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How middle leaders met lockdown

“It's an endless uphill struggle”

Bachelor's project in Marketing, Innovation and Leadership
Supervisor: Paula Rice

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Abstract

This thesis discusses how leaders in one of Norway's largest media houses motivated their employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a time that offered challenges, changes in the workday, lack of motivation in relation to work, and a shift in structure in everyday life, both for leaders and employees in the company. Through a small-scale qualitative study we have focused on what affects motivation among employees, and how the choice of leadership style facilitates motivation and effort for them, at a time when there was a lack of social aspects and challenges related to this. There was a clear change in the motivation for the employees, but also for the leaders. We discovered during our research that the home-office is not for everyone. Our research found that different situations and individual employees were in need of different leadership approaches. The leaders we interviewed showed great awareness and flexibility in relation to the employees' changing and increasing needs. By discussing our findings with existing theories on leadership, we found out if they are useful to implement in times of uncertainty. We also see if it ultimately leads to the organization reaching its goals, in addition to maintaining employee needs.

Preface

This bachelor's thesis is our final work in the bachelor study Marketing, Innovation and Leadership at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Campus Ålesund.

We looked forward to working on this task, as it would give us the opportunity to deepen our understanding in a field that we both thought was interesting. The process has been both educational and challenging, and we are left with new knowledge in a field that we are sure will be useful for us in the future. It has been especially meaningful to complete our final task during a challenging time with the Covid-19 pandemic still active. We have made many great memories together during this time, and learned a lot about ourselves.

The paradoxical side of writing the assignment was that we struggled to find the motivation to finish the assignment, while writing about motivation among employees. The constant changes in the Covid-19 situation in our city presented challenges in predictability for our collaboration.

We would like to thank our three informants who took their time to give us useful insights into their work lives. It has been engaging to talk to such experienced and interesting people. It was especially exciting to get the opportunity to interview someone who we consider experts in the interviewing field.

Finally, we would like to thank Paula Rice, our brilliant supervisor, who has supplemented the process with advice and motivation. We are greatly appreciative of all the time and energy she has put into this. During a period where we struggled a bit with motivation, she gave us a push to continue the writing process.

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1. Background and context

1.1 Coronavirus in Norway

On March 12th, the first Covid-19 death was registered in Norway. The same day, the Norwegian Government announced the strongest social restrictions that have ever been made in peacetime. Travelling was advised against, and borders were closed. Businesses that relied on physically present customers like hairdressers, gyms, and cinemas all had to close their doors. Restraining orders were introduced in hospitals and nursing homes, funerals were live-streamed, and the Government told the Norwegian people to keep a safe distance from each other (Haslie & Nøra, 2020).

Many were temporarily sent home from work and thrown into a time of economic uncertainty and social instability. In the first week of restrictions, 185 300 people applied to receive unemployment support from NAV (Haslie & Nøra, 2020). The unemployment rate increased to six percent. Every media platform mentioned the virus, some several times daily. Mass media has a great influence on people, and many were driven into panic and stocked up on toilet paper and canned foods. People who became sick had to stay in isolation until they were symptom-free and had received negative results on a Covid-19 test, and those who were potentially exposed to the virus had to quarantine. Violation of these rules could result in a 20,000 NOK fine or 15 days in jail (Haslie & Nøra, 2020) (NTB, 2020).

1.2 Changes in working habits

Almost every workplace in Norway was affected by the restrictions. Organizations were forced to make adjustments to the situation if they wanted to keep their businesses open. According to research done by Ingelsrud and Mamelund (Haslie & Nøra, 2020), one out of six workers were either furloughed, had a loss of income, or both. Workers in the age of 30-44 with families to provide for were most often furloughed, and workers without higher education were also vulnerable. The research also showed that over 70% of workers reported that their everyday work was greatly changed because of the virus. The number of people working from home increased, as did the workload. When working from home, meetings and conversations with coworkers had to be done online or on video chat. This provoked widespread use of technology

and a steep increase in digitalization. Particularly, the use of digital meeting platforms such as Zoom, Teams, and Workplace increased massively (Haslie & Nøra, 2020).

1.3 Challenges in work

To date, little research has been done to see how Covid-19 has affected Norwegian working life, and what role these changes could play in the future. As mentioned, a big part of the Norwegian working population was sent into economic uncertainty because of the virus. With a loss of income or the possibility of losing all of their income, people were using less money to ensure economic security for themselves throughout the pandemic. This made the situation hard for almost every type of organization since it led to fewer sales (Statista Research Department, 2020).

For office workers, most of their desk work could be done from anywhere. Many people were therefore sent home with their computers and work equipment. For the people who were not sent home, the office space was redesigned to facilitate social distancing. Going to work in an office also means communicating with people, chatting around the coffee machine, and hanging out with colleagues. Working from home reduces these social interactions. Finding the balance and accepting these changes may have been challenging for workers (Bacchi, 2021).

1.4 Plan of thesis

We have chosen to explore how a leader motivates employees during this difficult time, specifically in a successful Norwegian online newspaper. The Covid-19 situation was heavily molded by the mass media. Media companies have had a special position during the pandemic as they are in a position to inform the population. They have been the voice of the people, and have been the ones who have communicated the Government's message. In some way, the media stands between the public and the Government. The media houses have had to keep going through the pandemic, due to the important work they do.

We have focused on how middle leaders managed the greatest changes during the first year of the pandemic in Norway, and how they motivated and supported their employees. One of the most important aspects a manager should be aware of is how their actions affect employee motivation (Goleman, 2011). We have therefore formulated the following research question:

“How do leaders motivate the employees during the pandemic?”

In order to answer this question, the concept of motivation and its role in the workplace are discussed in Chapter 2. Then we look at relevant management theories, specifically in relation to a leader's role in motivation. We outline and justify our research methods in Chapter 3, and we describe and discuss our findings in Chapter 4. Following that, we look at the implications of our research in a final concluding chapter.

2. Theoretical background and literature review

In the presentation of the theoretical background and literature review, we will examine relevant research done on our focus areas: leadership styles and motivation. In regards to the Covid-19 pandemic, being a rather new phenomenon, there has not been much research in this area. It is important to know how leaders are managing to motivate their employees remotely because some organizations are already planning not to return to offices, or at least not full-time post-covid. Current and future leaders are going to have to be able to create successful organizations under these conditions - motivating employees is part of this.

2.1 What is motivation, and why is it important?

There are multiple theories about motivation. According to Pritchard and Ashwood (2008, cited in Mahmoud et al., 2020, p. 3), motivation can be defined as “the process used to distribute energy to increase the satisfaction of needs”. In the workplace, motivation generates a desire for the employee to perform well, which ultimately affects their motivation to work towards a goal. This means that motivation in the workplace plays a crucial role if the organization wants to be successful. There are several benefits from having motivated employees. Highly motivated employees tend to work towards a common goal, especially if they believe that their effort results in meaningful outcomes for them. If the employees in an organization are not motivated to perform, the development and success of the organization will be affected negatively. This means that lack of motivation can lead to reduced productivity and lack of output, which may eventually lead to the company not reaching its organizational goals (Mahmoud et al, 2020).

2.1.1 Motivation

It is clear that motivating employees is a key aspect in good leadership. It is especially important in times of uncertainty and change such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is essential to look at different motivational factors within a workplace, and at the same time show how the leader can facilitate these. We will elaborate on how motivation connects to leadership later on. Motivation is defined by Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2009) as the biological, psychological, and social factors that activate, provide direction and maintain behavior in diverse intensity to reach a goal. When it comes to motivation in the workplace we can look at the work itself and which factors contribute to motivating the staff (Erichsen et al, 2018).

A well-known theory that deals with motivation in the workplace is Herzberg's two-factor theory, which is categorized into two groups: hygiene factors and motivational factors. *Hygiene factors* can create dissatisfaction if they are not present. However, they do not create satisfaction if they are present. By having hygiene factors present, one will be in a neutral zone. There is no dissatisfaction, but there is still a lack of satisfaction. These hygiene factors can be things like social working conditions, job safety, salaries, management, and interpersonal relationships. For instance, this could mean that if an employee feels that they are not taken care of socially, not being paid enough, or if the management does not function well, they will be dissatisfied in the workplace. These are factors that leaders have strong control over. Because of this, if employees feel that the hygiene factors are not present, they can perceive their leaders as bad. This can impact their efforts negatively. The hygiene factors show how important it is for the management to try to be great leaders for their employees (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009).

Motivational factors can create satisfaction by being present, but they do not cause dissatisfaction by not being present. Motivational factors can be things like achievements, recognition, responsibility, variety in tasks, and possibilities for personal growth. If the motivational factors are favorable, they will actively promote satisfaction and productivity within the individual employees. For instance, if an employee is praised for their work, this can contribute to increased satisfaction in the workplace. With hygiene factors present, and motivational factors absent, the workers will be neutral - neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009).

2.1.2 Internal and external motivation

We have explained what motivation is, and which factors can motivate employees. It is also beneficial for the leader to know where the motivation comes from, and how they can facilitate it for the employees. We distinguish between internal and external motivation. We have internal motivation when we are working with something that genuinely interests us and we do it voluntarily. For a person to be in their motivational zone, it is required that they perform meaningful tasks. Meaningful means that one is conscious in relation to learning goals, that one knows why one performs an activity and sees the benefit of it. The tasks give the employee a sense of joy and enthusiasm, which drives them to continue the work. It is through internal and true interests the employee can improve their knowledge and skills. When people have a genuine

interest in something, it will have a positive effect on their ability to learn. People have different interests and therefore also different things that drive their inner motivation. For instance, ambition and success can be great for internal motivation. It could also be the general wish to do good in their job (Erichsen et al, 2018).

In a work situation, it is more common and easier to implement motivation through external motivation. External motivations are gain-oriented and caused by external factors such as salary, status, praise, and recognition. These are things the employee can achieve through the work, which brings them benefits in the form of, for instance, material goods. However, too much focus on external factors can ultimately decrease the internal motivation of the employee. As a result, one can argue that when the conditions for internal motivation are present, this will be the most beneficial for the individual itself and the company in the long run (Erichsen et al, 2018).

