative nature, the focus was on percentages, and no regressive analysis was conducted. Further, the patterns were then analysed vis-à-vis the established theoretical foundation as well as the research questions. Due to the abductive approach in this research, the data analysis was interactive between data and theory, meaning that I went back and forth between the data and the theory to, for instance, find similarities and differences (van Maanen et al., 2007).

### 3.4 Ethical considerations

Throughout each of the processes of this research, the universal research ethics and ethical guidelines were considered and purposefully followed (Patton, 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015). More specifically, this means that the participants were fully aware that they were participating in longitudinal research and gave their consent through participating in the survey, which was stated in the introduction of the surveys (see appendix 1 and 2). Bearing in mind the longitudinal nature of this study, collecting the respondents’ email addresses was essential, meaning that personal data was collected. Aligned with the
GDPR laws and the GDPR document submitted to the Hanken School of Economics, the research participants were informed in great detail about how their personal data is used solely for the purpose of this research, will only be handled by the author of this study, and that all the provided information will be erased immediately after the research is concluded. Also, while the email addresses were collected, the responses used in the research are kept anonymous and cannot be linked to any respondent. Also, the collected data is handled and stored confidentially. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any point with no consequences. Finally, these measures ensured that participating in the research will not cause any harm to the respondents. (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.5 Methodological limitations

To provide a clear description of the used research method, sampling strategy and sample, it is also essential to acknowledge the potential weaknesses arising from these choices (Silverman, 2005). Therefore, the potential methodological weaknesses of this research are presented and discussed in this chapter.

Firstly, whereas using qualitative surveys is efficient, safe and yields to large sample size, they do not offer the possibility to engage with the participants personally. Consequently, the respondents may not share everything they would like to or are more hesitant to spend time on an impersonal survey (Alasuutari et al., 2008). However, to ensure that the participants had a chance to share everything they wanted, both surveys contained a question allowing the participants to add anything they had not written in the study earlier. Secondly, participating in an online survey requires digital literacy and access to the internet, which might have excluded some potential research participants and create biases. Keeping the purpose and focal group of this research in mind, though, this limitation is only a hypothetical one. Thirdly, a significant limitation arising from the choice of method is the possibility of subjective interpretation or even misinterpretation taking place during the data analysis, which should thus be kept in mind when assessing the findings of this research (Beuving & de Vries, 2015).

Considering the sample, on the other hand, it should be noted that the sample size (n=95) is relatively large for a study that is limited both in terms of time and length, and thus the effect of potential outliers does not affect the data significantly (Patton, 2015). However, with a larger sample, the degree to which the findings of this research can be
generalized would be higher. On the contrary, combining a sample of 95 provides with two survey rounds and several open-ended questions, the amount of raw data is high, meaning that some remarks need to be left out to follow the length-restrictions of this thesis. Consequently, as a researcher, the responsibility to leave out some comments is significant as if executed poorly, some themes may remain untouched. Therefore, I have aimed at considering all the themes arising from the data and only leave out repetitive comments.

Finally, despite the efforts to reach research participants that do not belong in my social circles, it should be acknowledged that having convenient access to my personal network favours those who belong in it. Accordingly, the majority of the respondents are thus women, which should be kept in mind when assessing the results. This is worth noting as previous literature has shown that women are less likely to appreciate remote work than men (Nicholas & Guzman, 2009).

3.6 Quality of research

Keeping the methodological choices and their limitations in mind, the quality of this research shall be considered. Acknowledging that this is qualitative research, the quality is measured through considerations of its trustworthiness. In general, I have aimed at ensuring a high level of trustworthiness throughout the research, including the data collection, analysis and reporting (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). More specifically, the trustworthiness of this research was ensured by evaluating the credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and integrity of this research (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

Assessing credibility, or the internal validity of the findings, is essential in qualitative research to show whether or not the conclusions are drawn from too limited material (Gioia et al., 2012). One way of increasing credibility is through triangulation. In this research, triangulation was done across sources as the data was generated through two survey rounds (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). Also, in order to make sure that the correct concepts were captured and to avoid misunderstandings, the participants were allowed to send the researcher an email at any point to clarify the questions if needed. As this is a longitudinal study, there was naturally a prolonged engagement between the researcher and the study participants to the extent to which it was possible. Further, the detailed and transparent description of the different stages of this research that was
provided throughout the thesis consequently increases credibility (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

Transferability, on the other hand, indicates how the findings can be applied to other contexts and generalized (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This was considered when conducting purposeful sampling as the aim was to reach a representative sample that provides insightful and valuable results (Patton, 2015). Also, focusing on the limited scope of young adults in Finland increases transferability as the findings of this paper should be regarded within this group.

Moreover, the aspect of dependability, meaning the extent to which the study could be repeated in a similar context with a similar sample and to obtain similar findings, was considered in several ways (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). First, the qualitative survey was simple and same for everyone, which ensured that all of the respondents answered the same questions to find consistent answers. Secondly, having a large sample size was beneficial as it eliminates potential outliers and creates an understanding of the average (Patton, 2015). Again, also the detailed and transparent descriptions of the methodological choices ensure that the study could be repeated in the same way again, increasing the dependability of this research (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

Confirmability, on the other hand, refers to the study’s objectivity and neutrality of the researcher (Gioia, 2012). In practice, confirmability was increased through using online surveys, which ensured that my attitude or biases were not shown to the respondents and hence were limited. When conducting the data analysis, the role of the researcher should be acknowledged, but the potential biases are limited by presenting how the data analysis process was done in great detail and by showing direct quotes that the reader can interpret also when assessing the analysis. Nevertheless, the chosen data collection method did not allow the use of, for instance, reflexive journals, which would have further increased the confirmability of this research (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

Finally, integrity, meaning the extent to which the findings were impaired by issues such as lies was considered throughout the research. As explained in chapter 3.4., the research ethics ensured, for instance, the participants’ anonymity and safety, which increases the integrity (Patton, 2015). Moreover, allowing the participants to drop out at any stage ensured that instead of providing misinformation, the participants could leave the study if they so wanted (Bryman & Bell, 2015).
To summarize, considering the temporal and monetary resources available for this research, the obtained findings and level of trustworthiness can be regarded as satisfactory. As discussed, the trustworthiness has been taken into account through several initiatives throughout the research to ensure that the criteria of trustworthiness are properly addressed and enhanced to the best possible extent. Overall limitations of this research are further discussed in the final chapter.
4 RESULTS

This section will present the results of the conducted empirical study. More specifically, the collected data will first be discussed in light of Research Question 1 from several perspectives, including the general attitude towards telework, its perceived benefits and the potential future telework aspirations. Thereafter, the results will be looked at through the lens of Research Question 2, focusing on the longitudinal aspect of working remotely for a prolonged period of time by exploring the experiences individuals have gained during the period of forced telework in regards to new skills and habits, experienced challenges and endurance. Additionally, the focus on young adults will be highlighted through a comparative analysis of young adults and other participants throughout this chapter.

4.1 COVID-19 shaping the way young adults feel about telework

The aim of this section is to explore the general attitude, feelings and future aspirations individuals have after working remotely for a period of time, focusing on the question of whether or not the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the way telework is perceived and utilized. Hence, this section will provide insights into how exactly COVID-19 has shaped the way young adults feel about telework and consequently provide an understanding with which the first research question: “How has COVID-19 shaped the way young adults feel about telework?” can be answered.

4.1.1 General attitude towards teleworking

Overall, the pandemic has shaped the general feeling individuals have of telework. This can be seen when looking at the average of how much participants reported to enjoy teleworking on a scale from 0 to 10 has changed during the COVID-19 restrictions. Prior to March 2020 and the strong COVID-19 restrictions in Finland, the average telework satisfaction among the research participants was approximately 6.4 (0-10). More specifically, among those who are not young adults, the telework satisfaction was then 6.62, among young adults 6.24 and among young adults in Finland 6.23. In March 2020, however, individuals enjoyed teleworking significantly less than before, with an average of approximately 6. Respectively, among others it dropped to 6.1, among young adults to 5.82 and among young adults in Finland to 5.77. In October, one can notice an increase
in telework satisfaction as teleworking was generally enjoyed significantly more than in March 2020 with averages of 6.48 (others), 6.52 (young adults) and 6.75 (young adults in Finland). This was especially true for young adults in Finland, as their telework satisfaction was the lowest both prior to COVID-19 and in March 2020, but was the highest in October 2020 with an increase of approximately 17 percent since March 2020.

