

Henna Takala (1910023)

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN DIGITAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract <p>The thesis aimed to understand the culture between Sweden, Finland, and Norway, and how different digital communication was between these countries. The objective was to find out which communication channels were used. The purpose was to focus only on digital platforms and devices and to study how employees communicate through them.</p> <p>This study is based on mixed-method research. The qualitative method was used to better understand the current state of communication. Open questions helped to gather variable answers to support the quantitative study made after. The quantitative method was used to better understand how each country communicates, and which communication channels are used.</p> <p>The study showed that organizational communication was very important to all countries. Foreign languages were not challenging for any of the countries. Leadership communication worked in the case company. External training should be arranged related to communication and clear communication channels for the employees. The company should have rules or instructions on how channels should have used and how people should communicate. Sweden preferred Teams the most, then e-mail and Intranet. Finland preferred Workplace the most, then e-mail and Intranet. Norway preferred Workplace the most, then e-mail and Teams.</p> <p>Sweden, Finland, and Norway did not have major cultural differences between them. Each of the countries had its aspects and routines that they followed. Those were only personal issues, and not relevant cultural issues to be concerned about. The company has a strong common organizational culture that is followed. There were some differences in communication channels, which may affect efficient communication and good results. All countries should use the same channels for the same purposes.</p>		
Keywords		
organizational communication, language, communication channel, work environment, cultural differences		

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines digital organizational communication inside a company that operates in retail. The focus is on cultural differences in communication between Sweden, Finland, and Norway. Communication is vital in a work community. Usually, employees feel that communication needs improvements. They want to access easily all the information that is important for their work. Any problems in communication might hurt business. For example, it can cause trust issues if the company does not inform employees enough. (Joki 2021, 164.)

Communication gives a company a good reputation and character. The main factors are to strengthen a sense of community and to develop culture. Communication, purposeful strategy, and interactive work are important parts to create a culture in a workplace. Companies use consulting firms and communication training to keep communication updated while everything in business is constantly changing. Communication between different functions is important because it affects business results, and it is vital to keeping well-being in a workplace. (Juholin 2022, 40, 44.) Communication has shifted increasingly to a digital environment, which includes e-mail, digital messages, video conferences, and social media. Also, digital platforms evolve which means that in the future the communication environment will be wider. (Valo & Sivunen 2020, 199.)

Employees must have strategic goals in leadership, and they are required to be prepared. People are aware of common goals and how those are achieved before communicating. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 29.) A leadership culture inside a company is built around leadership communication. Employees can learn from their manager, especially how to communicate appropriately. Leadership communication is a skill that everyone can learn. That skill can be developed independently or by taking some lessons about the topic. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 17.)

From a societal point of view, information in this study helps to discuss which tools are the most effective. Also, the study will give more understanding of the

cultural differences between Finland, Sweden, and Norway. Hopefully, the study will provide information about how English as a language affects communication between different cultures and locations. From a company's point of view, the purpose is to find out how communication between employees is improved. After knowing how employees feel about remote communication and communication in general, the company can start the development process.

2 BACKGROUND

Before the study, it is important to know something about the case company, and what the study is all about. The chapter starts with a short description of the case company and the main purpose of why the study is being conducted. Second, the aim, purpose, and research questions are explained. The last part is research methods, which are explained in their own chapter.

2.1 Case Company

The case company is an international organization that has diversity as a strategic asset. The company believes that diverse suggestions can develop the company's growth and become a sustainable organization. The mission is important to the strategy, and it is part of pricing, service, planning, distribution, and marketing communication. (Company X, 2022c.) The case company operates in retail and has an online store, and brick-and-mortar stores in three countries: Sweden, Norway, and Finland (Company X, 2022a). The company has well-known brands in its assortment but also its brands (Company X, 2022b). The company wants to offer customers a choice to buy products at cheaper prices. The products are the right ones locally which follow the trends. (Company X, 2022d.)

The case company's organizational structure starts with the CEO, which is followed by the Director of Retail Operations, and the Country Operations Manager. The Regional Manager will report to the Country Operations Manager, and Store Managers report to the Regional Managers. Store Managers are responsible for managing Team Leaders and Salespersons, who work in brick-

and-mortar stores. More people work in the case company, but this is the basic organizational structure that is based on the daily work with consumer customers, at brick-and-mortar stores. The organizational structure is wide and has many branches under each department. For example, the HR department starts with the HR Director and the Sustainability Director and is followed by The HR Manager Business Support, HR Manager, and HR Partner. The Communication Department has an organizational chart that starts with the Group Head of Communications, who is followed by Communication Specialists and Communication Leads. Organizational structures are not based on a specific country. Different teams consist of people with different cultures and backgrounds. This means that employees must use various languages in their work to perform their work tasks. This has decreased people in the company and simplified communication. (Company X, 2022e.)

2.2 The aim, research questions, and methods

This topic for the thesis is based on the author's own experience in the case company. Communication has had its challenges for years, in my opinion, so it was interesting to study the topic more. I was also curious to explore if there are any possibilities to improve communication and to compare if others have the same thoughts as I do. There was also a purpose to know how important common language in the case company is. English is the lingua franca that should be used in all common communication. Still, there are considerable translations used, which has caused misunderstandings. This was also an aspect that in my perspective needed more exploring. I am studying international business management, which had its input to the research. The purpose was to gain international aspects while choosing an international company and to compare the countries to each other.

This thesis aims to understand the culture between Sweden, Finland, and Norway, and the communication different between these countries. The purpose is to find similarities and differences, and how those are described. The objective is to find out which communication channels are used. The purpose is to focus only on the digital work environment because it becomes more common. The

purpose is not to create a development plan with a timetable or focus on the whole communication inside the company. This study does not focus on communication with company partners or other stakeholders. This study only focuses on digital platforms and devices. There are chosen one main research question and three sub-search questions, which are listed next.

The main research question is:

How is digital communication different in Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish cultures?

The sub-research questions for the thesis are:

Which digital communication channels do employees use?

Do employees know how to communicate through digital channels?

Does a multicultural environment increase challenges in digital communication?

The main research question is the essence of the whole research and the thesis. The main purpose is to understand communication from Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian perspectives. Commonly it is thought that different countries have cultural differences, and it would be interesting to explore if there are differences also in communication. The results would indicate the differences and how those can be considered. The sub-research questions support the main questions and explore the topic in more detail. Communication usually requires channels, so the purpose is to understand what these channels are. Digital channels and remote communication have become more common, and that is why it is interesting to study if employees are familiar with using digital channels and communicate at a distance. Because the company is an international company and has many nationalities in the company, it is important to study if the multicultural environment increases challenges.

The main purpose is to examine mixed-method research which is a mix of qualitative and quantitative studies. First, the purpose is to examine qualitative study for the Human Resources or the Communication Departments to better understand the current state of communication. Open questions help to gather

variable answers to support the quantitative study. Second, the purpose is to execute the quantitative questionnaire, which is sent to a sampling of people who work in the office and stores. This means for example that salespersons and warehouse workers are not part of this study. Also, the questionnaire is not sent to all in the office or with supervisor status. The quantitative study is based on qualitative results. The questions for the questionnaire are based on the interviews in the qualitative study. There will be 45 questions to study organizational communication, how employees communicate, and, through which channels. There are also questions related to cultural issues, and results are analysed from a common perspective and comparing the three countries to each other.

After the two studies and analyses, the level of communication in the case company is more understandable. And it is easier to know which methods would improve communication in the future. It helps better to understand how each country communicates, and which communication channels are used. The main purpose is to develop communication from an employee perspective and create a plan or development suggestions, which depend on the study results. It is important to find answers to the main research question. It is also important to find issues related to the sub-research questions. Answers help to find solutions to improve communication and know the current state of the case company's communication.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

First, organizational communication is explained in general, and what is the digital work environment. Second, it is studied how cultural differences show in the workplace, and how language affects communication. The third part is about basic information related to cultural issues in Finland, Sweden, and Norway. Those countries and their issues are analysed with Hofstede's six dimensions model.

3.1 Organizational communication

According to Juholin (2022, 113), recent studies show that organizational communication requires good interaction in digital communication. Employees must receive training to use digital communication channels and be interested in using them. Remote communication and distance meetings have become more common in recent years. One reason is the COVID-19 pandemic, but Juholin (2022, 113) considered that it is because it is cheaper and environmentally friendly to use digital channels.

Topics about routines and daily business can usually be solved in digital meetings. The FutuRemote (project on distance work in Finland during the COVID-19 pandemic) considered that most people are satisfied doing their job at home and want to continue the method after the pandemic. The respondents considered that more happened in a shorter time, and it was surprisingly easy to adapt the work to weekdays. The only negative issue was that people were not interested in developing their work which becomes more like a routine instead of creating something new. (Juholin 2022, 135.) To build effective communication inside the company, it is valid to build a community, and ensure people feel connected, involved, and equally important. This strengthens the communication culture and the whole organizational culture. Reliable results can only be achieved with effective team communication. (Juholin 2022, 144.)

Juholin (2022, 366) showed a new model: Åberg's model of meaningful community communication 2020 which focuses on the working environment, which affects employees. The model is about finding the right direction and building processes around it to create desirable action. The model shows that all employees are responsible for maintaining communication effective, which is the main way to connect people, improve well-being at work, and create new innovative suggestions. (Juholin 2022, 372.) The Åberg Model 2020 is a tool for sustainable leadership and communication. It views action and communication from strategic, operative, and commonality perspectives. (Juholin 2022, 377.) The main purpose is to find meanings for different factors and ensure that communication is dialogic. Companies can be transparent with their products,

services, and plans. This way people will know what companies are about. (Juholin 2022, 367.)

The model has multiple parts that it consists of. The first one is a dialog which means working together and accepting differences. This enables employees to create innovations and feel better by achieving goals. (Juholin 2022, 367.)

Direction is the meaning of action which is based on mission and vision.

Employees need commitment which can be achieved with communication that tries to build a sense of community. Employees need to feel their work is relevant, and that they are engaging with the company. (Juholin 2022, 367-370.)

The movement is about operative communication which is part of daily work. It is important who delegate, and how to coordinate. Also empowering employees and creating supervisor-employee relationships are important. (Juholin 2022, 370.)

Processes require leaning which means efficiently minimizing issues that are obstacles for success. This reduces costs and improves quality. When evaluating processes, they need to have an agile point of view. Companies must observe if some issues are conducted correctly and if it is possible to change action based on feedback. (Juholin 2022, 371.)

A company's communication strategy defines how staff act and what are the common goals. A company may have multiple communication strategies, but the daily routine is the main issue. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 53.) The main purpose of communication is to ensure that information can be accessed easily.

Employees are also expected to share information with the supervisors because communication needs to work both ways. Communication needs certain transparency to work, which also affects business and supports the results that companies are after. (Juholin 2022, 57, 50.) Communication allows the company to build community and improve well-being at work. Companies can find new solutions after employees have understood different cultures and values. (Juholin 2022, 372.)

Employees are interested in developing themselves and appreciate the opportunities that the company enables. It is important to communicate about

different development projects to gain understanding. Employees need to understand that the company values self-development and wants to educate them. Communication should not be shared with everyone. It needs an evaluation of what is relevant to certain teams. Intranet has been a good channel to share information, which is for everyone, and if someone is interested in some issue, more information can be asked. One important issue is to share different feedback with employees. This will improve their working habits and business at the same time. (Joki 2021, 167.)

3.2 Digital work environment and communication channels

The environment of digital communication is wide and has several channels to share information and support each other. The only problem is understanding which channel to use. (Sivunen & Laitinen 2020, 43.) Different communication channels are used to inform about various issues. Companies need to have multiple channels for communication. Mostly, some information needs to be read multiple times or from multiple sources to understand the given information. Sometimes it requires the possibility of commenting or asking complementary questions to better understand the message. Regular meetings help to share information and ease communication with colleagues. Usually, the agenda is shared beforehand so participants can better prepare themselves for the meeting. Meetings are also an opportunity to share experiences, learn from them, and gather tips. (Joki 2021, 170.) Usually, the team chooses a communication channel, instead of the organization giving a certain method to use (Eklund et al. 2021, 70).

According to a study, digital communication channels have different purposes. Intranet is stated to be the memory of the company. It consists usually of all instructions and memos, which are updated in the office. Leaders use e-mail, which also has regular nice-to-know information. Slowly different apps like WhatsApp and Workplace replace “old” channels, like e-mail. It is much faster and easier to reach out to everyone for example to schedule deadlines and shifts. Sometimes people do not interact or respond to messages which have been sent. Everyone must develop their communication skills and become more

present. The person who sends the message needs to ensure that it is noticed, and relevant. (Isotalus & Rajalahti 2017.)

Current organizational communication channels are not internal or external. Social media and other apps, and channels are used in communication. People share work issues in different digital forums, where a customer or an employee may have written something about the company. (Marjamäki & Vuorio 2021, 25.) Leaders prefer different apps to communicate with the staff. These apps are for example blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Leaders are an example of how different communication channels can be used. Employees need to change from receivers to communicators, which transforms teams much stronger and involves everyone in the conversation. (Isotalus & Rajalahti 2017.) An Intranet is a platform that gives information to employees at the same time and does not depend on the country or other cultural factors. An Intranet should be clear, and people must find information quickly and easily. Other channels, like e-mail and WhatsApp, are tools that cannot be used for everything. People need to consider which information is shared and which channels are used. (Joki 2021, 170.)

According to Fried & Hanson (2014, 115), people consider meeting face-to-face impossible. Employees feel that working at a distance is more efficient, but it is difficult to gather all information and communicate emotions through digital channels. (Eklund et al. 2021, 66-67.) Usually, an international company's teams work in different countries and do not meet face-to-face. This can lead to difficulties and slow reactions. Teams are built with people with different cultures and languages, which leads to multiple working habits. The main goal is to have open communication culture to discuss common goals. A leader is a role model that needs to ensure that everyone communicates actively. A leader needs to show that employees can trust their manager. Also, it is important to train employees to use digital technology. According to a study that was part of the book *Hybrid leadership*, telecommuting will be a popular method at work. (Eklund et al. 2021, 13.) Telecommuting teams need to have regular meetings to ensure that goals are reached and celebrate their accomplishments (Eklund et al. 2021, 44-45).

To work at a distance has considerable benefits. Remote communication saves time, and the environment and increases profitability. It allows to be more flexible and decreases the work amount. Telecommuting can create a gap between employees and leaders, which needs new methods in the future. Employees can also be less interested in working towards the vision and following the strategic goals. (Eklund et al. 2021, 47-50.) Harvard Business Review research team considered in 2021 that in Nordic countries four elements are important in remote communication. Work roles can be different in a digital environment and teamwork can be insufficient in some parts of the organizational structure. The main factor is to support and train staff to communicate virtually. A company needs to measure tasks and follow how employees are doing, and how their work develops. (Eklund et al. 2021, 180,182). According to Keisala (2012, 67), the distance between people affects communication. The distance can cause interruption and enable one to forget the common goal in conversation. Also, it could be difficult to receive help quickly in certain situations because people do not know their colleagues well when they are located far away.

3.3 Cultural differences

Cultural differences are part of communication. The main purpose is to respect others' differences. (Lohtaja-Ahonen & Kaihovirta-Repo 2012, 37.) Intercultural communication has considerable benefits. Intercultural work environments tend to be healthier and have fewer conflicts. Employees give their support in a healthy environment and try to achieve goals more eagerly. (Neuliep 2021, 5.) Messages need to be modified and adapted to be more suitable for different cultures. Employees need to be interculturally competent to know the culture and have nonverbal and verbal skills to communicate. (Neuliep 2021, 34.) Heiskanen & Lehtikainen (2010, 24) wrote about problems that cultural differences can cause in an organization. They concluded that if a person does not understand the language, it can harm business. A company should know the culture and values of the country it operates in. This ensures that people communicate effectively, and business is more secure.

Global teams must understand cultural differences. Lee (2021, 117) states “Culture is defined as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another.” Cultural differences are affected by different factors, like gender, age, ethnicity, assumptions, and nationality. When working in multicultural teams, employees become better communicators locally and globally. They can also learn more about cultures and how to develop themselves. (Lee 2021, 117.) The language differs, and communication is not the same in every culture. Barriers can affect behaviors seen in another culture, for example, prejudices form a certain image of people. The culture people have grown into affects how people communicate. Communication may lead to being misunderstood if the language they use is not their native language. (Businesstopia 2018.)

Mustajoki (2020, 263) has divided cultural aspects into four different categories: ways to think and view the world, values, and beliefs, concepts and activity maps, and people’s mentality and norms. Mustajoki (2020, 265) considered that difference is not between cultures. To explore differences, the focus should be on people who live in the culture. The focus should be on personalities and how those can be understood. Mustajoki (2020, 275) has been using the term cultural fluency to describe the way a person should act and communicate when being in foreign surroundings. It varies between people how a person can adapt to an unfamiliar environment, and it can be a difficult situation for everyone.

3.4 Language and communication

Language is an important part of effective communication and successful business. It takes more effort to speak a foreign language which affects people’s points of view. Mostly, people focus on the topic of discussion, instead of the way people communicate. (Mustajoki 2020, 284.) Non-native English speakers use language with different accents which can lead to situations where receivers can misunderstand messages. This problem is not certain for one specific country, it is a global problem. (Talbot 2019, 72.) Staff should be trained to have skills to write and communicate in English. Employees should be able to use English in communication if a company wants to be successful. Compared to native

speakers, non-native English speakers are more focused on the language and the message itself. This gives them an advantage and ensures to have no misunderstandings. (Talbot 2019, 84.)

Keisala (2012, 69) concluded in a study that successful communication requires a common language between different functions. The common language was English. Research showed that everyone who did not speak or understood the language well was seen as problematic. Employees should be better trained for the language they use. Companies require new employees to have the skill to speak English, but rarely a standard is evaluated after recruitment. Mustajoki (2020, 297) concluded that a person should soften the tone if the topic is sensitive for the receiver. The main issue is to confirm that respondent has understood the topic correctly. One way to soften the tone is to use yourself as an example when telling the issue, instead of referring to the respondent. This means telling something the way that “I have done” and not “You have done”. One important feature is to listen to what others think and specify the outcome for all respondents (Mustajoki 2020, 300).

Language has become a social tool, which helps companies to better understand workplace communication. A study has shown that many employees do not want to speak English as a corporate language. This can affect the way to communicate, and how much. Usually, employees tend to communicate with people in the same native language. (Lahti 2020, 116-117.) Supervisors need to have skills to communicate remotely with multicultural teams, despite cultural dimensions. Lee (2021, 156) suggested that supervisors must consider several factors in their communication: “cultural fluency, language barriers, time zones, differences in cultural perceptions of deadlines and urgency, age and religious discrimination, and dealing with second language issues.” (Lee 2021, 156.)

3.5 Hofstede’s six cultural dimensions

Hofstede’s six dimensions are a model that helps to understand global management and remote leadership. Hofstede’s model states that culture is mind-gaming. Cultures have six different factors that are related to the mind and

behaviour: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-term Orientation, and Indulgence. With these factors, people can create various profiles about cultures. At the same time, people have given criticism to this model because it does not allow much space for variables. (Tienari & Meriläinen 2021, 218.) People in low-context cultures communicate directly and are always task-oriented to talk about what is on their minds. Most northern European countries are stated to be low contexts, like Finland, Sweden, and Norway. (Lee 2021, 121.) Finland and Sweden are high in institutional collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, which means that employees are loyal and follow rules. They are used to plan their work and value collaborative leaders. (Hofstede 2022b.)

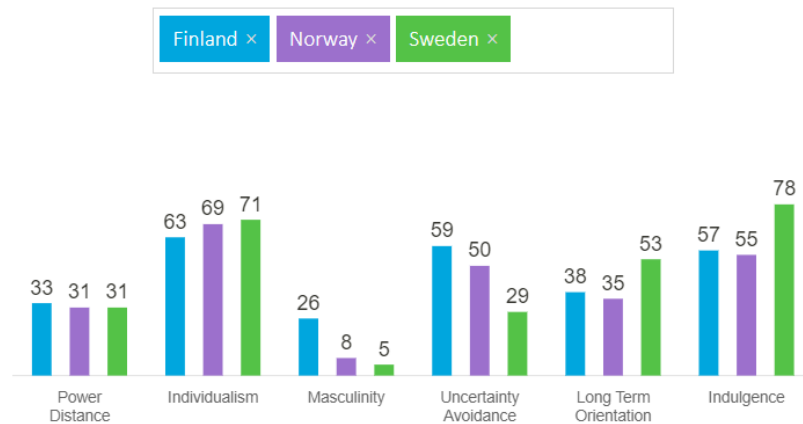


Figure 1. Hofstede comparison of Finland, Sweden, and Norway (Hofstede 2022b).

Power Distance means that power is not equally divided. People have different statuses inside the company. As seen in Figure 1., Finland received thirty-three points which mean Finns are independent and collaborative. They rely on their leaders and have a friendly relationship with them. Suggestions are commonly shared, and people work together as a team. Norway and Sweden received the same as Finland with thirty-one points which mean that they appreciate equal rights and want to be independent. These countries do not want to be controlled but need to be consulted. (Hofstede 2022a.) Individualism is about how independent people are, and when they need other groups to help. Finland has sixty-three points in this category which means that they are more focused on themselves. As seen in Figure 1., Norway received a score of sixty-nine which means their own opinions are highly appreciated. Norwegian people can

separate their free time and work. Sweden has the highest score with seventy-one which means that relationships rely on contracts. (Hofstede 2022a.)