As a leader, it can be difficult to uncover and understand what drives the individual employee. If the work-related tasks are not meaningful, but the job pays well, this will mean that the person is only driven by external motivation. The workplace should therefore try to facilitate so the employee also feels that the job is giving them something in return, besides salary. It is important to emphasise that one can be driven by both external and internal motivation at the same time (Erichsen et al, 2018). Additionally, it should be considered important that the leader is motivated to do a good job, especially when they also have personnel responsibilities. We will look into how the organization leader can facilitate motivation in the next part, by adjusting their leadership approach to the situation.

2.2 What is the leader's role in motivation?

Good leadership is an important element in the success of any business or organization. The question to be answered is *what is defined as good leadership?* Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2009) argue that the most important characteristic features of a leader are that they have drive and motivation, professional competence, charisma, tolerance for stress, emotional stability and personal integrity, etc. No matter the leadership level, the leader's central goal is to motivate employees to make great efforts and make sure that the work is organized and executed in a way that enables the organization to reach its goals. Leadership includes creating visions that have a motivational effect and gathers the employees to reach the organization's goals. This kind of leadership helps the employees to identify and take ownership of the business. The employees

will also prioritize the company's central goals rather than narrower self-interests. The ability to motivate and inspire others are important skills one needs to have as a leader (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009).

It is vital that leaders understand the importance of motivation since the success of their organization is dependent on their employees. According to The Fifty-Fifty Rule (Adair, 2009), fifty percent of the success of an organization depends on the team, while the other fifty percent depends on the leader. The internal motivation can be found in the individuals in a team, while the external motivation is found in the leader. These are rough proportions, but they do indicate that leaders play a key part in the motivation of people at work. Mahmoud et al (2020) say that to motivate their workforce, leaders should be aware of how they lead. They should also make a point of finding out what their workers want from a workplace.

2.2.1 Transformational leadership

Now that we know what role the leader has in motivating the employees, we can look at what they can do to facilitate motivation. One of the modern leadership theories that they can implement in their approach addresses aspects that will cause positive change within the employees. This theory is called *transformational leadership*. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there were several big changes that happened in almost every workplace. It is therefore beneficial to look at how leaders should manage their employees during unpredictable times, in order to stimulate motivation (Erichsen et al, 2018).

Transformational leadership builds on the leader's ability to change and improve the employees' attitude, motivation, and effort for the company. Transformational leadership is a type of leadership that makes the employees more aware of the fundamental value of the work they are doing and tries to stimulate them to search for fellow interests instead of their own best interests. Transformational leadership occurs when the leaders control the employees' focus towards the purpose and vision of the company (Erichsen et al, 2018). Transformational leaders aim to get their employees to make an extra effort using four factors:

- *Idealized influence* is where the leader acts as a role model and builds trust with their employees, by showing coherence between the company's vision and the leaders' behavior.

- *Inspirational motivation* is used to motivate their employees by being aware of the opportunities the company has. By communicating the company's vision and goal in a convincing way, the leader enables the employees to reach these goals. The leader emphasizes motivation, inspiration, democratic interaction, team spirit, enthusiasm, and optimism.
- *Intellectual stimulation* is when the leader stimulates intellectual development by giving employees challenges to promote independence and creativity. In this way, employees get an attitude that is both more innovative and creative.
- *Individual consideration* is the factor where the leader is careful to see and take care of the individual employee's need for further development. The interaction between the manager and the employee is considered personal.

We can see how this links to the theories about motivation, both in regards to the *internal motivation* and *motivational factors* from Herzberg's theory. The *transformational leadership* theory shows that implementing a leadership approach that emphasizes the company's values, in order to show how the employees work will be meaningful. This will contribute to the individual employee gaining greater ownership of their tasks, and for the company they work in. This will further contribute to the company reaching its goals. The theory also provides insight into how important the manager's impact is for the employee's motivation, and how they should work to improve it (Erichsen et al, 2018).

2.3 How do leaders motivate employees?

How a leader can motivate the employee may vary. Different situations are in need of different approaches, which comes out clearly in the following model. There are multiple theories about different leadership styles. Goleman (2011) did a study where he presented six different leadership styles. It explains how the leader should present themselves to provoke a certain type of behavior. The research also takes into account when the different styles are most beneficial to implement and what impact they will have on the climate and the employee's motivation.

Research done by the Harvard Business Review (Goleman, 2011) shows six different leadership styles (Appendix 1). These are:

1. Coercive / Commanding

This type of leader is demanding immediate compliance. Their most used phrase is “Do what I tell you”. These leaders have the drive to achieve great things, they show initiative, and have great self-control. However, this approach is most fitted when in a crisis or to handle a problematic employee. The overall impact on the work environment is negative.

2. Pace-setting

This leader sets high standards for performance. They want to do their work well and thoroughly and have a high level of drive and initiative. This method is most efficient when the company aims to get a fast result with a highly motivated and competent team, otherwise, it could destroy the team. Others will feel overwhelmed and give up, because they may feel that they cannot meet the leader’s standards.

3. Coaching

The coach develops people for the future. Their focus is on developing others, having empathy and self-awareness. The leader wants to help its employees to improve performance and develop long-term strengths. Coaching leaders are great delegators and accept short-term failure provided that they lead to long-time development. This type of leadership has a positive effect on the work climate.

4. Democratic

The democratic leader forges consensus through participation. Collaboration, communication, and team leadership are keywords for this leaderstyle. It builds trust, as well as respect and commitment. The results for this type of style are mostly positive.

5. Affiliative

This leader sets the people on the team before the task. The focus is on creating harmony and building emotional bonds among coworkers. Empathy and communication are essential characteristics for the affiliative leader. This leadership style works best to heal rifts in a team or to motivate people under stressful and challenging circumstances, and has a positive impact on the climate.

6. Visionary

The visionary mobilizes people towards a vision. This leader has self-confidence, empathy and the ability to make changes. This method is required when a team needs to make some changes and create a new vision and direction. The leader gives people the freedom to take innovative

and calculated risks, provided that they move towards the stated goal and vision. The leader style could fail if the leader lacks knowledge or becomes overbearing.

According to Goleman's (2011) research, the best leaders are able to handle four or more of these different styles. Leaders who can switch between the different types depending on the situation create the most successful organizational culture and achieve the best business results. The model explains how various leadership styles affect employees. The theory also demonstrates that different circumstances necessitate various approaches (Goleman, 2011).

2.4 How important is motivating employees during a crisis?

The theories we have gone through so far are on a more general level. As already mentioned, there has not been much research on leadership during Covid. However, Farhan (2021) investigated what kind of leadership practices and approaches should be utilized during the crisis to improve the situation. He used a case study of Canada's leadership at the federal level to understand the impact of leadership practices and approaches to managing the COVID-19 crisis. We can see a clear similarity to this approach compared to the transformational theory. This study addresses the research question of what leadership looks like and how in a time of economic uncertainty and social instability it can make a difference for the employees. The strategic leadership model proposed is focused on leadership strategies and methods that have demonstrated important impacts on survival and coping support (Farhan, 2021). The proposed model for improving the situation long-term is divided into four stages: *Gathering*, *Protecting*, *Challenging* and *Integrating*. Each stage of the model shows specific strategic leadership practices that are essential to facilitate people-oriented leadership and make a difference in an organization (Farhan, 2021). The aim of the model is to improve the situation gradually. The following paragraphs will explain the different stages in the model.

The first stage in the model is *gathering*. At this stage, the leader's ethical and positive personality can work to attract people and gather them to be followers, by showing them trustworthiness and morality. The leader aims to establish an open and trusting relationship with the employees. This is to motivate them to accept the leader's vision, strategy and philosophy. Gathering is important because the people get the same intent, and it enhances loyalty among the employees (Farhan, 2021). In comparison to the *transformational leadership* theory, we can see that *Gathering* is quite similar to the *Idealized influence*. It can also be linked up to the

Democratic style in Goleman's (2011) research. However, Farhan's model is more people-oriented, because he believed that people are more important to take care of during a time of uncertainty and change, rather than the focus being on the organization reaching its goals.

Authentic leaders “bring people together around a shared purpose and a common set of values and motivate them to create value for everyone involved” (Landesz, 2018, p. 40). The *gathering* stage shows how important it is to have authentic leaders who re-establish trust and confidence to cope with emerging challenges. There is a need for leaders who have the social ability to construct a shared vision and shared culture (Farhan, 2021). The importance of this can be seen through an example. During Covid-19, the Government advised workers to work from home if possible, and it was important that the leaders also did this as an example for their employees: it showed that they were in the same boat.

The second stage is the *Protecting* stage, which focuses on how leaders serve and motivate their employees to overcome challenges. It shows how the leader can motivate people through their needs at the time. For instance, the need for social stability and economic prosperity has been especially important during the pandemic (Farhan, 2021). The leader aims to create a new and better culture for care and ethics. The stage highlights the benefits of having a servant leadership style. Servant leaders follow moral rules and have high ethical standards, while they show trust, love and empowerment. This type of leader often enhances the employee's commitment, motivation and service, because they are both task- and people-oriented in their behavior (Farhan, 2021). The *Affiliative leader* sets the team before the task. Based on Goleman's (2011) research this will have a positive impact on the climate. In a crisis, the theory about transformational leadership highlights that *individual consideration* refers to the leader's close observation of the needs of each individual employee for further growth, which correlates to the *protecting stage*.

The third stage in the model is *Challenging*. This stage focuses on the leaders' ability to improve people's mindfulness, attentiveness and competitiveness, and how they can be competent enough to overcome current and future challenges. The stage emphasizes the role transformational leadership plays in encouraging the employees to synergy, inspire self-leadership, and confidence. This is an aid to motivate the employees to facilitate their own creativity in the workplace. The *Challenging* stage shows the importance of strengthening people's awareness

and willingness to tackle challenges, as well as setting rules and policies to avoid chaos (Farhan, 2021). We can see this in relation to the *Coaching style*, where the leader wants to prepare the staff for the future. *Intellectual stimulation* in a crisis also emphasizes challenges to facilitate creativity and innovative thinking.

The fourth stage is called *Integrating*. This stage highlights the importance of working in a team and revolves around the word “we”. This stage requires that the leader shows practices such as adaptability and harmonization, and focuses on sharing knowledge, experience and information with the employees (Farhan, 2021). This leadership style has a focus on working in teams, and team-building. A greater focus on collectivism in difficult times will substantiate that they are in it together. Sharing knowledge and experience can further contribute to the team having the same tools in order to overcome the obstacles they are facing. The other models and theories do not mention this to the same degree; however, we can see that the recurring theme suggests that this is important. The *visionary leadership* approach also has a somewhat unifying effect, as they have a bigger focus on mobilizing the whole team towards the same vision.