![Graph showing telework satisfaction over time](image)

**Figure 5**  
Satisfaction with telework over time

The increased satisfaction was also reported by many of the respondents, especially in regards to greater appreciation towards the benefits of telework, which will be further discussed in the next sections. Building upon this, the collected data shows that almost 70 percent of the respondents who were young adults in Finland reported that they look more positively on teleworking than before COVID-19 whereas only less than 10 percent of the participants disagreed with the statement. Therefore, it is evident that although the outbreak of COVID-19 affected telework satisfaction negatively at first, later in the year individuals felt more positive about working remotely than prior to the pandemic.

Interestingly, though, it should be acknowledged that those who are not regarded as young adults were slightly more satisfied with telework prior to COVID-19, which differs from the other presented groups. The underlying reasons for this may be found in, for instance, positive previous telework experience and additional stress caused by the pandemic. However, as the focal group of this research is young adults in Finland, the findings will focus predominately on their experiences.
4.1.2 Perceived benefits of teleworking

When the respondents were asked to share what they enjoy about teleworking after the initial shock seen in Figure 5 in October 2020, there were three dominant themes arising from the data, namely flexibility and freedom, saving time as well as being able to enjoy the home-office environment. Interestingly, the same themes were persistent also in March 2020, and there were no significant changes in the trends of perceived benefits. Nonetheless, in March, it was often claimed that identifying benefits was challenging due to the novelty of the situation, and hence this section focuses on the data from October 2020. Also, while the theme of efficiency also emerged from the data and is heavily linked to the perceived benefits of teleworking, it will be further discussed in connection to productivity. Additionally, according to the collected data, the challenges of telework have changed throughout the pandemic while the perceived benefits have remained the same to great extent, and thus the challenges will be further discussed in chapter 4.2.2.

Firstly, many of the respondents pointed out that working from home has indeed resulted in a stronger feeling of flexibility and freedom, especially in terms of planning one’s day and doing many tasks simultaneously:

“(I enjoy the) flexibility to multitask on some home chores.” (Young adult 1, Finland, October 2020)

“(I enjoy the) flexibility to work from home, no need to use transport. You can have breaks in between doing something else if you are able to do so such as 15 min yoga, walk, etc.” (Young adult 2, Finland, October 2020)

“My schedule is more flexible and I can plan my day more freely, I can sleep longer because I don’t have to spend time on commuting. If I’m feeling unproductive during the day, I can take a longer break and work in the evening instead.” (Young adult 3, Finland, October 2020)

Additionally, also the flexibility to work from physically wherever was seen as a benefit of teleworking, as illustrated by the following quote:

“I can work where I want, at home, my downstairs cafe, summer house etc” (Young adult 4, Finland, October 2020)

These quotes consequently indicate that the respondents value the feeling of flexibility, when they can multitask, schedule their days more freely and decide from where they perform work. Furthermore, having more flexibility also offered many of the research participants a chance to complete tasks that were not directly linked to work or studies during the day, including e.g. housekeeping and hobbies. Not being tied to one specific
place also enabled the possibility to work from new locations, as mentioned by Young Adult 4.

Secondly, another important aspect emerging from the data was that of saved time. Many respondents, both in March and October, stated that not having to commute saves time significantly, which was seen as beneficial in regards to, for instance, sleeping habits.

“I'm able to start and also end the working day earlier than normally, because I don’t need to prepare myself ready for work (no make-up or business attire needed) or use the time to go there. Therefore I get to sleep longer which is nice.” (Young adult 5, Finland, March 2020)

“Don’t have to reserve time for commuting, have more time in the mornings/can sleep longer.” (Young adult 5, Finland, October 2020)

“Less time spent commuting.” (Young adult 6, Finland, March 2020)

“No time wasted on commuting to work.” (Young adult 6, Finland, October 2020)

Therefore, according to the data, individuals feel that teleworking saves time on a daily basis, which consequently is beneficial for both additional spare time and healthy sleeping habits. When controlling for age and geographical location, the trend remained the same, suggesting that the absence of commute was of interest to teleworkers of all ages and countries of residence. Acknowledging that the appreciation of saved time and more sleep was present both in March and October 2020, the data shows that the chance to sleep more is not valued only for a while to overcome problems such as sleep debt but enjoyed also in the longer run.

Thirdly, many of the research participants pointed out their preference for a peaceful working location, which the home office can potentially offer. This is illustrated in the following quotes, in which the participants were asked to elaborate on the perceived benefits of working remotely:

“It’s more relaxed, the environment is more controlled and I have the ability to use the tools I best know how to operate (e.g. my desktop computer).” (Young adult 7, Finland, October 2020)

“It’s quite silent and calm back home, not a stressful environment.” (Young adult 8, Finland, October 2020)

“(I like the) relaxed environment for deep work.” (Young adult 2, Finland, October 2020)

This indicates that, at least in some cases, the home-office environment offers individuals a location in which they can focus on work better than at one’s traditional office due to
having more control over the surroundings. Therefore, the home-office environment was identified as a clear benefit of remote work, especially when performing tasks that require deep concentration. Interestingly, this trend was significant particularly among young adults whereas of those not belonging to the group of young adults in Finland, the peaceful aspect of working from home was not touched upon as often due to, for instance, the differences in the nature of work between the young work population and a more senior population as well as potentially having children at home. Thus, it should be noted that the home office cannot necessarily provide an ideal work atmosphere for everyone.

All in all, the data shows that individuals find some of the elements of teleworking beneficial, even after relying on it for six months. It can thus be concluded that the period of forced telework has shown many of the respondents both with no prior experience of remote work as well as those used to occasional telework the positive sides of such untraditional work arrangements. In turn, such positive experiences have had an effect on the way telework is viewed in the long run.

### 4.1.3 Future telework aspirations

Acknowledging that the phenomenon of telework has remained marginal due, for instance, the absence of teleworking culture for decades (Aguilera et al., 2016, Pyörä, 2016), it is interesting to explore how the research participants want to utilize teleworking in the future and whether or not the period of forced telework has consequently created the teleworking culture that was lacking prior to the pandemic. As shown in chapter 4.1.1., the overall telework satisfaction has increased significantly during the period of forced telework. Building on that, the data shows that the majority of the respondents believe that the period of forced telework will, in fact, has a positive effect on the rise of a telework culture both on the national level as well as the individual level.

When the respondents were asked to evaluate whether or not the use of telework will increase in their country because of COVID-19, approximately 98 percent of participants agreed with the statement, both among everyone and when controlling for only young adults in Finland. This indicates that neither geographical location nor age had a significant effect on the way the respondents believed that the future of telework will look like on a national level. Thus, the vast majority of approximately 98 percent agrees that
the period of forced telework has had a significant impact on the national work-life also in the long run.

Looking at the future telework aspirations on the individual level, the telework habits that would like to be applied to work-life also after the period of forced telework are clear in terms of electronic communication habits and the hybrid model of working. Firstly, almost 90 percent of the respondents wanted to adopt more electronic communication habits, such as online meetings, remote lectures and trainings and the use of applications such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, at work or school also after the COVID restrictions. Again, there was no significant difference when considering only young adults in Finland. Moreover, in comparison to the time prior to COVID-19, approximately 60 percent of the respondents indicated that they would like to increase the amount of working or studying remotely once things get back to normal in March and 85 percent in October. Thus, the data suggests that the interest in telework has increased during the first six months of the period of forced telework, and that the clear interest in telework is evident also on the individual level.

Moreover, when the participants were asked to evaluate whether or not the COVID-19 situation shaped their work habits or the way they view work, the forced telework period had had a significant effect on the participants as many would like to continue with at least occasional telework also in the future.