Finland has twenty-six points in Masculinity, which means they focus on equality and do not have a high desire to be the best. Femininity tells us that people have compromised and are flexible. They are also interested in keeping up a good quality of life. Norway has a lower score than Finland with only eight points which means that Norwegian people like to soften their tone when communicating. They do not want to be the best because it is not appreciated in their culture. Sweden has the lowest points with five which means Swedes do not try to become better than their colleagues. It only requires that everyone has what they need.

(Hofstede 2022a.) Uncertainty Avoidance is about the future and how it can be predicted. Finland has fifty-nine points which mean that Finns need rules and do not waste time. They are punctual and like to have individual motivation. Norway received fifty points, but Sweden scores lower with twenty-nine points. Sweden tries to be flexible and innovative in everything they do. They do not need many rules to execute the work. (Hofstede 2022a.)

Finland has thirty-eight points in Long Term Orientation which means that Finnish culture is based on fast results and traditional thinking. Norway scores the same with thirty-five points which means that their culture is normative. Sweden is in this dimension different with fifty-three points. Finland has fifty-seven points in the Indulgence category which means Finns are optimistic people and value free time. It is important to be social and respected. Norway is not either restrained or indulgent. Swedish people are optimistic and appreciate a free time when possible. (Hofstede 2022a.)

4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter has a description of the methods that are used in the studies. The mixed research method is explained which includes qualitative and quantitative studies. Then the data collection is described, and the data analysis process is explained.

4.1 Research method

Research ethics have certain rules that all researchers should know and follow. Techniques and collected information should be part of a good research ethic. This means that the researcher uses current and professional sources. (Vilkka 2021.) Mixed methods research combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. This gives a better understanding and turns weaknesses into strengths. Both types of research are individual in mixed method research, and usually, their results combine. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.) The qualitative method tries to understand some action, which is familiar to people who are interviewed. Chosen persons for the study should not be randomly selected. It requires that respondents know something about the research topic or have some experience with it. A qualitative study is executed usually with interviews or observation. An interview enables multiple answers, and knowledge about what a respondent feels. An interview can be executed face-to-face or through e-mail. Both methods can be extended with further questions. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 83–85.)

A quantitative study is usually made with a questionnaire which is gathered with questions that are the same for all respondents. When all respondents are anonymous it enables them to ask sentimental questions. The response rate of the form can be low at first, but the rate improves when the form is sent to many respondents. (Vilkka 2021.) The questionnaire is used because it is an easy way to collect data and gather diagram results. The information is usually gathered the way it can be measured. A respondent needs to choose the most suitable one from the given answer options. The goal is to find answers in the quantitative study of what, how much, and where. (Heikkilä 2014, 15.) When the form is sent, it should be guaranteed that everyone has the same possibilities to answer, for example, be able to use digital tools like e-mail. A question form and its questions are related to the theoretical framework. Respondents should be chosen at the beginning of the study. The questions should be clear and understandable so that many know what is asked. They also should be gathered in a way that gives answers which could help in a development process. A question form should be evaluated before it is sent. People can give feedback and help to finalize the form. The people who will evaluate it should be chosen carefully. (Vilkka 2021.)

Digital questionnaires are efficient economically and save time. The study results are easy to transfer to Excel-table or some other program that creates tables and calculations automatically (Valli 2018.) The digital questionnaire can be executed on social media, and it can be filled with pictures and videos which improves the response rate. A questionnaire needs to be in a form that is possible to open with any device, like a tablet, PC, or with phone. It is suitable for foreigners or people who live at a distance because they can be sent digitally. This varies the results and increases the credibility. (Valli & Perkkilä 2018.)

4.2 Data Collection

After choosing the research method, it is suitable to receive valid answers to cover the research problem. The results are quite different if the study is executed on the whole staff or taken only as a sampling. (Vilkka 2021.) The case company has around 5,000 employees, so it is necessary to narrow down the respondents (Company X, 2022a). The size of the sampling is not relevant in a qualitative study. The main goal is to gather information that has good quality, and not generalize the results. (Vilkka 2021.)

The purpose is to collect the data with a qualitative study from the Human Resources and the Communication Departments. The study will be executed through e-mail and sent to people who work in these two departments. The receivers can choose for themselves if they will take part in the study. The covering note is concluded in this report's appendix section (Appendix 1). The main purpose is to ask questions to obtain data about the current state of the company's organizational communication. The questionnaire will have ten questions that are open and can be only answered with respondents' comments (Appendix 2). The questionnaire is in English, but respondents can also answer in their native language. Because English (*lingua franca*) is the common language of the company, the questionnaire language was chosen based on that. The use of a native language can also decrease the possibility of misunderstandings.

The results received in the qualitative study are used to create the quantitative questionnaire, which will be sent through e-mail. The purpose is to execute a quantitative study for a sampling of employees who work in the office, and supervisors who work in stores. The respondents are selected randomly, based on the groups that are valid in the Outlook program. This narrows down the sampling and cannot guarantee that all employees are reached. This study will be executed with the Webropol program to gather fast results and good analysis. Webropol program will automatically create charts and comparisons which enables quick to move to the analysis part. The questionnaire is translated into four different languages: English, Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian. Respondents are given the opportunity to choose the language before or during the survey. It is important to ask how different teams usually communicate because they work in a multicultural work environment. The purpose is to understand challenges related to this, and which solutions assist the company to solve them.

4.3 Data Analysis

After the data is gathered in qualitative and quantitative studies, the data is analyzed. Rangaiah (2021) suggested that the data analysis process has five steps. The first one is to determine the objective. It is important to establish the aim of the questionnaire and the most related answers. An easy way is to gather answers to dashboards to have a better vision. The second step is data gathering. The data is divided into first-party data, second-party data, and third-party data. First-party data is the information that is gathered in the survey, and second-party data is the information that is gathered from other statistics and the homepage. Third-party data is information that is gathered from other companies and sources. For example, if the study needs information about statistics about customer behavior in some fields, it can be called third-party data. (Rangaiah 2021.) The third step according to Rangaiah (2021) is cleaning the data which means that irrelevant data is removed. The focus should be on data that helps to answer the research questions. It is also relevant to consider how trustworthy the data is, whether answers are dependable, or whether it is possible to have errors. The fourth step is interpreting the data and choosing the right analysis. The most

suitable for the upcoming study could be a diagnostic analysis, which helps to understand why certain issues occur, and triggers them. It also analyses the differences between different matters. The last step is to share the results which are commonly made clear with different visualizations. This helps the reader and the case company better understand the results. The visualizations also help the researcher to point out why certain actions should be conducted to improve business inside the company. (Rangaiah 2021.)

5 FINDINGS

The findings are based on two different studies: qualitative and quantitative, and on a small sampling of employees, so generalizations cannot be made. The findings guide and discuss what employees consider the current state of communication and what improvement they wish to have. The findings will also give a vision of differences in countries or are some issues the same despite the country or culture. The qualitative study was not focused on cultural aspects, so it was not relevant to the study. The quantitative study focused more on cultural aspects, and results are shown both in general and from a country perspective. The answers are not focused on age or gender. The main purpose was to focus on the country where employees live, not their nationalities. The results are analyzed from the country's perspective.

5.1 The qualitative study findings

The qualitative questions were sent through e-mail on 10 May 2022 to the Human Resources and the Communication Departments. Respondents were selected based on the organizational structure which was found on the social media platform Workplace. This means that some relevant people may have not been considered to the study. It was sent to a total of twenty-three people, of whom five answered back. Two people answered that they had no time to answer. Three people took part in the study and answered the questions. The study was submitted through e-mail and phone; two answered through e-mail and one was interviewed by phone. The main purpose was to gain answers from people who work in Finland, Sweden, and Norway which would have given international and

cultural aspects to the study. To secure the anonymity of respondents, the country where respondents were from is left unrevealed. The company has a common organizational structure which means that people work in multicultural teams. This study was not based on cultural differences, so it was not relevant to where the respondents were living.

The choice of the Human Resources and the Communication Departments was to know which are the channels and rules in communication. Also, it was important to know the current level of organizational communication and gain a vision to go further with the study. The main purpose was to gather the information that could be used to form the quantitative questionnaire. The research methods were chosen based on language barriers and demographic distances. It was equal to send the questionnaire through e-mail, so everyone had the same possibility to answer. The questions were in English, but the respondents were allowed to answer in their native language if they preferred. In the findings section, exact quotes were only from two respondents because the third interview was executed by phone, and exact quotes were not gathered.

5.1.1 The current communication status

The first question was about the current communication level inside the company, which led the communication to be functional. One challenge was having many channels to communicate. When employees do not know which channel to follow, it can lead to challenges. One respondent indicated: "The current state is at a good level. Not especially good, but not bad either. A common challenge is having multiple communication channels. Usually, people in stores use different channels than people in the office. This leads to that it is necessary to follow many channels, which have its challenges." (Appendix 4/1, Q1.) Another respondent also related to this same challenge. They hoped for transparency in communication by stating: "At the moment it is quite unclear who needs to be communicated, where, how, and in which channel. I hope for more open communication, for example in issues that are related to the decisions company has made. Sometimes it feels that these issues are forgotten to share with the staff which creates unnecessary speculations." (Appendix 4/1, Q2.) The

company should have clear information about all the factors that impact employees. The company sometimes forgets to communicate about some issues. All decisions were important to people who work inside the company. One respondent thought that the level of communication was hugely improved over the years. One reason for this was Workplace - a new communication platform, which Facebook owns and updates.

The second question was about the instruction related to communication: "Does the company have instruction or is it free to communicate the way everybody wants?" One respondent was not familiar with the instructions. They thought that the learning process is learned in practice. They also hoped to have some guidelines for Workplace. It was thought of becoming more social media-like instead of a professional platform for business issues. The exact quote was: "I have not found any instruction. I have come familiar with communication through practice. Workplace is like Facebook, and as a channel needs etiquette of its own. Otherwise, Workplace can turn to social media which will cover the content, and cause inappropriateness." (Appendix 4/1, Q1.) One respondent considered that some instruction exists but are not clear. Also, it was hoped for instruction on how to communicate in Workplace. The exact quote was: "And here I mean the way people communicate, and for example with which tone. It would be easier to be involved if the conversation is turning in an inappropriate direction." (Appendix 4/1, Q2). This meant that it should be important to know which tone to use and how issues are represented. The third respondent knew also that guidelines exist and were aware that it is quite free to use Workplace. The instruction on using Workplace needs updating.

The third question was related to communication channels that the company uses. It was also asked if specific channels are used only in certain situations. All respondents answered that e-mail, Teams, Workplace, and Intranet are the most common tools to use. The phone is not a common tool anymore but is still used in some situations. One respondent thought that it depends on the purpose and which channel to use. Workplace is also a communication channel for office people to communicate with the people working in stores. The exact quote was:

“E-mail, Teams, Workplace, and Intranet are communication channels that work. In addition, there are different customer portals to other stakeholders, which have their systems. It depends on the use, and which tool to use: E-mail is more universal, Teams is used mostly in the office and Workplace is for communication towards stores.” (Appendix 4/1, Q1.) One respondent thought that the company has too many channels to choose from, and some messages can be lost and not seen because of that. The exact quote was: “We have Intranet, Workplace, Teams, and e-mail, I feel that there are too many, and easily some messages may disappear when there is the choice to use many channels.” (Appendix 4/1, Q2.)

The fourth question was about effective virtual communication. One respondent was not able to answer anything. One thought that through digital tools it is easy to reach a person, for example, if phones are closed. Virtually communicated messages are saved, so it is easy to find them when necessary. It is seen that in Teams and Workplace people are used to receiving answers more quickly than before. One respondent thought that the camera gives a better impression to show one's emotions. Sometimes written messages can be misunderstood. The respondent indicated: “In a virtual interaction usually it is important to have many communication channels to be part of, like body language. That is why a camera has its place, even though it is not the same when meeting face-to-face. Always must remember that a written message can cause a rendition of the tone of the voice. Easily some answers can be understood abruptly. It is impossible to know someone's mood behind the screen.” (Appendix 4/1, Q1.) One respondent revealed that the company should have methods, which allow employees to be involved. That would improve the virtual communication between different functions because some people can be silent in meetings.

5.1.2 The current language status

The fifth question was related to the language used between different functions. English is the common corporate language, but employees use more their native language. One respondent stated: “The choice of language depends on who you are talking to. Conversations in the office are in the native language. When

communicating with people living in other countries, conversations are in English. English is not the main language, as it has been thought to be. This is not necessarily a worse issue because the use of English could cause extra tension, and it could act to creativity. This language tension can be seen in situations where multiple persons are present.” (Appendix 4/2, Q1.)

One respondent thought that Swedish is used more than English but that can be changed. People are more creative when they use their native language because of the language barrier. Messages and information related to the whole company are mostly written in English. In some cases, messages are translated into a person’s native language to ensure that everyone understands the information correctly. One respondent did not see any problem with language when communicating with different people. One respondent answered:” It depends on who you communicate with. For example, when employee communicates directly with Finnish staff, they communicate in Finnish or Swedish, especially, when communicating with stores. Information that is related to the whole company is mostly in English. Sometimes information is translated to Finnish if the information is important.” (Appendix 4/2, Q2.)

The sixth question was about changing something in the company’s current communication. Two of the respondents thought that the company has too many communication channels. It is suitable to have multiple channels, but this means more work. One would decrease the amount of information. Respondents considered that there should be more concise messages, instead of messages which are not relevant. Intranet and Workplace should have a balance between them. The main forum should be Workplace. One respondent thought that the company needs to focus more on the Swedish language in Finland. The communication on Intranet needs to be also in Swedish because some people in Finland speak only Swedish, like in Åland. The exact quote was:” There is no need to change anything else than the information which should be translated also in Swedish. Considerable people are working in Finland that speak Swedish, for example in Åland.” (Appendix 4/2, Q2.) One respondent suggested that OneDrive is a good tool to share information, instead of sending files through e-

mail. The exact quote was:” Communication channels should be decreased. Multichannel is good but it takes considerable work. I would decrease e-mails with modern tools. For example, M356 offers many tools, which could decrease the amount of Excel sent through e-mail. Those could be modified for example in OneDrive. The conversation related to these files can be executed through Teams.” (Appendix 4/2, Q1.)

5.1.3 The current cultural status

The seventh question considered cultural backgrounds which affect communication. The purpose was to find out if communication has any cultural aspects. All respondents thought that the countries do not have much cultural difference between them. They thought Finnish people are more direct, and Swedish people have a softer tone. Finnish people want to go to the topic right away, but Swedish people ask about someone’s feelings and news before they proceed. One respondent answered: “I have not noticed any difference. Sometimes Swedish way of communication differs somehow from the Finnish way. In Sweden, communication is softer and not so direct. In Finland usually, people tend to go straight to the topic.” (Appendix 4/2, Q2.) Sometimes personal differences may occur, but cultures are the same allowing using humoristic comments to free the conversation. One respondent’s exact quote related to this topic was: “I have not seen cultural backgrounds to affect. The Swedish way of starting an e-mail is the “Hope all is a well” expression, which is often part of different written texts. Usually, the Finnish way is to tell the issue and move forward. Of course, basic friendliness and relevance are considered. Culturally we are close, so rough humour can be used in both ways.” (Appendix 4/2, Q1.)

The eighth question was knowing whether the company has any training in communication or cultural aspects. Two respondents who have worked in the company for only a while were not able to answer this question. They did not know if any training for these issues exists. The exact answer was: “I cannot answer this. I do not remember having any practice related to this issue.

Organizational culture is part of the introduction, which also involves issues related to communication and culture.” (Appendix 4/3, Q1). Another respondent stated: “I cannot answer this. Our communication department gives very good support and tips when needed.” (Appendix 4/3, Q2). One respondent who has worked many years in the company revealed that the company does not have any actual training programs or training for communication or cultural issues. However, the company organizes occasionally some training for organizational communication.

The ninth question was a part where respondents had the opportunity to comment. One respondent wished for more openness and transparency. The company has also taken some actions to improve communication, so the challenges are acknowledged. The tenth question was related to background information about the status and how long a person has been working in the company. These issues were partly discussed in the results but because the study was anonymous, the titles and the exact number of years in the company were not revealed. It was more secure that respondents were not recognized.

5.1.4 Summary of findings of the qualitative study

The qualitative study had ten open questions which were related to communication. One part was about the current state of communication and which communication channels were used. The second part was to know how language affects communication. The last part was to know if cultures have any effect on communication. The first impression was that the communication is at a proficient level. All the respondents thought that the company has too many communication channels to choose from. Transparency also needs to be improved and the amount of communication increased. Respondents considered that the company should have more instruction on how different channels are used and how to communicate through them. One respondent indicated that in some situations Workplace has become a social media platform to share more free time posts than information that is relevant to the work assignments. Digital communication behaviour is an issue to focus on. Employees should be more

involved in meetings and other interactions. It is important to see body language to minimize misunderstandings, which can be improved with using the camera. Some variations between languages exist. It should be focused on this issue and ask complementary questions related to that in the next study. All respondents thought that language chosen depends on different situations. It is relevant to understand these situations better and whether it is relevant to other employees.

All respondents thought that culture does not have a significant impact on communication. Of course, minor issues are more related to personalities instead of actual cultural differences. Respondents thought also differently about the training part. They had little knowledge about it and did not know if the company organize any training. This is one issue to focus on and ask more specific questions to fully understand the need and the current state of training. Also, it is important to know if it is relevant to understand a culture in a multicultural company better.

5.2 The quantitative study findings

The results of the qualitative study helped to create questions to understand the communication and cultural aspects. Before the actual quantitative study, three people read the questionnaire and gave their feedback. They ensured that the questions were understandable, multiple choices were correct and the number of questions was suitable. They also estimated that the questions would gather reliable results and answer the research questions. The form was reformed before sending based on the feedback. Sections were divided into five themes: background information, organizational communication, communication channels, employee communication, and culture and language in communication. The main purpose was to understand how employees understand the organizational communication in the company, and how language or culture affects it.

The questionnaire was sent on August 4th, 2022, through e-mail and the respondents were given one week to answer. The cover letter for the quantitative study is available in the appendix section (Appendix 3). Respondents were selected from e-mail groups in the Outlook program; assumably Swedish,

Norwegian, and Finnish office groups, Store Managers, and Team Leaders from the same countries. The questionnaire was sent to around eight hundred persons, which cannot be divided into different nationalities by number because it was not obvious from the groups where they lived. The answering time was approximately 10 minutes. It was voluntary to answer the questionnaire and do it independently. An exact link and a QR code were given to the Webropol survey, which could be opened with a computer, a tablet, or a mobile phone. The questionnaire was opened 104 times, answering was started eighty-four times, and as a result, seventy-five answered, which is eighty-nine percent of the whole respondent group. Generalizations cannot be conducted because the sample of answers was small. The survey results would give perception what some of the respondents think about the current communication status in the case company.

5.2.1 Background information

This theme consisted of basic information about a respondent; gender, age, current home country, native language, place of work, and how long they have worked for the company. Most of the respondents were women (60 %), and 4 % were not able to answer what sex they represented. Respondents were an equal amount of 26–55-year-olds (23-25 %) but the majority was 36- to 45-year-olds with 42 %. Over 55 -years- old was 9 %. Most answers were given from Sweden, and some answers (4 %) were given from the United Kingdom and China. The reason answers were also from these two countries was that they are part of the office community and are based in the Swedish office group. These countries are described in the result figures with “other.” However, the original purpose was to focus on Sweden, Finland, and Norway and point out their cultural issues, it is also important to show how results changed when more countries were involved.

	n	Percentage
Sweden	38	50.7 %
Finland	28	37.3 %
Norway	6	8.0 %
Something else, what	3	4.0 %

Table 1. The division of respondents by their nationality.

Table 1., demonstrates the total division between respondents. Half of the respondents (38) were from Sweden, twenty-eight were from Finland, six were from Norway, and three were from other countries, China, and the United Kingdom. Swedish was the most popular language with 52 %. The study had people who speak something else than Swedish, Finnish (32 %), or Norwegian (6 %) with 10 %. (Figure 2.) Finland was the only country where the native languages were Swedish and Finnish. People use other languages among these two in other countries. Respondents speak Swedish 18 % in Finland and Finnish 3 % in Sweden. In Norway 17 %, speak some other language, and the rest speak Norwegian. In Sweden, 3 % speak English, and other languages are spoken with 5 %. Those other languages are Telegu (N=1), Spanish (N=1), and Chinese (N=3). (Figure 2.)