The model involves four phases: *Gathering*, *Protecting*, *Challenging* and *Integrating*, all of which reflect various leadership styles and different approaches to leadership that have arguably been instrumental in fostering economic and social change. The phases include recruiting people, inspiring them, promoting talent and innovation, and then making a difference in leadership practices (Farhan, 2021). Farhan suggests that the model can be applied at the organizational level in order to overcome unpredicted crises and make a difference for the employees, both for organizational performance and achievement. The model’s stages can guide a leader’s actions and serve as a strategic tool in both critical and stable situations (Farhan, 2021).

2.5 Motivation and leadership in a time of uncertainty

There has been a lot of research done on leadership styles and motivation, and from this several theories and models have been created. We have now looked at some of those who are relevant to our research question. Seeing that the success of an organization is dependent on leaders being able to motivate and inspire their employees, we wanted to investigate the journey of a specific, successful organization during the Covid-19 pandemic. There is to this date not much research completed on this area, which is why we found it particularly interesting.

In an article published by Gemini (Hansen, 2021), there is a discussion around what will happen with the home office after the pandemic is over. The article concluded that it is highly unlikely that things will go completely back to normal after the pandemic ends. This is because of the continuous success of many organizations during Covid. They point to the positive sides of working from home, which is flexibility and the same productivity in individuals as before. This is because people tend to be more focused and concentrated when working on a task from home since there are fewer distractions around them (Hansen, 2021). While this may be true, the article has a stronger focus on whether or not the company is doing fine economically and efficiently after the changes brought by the pandemic. It barely mentions the mental health issues that both employees and leaders may have encountered during the pandemic.

Based on what we found in our literature, we can see that motivation within an employee, and how a leader can facilitate motivation, is important in order for the organization to reach its goals. This can become even more important to maintain during a time of both insecurity and change in the workplace, and as we mentioned earlier, there has been little research to date in our context. Therefore our question, “How do leaders motivate the employees during the pandemic?” aims to contribute to knowledge in this area.

3. Method

In this section, we will explain every step of our method and give insight into why we made the choices we made. This involves how we proceeded in order to find relevant information about our research question, and how we analyzed this information.

3.1 Choosing a method

Method refers to the collection of data. Data is usually either qualitative or quantitative, and there are different methods used to collect them. It is important to see which of the methods supports the study. The difference between qualitative and quantitative methods is that quantitative methods are best when one wants to process large amounts of data from many participants or devices. Ringdal (2013) states that it should be used if the goal is to describe the frequency or scope of a phenomenon. Qualitative methods, however, should be used if the goal is to clarify the meanings of a concept or phenomenon. It should be used when addressing the most pressing issues and concerns because it makes it possible to collect data that contributes to deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. In contrast to quantitative methods, qualitative methods are typically more time-consuming, and more open-ended. This can make it possible to facilitate meaningful change (Ringdal, 2013).

The method we chose is therefore controlled by the research question. We had a clear vision from the start that we wanted to write about leadership, and prepared by reading different theories and research available on leadership. During our search, we realized that one of the areas where not much research had been done yet, was leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been completed studies on this subject in a few countries, but Norway seemed to remain untouched. Because of this, it was hard to create hypotheses or predict what the possible outcomes of our research would be, and found that a quantitative method was not fitting. We made a research question with the purpose of uncovering new knowledge in a given area in a specific organization. Therefore we felt it was natural to go for a qualitative method (Ringdal, 2013).

3.1.1 Case-study

For our research, we will conduct a case-study. There is no widely accepted definition of what a case-study is. A case-study can be explained as an empirical study of a phenomenon, where

multiple data sources are used (Ringdal, 2013). The goal is to use a case as an object for theoretical analysis based on theoretical expectations and assumptions. A case-study was suitable for our research question, as we were able to investigate how leaders motivated employees during the Covid-19 pandemic using theories of leadership and motivation as a framework.

3.1.2 Exploratory research design

This study is based on an exploratory research design. Our goal was to map out how the informants interpret and experience a situation. According to Ringdal (2013), exploratory methods are fit when there is little information about the problem since the goal is to gain insights and knowledge. This design is more flexible and unstructured, which makes it suitable for our case-study. By doing this, we were provided with in-depth information and unique experiences.

3.2 Selection and recruitment of informants

With qualitative methods, the purpose is to gain knowledge through deep descriptions from people that are useful and interesting for the study (Ringdal, 2013). For this study, we wanted to get in touch with an organization that was affected by the pandemic, with people who had worked throughout it. In the next part, the selection strategy, selection size, and recruitment of informants is presented.

3.2.1 Selection strategy

To find out who we wanted to interview, there were several things we had to consider. Early in the process, we knew we wanted to interview leaders. The reason for this was that we wanted to gain insights from their experience during the pandemic, and how things changed for them and the company. To make the data we collected trustworthy, we decided to interview an employee as well. In qualitative research, this strategy is called *triangulation*. Patton (2001) identified four types of triangulation, one of them being the use of multiple data sources. The triangulation of data sources we used is comparing people with different viewpoints. We aimed to get in touch with at least one leader and one employee working for the same company. Age or gender was not something we considered important in our recruitment of informants, however, they had to work for the same company and be located in an area affected by the virus (Patton, 2001).

3.2.2 Selection size

The number of respondents or informants needed is also dependent on the purpose of the research. One of the characteristics of qualitative methods is that there is a great amount of information to be gathered from a limited sample. Our purpose was to gain information about leaders' actions in the workplace. As mentioned, we saw it necessary to interview at least one leader and one employee, to ensure trustworthy results. We tried to make sure that we could interview more than one leader to get a broader perspective since leaders can operate in different ways. A crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic could also have a different impact on different individuals. With this plan in hand, we were more confident that we would get the information that we needed to complete our case-study.

3.2.3 Recruitment

The recruitment started by thoroughly discussing relevant companies and ruling out others. We wanted to choose a company that was clearly affected by the pandemic so that we could see how they reacted to strong restrictions. Since we also wanted to try and get more than one leader as informants, we tried to get in touch with a company that had several leaders and employees. To reach our goals, we had to consider big companies located in cities highly affected by Covid-19 restrictions.

One of the researchers had a contact that worked as a middle leader in a large, successful media house. When participants are chosen because of their availability to a researcher, this is called *convenience sampling* (Saeed, n.d). It includes utilizing resources that make the recruitment process easier. This company was a media house located in an area where the infection rate was high. For these reasons, this organization made a good candidate for our case-study.

In addition to interviewing our contact who was in a leadership role, he helped us recruit another leader from the organization and an employee who was willing to participate. This is a sampling method called *snowballing*, which is when existing study informants recruit other informants among their acquaintances (Ghaljaei et al, 2017). After they agreed, he provided us with their contact information so we could get in touch with them and arrange the interviews. With three informants from the same company confirmed, we would be able to see how the pandemic affected the workplace on a broader spectrum.

With convenience sampling, there are some downsides. The participants can be biased, which can leave the researchers unable to generalize the results. In addition to these downsides, using snowballing can lead to the first participant choosing other employees with similar characteristics and views. This could have a negative effect on the data that we collected, as it may not represent the whole picture of the company. The results we found may also not be representative of the whole company (Saeed, n.d.). To keep it professional, the researcher who knew the informant did not conduct the interview, and rather observed and took notes while the other researcher asked the questions.

3.2.4 Presentation of our informants

Our informants consisted of two middle leaders and one employee. The middle leaders lead different units, each with their own team of journalists. All informants work for the same media house, located in one of the biggest cities in Norway. The first informant is a middle leader, hereby called Jack, who has worked his way up the company over several years. He is in charge of a group consisting of twelve employees and conducts regular development conversations with the personnel. In addition, he leads them through the day-to-day work and delegates tasks. We also conducted an interview with one of his employees, hereby called Mario. He is a very experienced journalist. In his interview, we gained insight into how he interprets his leaders' actions and what he needed from a leader, during this especially difficult period. Lastly, the third informant is also a middle leader, hereby called Samuel. He, too, has been working for the company for a long time before he became a leader. Samuel has four employees in his team that he is responsible for.

3.3 Data collection

It is important to map out whether the data collection method can lead to answers to the research question. Data collection can be done by using surveys, phone interviews, and in-person interviews. Ringdal (2013) refers to them as conversation interviews, and they fit well when doing qualitative research because of the opportunity for flexibility. These interviews are completed with a goal, and they most often happen with a researcher and an informant meeting in person. The most effective methods of data collection for qualitative research are in-person. Since there was no possibility for meeting physically because of the Covid-19 restrictions, we completed in-depth interviews using Zoom. When doing an interview on Zoom, it is hard to see

each other's body language, as it is only showing parts of the upper body on the camera. Another problem is that there can be a delay when one person says something, and when the other person hears it. This can lead to interruptions, which is not an effective way of communicating. Video-chat interviews can also create barriers between the interviewer and the informant (Ringdal, 2013).

We were lucky that we were able to meet one of the informants in person so that this barrier mentioned was removed from the session. The other two participants, both luckily had their cameras on during the interview, so that we could see their facial expressions while they gave their answers.

3.3.1 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

We chose to complete semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect our data. The purpose of semi-structured in-depth interviews is to gather detailed information about the informants' perceptions of a particular phenomenon. The respondent is typically called an informant with valuable knowledge and experiences that fit the case study. When comparing semi-structured interviews to structured interviews typically used in surveys, structured interviews consist of many closed questions. Semi-structured interviews, however, should consist of open questions. The structure should be loose so that the interviewer and the informant can explore interesting points, which makes it possible to reach greater depths than with structured interviews. This means that they make room for flexibility and improvisation, so the researcher has the opportunity to capture descriptive data about how the informant thinks (Ringdal, 2013).