“I think that the ideal situation for me would be to have the so-called hybrid model that I would partly work/study at home and partly at the office/at school. In this way, I would have the automatic social contacts for some days a week, but then again I could also save time when not having to travel to the city every day and also being able to concentrate better at home for some days a week.” (Young adult 9, Finland, October 2020)

“I think a hybrid model would be best, i.e., combining both office work and remote work. Overall I may be more productive at the office but on the other hand I think better in the peace of my home. So the home environment is better for doing tasks that require concentration and independent analysis. Brainstorming and planning projects with others are, however, something that will probably always be easier and nicer face-to-face.” (Young adult 10, Finland, October 2020)

“Working remotely helps to keep up with work around the house and not having to commute adds back a couple of hours to your day. I do not want to work remotely for the whole week because I would miss in person interactions too much.” (Young adult 11, Finland, October 2020)

One popular future aspiration that emerged from the data was the so-called “hybrid model”, meaning that individuals would work or study partly from home and partly from the traditional office or school, which was of great interest to many respondents. Though the provided quotes are from October, some had reflected upon the interest in continuing
with occasional telework also in March, highlighting the fact that the period of forced telework has provided opportunities to get used to teleworking. According to the collected data, having at least occasional days of telework would provide the participants with the benefits of both telework and traditional office, as one could, for instance, spend less time on commuting to work and school on some days and simultaneously upkeep work-related social interactions the other days. In turn, this indicates that despite its social challenges, the other aspects of telework are valued to the extent to which individuals want to work remotely also in the future. Consequently, this shows that after getting familiar with remote work, people perceived it as being a natural part of work-life and worth utilizing also in the future.

4.1.4 Summary of COVID-19 as a game-changer

Based on the analysis, it is evident that the overall attitude towards telework suffered an initial shock, but the telework satisfaction is now higher than prior to COVID-19, indicating that, overall, the period of forced telework has had a positive impact on the perception of telework. More specifically, the respondents highlighted satisfaction especially in terms of flexibility, saved time as well as the peaceful home-office environment. Thereof, based on the analysis, telework is seen as essential also at future workplaces, as the vast majority of respondents believed that the use of telework will increase nationally because of the pandemic and wanted to rely on telework also in the future. Interestingly, there was a high interest especially in the “hybrid model” of working, indicating that in the future, work could be performed through a combination of both the traditional office and remote work. Surprisingly, aside from the overall attitude towards telework, the responses of young adults in Finland were closely aligned with everyone else. Consequently, the findings suggest the rise of a new working culture that supports teleworking among everyone.

4.2 Experiencing the period of forced telework

In this section, the focus will be on the experiences gained during the period of forced telework. Consequently, the aim of this chapter is to provide insights that can be used to answer the second research question: “How have young adults’ telework experiences evolved in the first six months of COVID-19 enforced telework?”
4.2.1 The rise of new work habits

While many of the research participants had prior experiences of remote work, the collected data shows that the period of forced telework has led to new work-related habits. All in all, in addition to learning how to telework, individuals had learned new ways of approaching work in terms of organizing work and utilizing new tools between March and October, 2020. Such habits and skills are valuable in the organizational context as they have the potential to be utilized also after the pandemic. Finally, when considering the longitudinal aspect of the data, it should be noted that a vast majority of the respondents highlighted that they had undergone a period of learning new habits and skills, and thus there were major changes in the comments provided in March and October 2020.

Firstly, when the respondents reported about lessons learned during the period of forced telework, the pandemic situation per se was one point which was heavily reflected upon both in March and October 2020. The telework situation was seen as a new and thus unique experience that took place in a rapid manner, consequently pushing for new ways of working, which was reported by many. For instance, in the following quotes, the same respondent mentioned that he had learned that his work can be performed remotely in March whereas in October the respondent was convinced that he, indeed, had learned to work remotely:

“The work that I do can be done remotely. The meetings are now online.” (Young adult 12, Finland, March 2020)

“It is a unique experience. I had no idea how telework looks, but now I know, and I know that it can work.” (Young adult 12, Finland, October 2020)

On a similar note, in the case of the following respondent, the use of virtual meetings and teleworking were already a part of the respondent’s work life and thereof the reliance on telework did not feel challenging in March. Nevertheless, having the whole company working remotely served as a new and unique experience, which the respondent reflected upon in October, 2020:

“We do a lot of virtual meetings at the office anyway so I didn’t feel any difference” (Young adult 13, Finland, October 2020)

“That moving almost all the employees of a big company from the office to home office happened surprisingly fast when it had to, and that the work was able to be continued well also in this situation” (Young adult 13, Finland, October 2020)
Therefore, after the initial, significant changes in March, the experience provided by the rapid shift together with quick organizational response has proved to some participants that teleworking, in fact, is possible and can be executed, both on an individual and firm-level. Consequently, the period of forced telework enabled a completely new way of performing work remotely for many participants, which consequently resulted in new work-related individual and organizational habits in the time period between March and October, 2020.

Secondly, many of the research participants had formed new work-related habits in the way they organize work. More specifically, especially the importance of time management, work-life balance and task prioritization were touched upon by many, indicating that individuals had experienced challenges and learnings in regards to these themes between March and October 2020. This is illustrated in the following quote, with which one can see how in March, the respondent identified work-life balance as a key challenge when teleworking, yet in October the respondent pointed out that they had learned the importance of proper time management and maintaining a satisfying work-life balance:

"It can also be harder to separate your free time from your work when you are working remotely. I tend to take shorter lunch breaks and work longer days when I'm working remotely."
(Young adult 14, Finland, March 2020)

"I have learned the importance of time management and having a good work-life balance. When you are working and studying at home it can be harder to take time off and relax, but if you do not do that you end up being really stressed and that has a huge impact on your wellbeing and productivity. Planning my days in advance helps me to accomplish my tasks on time and it leaves me with more free time."
(Young adult 14, Finland, October 2020)

Likewise, in March, the following respondent claimed to study and/or work remotely seven days a week from 8 to 18, but in October the respondent pointed out that, in actual fact, they had found new ways to prioritize their days during the months of teleworking. This can be seen in the following quote:

"(I have learned that) There are also other aspects in an individual's life that are as important as a career and work. In my case my life has become more balanced. I can now prioritize my time better between school, rest, hobbies and socializing. Time is no longer "wasted" as much as before, attending compulsory work with no efficiency."
(Young adult 15, Finland, October 2020)
Thus, according to these quotes, the way the respondents approached time management and work-life balance had changed significantly during the first six months of COVID-enforced telework. Furthermore, the period of forced telework hence had an effect on the way young adults prioritize their work-life to match their values and aspirations that are not directly linked to work by, for instance, learning to nurture well-being and prioritize tasks not linked to work when working and studying remotely.

Thirdly, the months of forced telework taught many of the research participants how to use online communication tools and virtual teamwork platforms that can be utilized at work, which required some learning in March, 2020. Additionally, as illustrated by the quotes below, many respondents experienced challenges with online communication initially but found ways to deal with such issues later in the year.

"When I need to communicate with my co-workers, it is much more difficult to work remotely" (Young adult 16, Finland, March 2020)

"I have learned to get more comfortable reaching out to people electronically. I have also learned how important the social aspect of work is to my mental wellbeing." (Young adult 16, Finland, October 2020)

Besides the quote provided by Young Adult 16, the use of online applications and different programs was brought up by many respondents, highlighting the fact that the telework experience has required individuals to learn new online tools to perform work. Therefore, it can be stated that the period of forced telework has indeed provided new technological skills and other electronic work habits to the research participants. As these kinds of skills can potentially be utilized also in the future, the data indicated that the use of, for instance, online meetings can become an important part of future workplaces as well.

Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the period of forced telework did not only offer positive experiences and learnings. In contrast to the other discussed experiences, a few participants pointed out that the main thing they had learned between March and October 2020, was the strong dislike towards teleworking. More specifically, one young adult in Finland mentioned that the biggest learning point for them during the period of forced telework was that they “hate it” and a few young adults in Finland mentioned that they have learned that they prefer working face-to-face. Interestingly, in such cases, the respondents had identified negative feelings already in March 2020, indicating that such feelings had not changed in six months. Nevertheless, as there are only a few comments of negative nature, the extent of such experiences is relatively limited, suggesting that
telework, indeed, does not suit everyone’s needs and preferences. Many respondents also pointed out that it has been challenging to tailor telework arrangements to fit one’s needs due to, for instance, strict societal restrictions limiting potential places from where one could telework and/or having limited social interaction also outside work.

4.2.2 Experienced challenges

Considering the experienced challenges individuals had when teleworking, the collected data shows that the most pressing issues with teleworking concern the social challenges, productivity and work-life balance. Additionally, also the themes of ergonomics and boredom were briefly touched upon by many. Such themes were present both in the data from March and from October 2020, suggesting that despite the 6 months’ experience with telework, the experienced challenges remained relatively same.