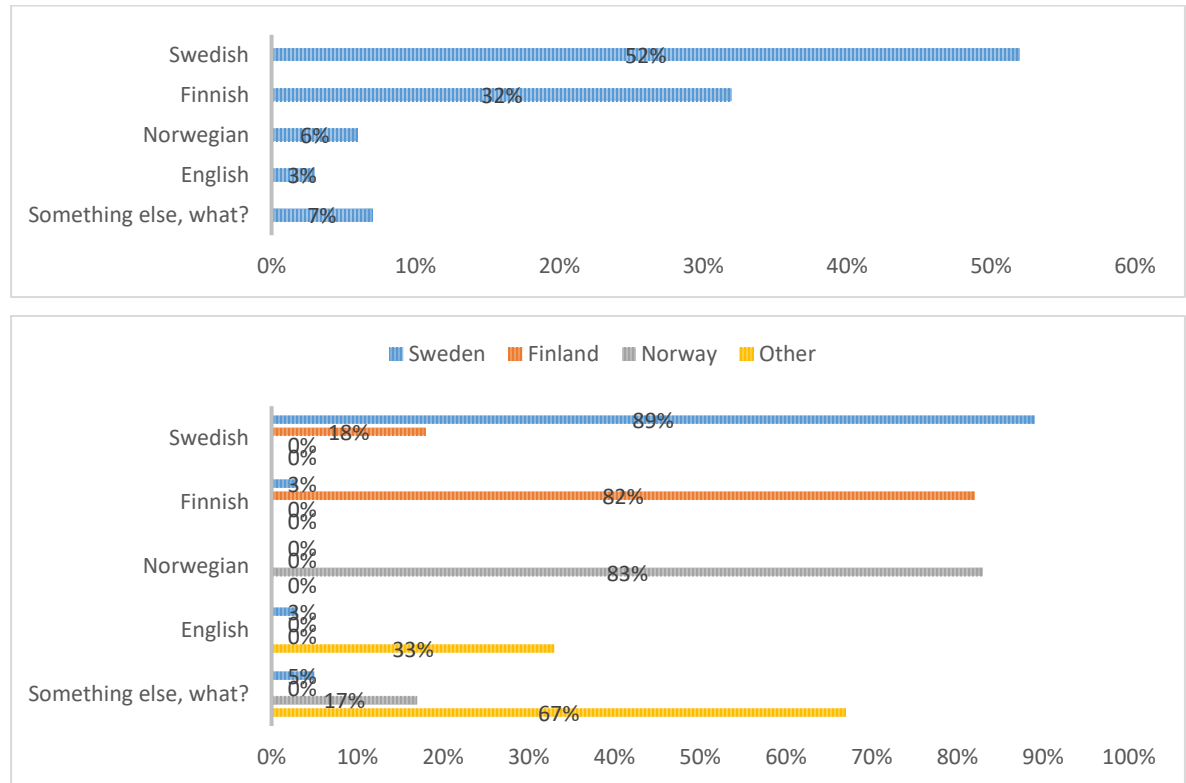


Figure 2. What is the respondent's native language?

One question was about where respondents work. Amongst the office and stores, some people work at home (4 %). Sixty-one percent of respondents work in offices, and 35 % in stores. People were equally divided with different work histories, but most people have worked less than five years in the company. As seen in Figure 3., thirty-nine percent of respondents have worked five years or

fewer in the company. Thirteen percent of respondents have worked over 20 years.

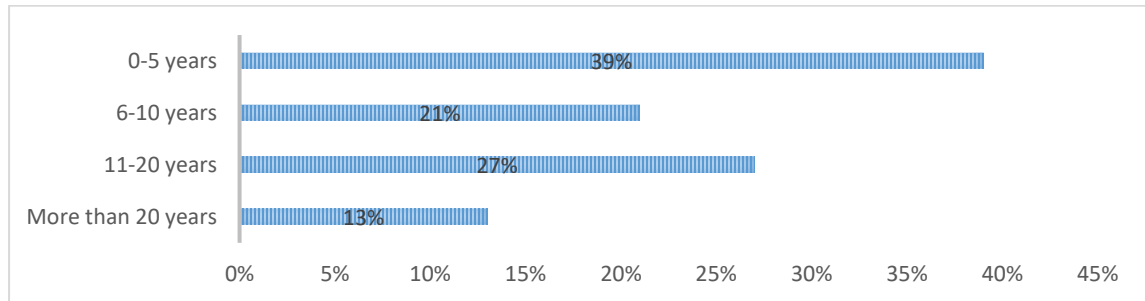


Figure 3. How long have you worked at Company X?

After the background information, the study focused on organizational communication and its current state of it. This is explained in the next chapter, Organizational communication in Company X.

5.2.2 Organizational communication in Company X

The next question was: “How important is organizational communication?” Sixty-five percent of respondents thought that communication is especially important. Nobody thought that it was not important because the results did not have any “not important” or “I cannot say” answers. The company did not have significant difference between Sweden, Finland, or Norway. The results of each country are shown in Figure 4., and those are marked with different colours to better separate which country thought what. All countries believed that communication is an important part of the work environment. Only 5 % of Swedish people thought it is only a bit important. (Figure 4.)

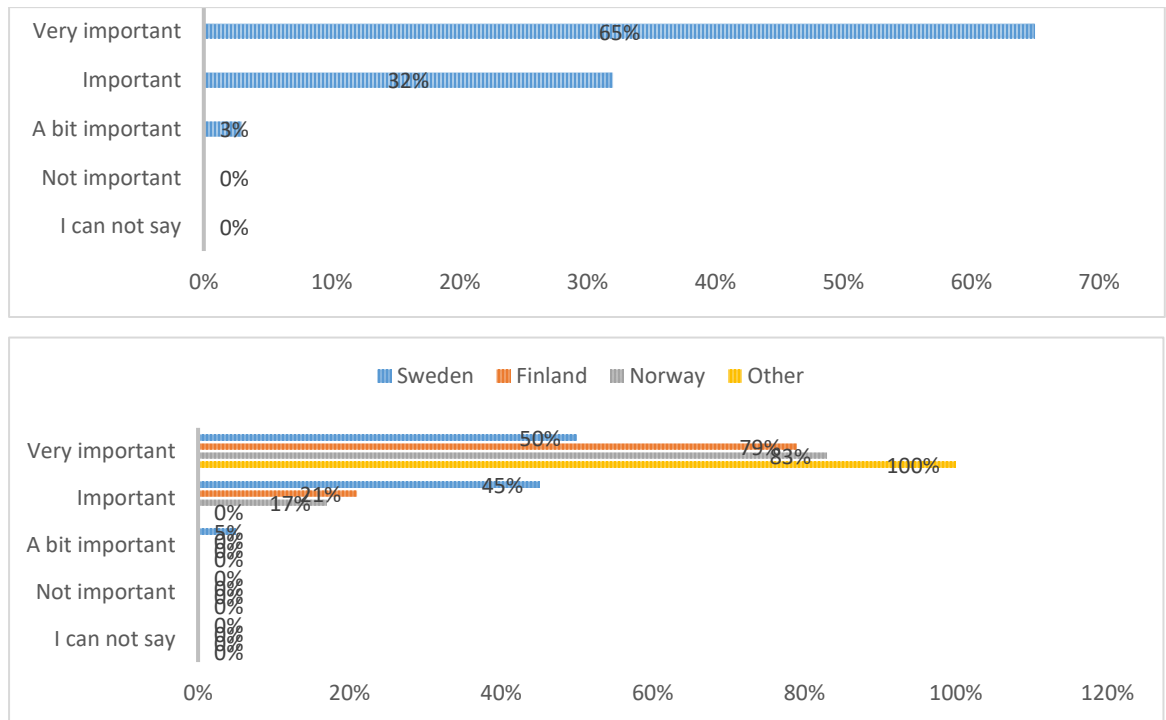


Figure 4. How important is organizational communication?

The eighth question was about the current state of the case company's communication. Most of the respondents thought that the current state is good with 49 % but 39 % thought it is moderate and 11 % thought it is bad. Figure 5., illustrates that Norwegian people were the most satisfied with the current state, and Finnish people were the least satisfied with 50 %. Overall, among Norway (47 %) and Finland, other countries (China and the United Kingdom) thought communication's current state needs improvement with 66 % of the results. (Figure 5.)

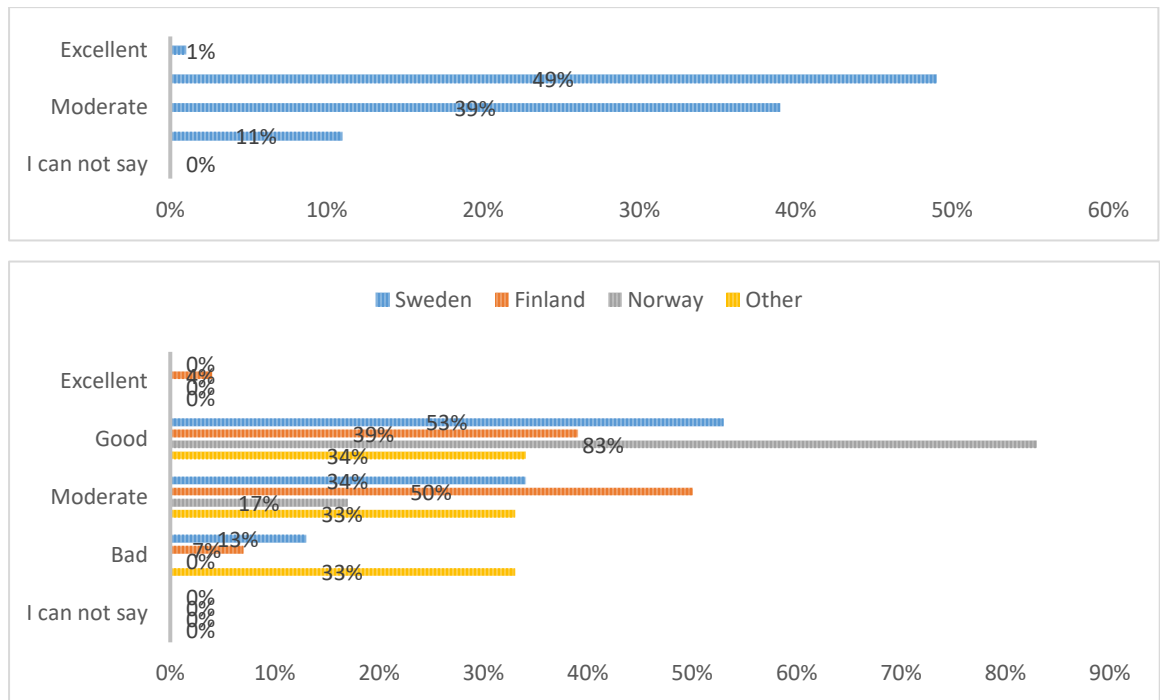


Figure 5. What do you think is the status of Company X's organizational communication?

The ninth question was about differences in teams or areas. The exact question was: "What is the communication between different teams or areas?" Answers showed that the allocation was equal. Some "I cannot say" answers were from Norway with 17 %. Figure 6., shows that one-third thought it is good, but the majority thought it is moderate (55 %) or even bad (13 %). Countries did not have differences between them.

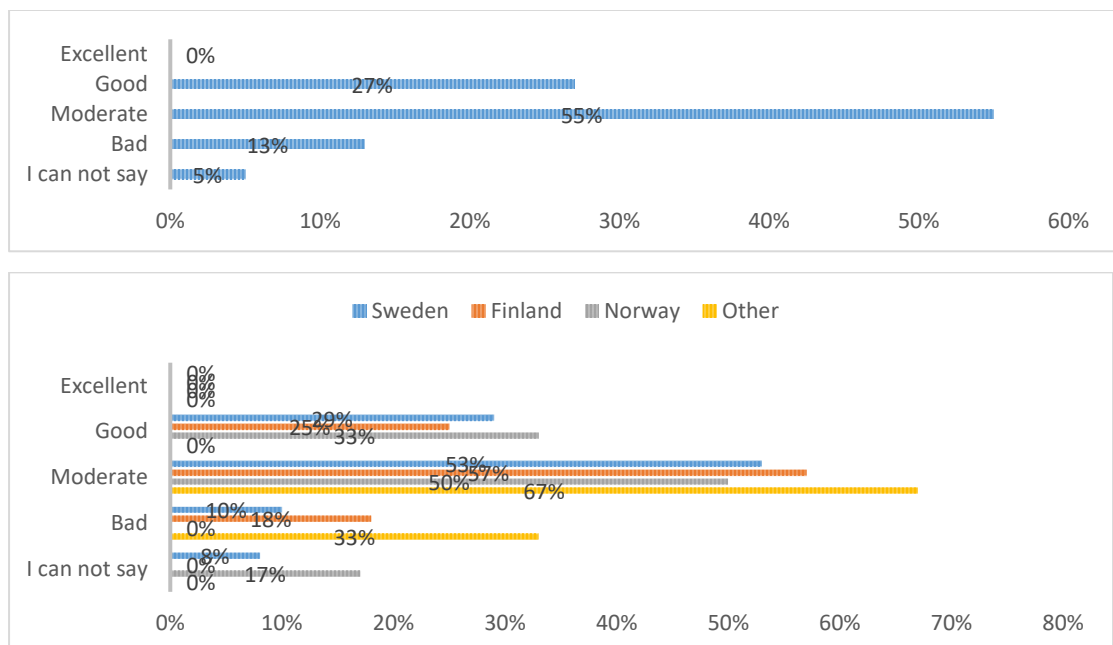


Figure 6. What is the communication between different teams or areas?

One respondent answered: "First it can be asked which is the Code of Conduct in the organizational communication. Is there that or can employees communicate the way they want, and just based on custom ways and norms? The company needs boundaries and instruction. Every department of the organization chooses its way to communicate, and that has led to increased information which is divided into different channels. Information flow is a natural consequence of that. The most important information should be in Intranet, fulfilling information for example in Workplace. Employees need training because people still post with #-sign instead of @-sign. Digi natives have increased naturally but help is needed. Tools do not integrate themselves perfectly into the work environment without any problems." (Appendix 5/3, Q20.)

The next question that divided people was about how remote communication works. Of all answers 49 % were good and 3 % excellent. "I cannot say" answers were given with 9 %. (Figure 7.) One respondent answered that Teams is a useful tool to contact managers because of the distance to head office (Appendix 5/2, Q9).

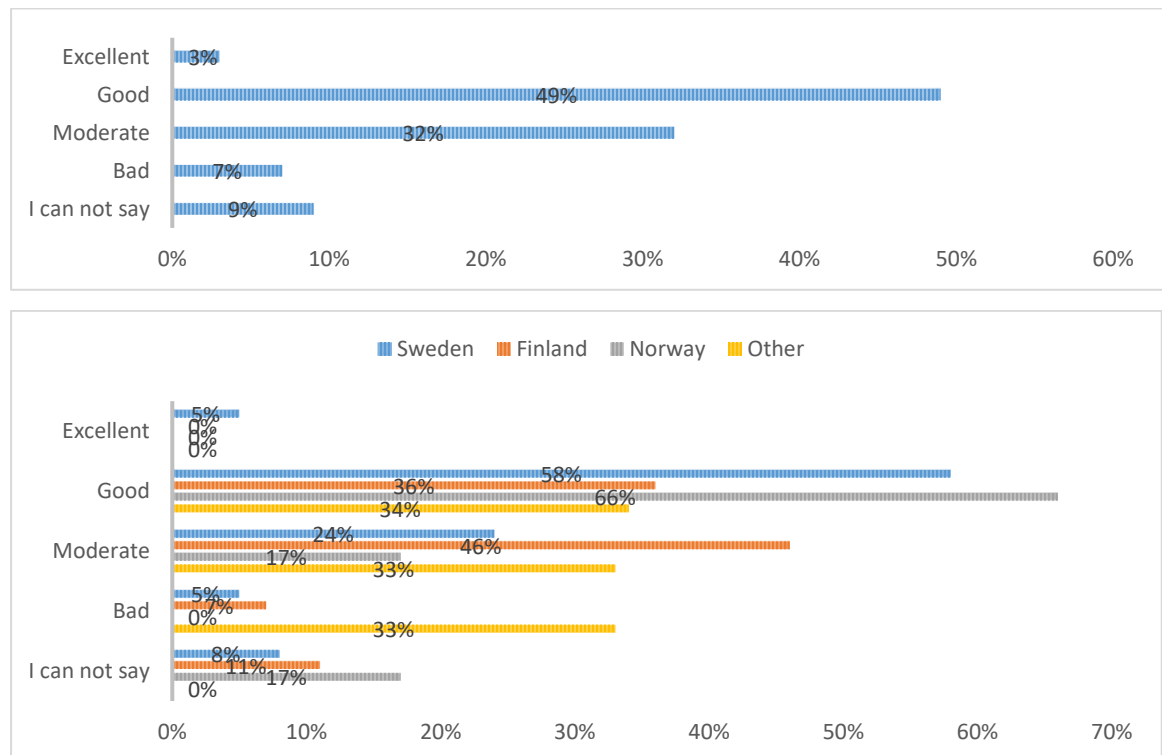


Figure 7. What is remote communication like at Company X?

The eleventh question was about the amount of information and its availability. Sixty-five percent of respondents were satisfied, and it had few differences between countries. However, one-third of respondents were displeased with the information and its availability. Those respondents were mostly from Finland or Norway. Swedes were the most satisfied employees in this matter. (Figure 8.) Respondents gave options about how information can be improved in the open comments section. One respondent answered: "It should have more info for example about when people quit, which are one's responsibilities, the structures of teams, and about who operates in what. The information is divided and to gather information employees require to be a part of the right Workplace group. The company has many Workplace groups, so some messages can be hard to find. Currently, the company does not have just one main channel for communication." (Appendix 5/2, Q12.) Another respondent also agreed with the same issues (Appendix 5/3, Q25). One respondent wanted that the information always put on Intranet, where it should be possible to see at least 2 months (Appendix 5/3, Q21). One hoped to gather more information about different projects and their results (Appendix 5/3, Q23.)

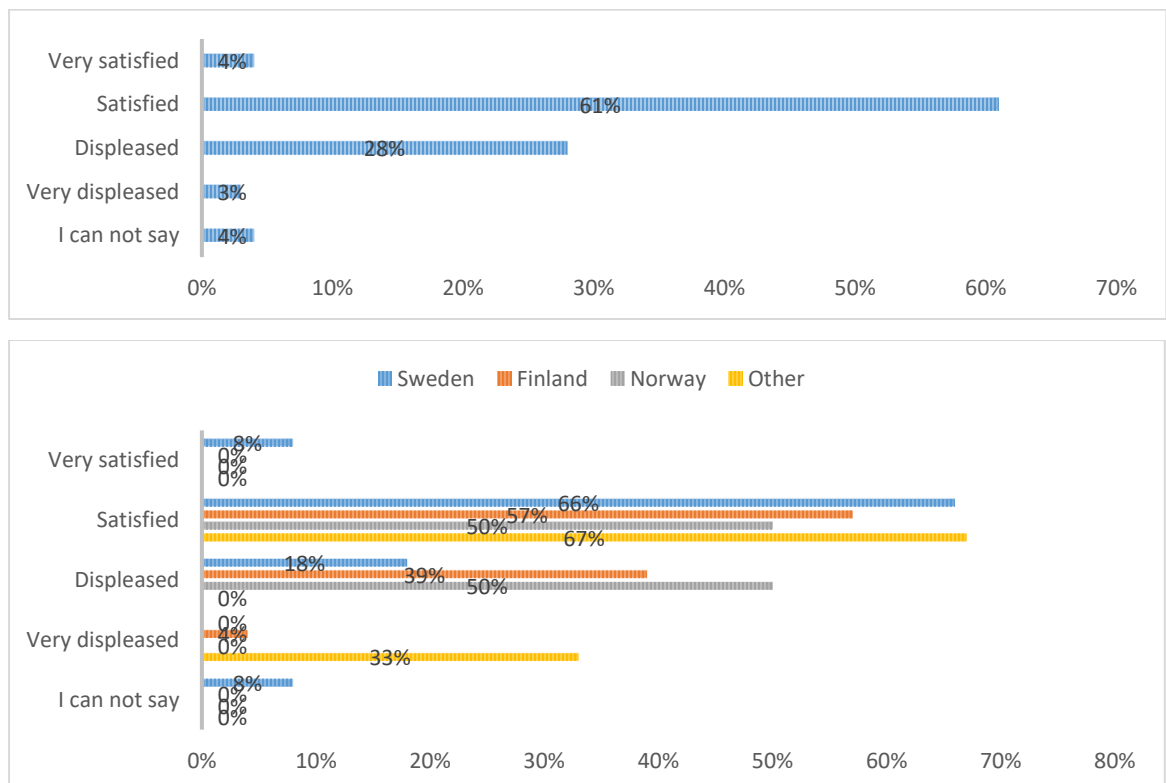


Figure 8. How satisfied are you with the amount of information and its availability?

“Do you think instruction on - how, where, and what to communicate - is needed?” was the next question in the survey. Most of the answers (69 %) gave the impression that instruction is needed. “No” and “I cannot say” answers, were equal, and most of them were from Norway and Sweden. Though, nobody from Norway answered no. All countries would like some guidance in communication. Especially, Finland had a high percentage of 82 % which means that Finnish people want guidance more than others. (Figure 9.)

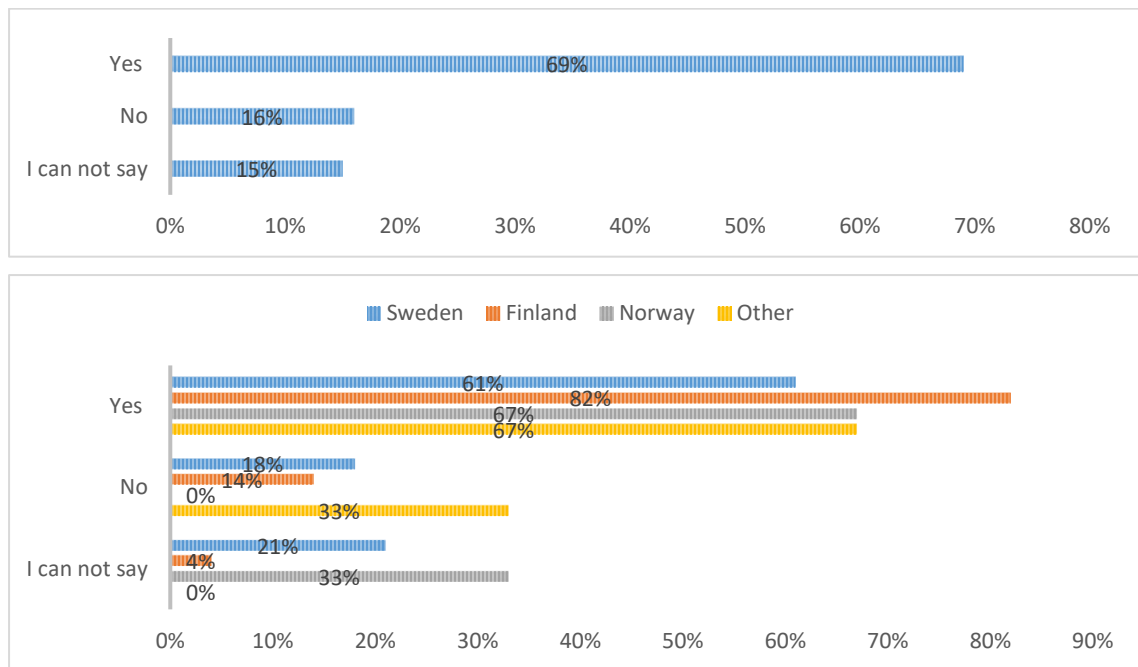


Figure 9. Do you think instruction on how, where, and what to communicate is needed?