We decided that this was the best method to receive the data we needed for our case-study, as we wanted to make sure that the informants had the freedom to think and interpret. To prepare, we created an interview schedule with a set of similar questions to be asked to every respondent (Appendix 2). We chose to be partially structured, but the questions summed up what we needed answers to. We found it to be safe to have the questions ready beforehand since we were not particularly experienced in doing interviews. We started this process by discussing what we wanted to gain insights into before writing down suggestions, and then selecting the ones we saw would fit best. After asking a question in an in-depth interview, it is important to listen to the informants' answers and ask another question accordingly. This also means that the answers can be different for each informant, which can make it hard to compare the answers. Since our main

goal was to find as much new and interesting information as possible, we did not see this as an issue (Ringdal, 2013).

3.4 Research Ethics

Before we could conduct any of the interviews, we had to receive permission from the Norwegian Center of Research Data (NSD, n.d). NSD gives permission to legally collect, store and share data about people and society. It also ensures that researchers cannot abuse the data collected. The application form had a few requirements that had to be met if we wanted to receive permission. This included information about the study and the selection of informants. In addition to this, they required a statement of consent to be written by the researchers and signed individually by all informants, as well as the completed interview guide.

3.4.1 Statement of consent

The Norwegian law on Personal Data requires a written or electronic signed consent, which shows that the informant understands the study and its purpose. The consent ensures that they voluntarily participate in the study, and accept the processing of information done by the researcher. Before signing and giving their consent, the informants were asked to read through an information sheet about the study. The document explained the purpose of the study, including what it meant for them if they participated, and what we would do with the information we received from them. It also had a privacy section, where it was explained that their answers would have no consequences for them or their work, as they ensured all answers would be anonymized. This is the reason behind the change of names. The document also included that they had the opportunity to withdraw themselves as an informant for the study at any time, without personal consequences for them (NSD, n.d).

We made two separate documents like this. One was created for the employee, and one for the leaders. The only difference between them was that in the leader-document they tick an extra box in the consent form, saying that they accept that an employee could give us information about them as leaders if necessary (Appendix 3).

3.4.3 The interview process

The interviews were completed in Norwegian, because this was everyone's mother tongue. We started the interviews by thanking them for taking their time to participate in our study. The first

few questions were open so that they could start on their own terms where they felt comfortable. We wanted the interview to be mostly steered by the informants, so we focused on creating questions that were beneficial to our study along the way. When the interview was coming to an end and we were ready to ask the last question, we also pointed this out to the informants. After we had asked all the questions we felt we needed answers to, we asked if there was anything else they felt like adding, in case they had not been able to express it earlier in the interview.

3.5 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are two characteristics that can be used to assess the quality of a study. Reliability in quantitative research measures if the results are consistent over time and if they can be reproduced and replicated. Validity in quantitative research looks at whether or not the study measures what it was intended to measure. It has been debated whether or not terms like reliability and validity are relevant when using a qualitative method, as they are better linked to quantitative methods. The concept of reliability has been most debated. According to Stenbacka (2001), if we discuss reliability in a qualitative study as we do with quantitative studies, the result will be that the study is not good. Reliability and validity in quantitative and qualitative research can therefore not be measured in the same way. To establish reliability and validity in qualitative research, we can rather focus on the dependability and trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (Stenbacka, 2001).

The results of our study are based on human behavior and thoughts. It is unlikely that the informants would give the exact same answer to the same questions if completing the interview again. We therefore kept detailed transcripts of the interviews to support our findings, and to be able to show the decision process (Appendix 4). We also looked for similarities and differences in the interviews. In addition to this, and as mentioned in 3.2, we used a triangulation of data sources to see different perspectives and include more aspects. This was done by interviewing an employee in addition to the two middle leaders. We tried to be critical of the methods we used, and consistent in our interpretation. All of these measures are ways to establish dependability and trustworthiness in our study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (Stenbacka, 2001).

3.6 Challenges

We encountered challenges during our data collection. The first challenge was that leadership can be complex. This made it harder to get over the bridge from writing about leadership theories

to starting the process with the interview guide and finding the right informants. Anyone can be a leader, but many may not be aware of who they are as a leader or look into how they can improve.

There were also several challenges that came into play while completing the interviews during a pandemic. When doing in-depth interviews, Ringdal (2013) states that it is best to do this in person. One of the reasons for this is that body language can have an impact in how the researcher understands the answers given by the informant. In order to not violate any infection control advice, we tried to do all of the interviews on Zoom. In section 3.3 we discussed the challenges of interviewing via Zoom.

3.7 Thematic analysis

As mentioned in 3.1.1, we conducted a case-study. To be able to pay full attention to the informants' answers, we recorded all the interviews. All participants were aware of them being recorded, as they signed the statement of consent mentioned in part 3.4.1. We spent time transcribing the interviews and this gave us a further opportunity to listen closely to what our informants said. Since the interviews were completed in Norwegian, the transcripts are Norwegian too. We translated the sentences that we wanted to use as quotes in the results part from Norwegian to English. Some of the quotations were not possible to directly translate, so they were reformulated to bring out the essence of what our informants said. This is because the direct translation of some words may change the meaning of a sentence entirely.

After interviewing all of the participants, our data showed that all of them touched on a lot of the same areas. We identified them as themes that we could use for our discussion, as part of a thematic analysis. To do a thematic analysis, we started with getting to know our data thoroughly by listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts repeatedly. The last two interviews were conducted with only one researcher present. Therefore, we had to read through the transcript of the other interview to get to know the data better. We then color-coordinated the transcripts of the interviews. After identifying a theme, we went through all of the transcripts to find the answers that touched on the same theme, and marked it with the same color. (Caulfield, 2019). We found that color coordination helped us stay organized in our analysis. After finding five recurring themes, we defined them further and gave them names that we used as subheadings for the presentation of our results.

4. Results & Discussion

As mentioned, we conducted in-depth interviews with three participants working in the same company. This section addresses the results and findings from the interviews. It is separated into different focus areas for a better overview and understanding. We chose to highlight the most prominent themes from our data: communication, motivation, leadership, and the measures taken to improve the situation. Next, we include some of the positive aspects that emerged from the pandemic. Finally, we will summarize the key and recurring findings. We discuss our results and include how we interpreted the data in the light of the literature we have described.

First, we will give some background information about what changed for the organization, based on our interviews with the informants. Before the pandemic made its appearance, the employees worked in an open office landscape. This made socializing with the associates accessible and communication with each other was easy. Each department had physical morning meetings where they planned their daily goals and delegated tasks for every employee. Brainstorming, discussion, and creativity flow were a big part of these meetings, which simplified the work for the individual employee. Other colleagues were close by and accessible for collaboration and sparring, which made the creative process easier as they could gain new insights and ideas. Every informant described the work environment before the pandemic as social, including, and fun. One of the leaders we interviewed assumed that journalists, in general, are interested in creating good relationships with other people, and have a general wish to be challenged creatively. This emphasizes the importance of having a well-established social environment in the workplace for our informants. This includes meeting with colleagues and sources. A good social environment is considered a hygiene factor by Herzberg's two-factor theory (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009).

However, when the Government implemented a lockdown throughout Norway in March 2020, almost everyone was sent to work from home. A few of the employees in the company had to stay at the office in order to finish their work. The rest of them started the process of adjusting to the new workday in the home office. All communication was now replaced with video calls, phone calls, or text messages. The different departments still had the morning meetings over video calls, but this became more work-related, and the small talk between the employees was

minimal. Samuel, one of the middle leaders, explained how he experienced a loss of small-talk which usually happens at the Monday meeting. The chit-chat about fun stuff that happened during the weekend and joking amongst the employees was now mainly replaced by work-talk. The staff more rarely engaged with each other, and almost all social interaction between them disappeared. There was now a lot more leader-employee communication than before, which ultimately increased the workload for both of the leaders.

The contrast from the regular workday shows that the staff was in need of a leader who knew how to handle a crisis. As we can see in Farhan's (2021) model this includes four phases: *Gathering, Protecting, Challenging* and *Integrating*. Using this will help overcome difficult times, where the whole foundation for their workplace and their way of working was undergoing change. The model aims to improve the situation for the employees, those who are exposed to the changes. How well the leader contributed to this improvement and facilitated a positive work environment will we look closer into later on.

4.1 Communication

A recurring theme in our conversations with all three informants was communication. This included how the lack of communication and communication errors led to a lack of motivation for all three of the informants, including the leaders. Communication is central in many leadership and motivation theories, which is why we chose to keep it as a separate theme. We could also see that the communication between the leaders and employees played a big role in how smooth things went in both delegations and in maintaining the employees' changing needs. We identified several sub-themes: challenges, digital communication, support, creative challenges and the importance of socializing.

4.1.1 Challenges

When the leaders were asked what kind of challenges they had at the beginning of the lockdown the list was long. Jack explained that there were a lot of changes in communication between him and the employees. As mentioned, all communication now had to be taken over video and chat. This change presented challenges in coordinating the work with the employees, simultaneously as the news load became much bigger. The pandemic brought a lot of news, that they needed to be updated on, and further write articles about, to be able to keep the readers up to date. The

delegation of tasks was complete chaos in the beginning, the middle leader further explained. It was hard to find a suitable meeting structure with the team. In addition, the follow-up conversations with each individual employee increased and became more important. However, it was just as important that the workload was finished, in order to fulfill their public service to the Norwegian people. Therefore, the leaders tried to work their way through the chaos by implementing a more *Coercive/commanding leadership style*. This is, as mentioned earlier, the most efficient way to kick-start a turnaround during a crisis. Goleman (2011) says that this will have an overall negative effect on the work environment, which it probably did. All the extra follow-up conversations the middle leader implemented can also remind of micromanaging, which can lead to the employees feeling like they have fewer responsibilities and trust from their leader (Bobinski & Talucci, 2009). On the other hand, the leader described that this was just in the beginning, as they got the hang of the situation they were in. Later on, they moved over to other, more constructive leadership approaches, for instance, the affiliative style, which we will elaborate on below.

4.1.2 Digital communication

Not all communication was done over video calls, sometimes a simple text message from the leader was considered adequate. Text messaging poses the perfect medium for short, effective interactions (Ebner, 2018). However, Jack noticed that some crucial parts of effective communication are removed when conversing over text. Text messaging is considered as a lean medium to communicate with, even more than with email. The receiver will not be able to hear the tone of voice over text, or see the body language of the sender (Ebner, 2018). Mario also pointed out that he thought that most of the communication between the coworkers was non-verbal communication, and that the things that are visible when talking face-to-face get lost in text messages and chats. This can create misunderstandings, and the receiver of a message might place an attitude that was not intended by the sender. An example of this was when an employee was delegated a task they did not really want, this would be visible for the leader by reading their body language. Then they can discuss it and find a solution that is more suitable for the employee. As mentioned earlier, such benefits from in-person communication are removed when talking over the internet. In text, those signals may be lost or misunderstood.