Evident from the data, the pandemic and telework have resulted in social challenges due to limited social interaction. Many of the participants mentioned that not seeing people at work or school has resulted in the feeling of loneliness and a wish for additional human interaction. The desire for more social work-related encounters can be seen in the following quotes from March and October 2020:

“I (--) miss the social aspect” (Young adult 17, Finland, March 2020)

“I think without having social interactions with co-workers I feel rather disconnected from my work. I would like to go to the office more, but it feels irresponsible to put people and myself at risk” (Young adult 17, Finland, October 2020)

Also the following respondent identified the lack of social interaction as one of the key challenges of telework both in March and October 2020:

“Everything is almost the same - but remotely. (--) Only the social part is missing”. (Young adult 18, Finland, March 2020)

“Creating social connections has been challenging, especially at a new workplace.” (Young adult 18, Finland, October 2020)

Hence, according to the data, the need for work-related social interaction had not changed significantly in the period of six months. Therefore, the social challenges arising from telework were perceived as an unchangeable part of working remotely, including both the need for being social as well as the possibility to build a social network.
Furthermore, considering the challenge of being productive when working remotely, the data shows that the perceived productivity has clearly evolved throughout the pandemic. In March, almost 40 percent claimed to be less productive when working remotely than from the office whereas approximately 30 percent believed to be more productive. In October, however, the percentage of people feeling less productive had fallen to 34 among young adults in Finland and 26 among others. Interestingly, 35 percent of the sample felt that they are more productive when teleworking. The remaining group did not see any effect in perceived productivity. With the significant decrease in unproductivity and increase in productivity among everyone, it is clear that some people have learned to telework in an efficient and productive way. Additionally, as seen in Figure 6 below, those who were not young adults felt significantly less productive in March, whereas in October over 50 percent of them felt more productive when teleworking. This dramatic change can partially be explained by the re-opening of daycare institutions and schools, as pointed out by several participants belonging to the group of others.

![Perceived productivity](image)

**Figure 6**  
Perceived productivity
The theme of telework-related productivity emerged also from the open-ended responses. For some, maintaining a sufficient level of productivity had remained challenging throughout the months between March and October 2020, as seen for instance in the following quotes:

“I feel I have slowly lost the structure of days and become less productive” (Young adult 19, Finland, March 2020)

“My productivity has dropped.” (Young adult 19, Finland, October 2020)

In contrast, however, many respondents claimed that, in fact, they had become more productive during the six months of forced telework, which is well aligned with Figure 6. An example of such experience can be seen in the following quotes:

“I have been really frustrated and worried because of this Corona situation, which has for sure affected my mental well-being, which in turn has affected my work and studies in a negative way as I am not as productive as I normally am.” (Young adult 20, Finland, March 2020)

“I am now more used to the whole situation and I can concentrate better. That’s why I feel more productive now.” (Young adult 20, Finland, October 2020)

Therefore, the perceived productivity of individuals had evolved during the teleworking experience, and the trend spotted in the data leans clearly towards a more productive working style after six months of telework. However, the quotes indicate that despite the decreased number of individuals who feel less productive when teleworking, there are still many who experience unproductivity when working remotely. Consequently, the data again shows that individuals experience teleworking differently, and thus the theme of productivity is of complex nature also in this study. Nevertheless, as this question explored the individuals’ perceived productivity when teleworking, it does not take the time saved when not commuting into account, which in previous literature is often seen as the reason behind higher productivity when teleworking.

Another perceived challenge with the period of forced telework was maintaining a sufficient work-life balance. According to the quotes below, teleworking has increased the permeability of work and family boundaries as well as caused challenges with ensuring work is performed only during work time and not being available all the time due to not leaving the office concretely. Illustrated by the following quotes from March and October 2020,
"I've noticed that it's easily so that workdays are longer now, especially as there's no travelling to/from work as well as basically no plans at all after a work day due to social distancing, so workdays can sometimes stretch to 10-11 hours easily." (Young adult 21, Finland, March 2020)

“(--) Knowing when to stop working. Am I working from home or living at work?” (Young adult 21, Finland, October 2020)

These quotes thus epitomize that, in fact, maintaining work-life balance can be challenging also during the period of forced telework due to blurred lines between work and leisure. Acknowledging that some participants had learned to maintain a satisfying work-life balance, many still struggled with long workdays. According to the data, the challenges arise from having work equipment at home, such as laptops, having no clear end to the workday as well as being contacted by colleagues who do not necessarily know when one's workday begins or ends. Additionally, when not controlling for age and geographic location, individuals with young children found it challenging to combine work and family, partially due to the fact that in March 2020, schools were closed, and young children stayed home. In October, however, the majority of schools had opened and thus the number of comments about having children at home was limited.

In addition to social challenges, productivity and work-life balance, the respondents identified challenges also in terms of work ergonomics at home, boredom and the struggle of preparing lunch at home daily. Acknowledging the strict national lockdowns, facing boredom as well as daily lunch preparations can also be linked to the pandemic restrictions overall, as going to lunch restaurants and having other aspects to life than solely work would potentially be utilized to a greater extent after the COVID-restrictions have been lifted off. Finally, it should be noted that in contrast to the new habits and skills gained during the forced telework period, the experienced challenges remained relatively same, and only the extent of such challenges evolved in six months.

4.2.3 Telework endurance

Another interesting aspect of teleworking is the intrinsic motivation of individuals and the endurance to perform work also when working remotely. In this section, the participants were asked to evaluate their endurance over the past 6 months of telework only in October, when individuals had had a chance to experience forced telework over a long period of time.
Overall, among those who were not regarded as young adults in Finland, approximately seven percent of respondents felt like they have not been able to maintain work or study motivation during the six months of remote work. In contrast, 48 percent said that they have maintained motivation and 44 percent had maintained motivation at least to some extent. When controlling for age and geographic location, 11 percent of young adults in Finland mentioned that they have not been able to stay motivated, while 34 of young adults in Finland felt that they have been able to maintain motivation and 55 percent believed so to some extent. The levels of perceived motivation are reported in Figure 7 below.

![Bar Chart: Work motivation in October 2020](https://example.com/bar-chart.png)

**Figure 7**  
*Work motivation in October 2020*

Hence, Figure 7 shows that while most people have been able to maintain motivated during the period of forced telework at least to some extent, the endurance levels were significantly lower among young adults than among those who did not belong to the focal group.

Moreover, when looking at the open-ended responses, it is evident that the feeling of motivation and telework endurance have evolved during the studied six months of forced telework. Interestingly, for some respondents, work motivation had increased along the way due to getting used to teleworking. On the contrary, a more common trend emerging from the data was that motivation had, in fact, decreased during the months of forced
telework, as in the following cases in which the individuals claimed to enjoy telework in March 2020, but provided the following quotes in October 2020:

“I like remote work but on my own terms, this situation has lasted so long that I’m getting quite tired of it. Would be nice to see more people.” (Young adult 22, Finland, October 2020)

“The feeling of motivation has come in waves. First it increased but now that there is no end in sight, it has decreased.” (Young adult 23, Finland, October 2020)

Such differences in motivation suggest that individuals have endured the period of forced telework differently, some experienced motivational issues at the beginning and others during later stages. However, the common theme between these two is that both groups experienced that the pandemic had affected their work-related motivation and thus indicates that people have endured the period of forced telework in many ways. Despite the high number of individuals who felt like they have been able to maintain work motivation during the period of telework, there are still many who point out that their motivation has suffered overall, especially in the open-ended questions, indicating that work motivation had not returned to its normal state after the initial shock.

Moreover, the collected data shows that the underlying reasons for changes in experienced work-related motivation share some similarities with experienced challenges of teleworking, particularly in terms of the decrease in social interaction with colleagues, which many of the respondents identified as demotivating factors. Additionally, productivity issues arising from the lack of oversight as well as the availability of distractions, such as social media and the possibility to focus on other tasks were listed as demotivating factors.

On the contrary, many participants stated that teleworking for six months, in fact, had not affected their work motivation at all. According to the data, there are several reasons why teleworking had not required special endurance from some of the research participants. The emerging reasons include both the intrinsic motivational factors, as in the following quotes, as well as external factors.