The result varied when asked if some misunderstandings or conflicts occur because of the quality of communication. The question had considerable results when 17 % answered I cannot say. Nobody answered “never” which leads to the result that some situations require improvement. Norwegian people considered that conflicts occur often, but Swedish people were a larger group with “very often” answers with 8 %. At the same time, they had also high scores in “I cannot say” answers. (Figure 10.) In the open comments section, one respondent hoped to know who will answer one’s questions related to work, and who has which role in the company. The information should be easy to find and updated regularly. The results showed that the company should have guidance on which

communication channels to use. Also, it discussed options on which answering times are suitable for different situations. (Appendix 5/2, Q16.)

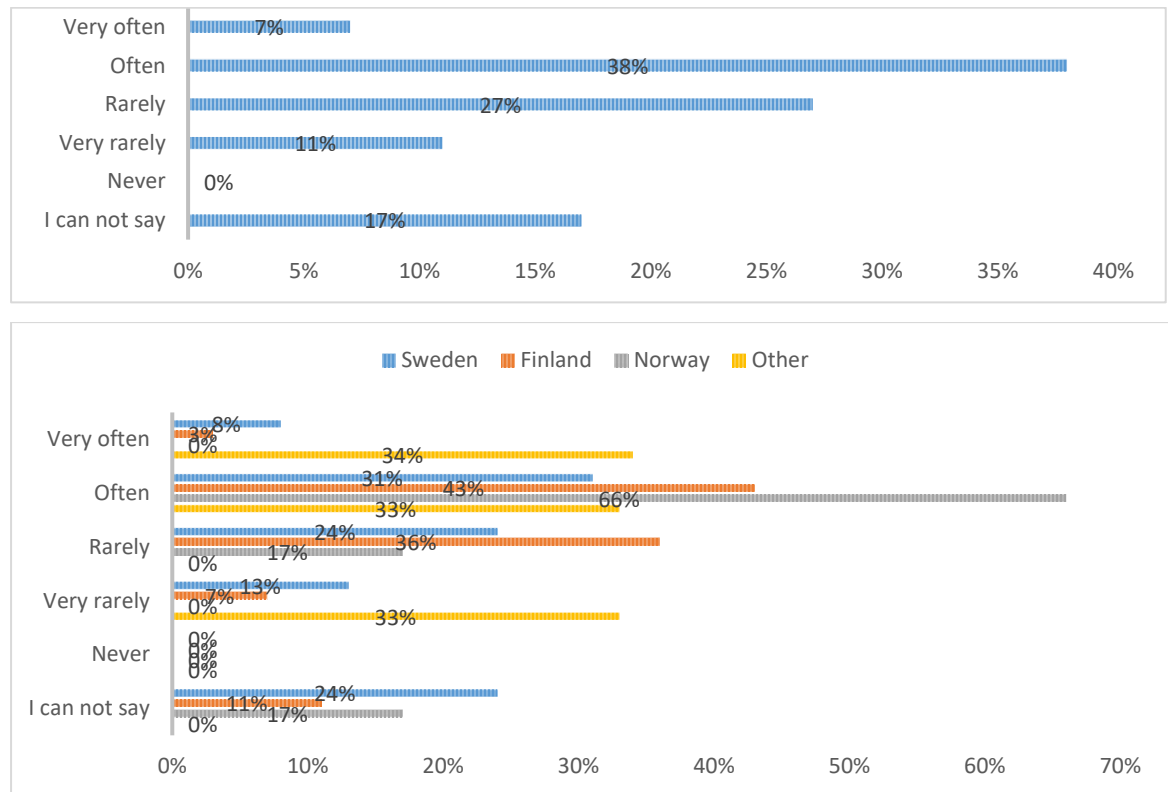


Figure 10. Do you think that organizational communication causes conflicts or misunderstandings?

The next question about whether the company communicates enough about changes and decisions received equal answers from all countries. Thirty-eight percent of respondents answered yes, but 51 % answered no. This gives an assumption that this requires improvement in the company. Finns answered no 61 % which was a higher percentage compared to Sweden or Norway. Finns answered I cannot say only with 3 % but Sweden (16 %) and Norway (17 %) were not sure what to answer. (Figure 11.)

In the open comments section, one respondent hoped for more transparency in conversations. Sometimes publications change after release. Communication between different teams should be better. For example, one respondent stated that Sales and Marketing Departments do not communicate properly because products and prices vary a lot. People in the office need to consider more from the store perspective and how different actions affect stores, customers, and

sales. One respondent was satisfied with the new communication platform Workplace, which enables communication, for example between the CEO and summer worker quite easily (Appendix 5/1, Q3).

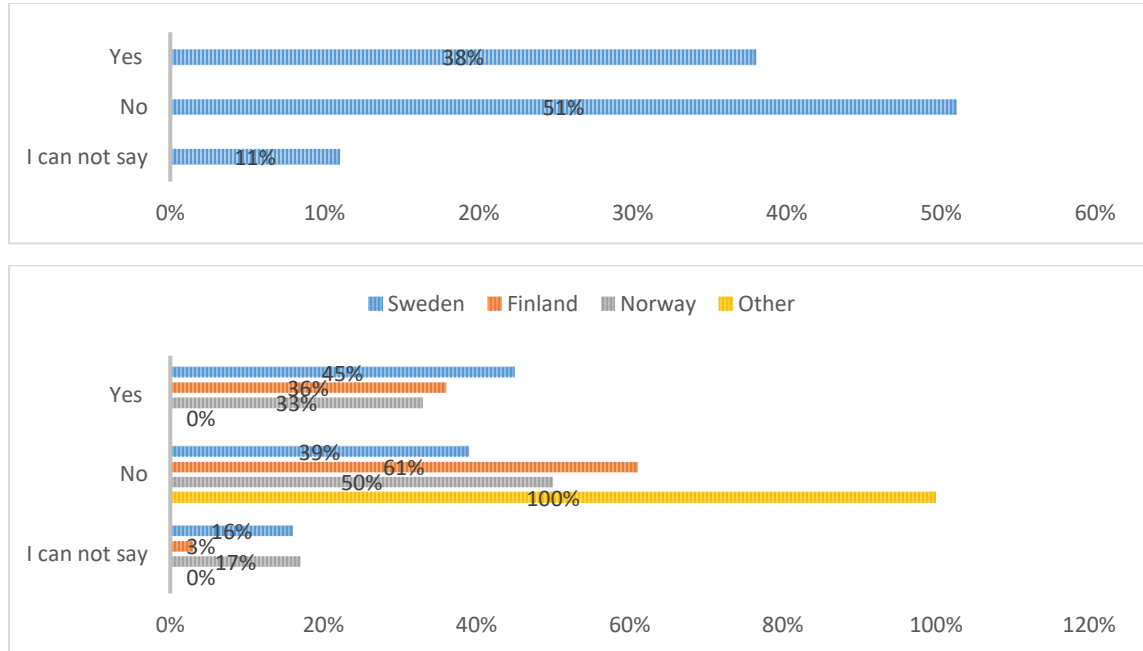


Figure 11. Do you think Company X communicates enough about changes or decisions?

The fifteenth question was about training programs related to communication. With this question, the purpose was to understand how respondents felt about the current state of communication, and should the company offer some training. Forty-nine percent of respondents answered yes, but 27 % answered no, and 24 % I cannot say. One respondent had some hesitation about if this was relevant or not. Answers between countries were equal. Of Swedish respondents, 32 % thought no, Finnish respondents 21 %, and Norwegian respondents 17 %. The answers were variable but cultural differences this did not have. The majority thought it is important to have the training, but at the same time, many uncertain answers were given with 24 %. (Figure 12.)

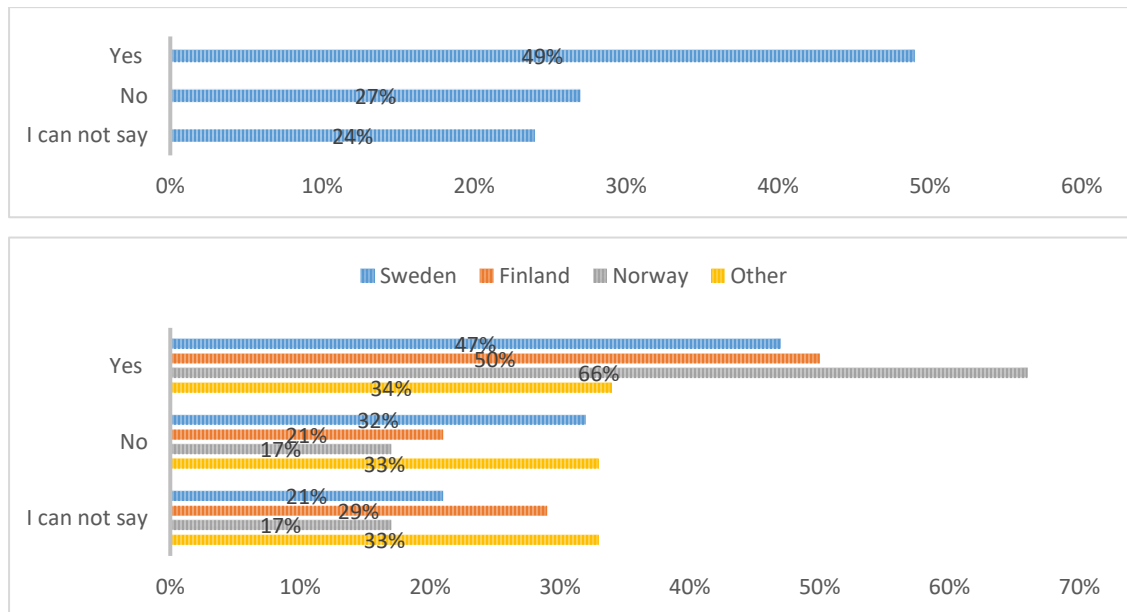


Figure 12. Should Company X organize communication training for everyone?

The question about how communication affects work motivation was unanimous. Respondents thought it affect them very much or much with 89 %. As seen in Figure 13., countries did not have differences between them. Respondents from Norway thought communication affects motivation with 17 %. The results did not have other major differences.

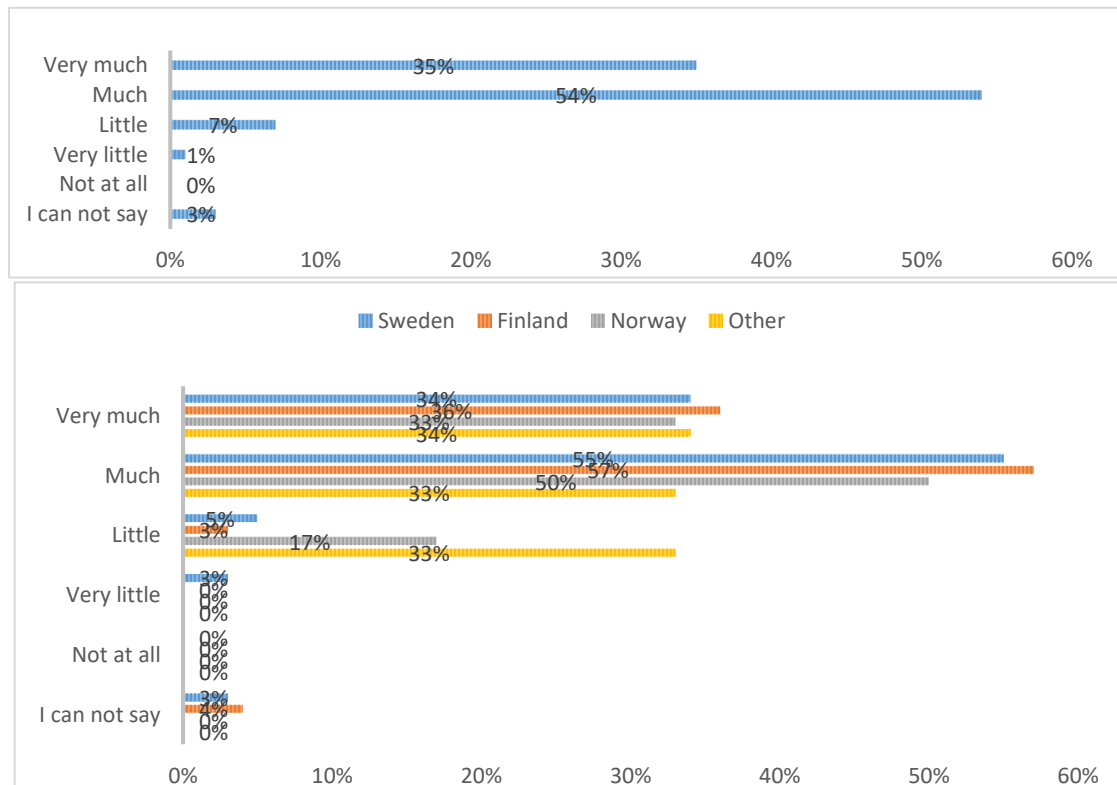


Figure 13. Do you think the quality of organizational communication influences work motivation?

The same issue was with the atmosphere and communication question when 84 % thought communication affects the atmosphere very much or much. The results showed that countries listed as other thought the opposite and that they have no connection. The atmosphere affects how employees communicate with each other. Sweden answered very much with 37 % while Finland with 22 %, and Norway with 17 %. (Figure 14.)

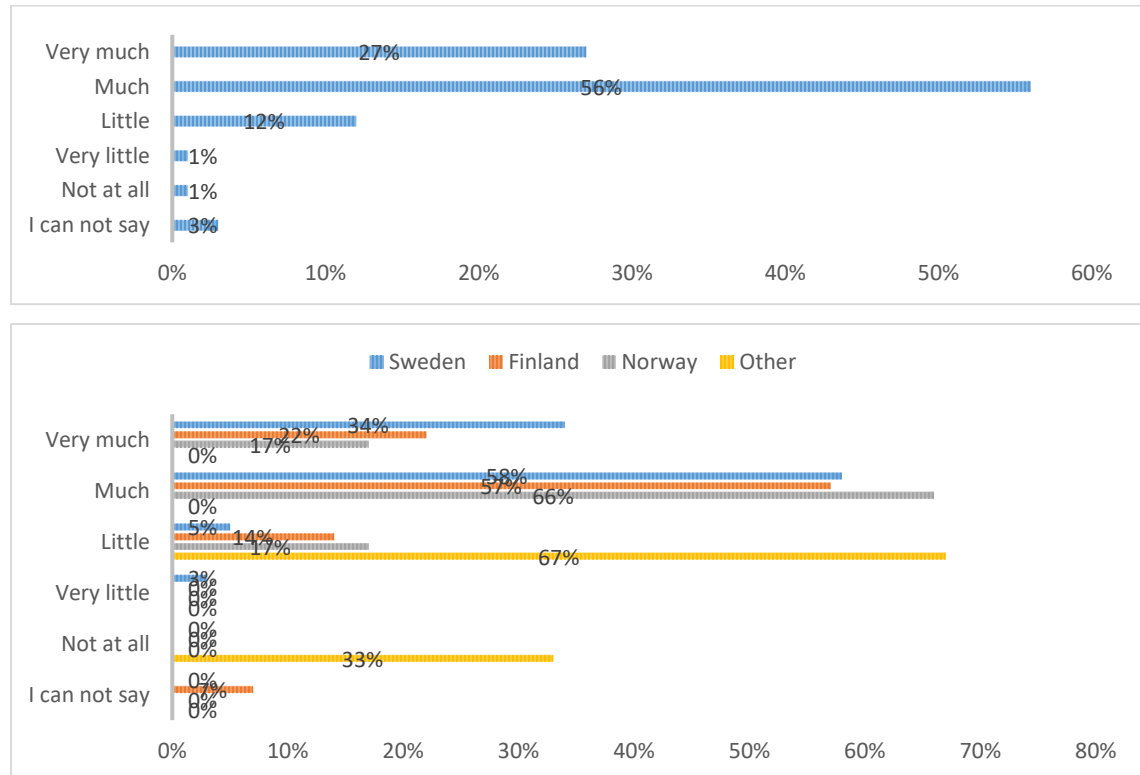


Figure 14. Do you think workplace communication affects the atmosphere at the workplace?

After the results of the current communication status, it is reasonable to focus on communication channels. Those channels are explained in the next chapter, and how the respondents felt about them.

5.2.3 Communication channels

Question eighteen was about the clearness of which communication channels to use in certain situations: "Is it clear which communication channels to use?" Most of the respondents answered often with 61 % and very often 10 %. Figure 15., shows that Finnish people had a clear view of what to use with 89 %. Norwegian and Swedish people answered that rarely it is known, which leads to the question

if it is necessary to have some guides for choosing the channels. Only one percent of Swedish people thought that very often it is known. Finns answered 11 percent that it is rarely clear. (Figure 15.)

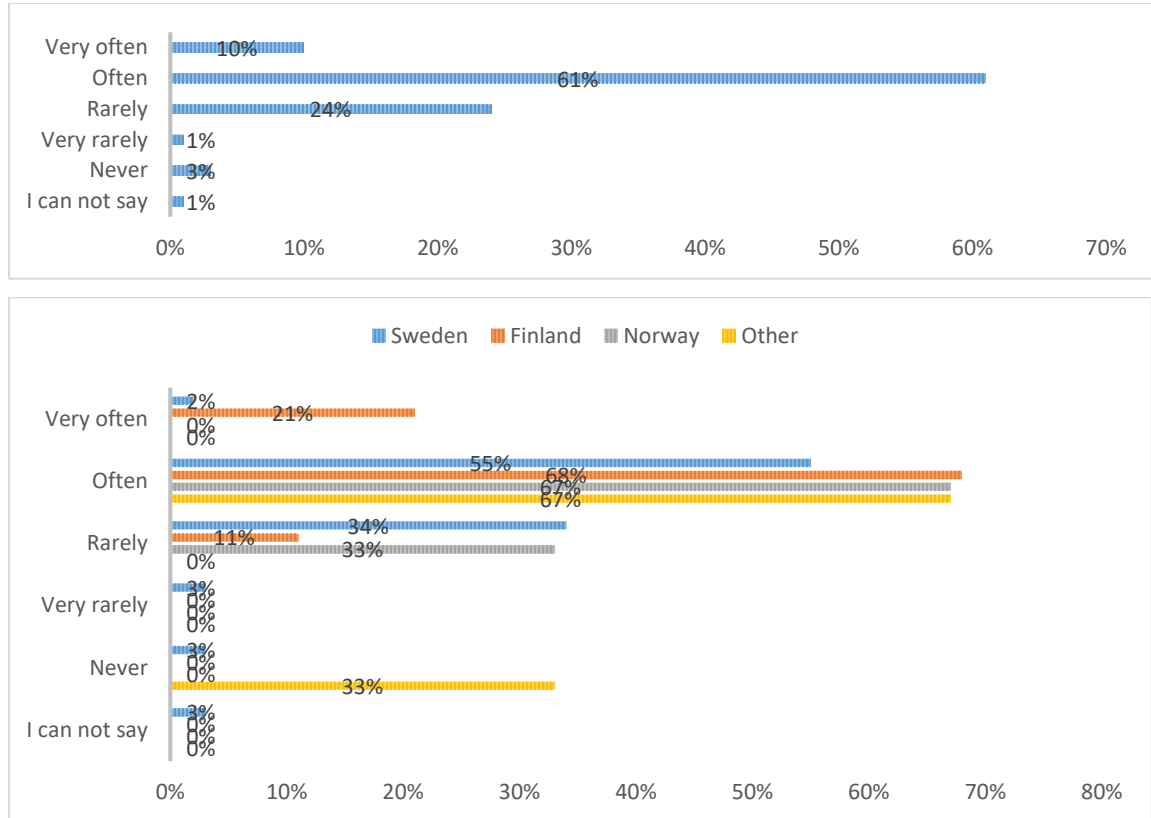


Figure 15. Is it clear which communication channels to use?

The next question was about information that may be lost because employees have too many channels to choose from. Fifty-seven percent of respondents thought that they often do not see all information. Most of the respondents answered very often (18 %) or often (39 %) that one cannot always find information because the company has too many channels. However, three percent of respondents considered that rarely they cannot find the information. Swedes answered rarely with 47 % and very rarely with 7 %. Norwegians answered often with 100 %. Finns answered rarely with 21 % and had the same percentage with “often” answers (21 %). (Figure 16.) One of the respondents indicated that it could take around 40 minutes to find some information because it could be in different channels. That is not a reasonable use of time. (Appendix 5/4, Q28.) Two of the respondents considered that the company does not have clear instructions for where to find certain information. The layout should be more

visible, and the number of channels should be narrowed down. (Appendix 5/4, Q29 & Appendix 5/1, Q1.)