4.1.3 Support

Samuel says that it was easier for him to support his team before the pandemic. “There was a more natural way to speak with people since everyone was at the office every day. Now, one has to reach out to people to get them to open up about things that are bothering them”. He also stresses that he tries to support those who need it the most. “I try to see things from a bigger perspective and think about who might have the biggest challenges at the time being. It is difficult to reach out to all the employees, so you have to prioritize where you see it is needed”. According to our theory on transformational leadership, Samuel here takes on the factor of *individual consideration*. He tries to observe and take care of the individual employee so that he can help motivate them. He also shows that he is on the *protecting stage* of Farhan’s (2021) model on strategic leadership during times of uncertainty, by being both task- and people-oriented in his choices at the workplace. To do this, he says he takes advantage of the meetings with the employees, and tries to take action right away if he is made aware that someone is having a hard time.

4.1.4 Creative challenges

One of the main problems that emerge in the new way of working is challenging for the creative processes. There is usually a lot of “talk around the coffee machine” that can be very helpful in the idea-development process. Many things that went smoothly before, through interaction between coworkers, have now become more problematic. For instance, the development of ideas and brainstorming among the coworkers are now directed towards the leader, which slows down the efficiency and makes the workload for the leader even heavier.

Mario, the employee, also found this as an issue. He explained how they have been forced to be more independent in their work, and dig even deeper into the brainstorming process than they usually needed. He talked about how the lack of communication among the coworkers results in the finished product being more one-sided. The input from colleagues is important for everyone's creative process. Not every individual employee has enough knowledge, but if you put two people with different knowledge together they can create a better result together. He emphasizes that the “missing piece of the puzzle” is found more easily in everyday communication with associates. By this, he means that the colleagues complement each other's fields of competence.

He said that “The lack of this type of communication means that the result of our work is less creative”.

The employees may feel that their work is less valuable as they are not as happy as they could be with the end result. According to motivational theories, it is important that employees feel that the work they do is important and that they are developing in their field. Because of the lack of communication, they do not feel that their tasks are solved optimally, which can result in them lacking in the *possibilities for personal growth*. In addition, it can be damaging for the feeling of *achievement*. These two are essential motivational factors in Herzberg's two-factor theory, and are important to maintain for both the organization and the individual employee (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009).

4.1.5 The importance of socializing

Jack emphasized that the workday was dominated by very intense sessions with no social breaks, interruptions, or distractions. The division between work and free time became blurred, and the tendency to work sporadically throughout the day became the normal way of working. This was not necessarily a bad thing, according to Jack. However, he missed socializing in between work sessions. Jack describes himself as an extrovert and that he becomes energized through meeting and interacting with other people, which does not work in the same way through video meetings. He explained that he did not get to fill the need to be social in the same way when it was digital.

Jack found socializing as important to him in order to carry out his job. Herzberg (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009) sees social working conditions as a hygiene factor. It may seem that Jack set this part of the job so high that missing it contributed to his dissatisfaction at work. It may also be that he lost the opportunity for personal development in his job due to this deprivation.

The research done by SINTEF (Hansen, 2021) suggested that the home office has come to stay. We can also look back on Farhan's (2021) model that suggests organizations be more people-oriented instead of focusing on the organizational goals during times of uncertainty. The study by SINTEF seems to not take into consideration the general needs of an employee, nor the other factors that contribute to the success of the organization. After discussing the home office with all three participants of our study, we have learned that working from home was not something that worked well for them, both when it comes to their motivation and well-being.

Samuel mentioned that his employees performed well and worked hard, but that they were in a bad mood. Even though the company is still up and running, none of the participants of our study was happy with the situation they were put in.

The importance of socializing with coworkers also played an essential role in their dissatisfaction with the home-office. It is hard to facilitate socialization in the home-office. Every employee is dependent on direct communication with their coworkers to carry out their work. It can still be positive to facilitate home-offices in order to be prepared for unexpected situations, but after talking to the participants of our study, it is clear that the social aspects of working in the office is something they all value highly. One of the things that keep them going is that things will go back to normal, as the feedback on coming back to the office was positive from the employees. Therefore it would not be beneficial to implement the home-office on a regular basis, for this company.

4.2 Motivation

One of the things we asked the informants during the interviews was their motivation and how they felt working during the pandemic. We uncovered quite a lot about both the leaders and the employee on this subject. We discovered that the leaders' motivations were affected strongly by the pandemic.

4.2.1 Motivation as a leader

Both of the middle leaders have the same leader group above them in the organizational structure, referred to as the editorial staff. In addition, they have a team of employees under them. Jack explains that they are stuck in a "squeeze" between their top leaders and their employees, trying to satisfy both levels. They have expectations from the top, as well as the needs they have to take into account from the employees. These two do not necessarily match, which can put middle leaders in a difficult situation. One of the leaders we talked to said "It is important for me to balance all these expectations, and that everyone is well, thrives and feels that they are developing."

Jack describes life during the pandemic as a feeling of being in a vacuum and admits that his motivation has taken a serious hit. "I am a very social person, and I depend on having regular contact with others in order to thrive in my work", he says. He explains that it is important for

him to have a meaningful job where he can work with interesting people, and he feels that working with the company filled this need before the pandemic. When conducting the interview with Jack, he was in a place where he was fed up with the situation. “I am usually very happy with my job, but the pandemic has been so difficult that I could potentially be persuaded to switch jobs”. The main reason why he was so unhappy was explained by the fact that he did not want the personnel responsibilities. This was exacerbated by particularly challenging employees during the pandemic, he further described. He said that he wanted to avoid these responsibilities in the future, indicating that he wanted to continue climbing the ladder in the organization. The social aspect that comes with the workplace seemed like an important *hygiene factor* for Jack, and he felt dissatisfied when it was removed, which supports Herzberg’s two-factor theory. He also lost some *motivational factors* because of the fact that he had responsibilities that he did not want, which stopped his possibilities for personal growth (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009).

Middle leader Samuel describes it as a rollercoaster. Some days have taken a toll on him. “There was an insane amount of news to write about during the Spring of 2020, and I was exhausted. Some periods had high tension, and I found it a bit challenging”, he says. He then explains that some days were good, especially after the summer of 2020. “People were hopeful that things would get better, and a lot of positivity came from this. Positivity is contagious, so everyone seemed more motivated for a while”, implying that he felt it too. When fall came, there was a new lockdown. “It felt like a slap in the face. It was very intense, so I decided to take a week off to just be home and do absolutely nothing because I needed to relax”. He says he never realized how much social stimuli he got from going to work at the office until it was taken from him. The fact that he had to take a week off from work because of this, shows that being social in the workplace was a critical *hygiene factor* for Samuel too. As with Jack, Samuel also felt a need to be removed from his duties as a leader, however not to the same degree as Jack. Samuel rather needed a break for a while when he felt dissatisfied in the workplace, instead of wanting to switch positions (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009).

Based on our interviews, it is clear that the pandemic affected the leaders' motivation as well. Both of the leaders we interviewed talked about the importance of social interaction, and how the lack of this had a negative impact on them. Going to the office was clearly very important for both Jack and Samuel. Jack longed to do something that felt more meaningful to him, as it was

not enough for him to work from home. Samuel realized how it took a toll on him and took a week off to do no work at all.

The literature we have read rarely takes into account how the leader's lack of motivation will affect the employees. On the other hand, the different leader style theories emphasize how important it is that the leaders are successful in their communication, in order to improve both the employees' motivation and efforts. Therefore, one can assume if the leaders are struggling to see the value of their work and find their own motivation, they will not be as successful in influencing their employees in a positive way. The amount of pressure from the top leaders and the expectations from their employees may work as an extra burden for the middle leaders, as they additionally are struggling to complete the large amount of work they already have been assigned. The fact that Samuel had to take a week off may suggest that he was feeling symptoms of burnout. In addition, the leaders experienced similar challenges related to their work as their employees had. This could contribute to making the employees' feelings and reactions more relatable for the leader, and give them a deeper understanding of how they could manage and motivate them further.

4.2.2 Motivation as an employee

Jack told us that a lot of the employees are ambitious, dedicated, and have the drive to do the best they can. There is a lot of prestige in being up to date and present in the job they are doing. On the question of how the employees are driven to do the job, Jack answered that it is both the commitment and the salary, in addition to achieving the feeling of mastery. This links to both motivational factors and internal motivation. He emphasized that people do not become journalists to be rich. Most of them have an urge to fulfill the public service that comes with being a journalist, which shows that there may generally be a lot of internal motivation in people who work as journalists (Erichsen et al, 2018).

Mario said that his motivation has always been based on public service. It is about the flow of information to the public. He explained: "I undoubtedly have an inner driving force in the work I do, where I want to make a contribution to the enlightenment of the population and a good discussion in what choices Norway makes as a society". He explains that the amount of news to write about has increased dramatically during Covid, simultaneously as the work has become more important. The journalists have been the voice for the public, and at the same time trying to

convey the Government's message. Mario found the lack of social interaction during Covid-19 a real issue for his creative process, as he thinks the results were better when they had the opportunity to work with different people. It becomes clear in the interview that he is mainly driven by inner motivation. It is usually beneficial for the company that the employees' motivation is based on inner motivation (Erichsen et al, 2018). This frees the leader from much of the work, and simplifies some of their tasks, as the employee already has the motivation to perform well. You do your job well because you want to, not because someone tells you to do it.

4.2.3 Turning the two-factor

Jack talked about the workday and free-time melting together. This is recognized as a hygiene factor - conditions that affect leisure and personal time (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009). Jack had the feeling that he was working around the clock. However, he said that this did not bother him and that he actually preferred working in that way. This may be because he was in the position to manage his own day and take free time when he needed it. The change in the workday may have brought other challenges, and increased the need for longer breaks, rather than working fixed working hours. This shows that, for Jack, this particular hygiene factor in fact did not create dissatisfaction when not present.