“My work is interesting and fun at times, so it is easy to maintain interest!” (Young adult 23, Finland, October 2020)

“Right now, because of my new, interesting job, my motivation is pretty high but back in my old job I had done trouble staying motivated. The lack of motivation was probably caused by the job itself, not remote work” (Young adult 24, Finland, October 2020)

“I still have to show what I’ve done so the due dates work as motivators.” (Young adult 25, Finland, October 2020)
“(--) I take pride in being productive. If I’m not productive, I fail my classes.” (Young adult 26, Finland, October 2020)

Likewise, also organizational routines have resulted in the upkeep of individuals’ motivation throughout the pandemic:

“We have daily remote video coffee breaks with my colleagues and are in frequent interaction with them on Teams via the chat function. That is something that keeps me motivated – to be able to collaborate and work towards the common goal despite the physical distance.” (Young adult 27, Finland, October 2020)

“If everything is done well in terms of organizing telework, I don’t see a reason why the motivation to work would have decreased. If you still feel like you are remembered and that someone cares about you as an employee, the situation is good and motivating, even if it happens remotely.” (Young adult 28, Finland, October 2020)

Therefore, such quotes show that while keeping motivation up has been challenging for some, some have not experienced any significant changes in work-related motivation. Consequently, it can be noted that the feeling of doing meaningful work, the nature of work in terms of having deadlines and personal tendency towards being productive. Such changes highlight the fact that teleworking does not necessarily suit everyone. In regards to the motivation originating from the employer’s side, the data shows that, in fact, satisfying guidance and policies are beneficial for teleworkers’ motivation to perform work also remotely.

### 4.2.4 Summary of the experiences

To sum up section 4.2., individuals have gained new skills and experienced challenges during the period of forced telework. Skill-wise, many teleworkers had learned to navigate telework *per se* and to utilize new online tools to work-related tasks between March and October 2020. In contrast to March 2020, the perceived feeling of being less productive in comparison to office-based work had decreased, suggesting that individuals have learned to perform work efficiently also from home. Also, some teleworkers had found new ways to maintain social encounters, and thus did not feel as lonely as in the first month of COVID-restrictions. However, many respondents still experienced loneliness, unproductivity and problems with sufficient work-life balance at least to some extent also in October, indicating that not all telework-related problems can be overcome through the 6 months of telework experience. Finally, the data shows
clearly that while many of the respondents felt that they had been able to maintain work-related motivation during the pandemic at least to some extent, the issues with keeping oneself motivated and endure the period of forced telework were evident. The demotivational reasons were linked to, for instance, lack of social interaction, lack of oversight and the availability of distractions at home. However, some participants also pointed out that they had not experienced any problems with motivation due to both intrinsic as well as organizational reasons. Thus, it can be stated that individuals have endured the period of forced telework differently.
5 DISCUSSION

In this section, the empirical findings of this study are discussed to finally answer the established research questions, first independently and then together to provide an overview of how exactly the period of forced telework affected work habits. Consequently, the first chapters will provide an overview of the effects of COVID-19 on the way telework is perceived as well as telework habits. Next, the practical and managerial implications of the results will be discussed, and thereafter the contributions to existing literature will be considered. Then, the limitations of this study are briefly discussed to ensure a correct understanding of the findings. Finally, several suggestions for future research are presented.

5.1 The effects of COVID-19 and forced telework on work habits

This research has aimed at shedding light into the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the way telework is perceived, especially among young adults in Finland. The research findings have shown that the forced telework period has affected the perception of telework in many ways. To summarize the research findings presented in the previous chapter, the main themes and key findings can be seen in Table 4 below. In turn, these findings guide the next sections and are used to answer the established research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall telework satisfaction</td>
<td>Initial shock, overall increase in telework satisfaction compared to the situation prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, both among everyone and young adults in Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived benefits</td>
<td>Flexibility of work times and locations (both in regards to work and studies), saved time when not commuting, peaceful home office environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future aspirations</td>
<td>Clear interest in the “hybrid model”, telework as part of the worklife also after the pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New skills</td>
<td>Telework habits in general, new ways to organize work in terms of, for instance, time management and work-life balance, new electronic tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced challenges</td>
<td>Lack of social interaction, productivity issues especially in the beginning, work-life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endurance and work-motivation</td>
<td>Differences between individuals, motivation changed throughout the period of forced telework, but overall individuals were able to stay motivated at least to some extent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Summary of the main findings

5.1.1 RQ1: How has COVID-19 shaped the way young adults feel about telework?

The first research question sheds light into the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular how teleworking was perceived after relying on remote work involuntarily. Furthermore, the aim was to capture the participants’ subjective experiences associated with their work- and study-related feelings from the period of forced telework while simultaneously spotting larger trends. The findings show, for instance, that telework satisfaction has increased, and that young adults had a tendency to appreciate the aspects of flexibility, saved time as well as the home office environment when teleworking, and thus the majority wished to upkeep the habit of teleworking also in the future through the hybrid model.

Firstly, the presented results demonstrated that the forced telework period caused by the COVID-19 restrictions has, in fact, shaped the way telework is perceived. After the initial shock in March 2020, telework satisfaction increased in comparison to the era prior to COVID-19. Therefore, the findings show that individuals have grown to like telework in the time period between March and October 2020 when relying on telework more than usually. According to Anicich et al. (2020), the drop in telework satisfaction in March 2020 can be explained by the radical life change that individuals experienced in the first moments of COVID restrictions, causing additional stress on the individual level (Carver & Scheier, 1989; Anicich et al., 2020). Interestingly, Anicich et al. (2020) also showed preliminary evidence that such psychological effects only last for a while, which is aligned with the presented finding that individuals felt more satisfied with telework in October than prior to the pandemic or in March 2020.

The main reasons for the increase in satisfaction, according to the research findings, were flexibility, saved time and the home office environment, which are overall well aligned
with previous literature. Firstly, the findings suggest that teleworking offers flexibility in regards to both work times and work location, which were also pointed out by scholars such as Härmä (2006) and Hill et al. (2008). Secondly, the appreciation of not having to commute and thus saving time was evident. Interestingly, the aspect of not commuting is often linked to productivity in previous literature (e.g. Brion & Veldhoven, 2016; Sharbu, 2018). In contrast, the findings of this research suggested that, in fact, saving time is not only a matter of getting more work done per se, but also allowing more time to sleep and saving time for other responsibilities than solely for work-related tasks. When considering the focal group of this study, young adults in Finland, this can be explained by the generational mindset of holding work as something that supports one’s lifestyle instead of being the most central aspect of life (e.g. Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Martson, 2007). Thirdly, aligned with the results, according to Khanna and New (2008), working from home also limits the number of spontaneous chats and disruptive noise, explaining how the home office was seen as the more peaceful option among young adults.

As a result of the perceived benefits of telework, the willingness to continue with working and studying remotely at least occasionally was presented. Instead of purely working from the traditional office or teleworking, the concept of “hybrid model” of telework was of significant interest. With the hybrid model, the findings suggested that the perceived benefits could be enjoyed, but the challenges of, for instance, the lack of social interactions, could be decreased by working from the office occasionally, which is closely aligned with for instance Dahik et al. (2020). Acknowledging, however, the lack of academic literature on a prolonged period of forced telework and the long-term implications of this finding, it is interesting to see that teleworking is perceived as something both workers and students want to utilize also in the future.

Therefore, the analysis shows that the period of forced telework has, in fact, shaped the way young adults, among others, feel about telework. As many had not had a chance to rely solely on telework or remote studies prior to COVID-19, the months of telework generated a clear interest in continuing with telework also in the future. In previous literature, the absence of a telework culture is often highlighted by scholars such as Pyöriä (2003) and Aguilera et al. (2016). Nevertheless, along with the recent works of, for instance, Rudolph et al. (2020) and Eurofound (2020), this thesis shows the pandemic has indeed created a new telework culture. To address the telework culture accordingly, the data showed that individuals require organizational guidance to
navigate in the emerging telework culture, which is aligned with the findings of, for instance, Allen and Shockley (2009) as well as Nordbäck et al. (2017).