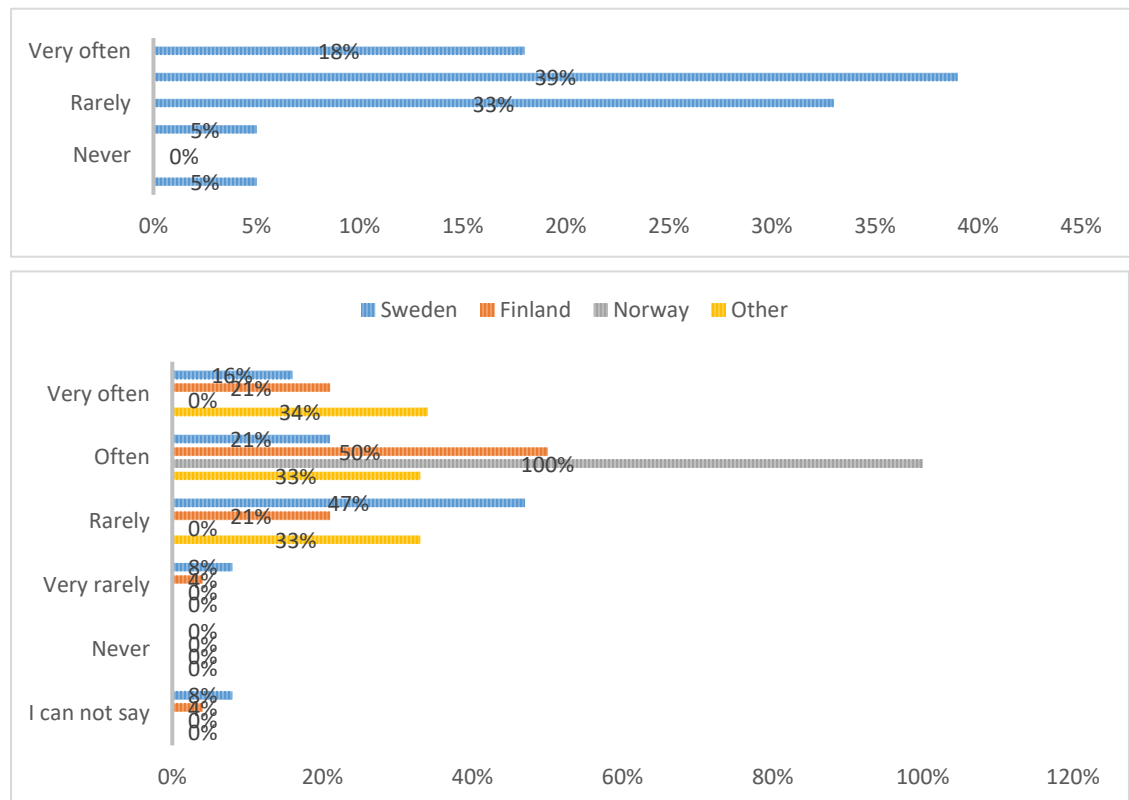


Figure 16. Do you have difficulties to find any information because people communicate through many channels?

The 20th question was: “Should the number of communication channels be reduced?” The results showed that channels need to be reduced because 65 % answered yes. Twenty-three percent of respondents answered I cannot say. The majority who would not reduce channels was Finland. Norwegian people answered yes with 83 % while Finnish 64 %, and Swedish 61 %. Norwegian people did not answer no at all, as the other two countries did. (Figure 17.) One respondent answered that reduction of channels could improve communication. One suggestion was to inform about Workplace changes in Intranet. (Appendix 5/1, Q4.) One respondent answered that when creating instruction, it needs to be executed carefully. For example, instruction can refer to some other instruction, and this can lead to difficulties to find the right information. (Appendix 5/2, Q7.)

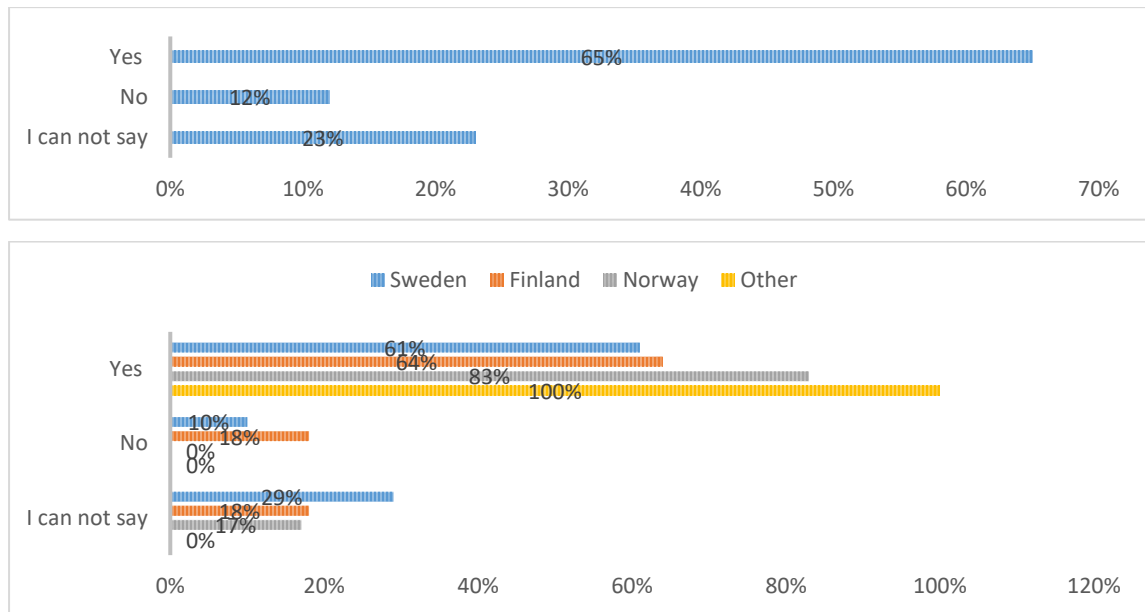


Figure 17. Should the company have fewer communication channels?

The next question was: "Which communication channels do you personally prefer for communication within the work community? Select 1-3 options." Respondent had the opportunity to add their alternative if the question did not have a suitable alternative to choose from. Most respondents answered that the most suitable channel to communicate with colleagues is e-mail with 65,3 %. The second was Workplace and Teams with 54,7 %. The third most used channel was Intranet with 48,0 %. In the open alternative section, WhatsApp was one channel and physical meetings were another. (Table 2.) This study only focuses on electronic channels and that is why a physical meeting was not included in the original alternatives.

	n	Percentage
Phone	12	16.0 %
E-mail	49	65.3 %
Intranet	36	48.0 %
Workplace	41	54.7 %
Teams	41	54.7 %
Something else, what?	3	4.0 %
I can not say		0 %

Table 2. The division of which channels are used.

Countries had some variations: Swedes preferred to use Teams the most with 82 % while Finns with 29 % and Norwegians with 17 %. The second most used in Sweden was e-mail with 71 % while Finland answered 54 %, and Norway 67 %. The third most-used channel for Sweden was Intranet with 53 % while Finland

answered using it with 46 %, and Norway with 17 %. For Finland, the most used channel was Workplace with 89 % while Sweden with only 24 % and Norway with 100 %. The second was e-mail and the third was Intranet, just like in Sweden. Norwegians preferred to use Workplace the most, and then e-mail. Phone, Teams, and Intranet shared third place with 17 %. One significant difference between these three countries was that Norway and Finland use Workplace more than Sweden. They still preferred more face-to-face meetings or chats in Teams. The similarities were in other channels, so all countries use equally Intranet and e-mail. Commonly the phone was not a relevant communication channel to use. E-mail was the most popular channel while Teams, Workplace, and Intranet were equal. Workplace was the most popular channel in Norway (100 %), then in Finland (89 %), and the less important in Sweden with only 24 %. Swedes were more familiar to use Teams instead of Workplace when they contact co-workers. (Figure 18.)

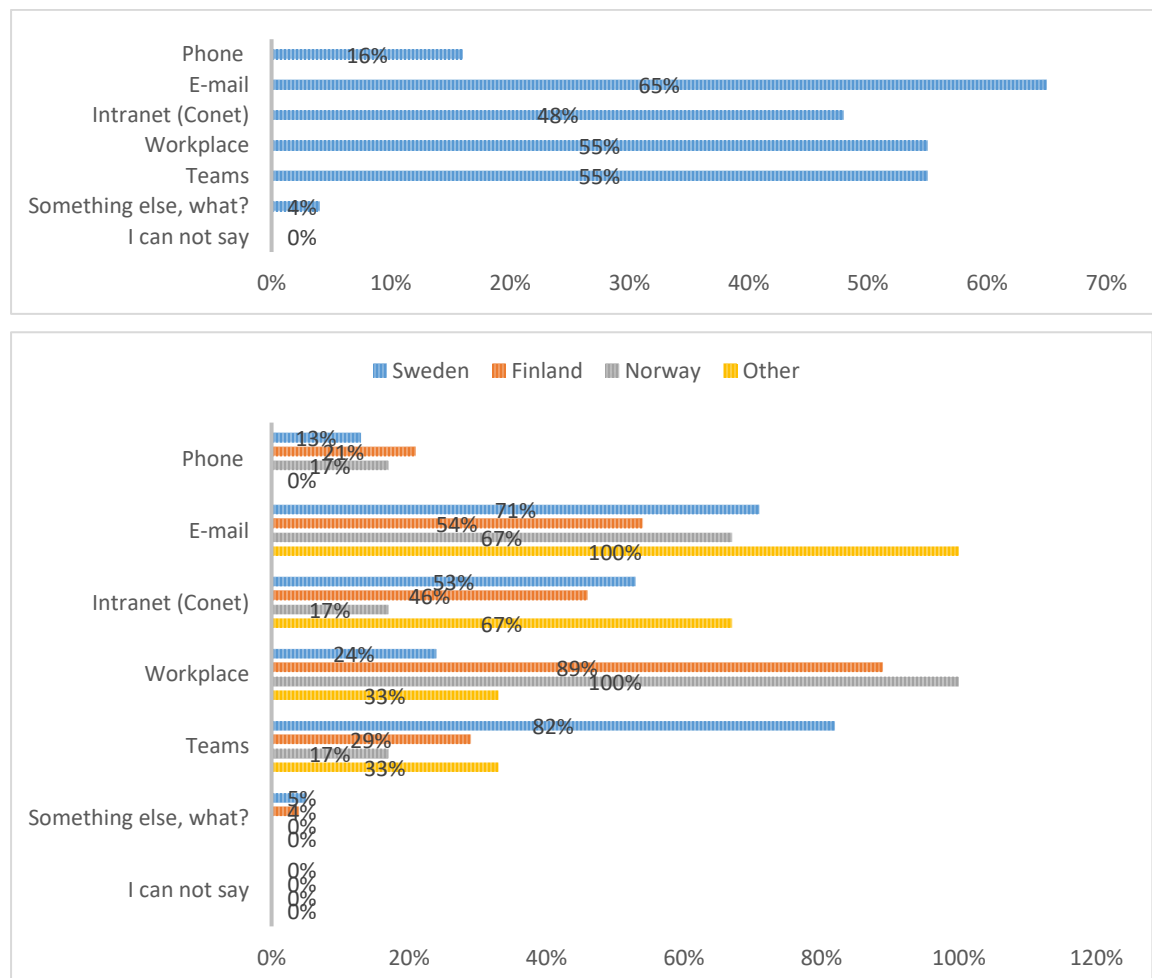


Figure 18. Which communication channels do you personally prefer for communication within the work community? Select 1-3 options.

The 22nd question was to find out which communication channels are the most effective in both ways. According to the results, the most effective channel was Teams with 62.7 %, then e-mail with 50.7 %, and Workplace with 40.0 %. Compared to general communication, when need to interact and receive answers quickly, respondents preferred Teams to be the most suitable channel for it. WhatsApp, face-to-face talks, and meetings (N=2) were also discussed to be effective channels to use. (Table 3.)

	n	Percentage
Phone	17	22.7 %
E-mail	38	50.7 %
Intranet	21	28.0 %
Workplace	30	40.0 %
Teams	47	62.7 %
Something else	4	5.3 %
I can not say	1	1.3 %

Table 3. The division of channels is used both ways.

Phone and Intranet were not so used channels to have interactive communication between co-workers. Finnish people liked to use e-mail the least with 32 %, Sweden with 58 %, and Norway with 67 %. Norwegian people liked to communicate through Workplace the most with 83 %, and Finnish people 68 %. Swedish people liked to communicate more with Teams (84 %) than with Workplace (13 %). (Figure 19.) Cultures have differences and can cause misfortunes between multicultural teams when other channels are more effective than others. This also can lead to information being in the wrong place. One respondent indicated that everyone is responsible to find the right information. The first issue is to have help from a supervisor when necessary. The intranet should be used for statistical information, e-mail can be used for information that is relevant to all employees. Teams should be an information forum that is used daily. Workplace is like Facebook, which only wastes employees' work time. (Appendix 5/1, Q6.) One respondent stated that Workplace has too much information and can be more suitable for people who use Facebook in their free time (Appendix 5/2, Q13).

One respondent thought that Teams has many functions that help to communicate between colleagues, have phone calls, share documents, and chat

(Appendix 5/3, Q18). E-mail is a good channel to contact people outside the company (Appendix 5/3, Q19). One respondent did not know if Intranet or Workplace is the most common platform to share information (Appendix 5/4, Q26). Intranet is a place, which is not updated regularly. Employees are not convinced who to contact because the organization charts in Workplace are not up to date. (Appendix 5/4, Q27.) One respondent answered: “All functions should be in communication platforms. Now just rare communicates or answers questions” (Appendix 5/4, Q31).

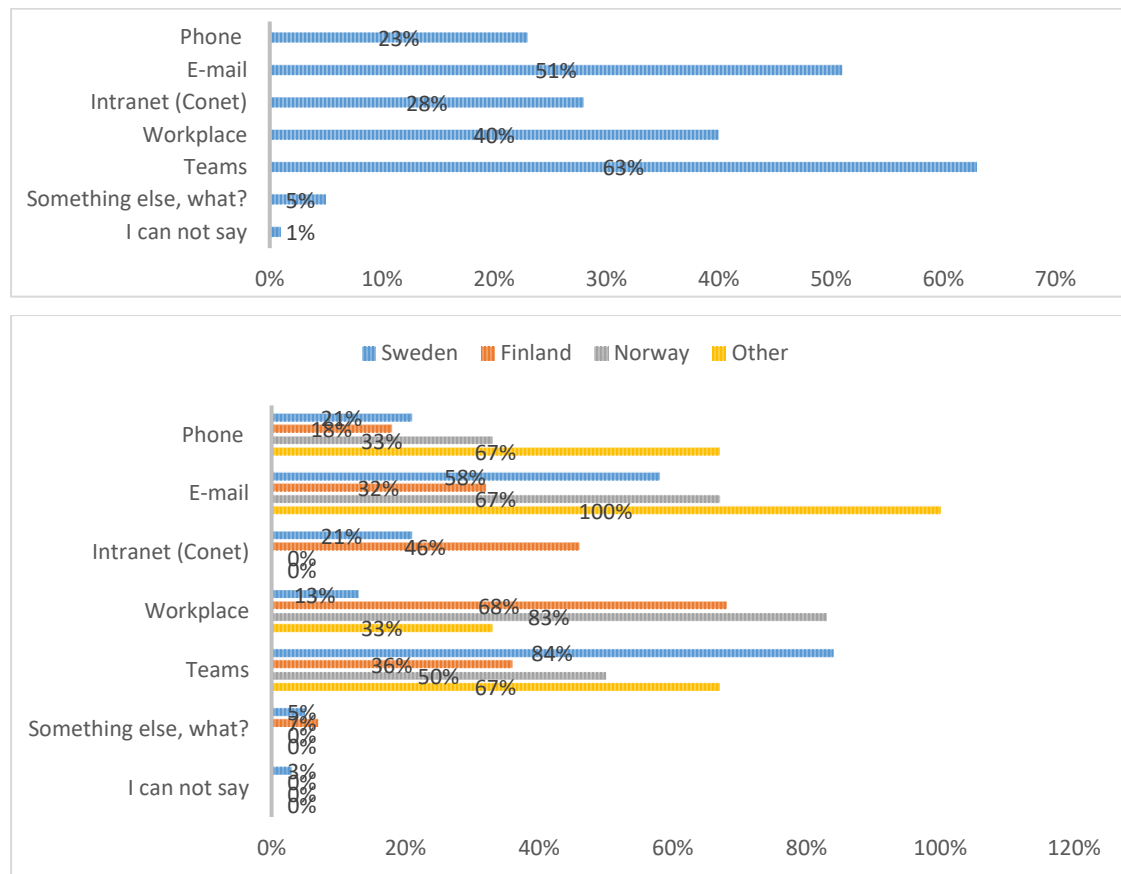


Figure 19. What do you think are the most effective communication channels in your work community? (Communication in both ways). Select 1-3 alternatives.

The next question was to know which channels are the most effective for personnel matters. Intranet was the most common with 60 %, after that e-mail (41.3 %) and Workplace (29.3 %). This question was answered also in meetings (N=3), but the focus of this study was on virtual channels. Intranet (60 %) or e-mail (41 %) was to share personnel issues. (Table 4.)

	n	Percentage
Phone	11	14.7 %
E-mail	31	41.3 %
Intranet	45	60.0 %
Workplace	22	29.3 %
Teams	12	16.0 %
Something else, what?	3	4.0 %
I can not say	5	6.7 %

Table 4. The division of channels used for personnel matters

Swedish people preferred Intranet (55 %) and e-mail (45 %), and Norwegian people preferred e-mail with 100 %, phone, Intranet, and Workplace with 17 %. Finnish people preferred e-mail with 100 %, phone, Intranet, and Workplace with 17 %. Finnish people used Intranet (82 %) and Workplace (43 %) the most. Other countries relied on phones and Teams for their communication. (Figure 20.)

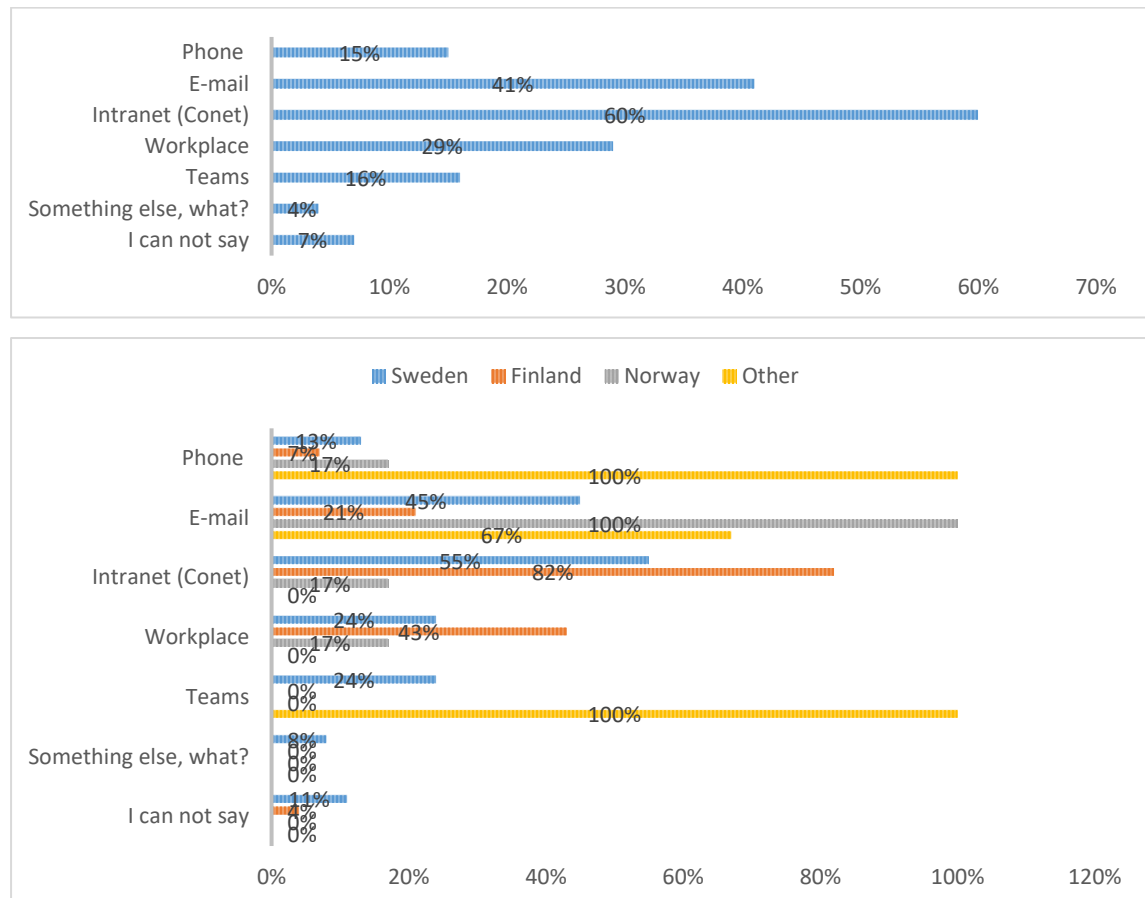


Figure 20. Which communication channel(s) best provides information on personal matters? Select 1-3 alternatives.

Question 24 was about channels that are the most common in organizational issues. The respondents were using Intranet with 73 % or Workplace with 48 %. E-mail and Teams were the less-used channels in these matters (Table 5).

	n	Percentage
Phone	1	1,3 %
E-mail	19	25,3 %
Intranet	55	73,3 %
Workplace	36	48,0 %
Teams	8	10,7 %
Something else, what?	3	4,0 %
I can not say	2	2,7 %

Table 5. The division of channels used in organizational issues.