We asked the leaders if they would stay in their position if they knew that it would stay like this forever. Both of them clearly stated that they would not, which shows how dissatisfied they have felt during this time. The changes that came with Covid-19 removed many hygienic factors and motivational factors that the workers had. The social aspects of the workplace were no longer present, and the office was moved to a place that the leaders could not control - the home office. The worker was more responsible for creating their own workspace, and they had no chance of socializing with their colleagues. These factors of the workplace are considered essentials according to Herzberg's two-factor theory (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009). As explained earlier, if hygienic factors are not present, they will create dissatisfaction.

After conducting the interviews and analyzing the answers, it became clear that almost none of the factors that were considered "essential" by Herzberg's theory were present. There was a sense of dissatisfaction coming from all of our participants. It seems as if the two-factor model is turned, and that they are working only with the goal of achieving and creating something for the company. It is also noticeable that they are staying in the job, regardless of the fact that they are

dissatisfied. They receive no social benefits, experience a lack of structure, and work even harder. They seem to miss working during normal times, and it becomes clear that they are hanging in there while holding on to the hope that the normal way of working is gradually returning.

4.3 Leadership

As we have explained earlier, leaders play a great role in motivating the employees. After seeing how our informants' motivation was affected, we were interested in seeing which leadership style they used, to see how this facilitated motivation in the employees. We asked them questions regarding how our two leader-informants were as a leader, and how their employees reacted to this. From this, we identified sub-themes on creating a new structure for the employees in the home-office and adapting.

4.3.1 Creating structure

Samuel mentioned that the days can become meaningless. He tries to help this by setting clear boundaries and expectations for others. "I do not want them to fret over something that is not necessary. I think they need deadlines and goals. This is important so that they can finish their tasks, but I make sure to give them a realistic amount of time". With this, he stresses the importance of giving them the support they need, and not pushing them so that it results in a bad product. He is pushing them while also being aware that if the end result is going to be good, they have to make room for some longer deadlines and show them that they are trusted in the workplace. He has a great deal of empathy for his team, and self-awareness around how he acts in the workplace. This also supports the leadership theory by Goleman (2011).

A leadership style that he masters is *the affiliative leadership style* (Goleman, 2011). The style shows the importance of having a leader who shows empathy and practices clear communication. This is especially important in order to motivate people under stressful and challenging circumstances, for example during the Covid-19 pandemic. When this is not present, this can have a negative impact on the team. One can therefore assume that during these difficult times it is important to put the team before the work. The team went through a turbulent time, and they were in need of a consistent leader. Samuel showed awareness by adjusting his leadership approach to fit into the chaos the pandemic had brought.

Samuel's team finds it hard to continue the creative processes like before, and the setbacks with the new lockdowns are becoming harder each time. "The solution is probably not to tell them that things will get better soon. We're talking about adults, so I do not think they would believe it either. Nobody knows how long this will last", he says. He thinks his employees might notice his dissatisfaction during the pandemic. He emphasizes that he thinks it is important to be honest with them. "I am not trying to play a role where I pretend like everything is fine. I recognize that it is troubling for me too, and I want to be honest with them all the way" he says, and continues that he would not want to just keep telling them that things will get better. By doing this he showed that he valued honesty in relation to his own leadership approach. By being honest, this could have contributed to gaining trust from his employees and better his integrity as a leader.

Samuel came across as a leader with an overall positive mindset, while still being realistic. An example of this is when he explained that the Christmas holiday never felt as short as it did in 2020. "I came back to work with a lack of energy, so whenever I found small positive aspects I tried to hold on to them for as long as possible." In addition to this, he mentioned several times that he values honesty with his employees, but stresses that it is important to try to look for the lights even though they can be small. Having an open and trusting relationship with his employees is the first stage in the model created by Farhan (2021). It is also one of the four factors that transformational leaders can use in order to make the employees make an extra effort (Erichsen, et al, 2018). Being an honest leader might be easier for him because he knows his employees well. "I have been working for this company for many years, and I started as a part-time worker. I did not come into the company directly in a chief position, so I have a friendly relationship with many as we have already been working together". He has a strong focus on taking care of his team, rather than just thinking about the goals of the company.

4.3.2 Adapting as a leader

Jack explains that it has been a very demanding year as a leader, but he has done his best to keep it together. He realized that he had to prioritize who is being followed up, due to limitations for some employees. For instance, he said that some people simply do not function in these work conditions and that he, as an individual, does not have the resources to spend endless amounts of time on everyone, even though he gave it his best effort. He tried to focus his attention on the staff with the most potential and keep building them as an employee. At the same time, he admits

that he would never give his employees “slack” to this degree if it was not for the pandemic and the challenging situation they were in. This shows that the leader had to change and adapt his external behavior, and how he chose to do things in relation to his employees. Same as with Samuel, Jack also switched to a more *affiliative leadership style* during the Covid-19 pandemic (Goleman, 2011), as he realized that his team needed someone to motivate them during a challenging period. This is a leadership style that he does not normally use, because he is usually more direct with his employees.

There were also changes in Jack internally as a leader. Jack further explained that he has become more patient and developed thicker skin in certain areas. We can say he changed into more of a *Paternalistic leadership style* with his employees, which is an approach where a leader is best suited to look after the needs of the company and its employees (Luenendonk, 2020). This was something he did not do before the pandemic. He continued: “I expected them to do what they could to facilitate themselves. But this was not necessarily the case”. Jack felt that the employees waited for him to give them the extra “push” they needed, rather than handling it themselves. Concerning how he approached his employees, he answered: “I approached them with an attitude of being generous, open, and understanding due to the tough times. I wanted everyone to feel that they were seen and that they got acceptance for the feelings they had”. By saying this, he gave us a clear insight into how he changed as a leader, and adapted his approach for the better, to help guide the employees. This suggests that he moved into a more *Protecting stage* (Farhan, 2021), where the leader can motivate his employees according to their needs at the time. He also explained that he thought that this was a successful approach, and that it seemed like his employees got a motivation boost, and a new drive to continue the work.

Despite this development and adaptation in his approach to the employees, Jack did not think he had become a better leader. He felt like they expected him to “baby” them. This suggests that this was not the kind of leader he aspired to be. Jack may have felt that his own vision of what a great leader should be, was not aligned with what the employees needed from him as a leader. However, it was not visible to him that his internal conflict affected his ability to motivate the employees. On the other hand, his efforts were not always as successful, because it seemed like his employees sometimes were in need of some extra consideration and support.

When Samuel talked about the social measures that the company put in place because of the pandemic, he said that the only one that everyone talked with every day was him. For this reason, he tried to encourage his employees to do things together socially without him. He makes a conscious effort to make sure that the employees do not rely on him too much, which links to what Jack said about taking on a paternal role. He said it was too early for him to say if the changes of the pandemic made him a better leader, but he emphasized how it has made him become more aware of the little things. Both leaders tried to challenge the employees to promote independence and creativity, which connects to the *intellectual stimulation*-factor in transformational leadership. This will further contribute to the employees gaining ownership of their work, which will help the organization reach its goals (Erichsen et al, 2018).

Samuel continued that it is important to lead by example. Similar to what Jack said about the workday melting together with the free time, Samuel also experienced that the workday was extended. “At the start of 2021, it was hard working from home because there was nothing else to do. You get out of bed at 8 am, take a shower before the morning meeting, and then you stay at the home office until 10 pm”. Suddenly they could work fourteen hours off and on, instead of eight effective hours. Because of this, Samuel has been very clear to his employees that they should set boundaries for themselves and leave work at normal times. He emphasized that the staff are in need of a clearer framework. When all activities people could do after work had been removed, all that was left to do was work. “It has been important for me to tell my employees that they should not work after work hours”. His strategy of leading by example is similar to the *gathering* stage in Farhan's (2021) model. Samuel wants to act like a role model, so that the staff is motivated to act similarly to him and share his vision for the team.

4.4 Measures

In order to adjust to their needs and try to maintain the employees' satisfaction at the workplace, the leaders had to take some measures. Their leadership approach had to be modified to suit the particular employee or task to be solved. We will now explain some of the measures that were taken in order to improve the situation for the employees. This included giving some the opportunity to work from the office, giving more recognition, and facilitating socializing.

4.4.1 Going back to the office

For Samuel, the most important thing has been to use what they can within the regulations. He also said that with Covid, the stimuli that the journalists usually got from talking with other journalists, now had to come from a leader. This means that he had to contribute more to the brainstorming than before. As a measure to make the employees less dependent on him to limit his parental behavior, he explained: “We took in two employees from my team that could work from the office every time we had the opportunity so that they could talk to the editors and get some new impressions”. One of his employees gave him feedback on this and said that one day in the office gave him numerous new ideas and motivation. “Everyone was very positive about this solution. There is nothing they want more than to get out of the house and go to work”. He tried to facilitate the hygiene factors as best he could, such as the social working conditions.

Samuel was very aware of how the pandemic affected his employees, and motivating them seemed to be an important part of his leadership. As mentioned in Chapter 2.2, one of the key aspects of a leader motivating the employees is to be aware of how they lead, and finding out what the workers need. He says he notices a clear difference between those who have children and those who do not. Those who have children get some sort of framework, as they have to deliver the children to the kindergarden or school, take care of them, and make meals for everyone in the house. “When we had the opportunity to allow a few people into the office, we were aware that most young employees who lived alone had bad working conditions at home, and decided to prioritize them. We didn’t have to do an advanced analysis to realize which group needed it the most, since it became clear during our meetings”. These actions show that he sees the individual needs of the individual employee. This relates to *transformational leadership* and *individual consideration*. In such situations, it can be an advantage to think about the individual employee, rather than collectively, because people's needs may vary depending on their life situation (Erichsen et al, 2018).

4.4.2 The expectations for recognition

Jack explains that giving feedback and recognition to colleagues and employees has always been one of the company's weak sides. This is something that they have worked on to change, and have gradually gotten better during the last year. Recognition is considered one of the motivational factors that help employees evolve out of their own initiative and need for personal

growth (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009). Jack implemented weekly assessments where they highlight good examples from the previous week. The middle leader emphasizes that the positive feedback often gets lost in the heavy workload because when one article is finished you have to move on to the next. He knows that feedback and recognition are important for a lot of employees. Jack admits that he is not the type of leader who is always praising his employees, as it does not come naturally to him. He told the employees to ask for feedback in order to get it from him. He further explained that the threshold for asking is greater for some because they know how busy he is and that the workload is already heavy. However, he had to adjust to consciously praise and give good feedback to them. It seems that they appreciate this, even though there is potential for improvement.