As for young adults in Finland, the preferences were relatively similar to the preferences of other groups, but in most cases telework satisfaction was slightly lower among young adults especially in March. In previous academic literature, young adults and millennials are shown to be more prone to enjoy teleworking due to, for instance, having broad technological skills and appreciating autonomy and flexibility (e.g. Gennamo & Gardner, 2008; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014). Interestingly, this study provided empirical evidence to the contrary, as when controlling for age, young adults overall were less satisfied with working remotely than when not controlling for age. Young adults in Finland, though, were more satisfied with telework in October 2020. Nevertheless, acknowledging the extensive effects of the pandemic also on many non-work aspects of life, such as limited chances to enjoy hobbies, the governmental recommendation to keep social and physical distance from others and the additional stress arising from the economic challenges caused by the pandemic, the age-related differences can be caused by other elements, consequently affecting the overall telework satisfaction.

5.1.2 **RQ2: How have young adults’ telework experience evolved during the first six months of COVID-19 enforced telework?**

The second research question, on the other hand, focused on the way the temporal evolution of the telework-related experiences. Thus, the aim was to concentrate on the experiences of individuals and how those changed during the time period between March and October 2020. Overall, the findings suggest that individuals gained new skills, experienced challenges and endured the period in different ways.

Considering the learning points gained during the period of forced telework, the research findings showed that individuals had learned new skills. Namely, these skills were learning to telework in general as well as using and applying different electronic tools, such as online meetings, to work. Taking the novelty and rapid shift of the situation into account, these skills allowed the workers and students to continue with work at least satisfactorily. Interestingly, these skills developed over time, meaning that in March such skills were not reported as often as in October. Such skills can be utilized also in the future when teleworking, which is beneficial when considering the significant demand for the hybrid model arising from the empirical findings.
Further, the period also caused challenges to many, especially in terms of the lack of social interaction, work-life balance and productivity which are closely aligned with previous research (e.g. Richardson & McKenna, 2013; Hill et al., 2001). All in all, the social interaction lacking when teleworking is a known phenomenon that has been explored in previous literature by, for instance, Richardson and McKenna (2013) as well as Pyöriä (2011). More specifically, the findings indicate that while the absence of social interaction at the workplace is inevitable also among young adults, the extent of which it affects the feeling of loneliness among individuals evolves over time, suggesting that it is possible to find ways to cope with loneliness through, for instance, video meetings. In turn, this is aligned with the views of Richardson and McKenna (2013) and Olsewski and Mokhtarian (1994), as such ways can be regarded as increased efforts to maintain social interaction. Nevertheless, such coping methods did not eliminate the feeling of loneliness and only worked in some cases.

Throughout the period, however, the challenging aspects evolved, resulting in, for instance, fewer people experiencing the feeling of being less productive in comparison to office-based work. Moreover, as individuals handled and perceived the period differently, the experienced motivation to perform work shaped throughout the period. For some, work-related motivation was lower in the beginning as there were many aspects to get used to while for some the months of forced telework decreased the experienced motivation due to, for instance, getting tired of the situation. Additionally, those who mentioned that they are motivated by intrinsic factors, such as personal desire to perform well, had in most cases maintained motivated through the period of forced telework.

Finally, when considering the longitudinal aspect of this research, this research has provided rare insights into how telework habits, preferences and challenges develop over time. As previous research has not focused on full-time involuntary telework that lasts for months, the insight that time in fact shapes the way individuals perceive telework through, for instance, learning new skills as discussed above. The findings thus suggest that due to the prolonged period of forced telework, individuals have had an opportunity to overcome challenges and grow to like telework. Nevertheless, this was only true in some cases. In literature, the tendency of valuing work-life balance is often linked to young adults (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Martson, 2007), and as the analysis presented, one of the challenges of forced telework has been work-life balance. Thereof, aligned with Nicholas and Guzman (2009), also this research pointed out that telework is not
necessarily of interest to all young adults. Furthermore, this is aligned with Pyörä’s statement (2011) that teleworking is not necessarily ideal for everyone. In the first months of the pandemic, individuals had in most cases limited possibilities to affect their telework arrangements, which then caused problems for those who did not feel positively about teleworking (Pyörä, 2011). In the light of the pandemic, such problems can arise from, for instance, having children at home or not having the required technological equipment to perform telework (Rudolph et al., 2020).

5.1.3 The effects of forced telework on work habits

Combing the insights generated through answering the research questions, the findings altogether suggest that the telework culture, which was lacking both globally as well as in Finland, has evolved and strengthened during the period of forced telework, which has the potential to radically change future workplaces (Pyörä, 2011; Rudolph et al., 2020). As individuals have now gained more telework-related experiences, relying on it occasionally is not as challenging as it would have been prior to the pandemic. Consequently, the results showed that the telework experience sparked new ways of performing work for some participants, which consequently resulted in new work-related habits in the time period between March and October, 2020. Overall, this is aligned with, for instance, the argument of Rudolph et al. (2020) stating that COVID-19 can shape the way work-life is viewed overall. Additionally, as many companies were forced to switch to telework and consequently noticed that employees perform work sufficiently also remotely, the ability to provide telework opportunities should exist also in the future.

Furthermore, the period of forced telework has affected overall telework satisfaction, perceived benefits, future aspirations, new skills, experienced challenges as well as endurance and work-motivation. Therefore, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic has, in fact, affected work habits and the way work is viewed. Moreover, such themes were present among students, part-time workers and full-time workers. This indicates that not only the work-related habits have changed during the pandemic, but also habits in regards to education. As previous literature on telework has a clear tendency to focus on work and not on studying (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), the findings have generated an interesting overview of how students perceive telework and that, in fact, the effects of
forced telework are relatively similar among those who work, those who study and those who do both.

Considering the longitudinal findings, the empirical evidence showed that despite experiencing a 6-month long period of forced telework, some experienced effects of forced telework remained the same at least to some extent. As discussed, these include for instance the flexibility and saved time offered by working remotely as well as the increased feeling of loneliness. Therefore, these themes can be said to be at least relatively permanent effects of working remotely. On the other hand, some themes evolved significantly throughout the studied six months, including for instance overall telework satisfaction, new skills and, to some extent, productivity. Therefore, the findings suggest that while some aspects can evolve over time, some themes tend to follow the same patterns as in previous research.

5.2 Contributions to existing research

Overall, this thesis has contributed to the existing research on telework by providing new empirical findings as well as focusing on a new, under-researched phenomenon of forced telework. In practice, this was done by conducting an empirical qualitative study while simultaneously having built a theoretical context in which the findings were compared to.

Acknowledging the vast number of studies on the effects of telework with contradicting conclusions on, for instance, work-life balance and productivity (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), this research has provided more empirical evidence that will help navigate the existing literature in the field. For instance, the academic discussion on productivity vis-à-vis telework has thus far been inconclusive, but this study showed that while perceived productivity shaped during the period of forced telework, there were still some who believed that they were more productive than when working at the office, and some who experienced the opposite. Thus, the findings of this thesis also highlight that teleworking does not necessarily suit everyone, and therefore the experienced effects can vary to a great extent as suggested also by Pyöriä (2001). Interestingly, also, the findings of the general effects of telework were in most cases well aligned previous literature, as this research pointed out that, for instance, the lack of social interaction and saved time when not commuting are strongly linked to the nature of telework. This also suggests that the
effects of forced telework in terms of, for instance, the experienced challenges and perceived benefits are relatively similar to those of voluntary telework.

On the other hand, when considering the longitudinal aspect of this study, the findings indicate that the effects of telework can change throughout the telework experience. This is in contrast with Golden’s (2008) finding that job satisfaction decreases when teleworking becomes more extensive, as this research shows that telework satisfaction actually increased after six months of extensive telework. Also, as this longitudinal research studied individuals over a period of six months, it contributes to the work of Lapierre et al. (2016) by offering an understanding of how involuntary telework is experienced during a longer time period. In fact, the findings of this research suggest that particularly young adults can maintain a sufficient work-life balance when teleworking but learning to do so requires time, which is in contrast to the research of Lapierre et al. (2016). However, the findings of this research also indicate that even after six months, some people perceive work-life balance as a challenge when teleworking, but the intensity of such feeling is not as strong as suggested by Lapierre et al. (2016).