Finland used e-mail only 4 %, Intranet 82 %, and Workplace 64 %. Norway and Sweden were equal when selecting channels to find information about organizational issues. They both preferred Intranet with 66-67 %. Workplace was more common in Finland in these matters than in the other two countries. Physical meetings were part of open comments (N=4). Other countries thought that e-mail, Intranet, and Workplace were the three most common channels, but Intranet was used the most. (Figure 21.)

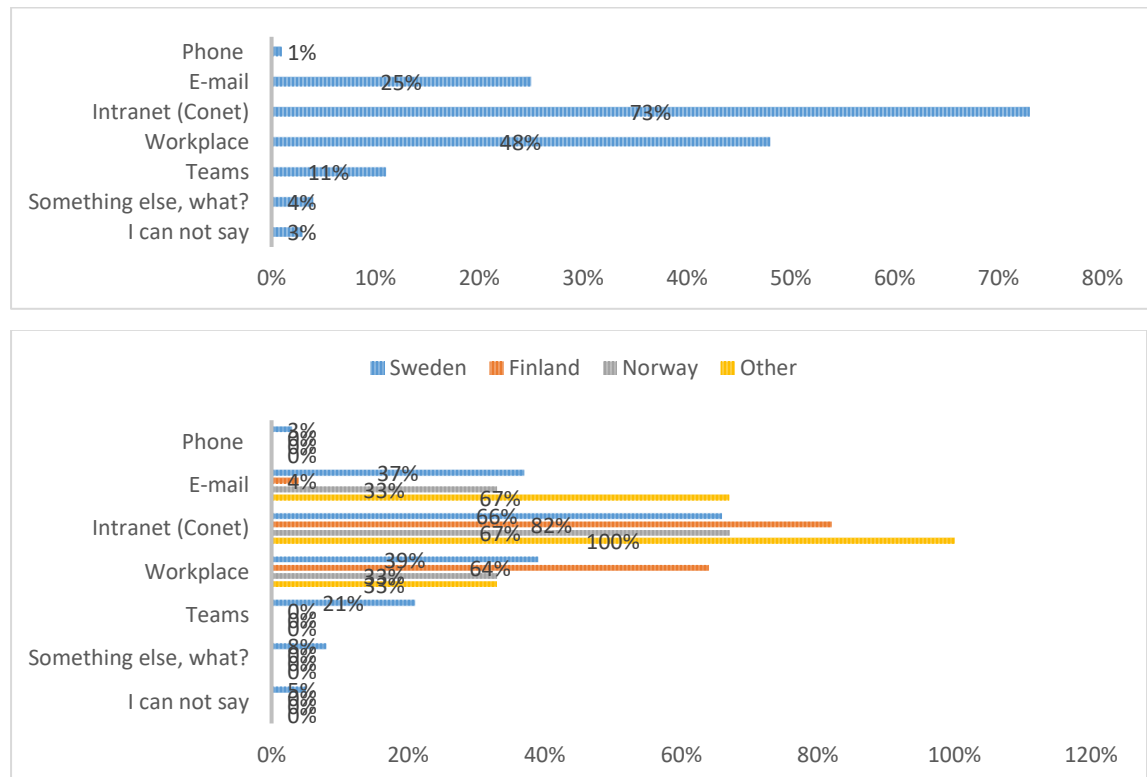


Figure 21. Which communication channels best provide information on matters related to the organization? Select 1-3 alternatives.

The next question was to find out the most common channels used in the information that is relevant to one's work. To search for information for one's

work, the most used channels were e-mail or Teams with an equal percentage of 58.7 %. Respondents answered physical meetings in open comments (N=4), and one answered Internet searches and digital documents. One respondent understood the question wrong, so the answer is not relevant to this question.

(Table 6.)

	n	Percentage
Phone	12	16.0 %
E-mail	44	58.7 %
Intranet	28	37.3 %
Workplace	25	33.3 %
Teams	44	58.7 %
Something else, what?	6	8.0 %
I can not say		0 %

Table 6. The division of channels is used when searching for something for one's work.

When searching for information for one's work, Sweden used Teams and e-mail, Norway used e-mail, and Finland Intranet, and Workplace. Some variations occurred between countries; Swedes liked to use Teams to gather the information that is related to their work with 76 %, Finland with 36 %, and Norway with 50 %. Finnish people relied on Intranet with 75 % while Swedish people preferred that with 16 % and with Norwegians 17 %. (Figure 22.) One respondent suggested that all the important issues should be on Intranet and have easy access. Intranet should be cleaned, and all old and not important pages and links removed because those consume much work time. Workplace is a good forum, but the search for information lacks, and people sometimes argue or challenge each other in vain. (Appendix 5/1, Q2.)

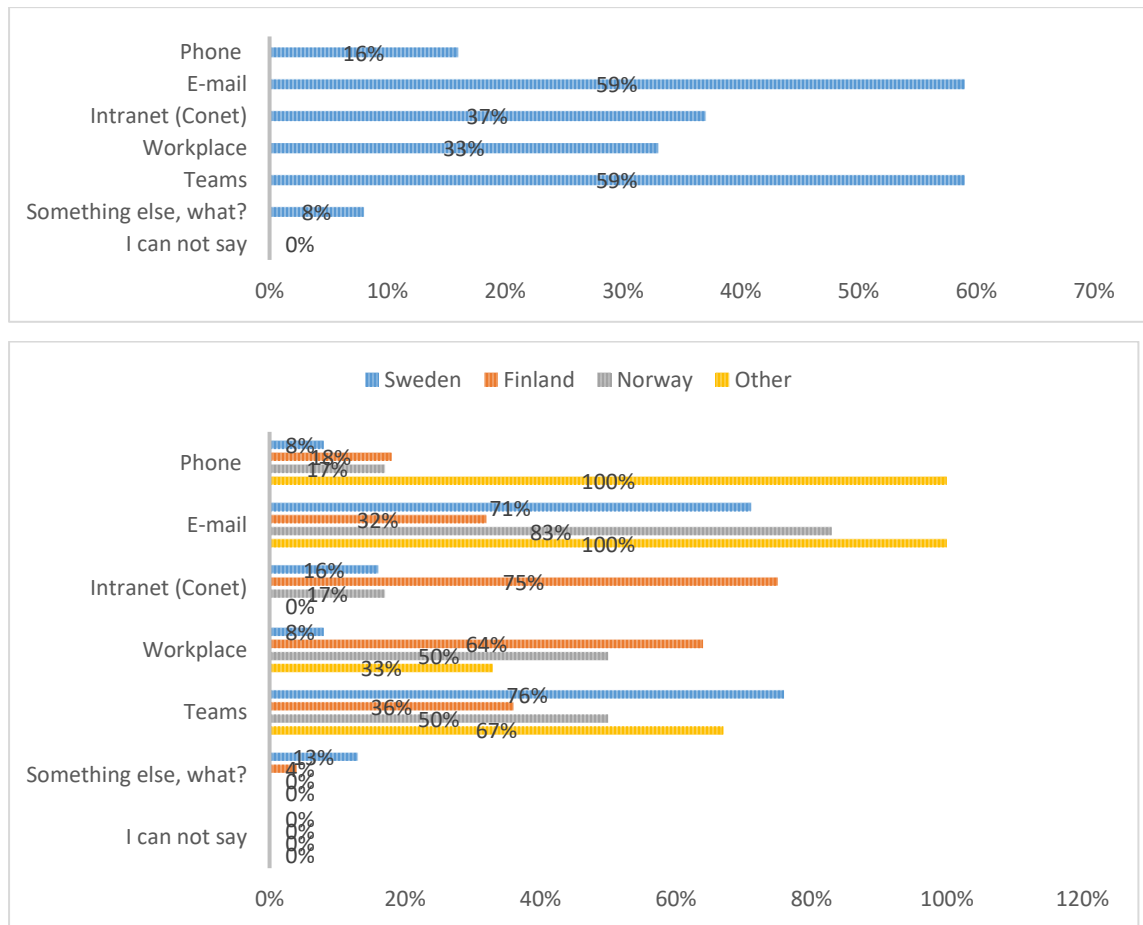


Figure 22. Which of the communication channels best provides information for your own? Select 1-3 alternatives.

Question 26 was about Workplace and how communication has improved after Workplace. Respondents could not answer if the communication has been improved or not. They answered very much or much with 33 %, the same percentage was with very little or little. The question gained “not at all” answers 13 %. The number of “I cannot say” answers were quite high with 21 %. Norwegian people thought that Workplace has improved communication because they answered very much or much. Swedes thought the less when they answered not at all with 24 %. Finns answered I cannot say with 32 %. So, answers had many differences and country perspectives. (Figure 23.)

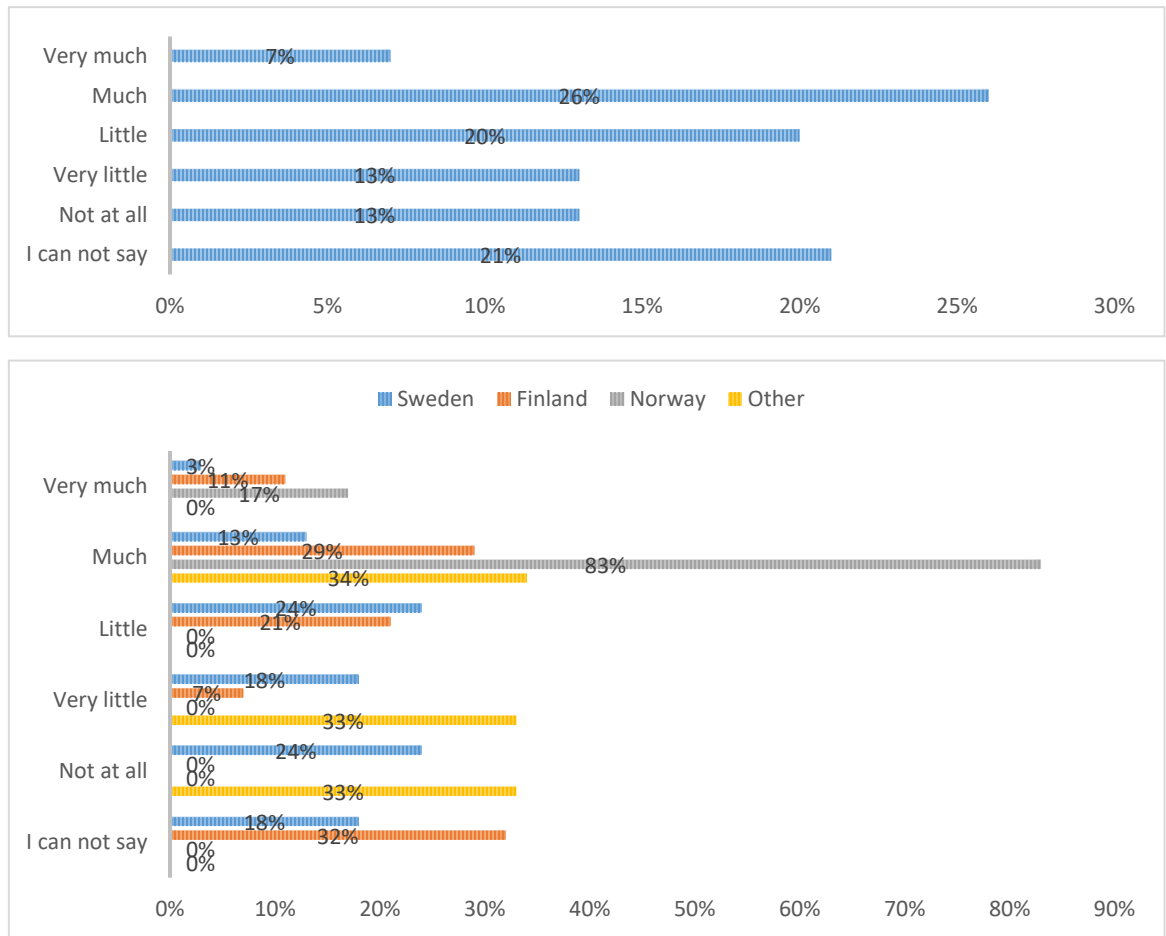


Figure 23. Do you think communication has improved after Workplace?

The next question was about how easily the information is found in Workplace. Information was very rarely (24 %) or rarely (43 %) easy to find. Norway thought that rarely it is 100 %, and Finland and Sweden agreed on it. One difference was that Sweden was the only country that answered never with 13 %. “No” answers were 74 % of the total, 16 % yes, and 11 % I cannot say. (Figure 24.) One respondent answered that Workplace consumes considerable time. The better forum to have more clear communication is Teams. (Appendix 5/3, Q22.) Other respondents thought that Workplace has too many groups and people do not know which groups are the most important. One respondent thought that information can be lost and one’s words “drown in information flow” (Appendix 5/3, Q24).

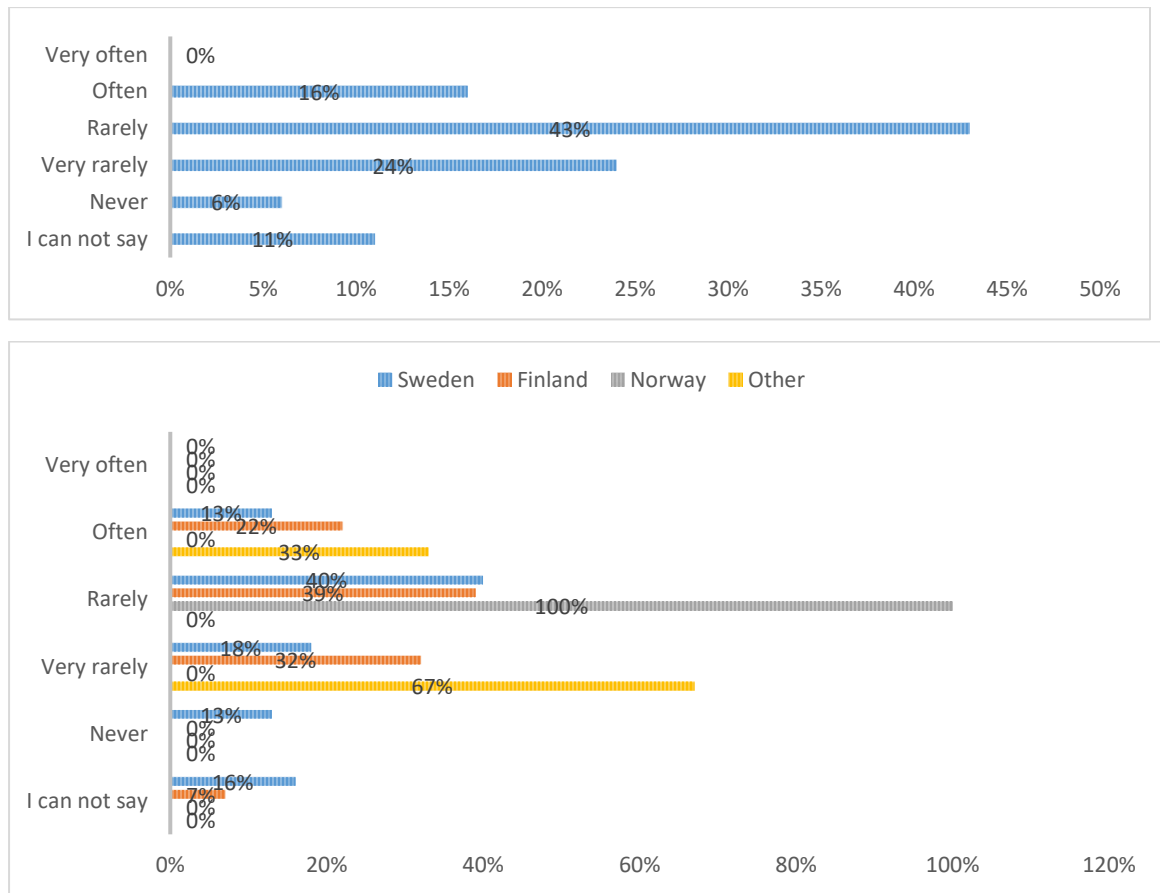


Figure 24. Is it easy to find the information in Workplace?

Question 28 was: “Would you like to have communication instruction on how to use Workplace? For example, what message, to who, how, when?” More than 40 % were hoping for instruction for Workplace with very often 9 % and often 39 %. Those instructions could be part of the new employee’s introduction. Norwegian people thought that it is not so important, but Finnish people thought it is important to have. Sweden answered never with 16 % and I cannot say with 21 %. (Figure 25.) One respondent answered that the company should have a clear organizational chart that shows work tasks with descriptions. This could help to understand who to contact. (Appendix 5/2, Q10.) One answered that the roles should be clearer to have better communication (Appendix 5/2, Q15). Other respondent thought that information is so fragmented that it can be difficult to find or understand the right information in certain situations (Appendix 5/2, Q11).

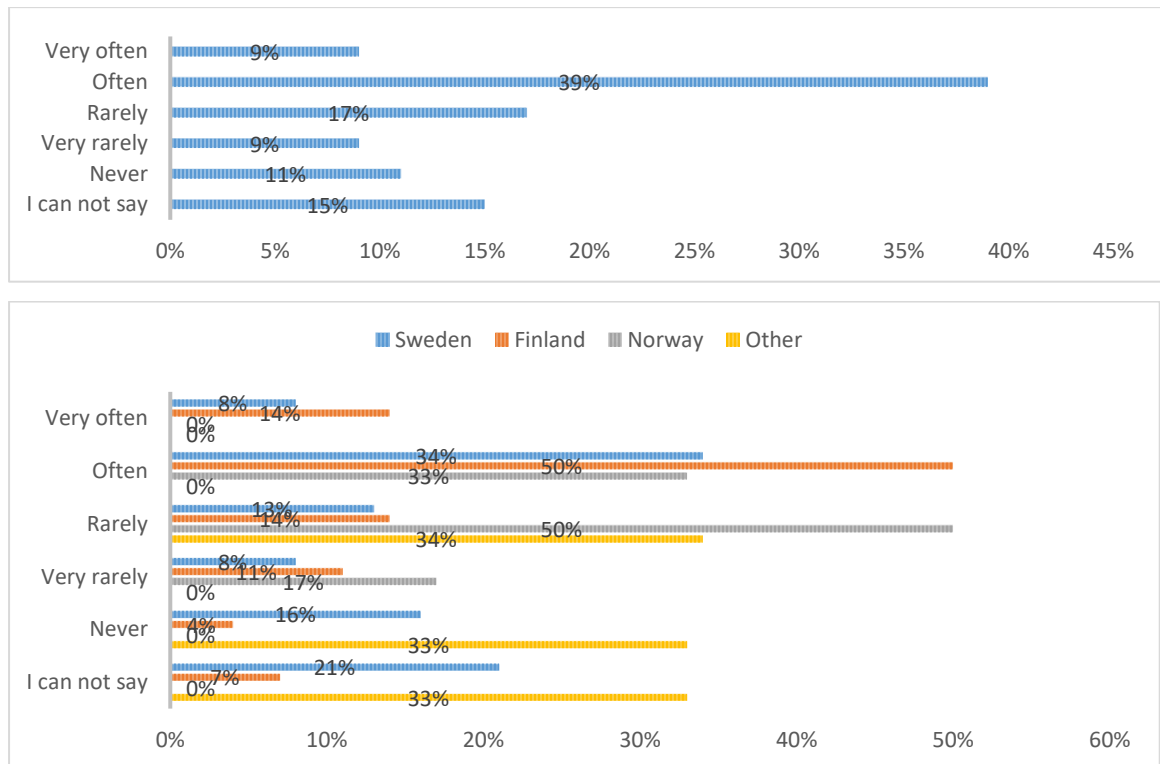


Figure 25. Would you like to have communication instruction to use Workplace? For example, what message, to who, how, and when?

The next question was to find out if Workplace messages are easy to understand. According to the study, Workplace was understandable. Respondents answered very often with 13 % and often with 52 %. So, the messages itself does not need to be improved. Only 3% answered never. Finns answered very often or often with a total of 82 %, and Norwegians with 83 %. Swedes answered the less with 53 %. (Figure 26.) One respondent suggested that Workplace should be simpler or even stop to use it (Appendix 5/2, Q14). One respondent indicated that Workplace gives employees the possibility of giving one's opinions or asking questions. Workplace is time-consuming, and information is hard to find. Respondent also answered that if someone does not answer in a decent time, the conversation can turn out to be unprofessional. (Appendix 5/3, Q17.)