Samuel says it is important for him to be more generous than before when it comes to recognizing his team members for their work. Before Covid, employees would praise other employees by telling them that they wrote a good article or did good work. “Now, they do not have the opportunity for this kind of small talk around the office. It takes more to send someone a message than just pointing it out by the coffee machine”. He explains that he tries to fill this void by telling the workers when they did a good job. “Even though they work more and better than they did before Covid, they might still feel that they are not doing a good job. There is no one around them to say it, so I think it is important that leaders take responsibility and let them know”.

The role of feedback when it comes to motivation is especially important when implementing the leadership style *coaching*, which is considered to have a good impact on the work climate. This style, as mentioned, focuses on the development of the staff and improves performance (Goleman, 2011). It is difficult to develop the staff without them knowing what is considered good and what can be improved. Additionally, if the motivational factors are favorable, they will actively promote satisfaction and productivity within the individuals (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2009). It is therefore important that the leaders maintain and further develop their skills in order to keep their employees satisfied. Even though both of the leaders made changes to improve on these areas, the employee we talked to felt there was more potential. It can be hard for a person to readjust and give recognition if it does not come naturally to them. Jack is a good example of this.

When asking the employee, Mario, how he would lead during the pandemic the answer was clear. He would give the employees more frequent feedback because he thinks that would contribute to the employees feeling appreciated and valued. Additionally, he would call them for a casual talk more often. He emphasized how important it was to be seen as an individual employee by your leader: “One should not underestimate the importance of knowing that the work you do has value. If you do not feel that it is valuable it can make the work a bit empty and meaningless”. This directly connects to the motivational theories we have discussed. Mario said that he is very direct with his leaders, and is not afraid to speak his mind. During Covid, he has had a lot of conversations with his leaders regarding his colleagues. Personally, he does not have a huge need for feedback because he has long experience in the business and knows how it works. However, he sees that some of the newly trained colleagues and new hires may have a bigger need for this because they are still trying to maneuver their way on how things work.

Mario explained that he is very busy. Often he has a lot going on that his leaders do not see. For instance: “At the office, it is visible that someone is talking on the phone for 2-3 hours on a workday, which you do not see through the home office”. At the home office, you only see the results of the work, and not the amount of time put into it. There is also a lot going on behind the scenes: “colleagues asking for feedback, sources that call to pitch a news story and my own projects”. It can be frustrating and irritating when your leader does not see the amount of work you have and then keeps piling on more. Mario said that he needs to know that his work is valued to make it feel meaningful. Even though all of the employees might be working harder and longer hours than before, if they are not recognized for it, it can affect their motivation and ultimately lead to creating products that reflect the company badly.

4.4.3 Facilitating socializing

Samuel stresses how important it is to build a good working team, both work-related and socially. During the pandemic, this has not been an easy task. He says that lately it has been important to facilitate journalists working in pairs. “It is harder to build these kinds of teams over video chat, especially when most journalists work individually”. As a measure for the employees to regain the spark that social interaction brings, Samuel wanted to bring back the socializing and communication between the employees during the morning meetings. “We have changed the focus during morning meetings so that they become more of a social affair. Now they can see

each other and chit chat”. He emphasizes the importance of small talk and jokes, and that if anyone has a good story to tell, there is set aside time during the morning meetings to tell it. Sometimes the meetings are only a social gathering, with no discussion about work-related subjects.

A social committee was created across the whole company as a measure to try to organize social events for the employees. The social committee created online quiz nights and team-building competitions. In addition to this, the employees were also encouraged to go on walks together in pairs. Samuel made a separate agreement with his employees that they should take an hour of the day off for lunch. According to Samuel, taking longer breaks to recharge will not affect the company negatively. This further shows that he took on an affiliative leadership style during the pandemic because he put his team first and focused on motivating them during stressful circumstances.

4.5 The positive aspects of the pandemic

Jack mentioned that he is thankful that none of his employees were temporarily laid off, and that it was never an issue with them as it has been for other companies during the pandemic. He also thinks that it feels more meaningful to work during a pandemic. “It is a profession that is filled with social responsibility, as we are supposed to give correct and valuable information to the public”. After Covid hit, he felt that their work became even more meaningful, as there was a stronger need for their labor.

Both Jack and Samuel mentioned that getting to work from home removed some of the stress factors of a regular workday. When working from home, one has more freedom to distribute the work hours so that it fits into everyday life better. They think that this applies best to those who have a family to take care of. “From the home office, it is easier to balance work, delivering the kids to the kindergarden, making dinner, etc...”, Jack says. He mentioned that it was more chaotic getting used to this in the beginning, especially with the increase in workload. Samuel stressed the same points and said that the home office facilitated less stressful mornings.

Samuel explains that, in a way, it affected his leadership positively because he has become more attentive to how he follows up with his employees. “Some are more introverted than others and

need a different type of follow-up. After Covid, I think it has become easier to notice and be aware of the small things.”

4.6 Summary

We have now presented all the data we found the most relevant to our research question. The data has been linked up to the literature and theoretical background. We have discussed the data in relation to our literature. Based on this we have come to an answer to our research question. According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, we saw that there were major deficiencies in both the motivational and hygiene factors. Despite the lack of these factors, the employees stayed in their jobs, because they knew the situation was going to return to normal after the pandemic. The hygiene factor that seemed the most crucial for all of our informants was the change in working conditions and the lack of socializing, which in turn led to the disappearance of many of the other hygiene and motivational factors. We connected this to the challenges in communication, which was a recurring theme in our interviews. It became clear that the journalist's greatest driving force came from internal motivation. The feeling of mastery and getting recognition for the work they did played a central role in what drove them to continue their work. The lack of motivation, change of leadership style, and the measures that were implemented to make the workday easier for the employees were all somewhat connected to a change in communication.

During the pandemic, the leaders seemed to have mastered several of Goleman's (2011) leadership styles, depending on the situation and individual employees, and ultimately increased the employees motivation and efforts. We also saw evidence that the leaders succeeded in a lot of the stages Farhan (2021) talked about in his model of how a leader can improve the situation for the employees during a crisis. Without them being fully conscious of their choice in leadership approach, they showed great people skills and awareness of how they could affect their employees for the better. Some employees had bigger challenges in adapting to the home-office, which the leaders were aware of. These were lagging behind a bit, which required extra adaptation and effort from the leaders. Even though the leader struggled with their own motivation, they stood steady in the storm, trying to focus their energy on helping the employees feel better. Ultimately the leaders tried to make the best of a bad situation.

5. Conclusion

Leadership during Covid-19 has been challenging for many. Our aim was to gain more knowledge in this field to see how this has changed the everyday life of leaders in Norway. We did interviews with leaders in an organization who were influenced by the pandemic and interpreted the findings with the already existing theories. This gave us new points of view and knowledge about a field that is still quite undiscovered.

We uncovered the leadership styles to find out what it means to have a role as a leader during the Covid-19 pandemic. Using the research question “*How did leaders motivate employees during Covid-19?*”, we tried to map out the leaders’ behavior during this time, linking it with the reactions from their employees.

The findings of our study were that the leaders have felt demotivated too, and that this has affected their ability to motivate the employees. The reactions from employees to the changes from the pandemic made the leaders end up in situations where they have had to change and adjust their leadership style. Both of the leaders had a stronger focus on the individual needs of the employees than they had before, rather than the organizational goals. For example, when there was strong dissatisfaction from some workers in the home-office, they took someone in physically to the office to fill their socializing needs. Another finding was that the leaders often acted similarly during the pandemic, despite them being different in their own personalities and original leadership styles.

We hope that this research can help increase the understanding of leadership and motivation during Covid-19, and that it can contribute to the discussion of whether or not the home-office should stay after the pandemic. It is important that companies considering this should look beyond economic considerations. Behind every successful organization, it is the people that are the reason for this success, so maintaining their needs and developing them should be the focus for every great leader. We also hope that it can initiate a discussion on how leaders feel during times of uncertainty. Based on what we have found, it can be argued that the home-office does not fit well for everyone, as it has strongly affected the motivation of our informants. We have also uncovered the importance of transformational leadership, in times of uncertainty. It turned out that communication in the workplace was not only important for job satisfaction, but that it

was considered a necessity for the employees in the execution of the tasks, in relation to the creative processes. It is necessary to note that in our research we had only three informants. For further research, we suggest having a higher number of informants with more diversity, so that it provides deeper insights in several aspects.

Because our study focused on a single news organization, it would be interesting to examine if the pandemic had different or comparable effects on different organizations as well. We hope that these findings will become part of a much larger knowledge base in the near future.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1:

LEADERSHIP STYLES

LEADERSHIP STYLE	HOW IT BUILDS RESONANCE	IMPACT ON CLIMATE	WHEN APPROPRIATE
VISIONARY (OR AUTHORITATIVE)	MOVES PEOPLE TOWARD SHARED DREAMS	MOST STRONGLY POSITIVE	WHEN CHANGE REQUIRES A NEW VISION, OR WHEN A CLEAR DIRECTION IS NEEDED
COACHING	CONNECTS WHAT A PERSON WANTS WITH THE TEAM'S GOALS	HIGHLY POSITIVE	TO HELP A PERSON CONTRIBUTE MORE EFFECTIVELY TO THE TEAM
AFFILIATIVE	CREATES HARMONY BY CONNECTING PEOPLE TO EACH OTHER	POSITIVE	TO HEAL RIFTS IN A TEAM, MOTIVATE DURING SUCCESSFUL TIMES, OR STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS
DEMOCRATIC	VALUES PEOPLE'S INPUT/GETS COMMITMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATION	POSITIVE	TO BUILD BUY IN OR CONSENSUS, OR TO GET VALUABLE INPUT FROM TEAM MEMBERS
PACESETTING	SETS CHALLENGING AND EXCITING GOALS	OFTEN HIGHLY NEGATIVE BECAUSE POORLY EXECUTED	TO GET HIGH QUALITY RESULTS FROM A MOTIVATED AND COMPETENT TEAM
COMMANDING (OR COERCIVE)	SOOTHES FEARS BY GIVING CLEAR DIRECTION IN AN EMERGENCY	OFTEN HIGHLY NEGATIVE BECAUSE MISUSED	IN CRISIS, TO KICK START A TURNAROUND

Source: Goleman, Daniel, 2011. *Leadership : the power of emotional intelligence*, Northampton, Mass.: More Than Sound Productions.