Moreover, this thesis gives insights into the existing academic gap of forced telework and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is currently an under-researched topic due to the novelty of the situation. More specifically, the situation has allowed a study on telework during a time when many have the possibility to work full-time for a long period of time, which historically is a rare situation and thus related studies are still rare. By engaging 95 research participants, this study gives an understanding of how exactly the pandemic shaped the way work and work life are viewed, focusing on young adults in Finland. Consequently, such academic research sheds light into the phenomenon and offers new insights into forced telework itself per se as well as the longitudinal aspect of relying on forced telework for a long period of time. Moreover, this study explored the work-related habits and aspirations of young adults, and showed and in regards to telework, the aspirations of other age groups were, in fact, relatively similar to those of young adults. Therefore, by holding the specific focal group at the core of this research, the findings gave new insights into the interplay of telework, young adults and the pandemic.
5.3 Practical implications of the findings

Alongside the theoretical contributions, the findings of this thesis carry practical and managerial implications that can be applied in organizational contexts. Briefly, for employees and students, this thesis has shown that, indeed, telework is a phenomenon of interest also in the future, meaning that the learned telework skills shall not be forgotten after the pandemic. The findings of this research suggest that such skills include, for instance, the use of online tools and the importance of managing work-life boundaries.

Furthermore, this thesis offers valuable insights also for organisations. Firstly, due to the rise of a strong teleworking culture, organizations should consider teleworking opportunities and policies as something that are here to stay permanently instead of regarding these solely as of temporary nature (Pyöriä, 2011; Nordbäck et al., 2017). Hence, based on the findings of this research, organizations shall consider ways to execute the hybrid model and offer employees and students the possibility to work remotely and at the office. In practice, this could be done by, for instance, offering remote lectures and organizing online meetings at least occasionally while simultaneously offering the possibility to work and maintain social relations at the traditional office. Secondly, as this thesis offered an overview of the challenges that people have experienced during the period, organizations can aim at enhancing their employees’ and students’ job satisfaction by allocating more resources to, for instance, remote social interaction or work ergonomics.

Another interesting managerial implication of this research concerns today’s labour market, which again is beneficial especially for firms and particularly for departments dealing with human resources. Acknowledging the experience gained through months of telework, organizations have adopted new habits and, for instance, electronic communication tools that have the potential to support efficient telework infrastructure also after the pandemic. Therefore, hiring international talent residing abroad or individuals who prefer to work from home can consequently become more and more common as the period of forced telework has shown that teleworking is possible and some employees feel like they would be willing to rely on it solely. This means that firms can expand their talent search to remote cities and countries, creating more diversity to organizations.
Finally, stretching the research findings to indicate future trends, the potential “telework revolution” (Eurofound, 2020) can also have long-term effects that are of interest for the governmental and regional authorities. The discussed clear interest in the hybrid model arising from the empirical findings can, for instance, disrupt the current commuting habits. In the case of, for instance, fewer individuals driving to work daily can have positive environmental consequences (Hook et al, 2020). Additionally, working from home occasionally may result in increasing interest in having larger living spaces. Therefore, the findings of this research can also be used to evaluate the future of work life and even living in general to some extent.

5.4 Research limitations

When assessing the findings, the research strengths and limitations should also be acknowledged to gain a realistic understanding of the research. Considering the strengths of this research, it should be noted that the research begun in March 2020, when the COVID-restrictions first took place in Finland, which in turn shows that the actual temporal context of this thesis is fruitful. Also, the longitudinal nature of this study is beneficial as it allows us to elaborate on the general feelings towards telework and how exactly those have evolved. The chosen approach is rare when conducting research for a master’s thesis due to limited time.

In addition to the discussed limitations arising from the chosen methodology, it should also be noted that the majority of the sample were women, especially when considering the young adults in Finland. This is worth noting as previous literature has shown that women are less likely to appreciate remote work than men (Nicholas & Guzman, 2009), and thus should be considered when assessing the findings. However, as the findings suggest that the trend and general attitude towards teleworking are of positive nature, the findings indicate that having a sample group with a majority of women has not shaped the trend of telework satisfaction to a negative direction. In addition to the conscious delimitations pointed out in the introduction as well as methodological limitations discussed in the methodology section, this study carries limitations also in regards to the generalizability of the results. As this qualitative study focuses on the feelings of individuals, the findings should be regarded as indicators of trends (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014). More specifically, the chosen approach has elaborated on the
perceptions and feeling that individuals hold of telework, which should be kept in mind when attempting to generalize the findings.

Finally, as the COVID-19 situation continues even after this research, it should be noted that the findings are valid in the temporal context. In practice, this means that the perceptions and feelings individuals have are subject to evolve during the following months of the COVID-19 restrictions or even after.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

Again, as this research focused on generating an overview of how COVID-19 effected telework habits rather than focusing on only one aspect, there are many directions which future research can take. Acknowledging the contributions of this research, future research in the field could focus on slightly different aspects of the forced telework period. To gain a coherent understanding of the effects of COVID-19 on telework habits, I suggest future research to extend the longitudinal study presented, hold other focal groups at the core of the research, or focus more on elements that were only mentioned and not further studied in this research, such as the role of gender.

More specifically, in future research, the longitudinal study could be taken further to identify how the telework preferences evolve during the COVID-19 restrictions and even after the restrictions have been lifted off. Acknowledging that this thesis took place in 2020 when the pandemic-related restrictions were endorsed, it offers a sufficient starting point for studies that aim at understanding the effects of the forced telework period in the longer run. This could be done by engaging the participants of this study to a third survey, which would take place months after the restrictions to capture whether or not the effects found in this survey were, in fact, long-term effects or limited to the period of forced telework. Additionally, as this research showed, the initial shock and negative feelings towards teleworking eased between the two survey rounds. Thus, the longitudinal research on forced or involuntary work should be studied for longer than in this research or in the study of Lapierre et al. (2016).

Furthermore, this study focused on young adults in Finland that do knowledge work or study, which can be performed remotely. To understand the effects of COVID-19 to the greatest possible extent, future research should consider conducting a similar longitudinal study with a different focal group. This could be, for instance, another
geographical location, older focus group or individuals who have not had the opportunity to rely on telework during the pandemic. This way, the contextual factors affecting, for instance, satisfaction with telework and future telework aspirations could be understood in greater detail.

Another interesting aspect to study further would be the role of gender. While gender was briefly touched upon in the literature review, it was not a focal point in this study. Interestingly, previous research has shown that women are more likely to also take care of the household (e.g. Cerrato & Cifre, 2018), which may cause additional problems in terms of work-life balance and work-family conflict during the period of forced telework. Thereof, the field should be further studied from the perspective of involuntary telework as it has the potential to yield interesting insights into the themes of, for instance, telework aspirations, productivity and perceived work-life balance.
6 CONCLUSION

In this brief summarizing conclusion, the key points of this thesis will be presented to ensure a clear understanding of the research aim, its theoretical grounding, research methodology as well as the research findings.

Firstly, the aim of this research was to shed light on how the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the way work is viewed and how work habits have changed, focusing on young adults in Finland. This way, the thesis contributes to the existing academic conversation on the topics of telework and young adults and millennials, with a fresh perspective offered by the period of forced telework. In order to study the topic, there was an extensive theoretical background exploring the previous literature on the topics of telework, the young working population as well as the pandemic. Furthermore, a longitudinal study was contacted through two rounds of qualitative surveys, one taking place in the first month of strict COVID-related restriction in Finland, and another approximately half a year later when individuals had gotten more used to the situation. The raw data was then analysed through a thematic approach, resulting in six main themes.

With this approach, the research arrived at several key findings. After the initial shock, telework satisfaction had increased significantly, also when compared to the era prior to COVID-19. Individuals enjoyed the flexibility, the home office environment and saving time due to not commuting, and thus aspired to utilize telework also in the future, preferably in the form of the hybrid model. Moreover, while telework- and electronic communication-related new skills were learned, individuals also experienced challenges in terms of the lack of social interaction, work-life balance, productivity as well as ergonomics and boredom. Also, the data showed that individuals kept motivated in different ways, suggesting that there were clear differences in the ways individuals showed resilience during the period of forced telework. Consequently, the findings contribute to the existing literature by, for instance, exploring the under-research field of forced (or involuntary) telework and carry practical and managerial implications that are interesting especially for managers that are responsible for human resources as to plan the future workplaces and telework opportunities to match the interest in telework also after the period of forced telework.