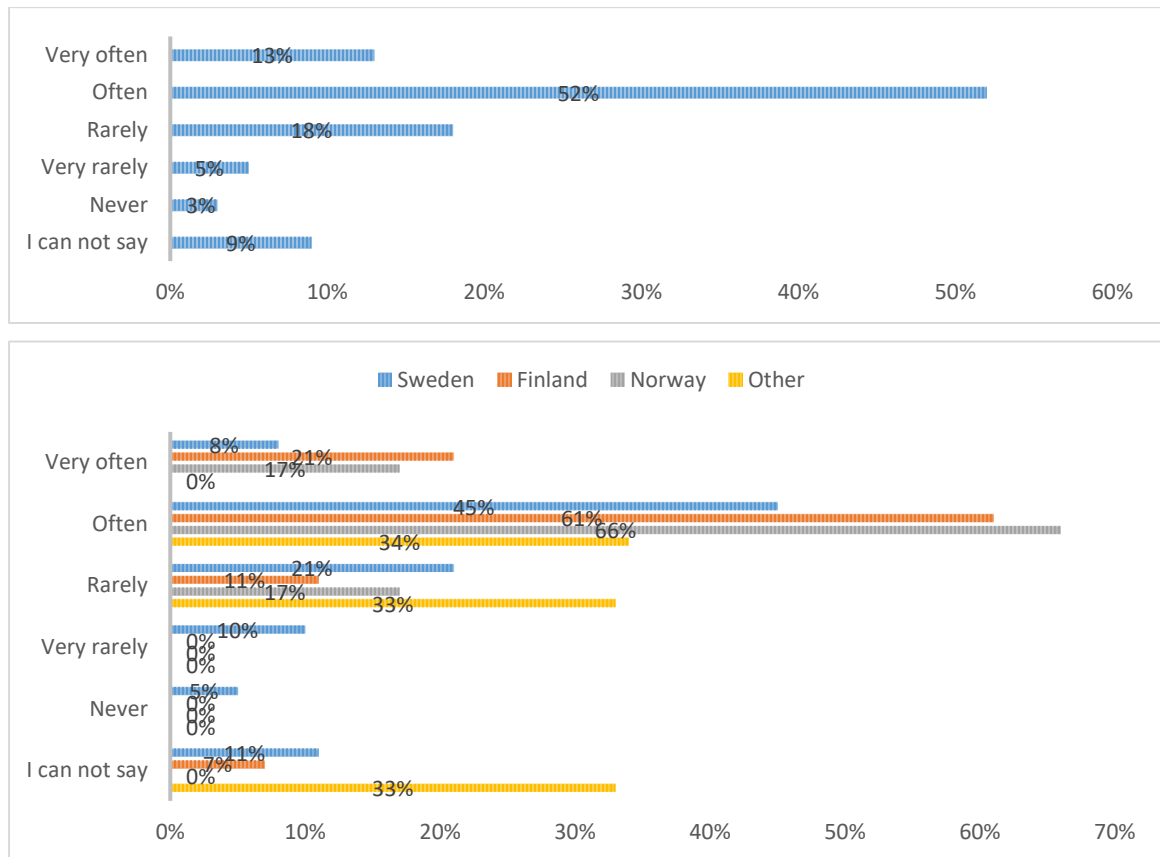


Figure 26. Are Workplace messages easy to understand?

This chapter was focusing on the results of communication channels, especially on the newest channel Workplace. The next chapter is focusing more on communication between employees.

5.2.4 Employee communication

Question 30 was: “How often do you communicate via electronic communication channels?” The results were very equal between countries. Electronic communication channels are part of everyday work. Only 3 % of respondents answered rarely or very rarely. (Figure 27.)

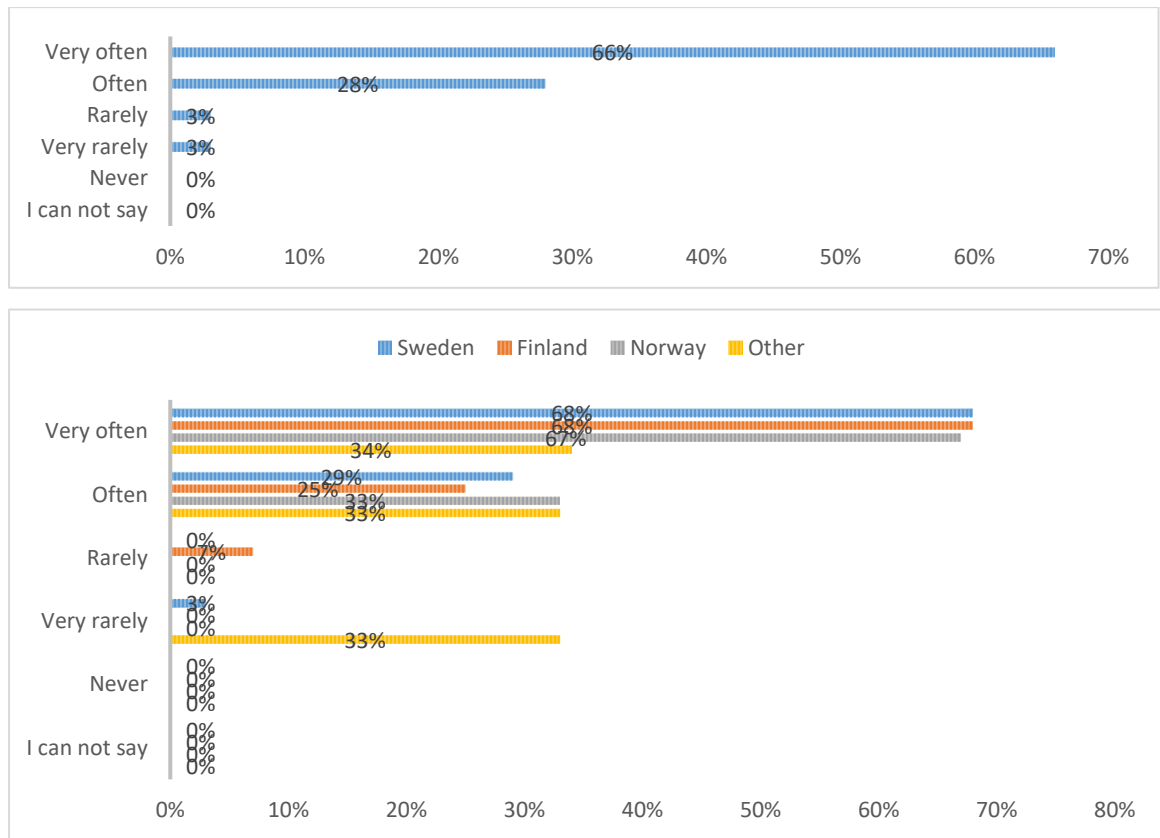


Figure 27. How often do you communicate via electronic communication channels?

The next question was: “Are you supposed to respond quickly in electronic communication channels, for example, Workplace or Teams?” Assumingly, employees answer fast through digital communication channels. Between countries, the difference was that Finns do not have the same feeling as Norwegians or Swedes. Finland answered very often or often only with 67 % while Norway answered 84 % and Sweden 87 %. Sweden is the only country that answered never with 3 %. Finland had “I cannot say” answers 4 %. (Figure 28.) One respondent indicated that the organization should discuss how quickly one answers to the posts in Workplace, chats in Teams, or messages in an e-mail (Appendix 5/2, Q8).

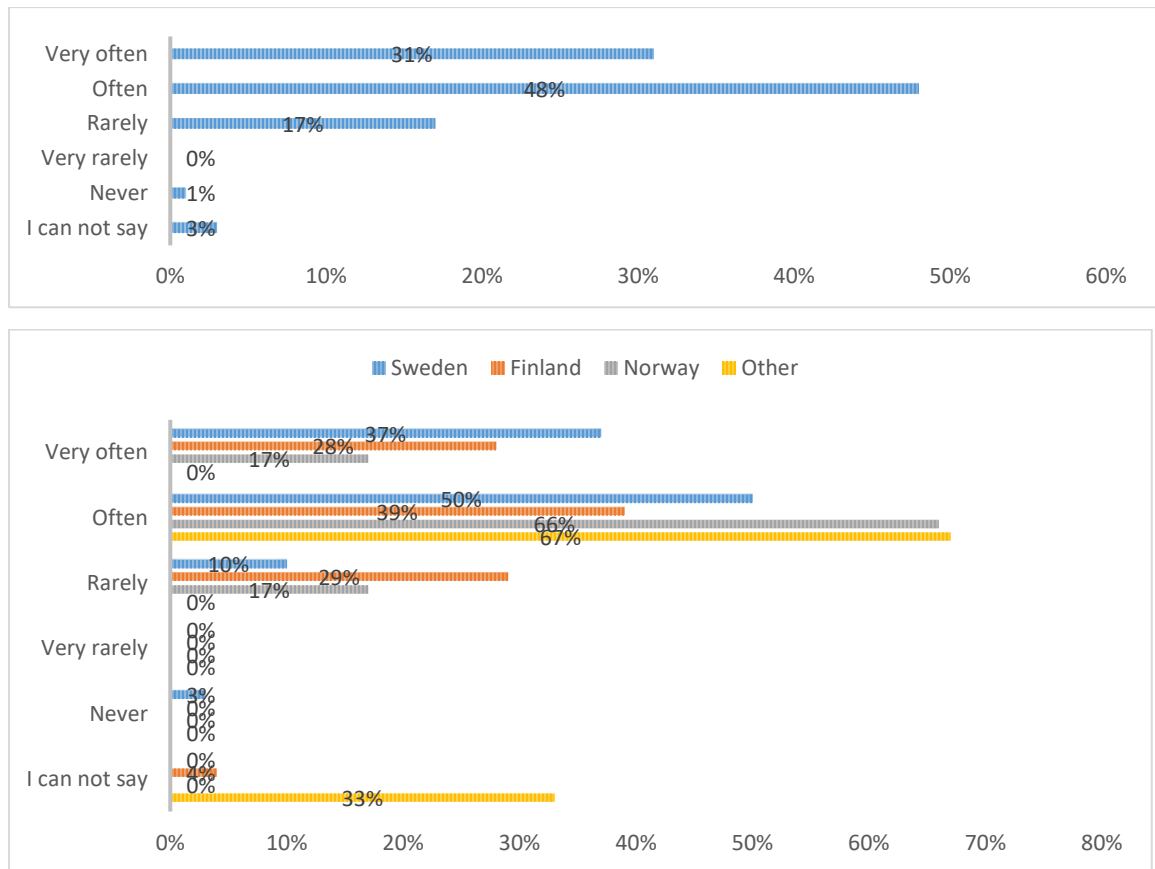


Figure 28. Are you supposed to respond quickly in electronic communication channels, for example, Workplace or Teams?

Question 32 was: “Do you use your organization's communication channels in your free time?” The results on how employees use work-related digital channels in their free time varied. Respondents selected each answering option equally. Norwegian people tended to use the most (88 %), and Swedish people the less (26 %) or never (32 %). Finnish people answered 50 % with “very often” or “often” selections. Also, other countries answered often with 67 %. Norwegian and Finnish people used more work channels in their free time than Swedish employees. (Figure 29.)

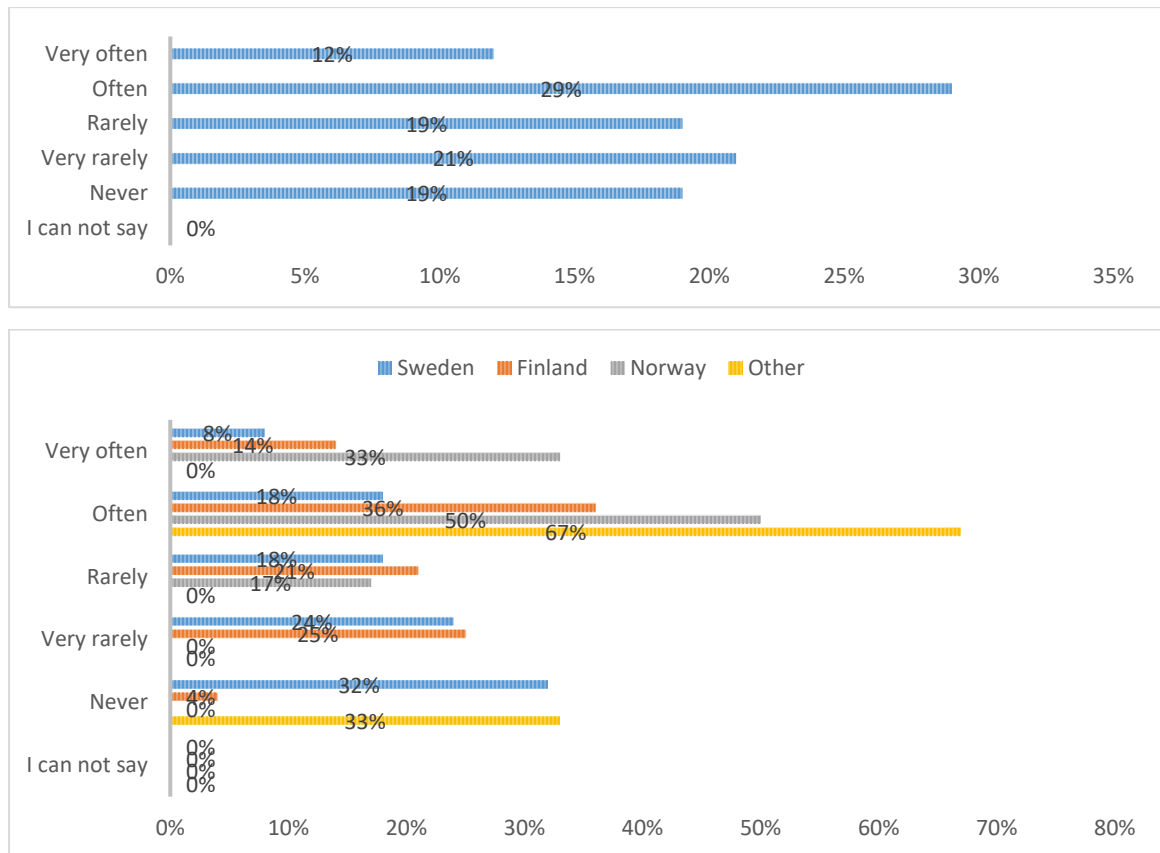


Figure 29. Do you use your organization's communication channels in your free time?

Question 33 was about how easy it is to find instruction related to one's work at any given time. Results showed that those are easy to find. Very often was answered with 8 % and often with 58 %. No cultural differences were in this issue because answers were divided quite equally. Swedes answered often with 50 %, Finns with 61 %, Norwegians with 83 %, and other countries with 67 %. (Figure 30.)

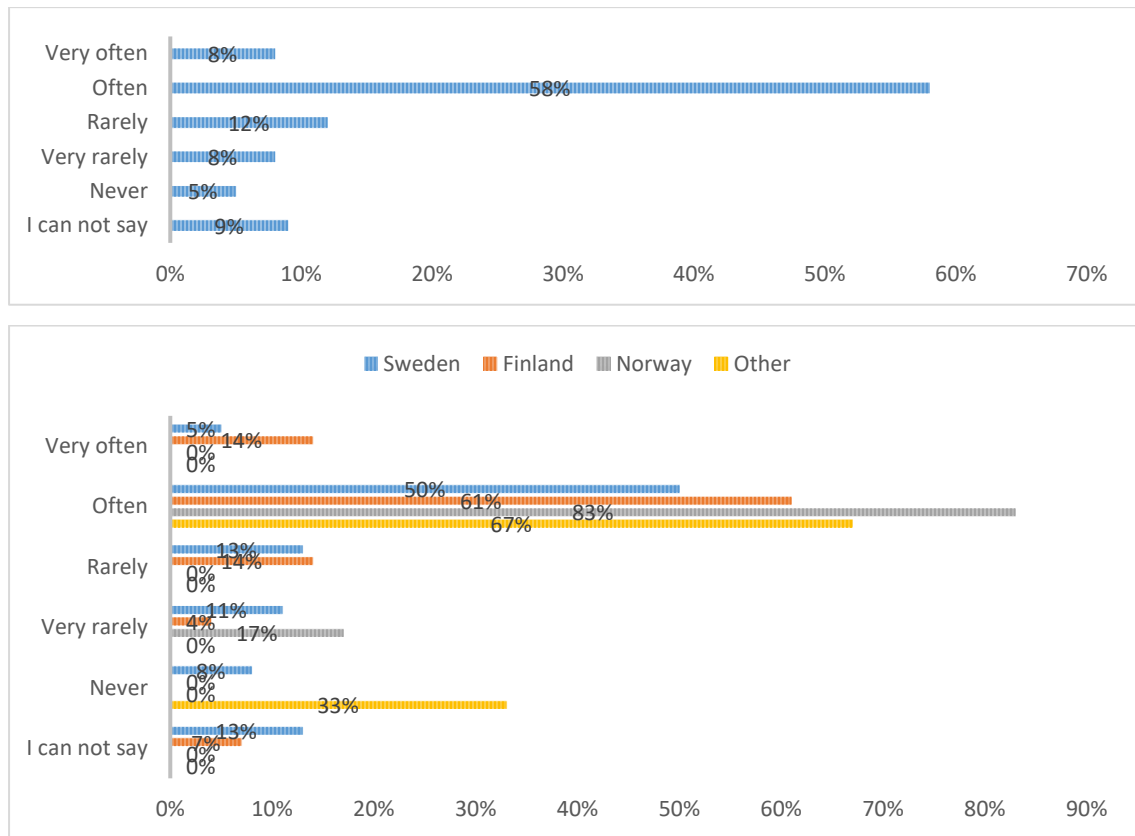


Figure 30. Do you know where you can find the instruction related to your work at any given time?

Question 34 was: “What would develop you as a communicator?” The respondents had the opportunity to choose from 1-3 options. The most popular option was various instruction (45.3 %), then virtual training (37.3 %), and managers’ coaching, and support (36.0 %). Also, support and coaching of colleagues and practical exercises were listed main factors in development. They were selected equally with 30.7 %. In open comments was discussed that giving external training could improve employees’ communication skills. (Table 7.)

	n	Percentage
Virtual training	28	37.3 %
Manager's Coach and support	27	36.0 %
Coach and support from colleagues	23	30.7 %
Various instruction	34	45.3 %
Practical exercises	23	30.7 %
Something else, what?	3	4.0 %
I can not say	7	9.3 %

Table 7. The division of tools to use in self-development.

Finns prefer the most various instructions (57 %), then virtual trainings (39 %) and practical exercises (29 %). Swedes felt that they would be better communicators with various instructions and virtual training, both with 39 %. The third option was coaching and support from colleagues, and practical exercises, both with 37 %. Norwegians would rely on a manager's coach and support (67 %), coach and support from colleagues (50 %), and various instructions (50 %). The company had few differences between the countries, but Norway and Sweden rely more on managers than Finland. Finns improve their communication skills by themselves. (Figure 31.)

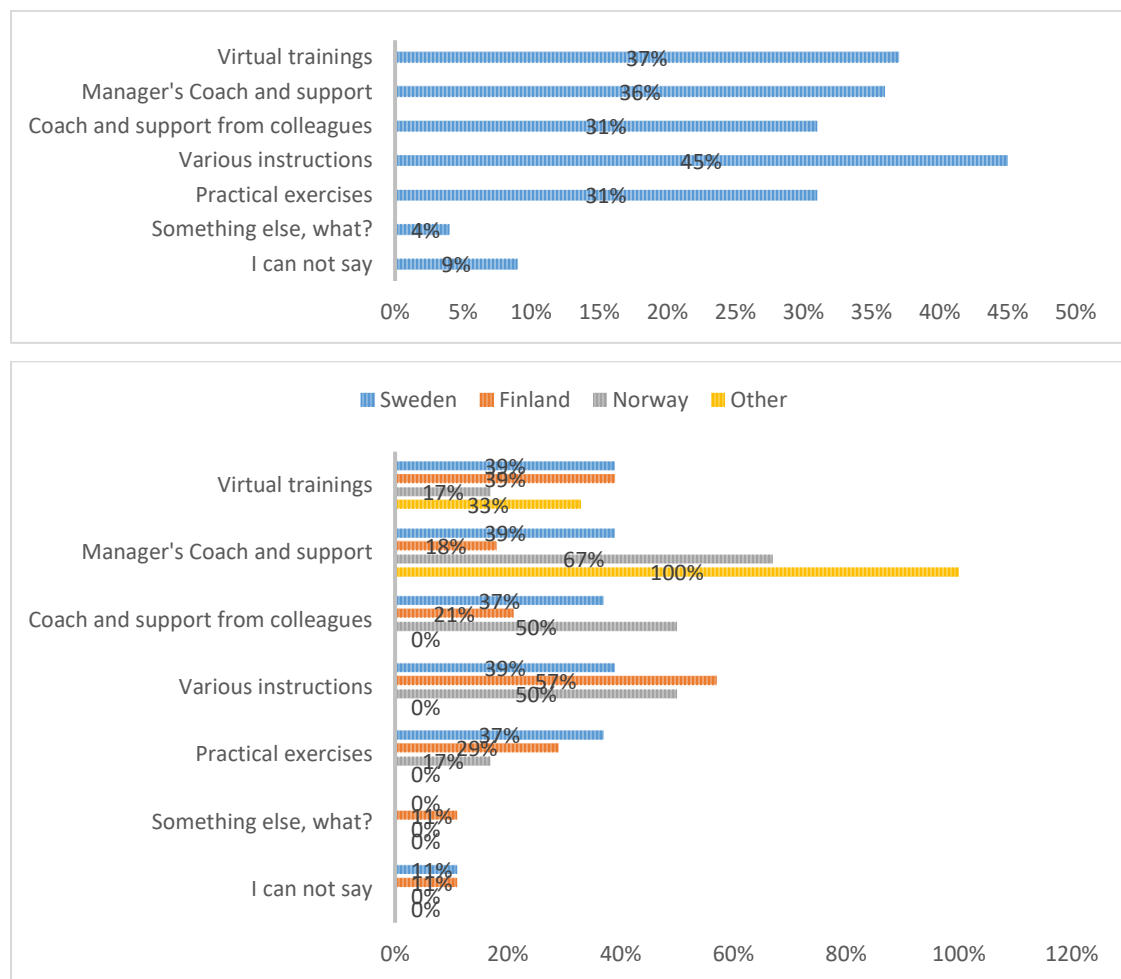


Figure 31. What would develop you as a communicator? Select 1-3 alternatives.