Appendix 2:

(Norwegian) Intervjuguide

Introduksjon: Innled intervjuet ved å takke deltageren for at de ønsket å delta på et intervju med oss, og forsikre dem om at alle svarene vil bli anonymisert.

Formålet med intervjuet er å få innsikt i hvilke utfordringer både ledere og ansatte møtte på arbeidsplassen, på grunn av endringene som skjedde på grunn av Covid-19.

Spørsmål til leder

Hva er viktig for deg i din rolle som leder?

Hvilke endringer i arbeidsplassen har du tydelig merket siden mars 2020?

Jobbet du hjemmefra?

Jobbet dine ansatte hjemmefra? Hvor lenge?

Dersom svaret er ja; Hvordan holdt du kontakten med dine medarbeidere?

Er du oppmerksom på hvordan du påvirker dine ansatte?

Har du følt deg umotivert til arbeidet ditt under Covid-19?

Hvis ja; hvilken innvirkning tror du dette har hatt på dine ansatte?

Hva syntes du om å jobbe under pandemien?

Hva fungerte bra?

Hva fungerte ikke bra?

Hadde du noen utfordringer med å lede og motivere teamet ditt under pandemien? Hvilke?

Hvilke problemer hadde du med å tilpasse deg til den nye måten å lede på?

Hadde Covid-19 alt i alt en positiv eller negativ påvirkning på deg som leder? Lærte du mer?

Har du noe annet du føler er relevant til dette emnet?

Spørsmål til ansatte

Hvilke endringer i arbeidsplassen har du tydelig merket siden mars 2020?

Jobbet du hjemmefra? Hvor lenge?

Hvordan holdt du kontakt med dine medarbeidere?

Hvor viktig synes du det er å være sosial med dine medarbeidere?

Hvordan holdt du kontakt med lederen din?

Opplevde du noen utfordringer med denne typen kommunikasjon?

Føler du at ditt arbeid har vært viktig og meningsfylt under pandemien? Hvordan?

Hva syntes du om å jobbe under pandemien?

Hva fungerte bra?

Hva fungerte ikke bra?

Hva ser du på som viktige egenskaper hos din leder?

Føler du at du ble støttet av lederen din? Hvordan?

Føler du at lederen din gjorde en ekstra innsats for at du skulle føle det komfortabel og trygg i arbeidet ditt?

Har du noe annet du føler er relevant til dette emnet?

På slutten av intervjuet:

Kan vi kontakte deg igjen dersom det blir aktuelt?

Tusen takk for at du deltok!

(English) Interview guide

Introduction: Start the interview by thanking the participant for agreeing to do an interview with us, and ensure that all answers will be anonymised.

The purpose of the interview is to gain insights into what both leaders and employees met in the workplace, due to the changes that happened because of Covid-19.

Questions for leader

What is important for you in your role as a leader?

What changes have you clearly noticed in the workplace since march 2020?

Did you work from home?

Did your employees work from home? How long?

If yes; How did you communicate with your employees?

Are you aware of how you affect your employees?

Have you felt demotivated while working during Covid-19?

If yes; What impact do you think this had on your employees?

What do you feel about working during the pandemic?

What worked well? What did not work well?

Did you have any challenges with leading and motivating your team during the pandemic?

What challenges?

What problems did you meet while adapting to this new way of leading?

Did Covid-19 all in all have a positive or negative effect on you as a leader? Did you learn more?

Is there anything else you think is relevant to this theme?

Questions for employees

What changes have you clearly noticed in the workplace since march 2020?

Did you work from home? How long?

How did you communicate with your colleagues?

How important do you think it is to be social with your colleagues?

How did you communicate with your leader?

Did you experience any challenges with this type of communication?

Do you feel that your work has been important and meaningful during the pandemic?

How?

What do you feel about working during the pandemic?

What worked well? What did not work well?

What do you think are important characteristics in a leader?

Do you feel that you were supported by your leader? How?

Do you feel that your leader made an extra effort for you to feel comfortable and safe in your work?

Is there anything else you think is relevant to this theme?

At the end of the interview:

Can we contact you again if needed?

Thank you for participating!

Appendix 3:

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet «Hvordan motiverer en leder sine ansatte under Covid-19 i Norge?»

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å finne ut hvilke utfordringer ledere og ansatte har møtt på i arbeidsplassen, på grunn av endringene som skjedde på grunn av Covid-19. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med prosjektet er å skrive en bacheloroppgave som tar for seg hvordan ledere motiverer sine ansatte under Covid-19 pandemien. Vi vil også inkludere et segment som tar for seg hvordan motivasjonen til de ansatte har blitt påvirket under pandemien. På denne måten får vi et innblikk i både lederens og medarbeiderens synspunkt og opplevelse av situasjonen.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Førsteamanuensis i engelsk, Paula Rice, og Institutt for Internasjonal Forretningsdrift hos NTNU er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta fordi du er en ansatt i en bedrift som ble påvirket av Covid-19, og fordi du har måttet omstille deg på grunn av pandemien. Det vil være totalt 2 ansatte uten lederstilling fra organisasjonen som får samme henvendelse.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du deltar på et personlig intervju gjennom Zoom. Intervjuet vil inneholde spørsmål som omhandler endringer du og ditt team har måttet gjort som følge av pandemien, og generelt hvordan det har påvirket din trivsel og motivasjon. Dine svar på spørsmålene vil bli registrert med lydopptak og notater. All informasjon som ikke er blitt anonymisert vil slettes når vi er ferdig med bacheloroppgaven. Du vil også få muligheten til å lese over de anonymiserte notatene som skal brukes i bacheloroppgaven, slik at du kan få godkjenne, utdype eller gi beskjed om feil.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg eller arbeidsplassen hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Dersom du vil trekke samtykket, send det helst skriftlig. Kontaktinformasjon følger lengre ned i skjemaet.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil kun bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Studenter Silje Strand og Iselin Aarø vil ha tilgang til opplysningene, samt veileder Paula Rice ved NTNU i Ålesund.

Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil lagres med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data. Når bacheloroppgaven er ferdigskrevet, skal ikke noen av deltakerne kunne gjenkjennes eller spores.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er senest 28.05.2021. Personopplysningene og opptak vil slettes permanent ved prosjektslutt.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra NTNU har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- NTNU ved ansvarlig Paula Rice, tlf +47 701 61 273, e-post pari@ntnu.no
- NTNU ved student Silje Strand, tlf 94899143, e-post siljerst@ntnu.no
- NTNU ved student Iselin Aarø, tlf 98648120, e-post iselisa@ntnu.no
- Vårt personvernombud: Thomas Helgesen ved NTNU. Tlf 93079038, e-post thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Paula Rice
(Forsker/veileder)

Silje Strand
(Student)

Iselin Aarø
(Student)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Hvordan motiverer en leder sine ansatte under Covid-19 i Norge?», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 4: A section from the transcribed interview with Samuel, one of the leaders.

(Translated from Norwegian to English)

What do you think about the motivation of the employees?

It is perhaps one of the most demanding, to get people to keep their spirits up. The solution is probably not to say "it will get better soon", because no one knows. Nobody believes in that either, we are talking about adult people. For us, it has been a lot about continuing to keep creative processes going. We have also utilized what we can within the regulations that are in place at work. It is quite strict regarding who is allowed to be in the office and not, but when we have had the opportunity, we have taken in maybe 2 people that can sit together one day in the office and work. We have a part of the editorial staff who are in the office, so they can talk to them. This way they can get some new impressions. I have one in my department who, after only a day at work, got so many new ideas just from being at work in the office landscape. So it's keeping motivation up by inspiring creative processes, following up on people and showing understanding that it's a challenging situation. People are having a hard time, and it does not necessarily help to say that things are getting better. Notice that now when it gets brighter outside it does a bit of the job already, because people get a little more positive. I also believe that just being completely honest that this is demanding and you lose motivation, that's the way it is and we just have to come to terms with it.

At the same time, it is important to be even more generous when it comes to praising the employees, because now they do not get the small talk around the room. It takes more to send a message than someone just throwing it out at the coffee machine, or saying it in the room. Just the fact that you see that people react positively to the case you have written and things like that. The leader must now to a greater extent do that job, and tell people more often that they are doing a good job. If you sit and work on an article for a week and do not feel that you are getting anywhere, then it is important that - I think there are more who may feel that they are not doing a good job as well. This even though they work more than they did before, and at times maybe better, but they have no one around them who can say that. You just sit at home doing the work on your own. Important that leaders let them know.

Did you rotate who was allowed to be in the office?

It is a bit situational, because the rules are that it must be business-critical for someone to be able to be in the office. So in those cases where someone has been in the office, it has been extremely important, such as "we have to get this done, and it has to be done now". Then we can take in two people. This is how we have done it, and now everyone in my department has been allowed to be in the office for a few days now after the New Year.

There was good feedback on that or?

Everyone was very positive about it. There is nothing they look forward to more than getting out and going to work.

Were there any other measures you took to try to ensure well-being amongst the employees?

Yes, across the entire company, a social committee has been set up which, for example, has made online quiz nights. There has also been a type of rebus race afterwards, and people have been encouraged to go for walks together. For instance, two coworkers that go for walks together, so we have some hiking groups. I have also agreed with my employees that they can and should take time off in the middle of the day and meet for lunch. It does not matter if you take an hour off, you should really do it and go for a walk. Preferably with someone else.

Did you agree to it yourself too?

I tried to encourage them to do just that, because the only one everyone talks to a lot is me. Would rather build up a little under normal collegial things without the boss having to come with.

Do you feel like you are a very typical boss or a little more buddy?

I'm to a certain extent more at the buddy level. I have worked there for several years and started as a part time employee. I have worked with these people for many years, so there are very many with whom I have had a relationship in the past. I did not enter the company directly in a managerial position, so I have a friendly relationship with very many as we have been in the same positions.