In line with Leonard (1995), this thesis has demonstrated that work, in fact, has the potential to be something we do, not a place where we go to.
7. REFERENCES


Finnish Government (2020). “Government, in cooperation with the president of the republic, declares a state of emergency in Finland over Coronavirus outbreak”,


COVID-19 & Forced Telework

COVID-19 & Forced Telework

Briefly, the notion of telework refers to working remotely, meaning that one will work from e.g. home with the use of electronic devices. As of March 2020, Finland has been on lockdown due to the measures taken to minimize the spread of COVID-19, and hence many employees have been instructed to rely more on telework. The aim of this survey is to explore how individuals perceive telework, focusing on how the forced virtualization of work due to COVID-19 affects one's work habits in the long run. The survey contains 21 questions and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You can write your answers in English, Finnish or Swedish. This research is longitudinal, meaning that there will be another round of surveys in the Fall 2020, and thus your email address is required.

Your personal data will be processed securely according to the data protection policy and ethical guidelines of Hanken School of Economics. The legal ground for processing your data is your consent, GDPR as well as the Finnish Data Protection Act. Moreover, the results of this survey are confidential, and data that directly identifies you personally will not be visible in any results or publications based on the data, and the results will be used solely for the purpose of this research. The collected data will be stored for up to two years and will be erased after the research is done. Additionally, you can withdraw from the research at any point. By completing this survey, you give your consent to processing your personal data, as obtained from the survey you are about to respond to, for the purpose of scientific research. You also approve that you have read and understood the above information, and you agree to participate in the research.

In case you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research or survey or if you want your personal data to be erased, please email Veronika Mielck (veronika.mielck@student.hanken.fi). If you have complaints or other questions related to the processing of personal data, contact the data processing officer of Hanken School of Economics (dpo@hanken.fi).

Thank you for your time!

1. Contact Information *

- Email address
- Country of residence
2. How old are you? *
   - 18-23 years old
   - 24-29
   - 30-39
   - 40-49
   - 50-59
   - 60-69
   - 70+
   - Other [ ]

3. Which gender do you identify with?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other
   - Prefer not to say

4. Do you have children?
   - No
   - Yes: youngest is 0-6 years old
   - Yes: youngest is 7-12 years old
   - Yes: youngest is 13-17 years old
   - Yes: youngest is 18+
5. What is your current occupation? (You can choose more than 1)

☐ Student
☐ Office job: part time
☐ Office job: full time
☐ Physical job: part time
☐ Physical job: full time
☐ Other __________

6. Please specify the field that you study / work in

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

7. On average, how many days a week have you been working / studying remotely prior to March 2020?

☐ 0 days a week
☐ 1 day a week
☐ 2 days a week
☐ 3 days a week
☐ 4 days a week
☐ 5 days a week
☐ Other __________
8. On average, how many days a week are you working / studying remotely now?

- 0 days a week
- 1 day a week
- 2 days a week
- 3 days a week
- 4 days a week
- 5 days a week
- Other [ ]

9. Please write more about how the current COVID-19 situation has shaped your work/ school life. You can e.g. describe your usual day when working remotely

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</tbody>
</table>

10. Prior to COVID-19, how much did you enjoy teleworking? If case you have not worked remotely before March 2020, you may skip this question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did not enjoy it at all</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Enjoy it a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. How much do you enjoy teleworking now? If you are not working remotely now, you may skip this question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do not enjoy it at all</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Enjoy it a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
12. In comparison with traditional office work, how productive were you when working remotely prior to COVID-19?

- Significantly less productive compared to "normal" work
- Less productive compared to "normal" work
- No effect
- More productive compared to "normal" work
- Significantly more productive compared to "normal" work
- Did not work remotely prior to COVID-19 / Not applicable
- Other

13. In comparison with traditional office work, how productive are you now when working remotely?

- Significantly less productive compared to "normal" work
- Less productive compared to "normal" work
- No effect
- More productive compared to "normal" work
- Significantly more productive compared to "normal" work
- Not working remotely / Not applicable
- Other

14. Compared to pre-COVID19, would you like to increase the amount of working/studying remotely when things get back to normal?

- Yes
- To some extent
- No
- Not applicable
- Other

15. Why?
16. Have you had any virtual meetings with your colleague(s) / peers during the COVID-19 time?

  ○ Yes
  ○ No
  ○ I don't know

17. If yes, how did it feel to work with or "be with" your colleagues online?

18. Would you like to adopt more electronic communication habits at the office/ school when things get back to normal? (Compared to pre-COVID-19)

  ○ Yes
  ○ To some extent
  ○ No
  ○ Other [ ]
19. If yes or to some extent, what kind of electronic communication habits? (You can choose more than 1)

- [ ] Online meetings
- [ ] Online chats
- [ ] Online collaborative spaces
- [ ] Email
- [ ] Remote lectures / trainings
- [ ] Calls
- [ ] Use of applications such as Teams
- [ ] Conference calls
- [ ] Project management applications such as Microsoft Planner
- [ ] Fax
- [ ] Virtual social meetings
- [ ] Decision-making polls
- [ ] Feedback tools
- [ ] Other

20. Finally, do you think the COVID-19 situation has shaped your work habits or the way you view work? If yes, please explain why and how.


21. Anything to add?


COVID-19 & Forced Telework: Follow-Up

Mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk (*) and must be filled in to complete the form.

COVID-19 & Forced Telework: Follow-Up Survey

You are invited to participate in this follow-up survey, because you answered the first survey earlier this year.

Briefly, the notion of telework refers to working remotely, meaning that one will work from e.g. home with the use of electronic devices. As of March 2020, Finland has been on lockdown due to the measures taken to minimize the spread of COVID-19, and hence many employees have been instructed to rely more on telework. The aim of this survey is to explore how individuals perceive telework, focusing on how the forced virtualization of work due to COVID-19 affects one’s work habits in the long run. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You can write your answers in English, Finnish or Swedish.

Your personal data will be processed securely according to the data protection policy and ethical guidelines of Hanken School of Economics. The legal ground for processing your data is your consent, GDPR as well as the Finnish Data Protection Act. Moreover, the results of this survey are confidential, and data that directly identifies you personally will not be visible in any results or publications based on the data, and the results will be used solely for the purpose of this research. The collected data will be stored for up to two years and will be erased after the research is done. Additionally, you can withdraw from the research at any point. By completing this survey, you give your consent to processing your personal data, as obtained from the survey you are about to respond to, for the purpose of scientific research. You also approve that you have read and understood the above information, and you agree to participate in the research.

In case you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research or survey or if you want your personal data to be erased, please email Veronika Mielck (veronika.mielck@student.hanken.fi). If you have complaints or other questions related to the processing of personal data, contact the data processing officer of Hanken School of Economics (dpo@hanken.fi).

Thank you for your time!

1. Contact Information *

   Email
   
   Country
2. What is your current occupation?

☐ Student
☐ Office job: part time
☐ Office job: full time
☐ Physical job: part time
☐ Physical job: full time
☐ Other

3. On average, how many days a week are you working / studying remotely now? *

☐ 0 days a week
☐ 1 day a week
☐ 2 days a week
☐ 3 days a week
☐ 4 days a week
☐ 5 days a week
☐ Other

4. How much do you enjoy teleworking now?

Do not enjoy it at all

Enjoy it a lot

5. What do you like about teleworking?


6. Have you felt anything particularly challenging when working remotely for a longer period of time? Please also reflect upon how you have coped (or failed to cope) with these challenges.

   |   |   |   |   |
   |   |   |   |   |

7. In comparison with traditional office work, how productive are you now when working remotely?

   - [ ] Significantly less productive compared to "normal" work
   - [ ] Less productive compared to "normal" work
   - [ ] No effect
   - [ ] More productive compared to "normal" work
   - [ ] Significantly more productive compared to "normal" work

8. Compared to pre-COVID19, would you like to adopt more electronic communication habits at work/school when things get back to normal?

   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] To some extent
   - [ ] Not applicable
9. Compared to pre-COVID19, would you like to increase the amount of working/studying remotely when things get back to normal?

- Yes
- No
- To some extent
- Not applicable

10. Why?


11. Please answer the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because of COVID-19, I now look more positively on teleworking than prior to COVID-19.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Because of Covid-19, the use of telework will increase in my country.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What have you learned during the period of forced telework?
13. Have you been able to maintain your work motivation during remote work?

- Yes
- No
- To some extent
- Not applicable

14. Please elaborate why.


15. Finally, do you think the COVID-19 situation has shaped your work habits or the way you view work? If yes, please explain why and how.


16. Anything to add?