The next question was to understand the communication between supervisors and employees. The results showed that communication between them was good. Respondents answered excellent 51 % or good with 40 %. Of the answers,

Swedes answered excellent or good with 92 %, Finns with 89 %, and Norwegians with 100 %. So, it is no need to have an improvement on this part. (Figure 32.)

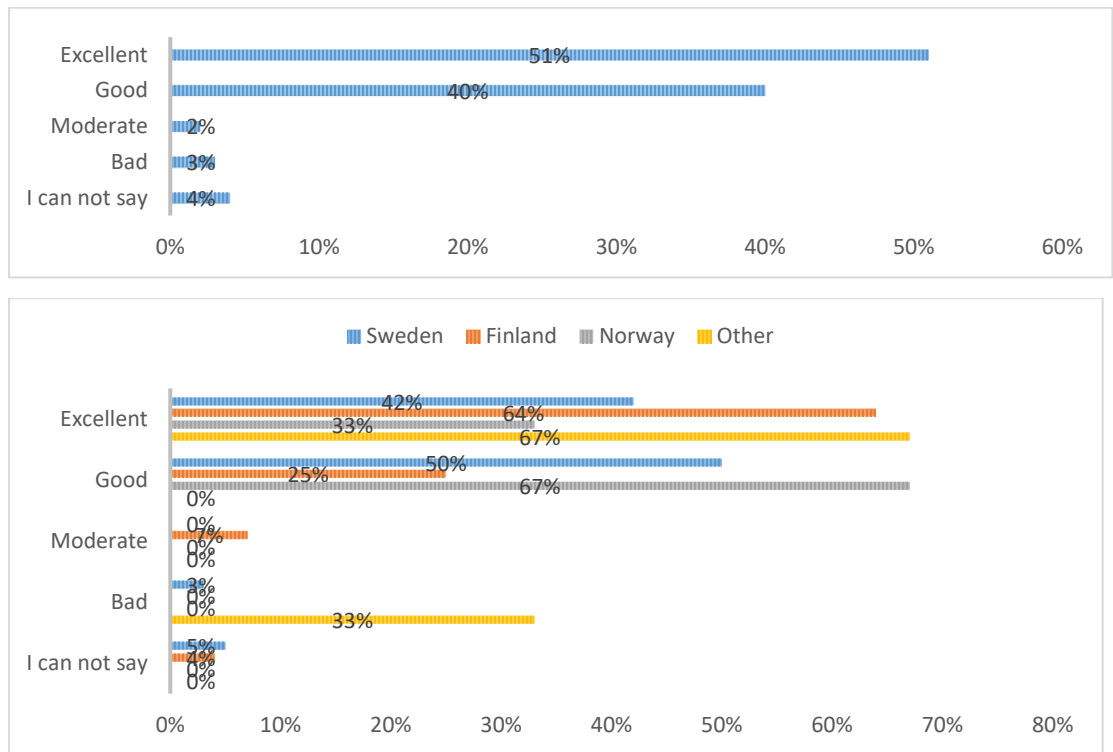


Figure 32. What kind the communication between you and your supervisor?

Question 36 was: “Can you contact your supervisor if necessary?” Sixty-eight percent of respondents answered very often, and 24 % often. Only 3 % were rarely, 1 % very rarely, and 4 % were not able to choose the answer. The answers between countries were quite equal, only some in Sweden answered rarely. Norway and Finland were the most satisfied. (Figure 33.)

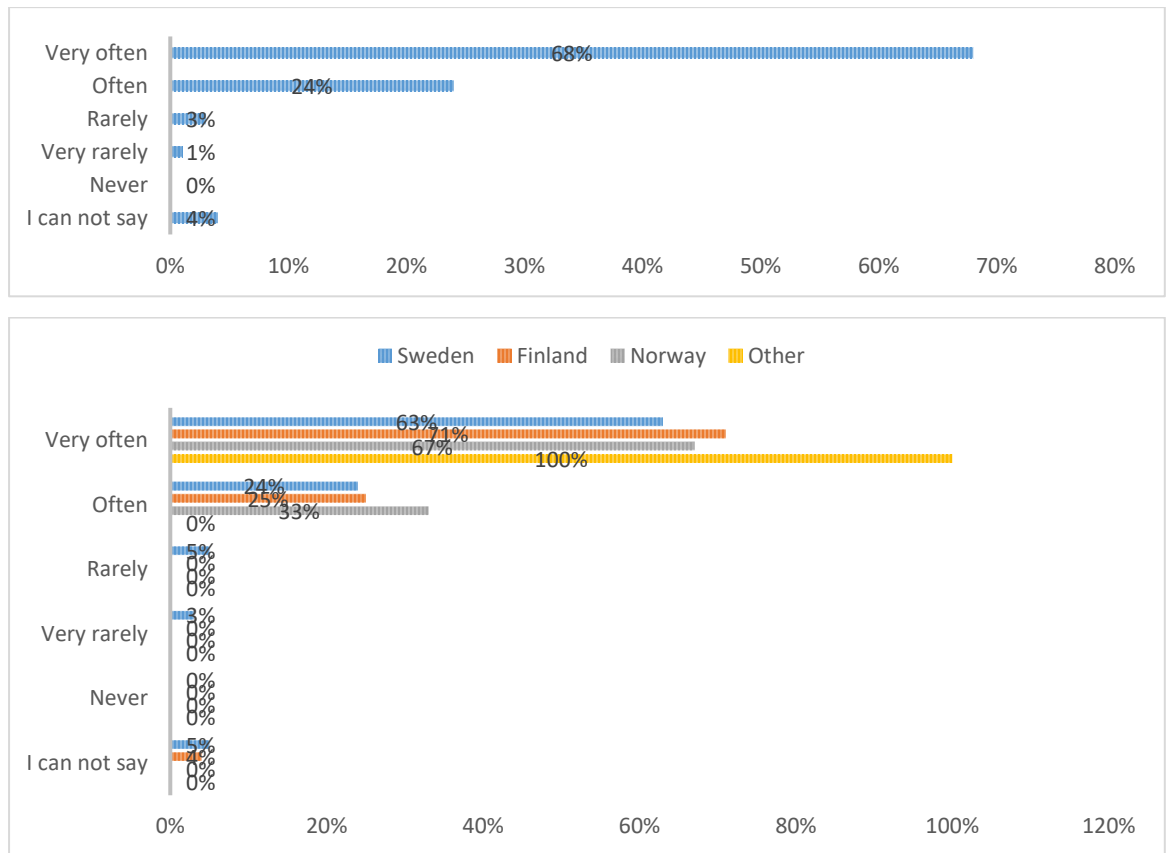


Figure 33. Can you contact your supervisor if necessary?

This chapter focused on leadership communication and how managers affect communication. The next chapter is the main issue of this thesis; culture and language related to communication. The results focused on if there are any cultural aspects and differences between Sweden, Norway, or Finland.

5.2.5 Culture and language in communication

Question 37 was: "Do you feel it is important to know how to communicate in English?" Most answered important with 89 %. Only 11 % did not feel that it is relevant. Finland thought the most that communication is important. Finnish respondents answered important with 72 % and important with 21 %. Swedes answered very important with 53 % and important with 34 %. Sweden was the only country that selected not important with 5 %. Norway answered little important with 17 %. Norwegians answered very important with 33 % and important with 50 %. Also, in other countries, it is important to know how to communicate in English. (Figure 34.) One respondent stated English should be the common language in Workplace. When messages are written in Swedish or

Norwegian, the translator does not translate them correctly, and in some cases, the information is not understood. (Appendix 5/4, Q30.) Although, some differences were between percentages, it can be stated that in this matter it has no cultural difference.

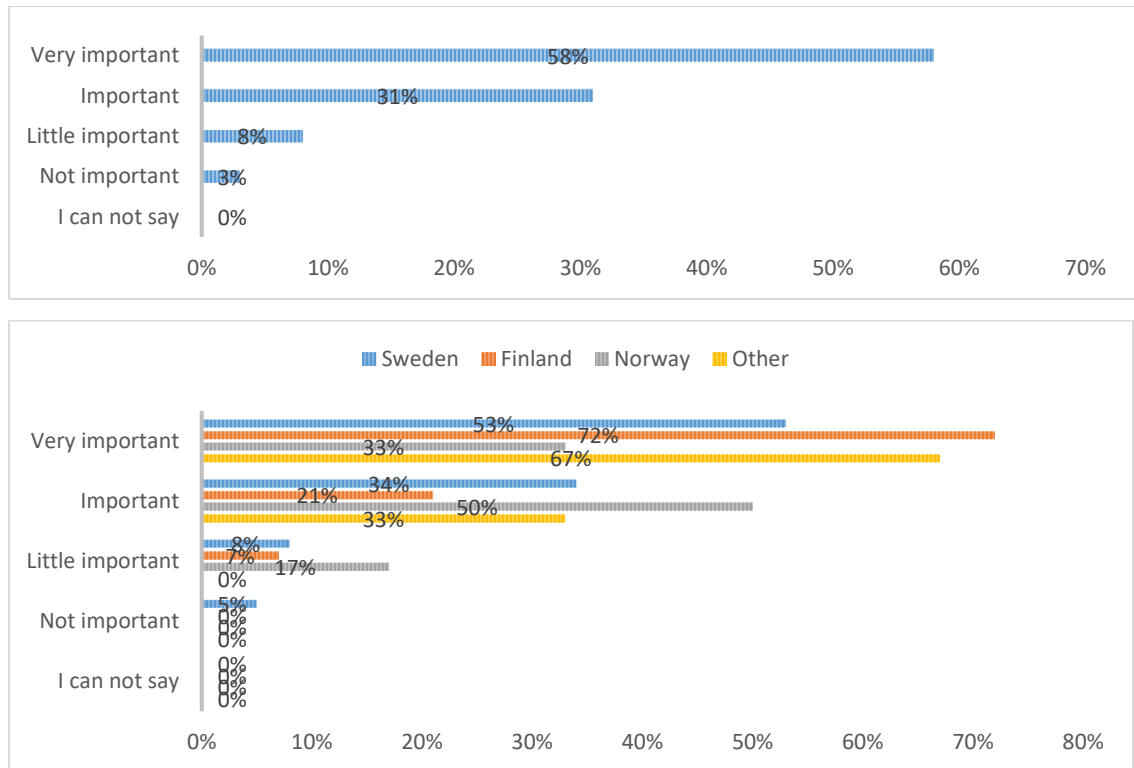


Figure 34. Do you feel that it is important to know how to communicate in English?

Question 38 was: “Have you found communication in English challenging?”

Most of the respondents thought that it has never or rarely been challenging for them to communicate in English. Of the countries, Sweden had the most challenging according to answers (29 %), Finland answered never with 43 %, and Norway with 33 %. The results were divided equally, and there was not much difference between countries. (Figure 35.)

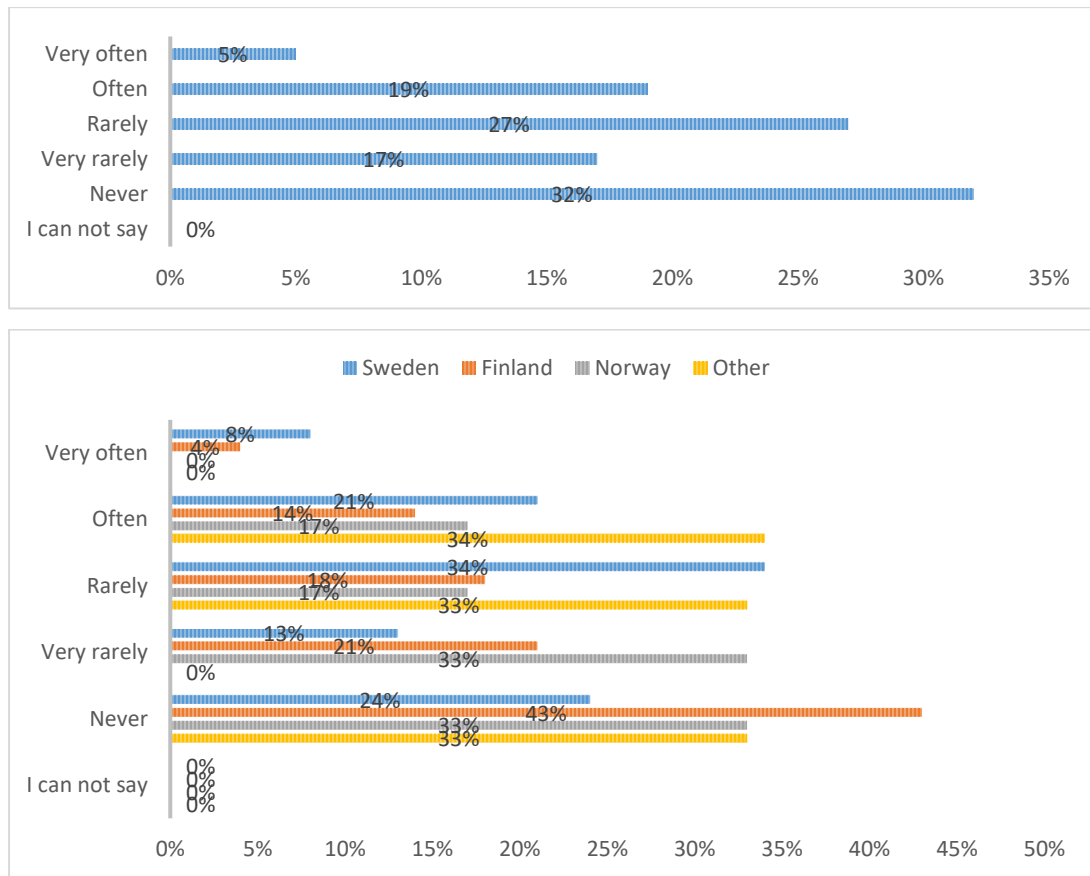


Figure 35. Have you found communication in English challenging?

The next question was about knowing if there were any challenges with foreign languages. The results showed that most of the results were rarely, very rarely, or never with a total of 83 %. Swedish people considered foreign languages the most challenging compared to Norway or Finland. The results were divided equally. Overall, employees did not think that foreign languages are challenging. (Figure 36.)

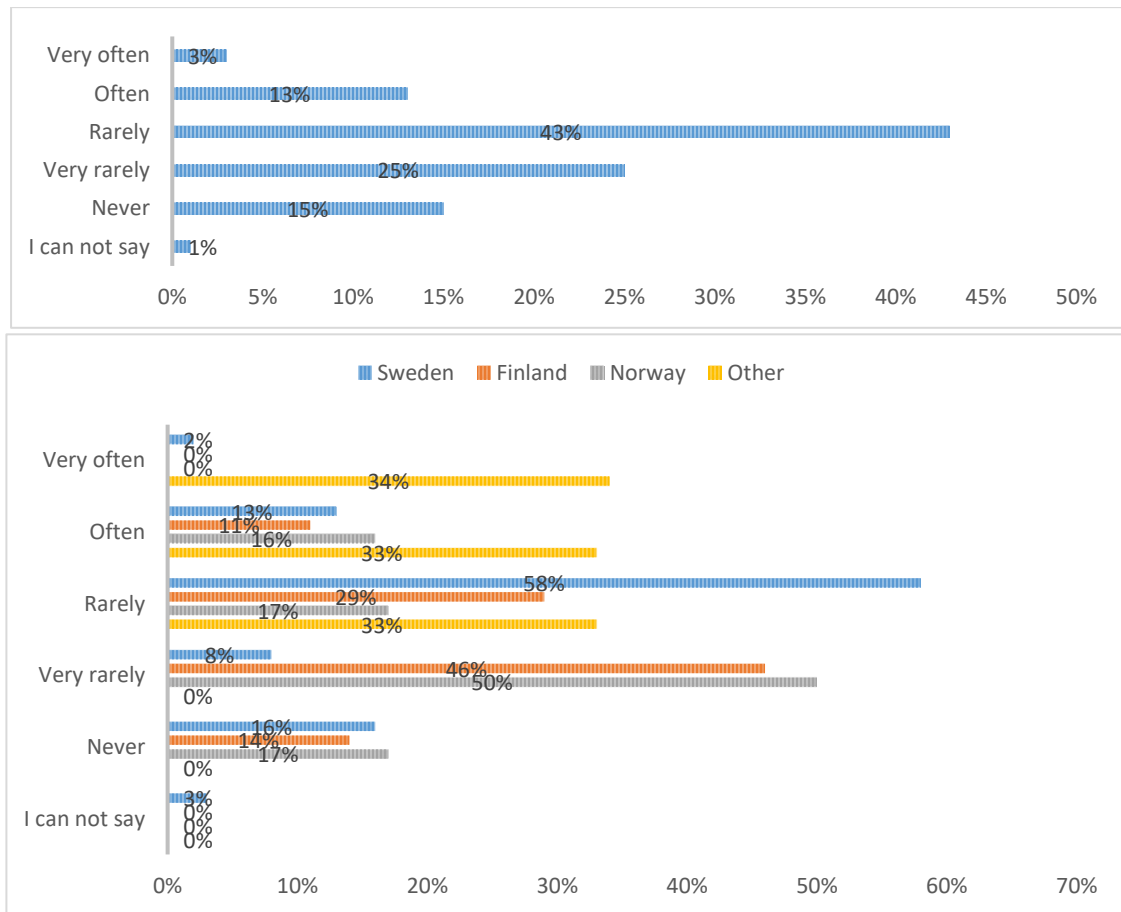


Figure 36. Have foreign languages been challenging for you?

The 40th question was about cultural backgrounds, and have they affected communication. Eleven percent of respondents answered very much, 27 % much, and 26 % little, so it can be stated that cultural backgrounds have some impact on communication. Sweden thought very much or much with 45 %. The larger variation in answers was with Finnish respondents. Finns answered very much or much with 21 %, little or very little with 54 %, and 18 % not at all. Of Finnish respondents, 7 % answered I cannot say, and it was the only country to answer so. Most Norwegians answered little with 50 % and much with 33 %. Other countries thought that cultural backgrounds affect very much with 33 % and much with 67 %. (Figure 37.)

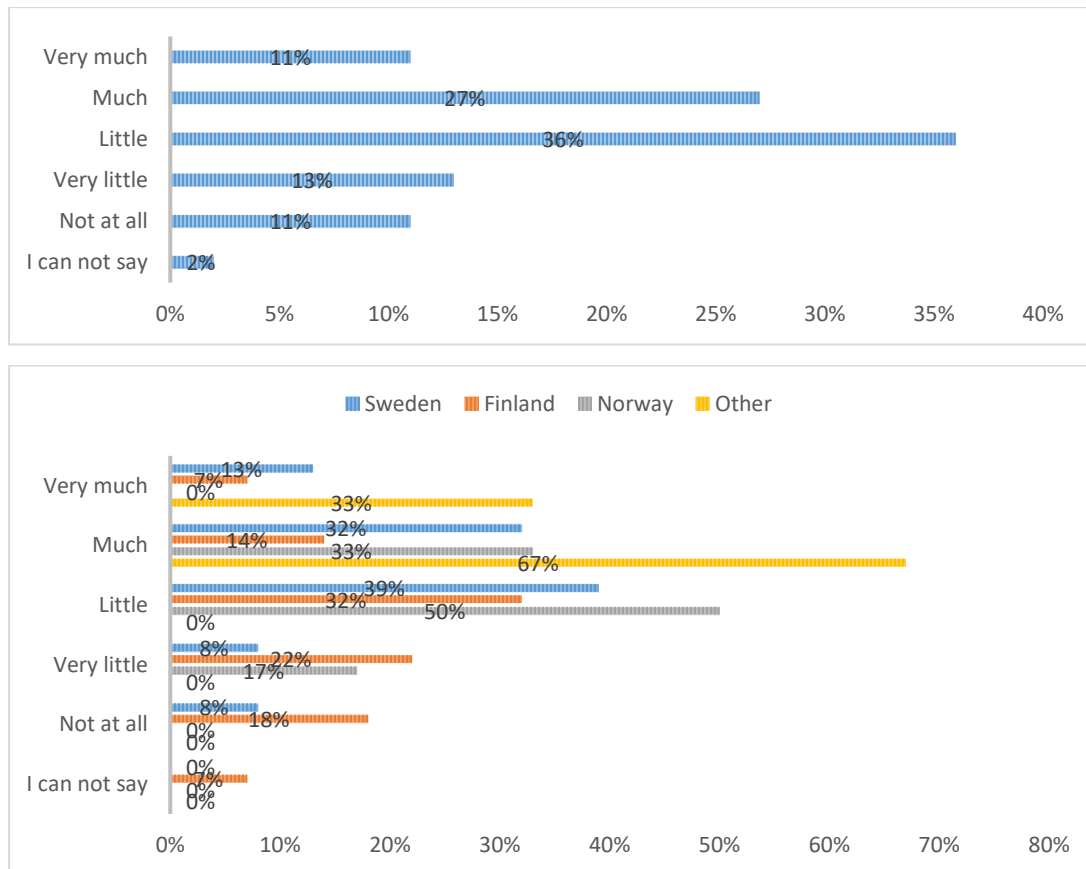


Figure 37. Do you think different cultural backgrounds affect the way you communicate?

The next question was: “Do you often communicate at work with people from different cultural backgrounds?” The results showed that the company has much communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. Twenty-six percent of respondents answered very often with 26 %, and often 53 %. Swedish people communicate the most (60 %), and Finnish the least. The percentage was high when Finnish respondents answered very often with 25 % and often with 46 %. Norwegians considered that they collaborate often with people who have a different cultural background because they answered often with 33 %. Answers were quite equal between countries. Sweden and Finland were the only countries to answer very rarely with a total of 3 %. Because nobody answered never, it can be stated that the work environment is multicultural. (Figure 38.)

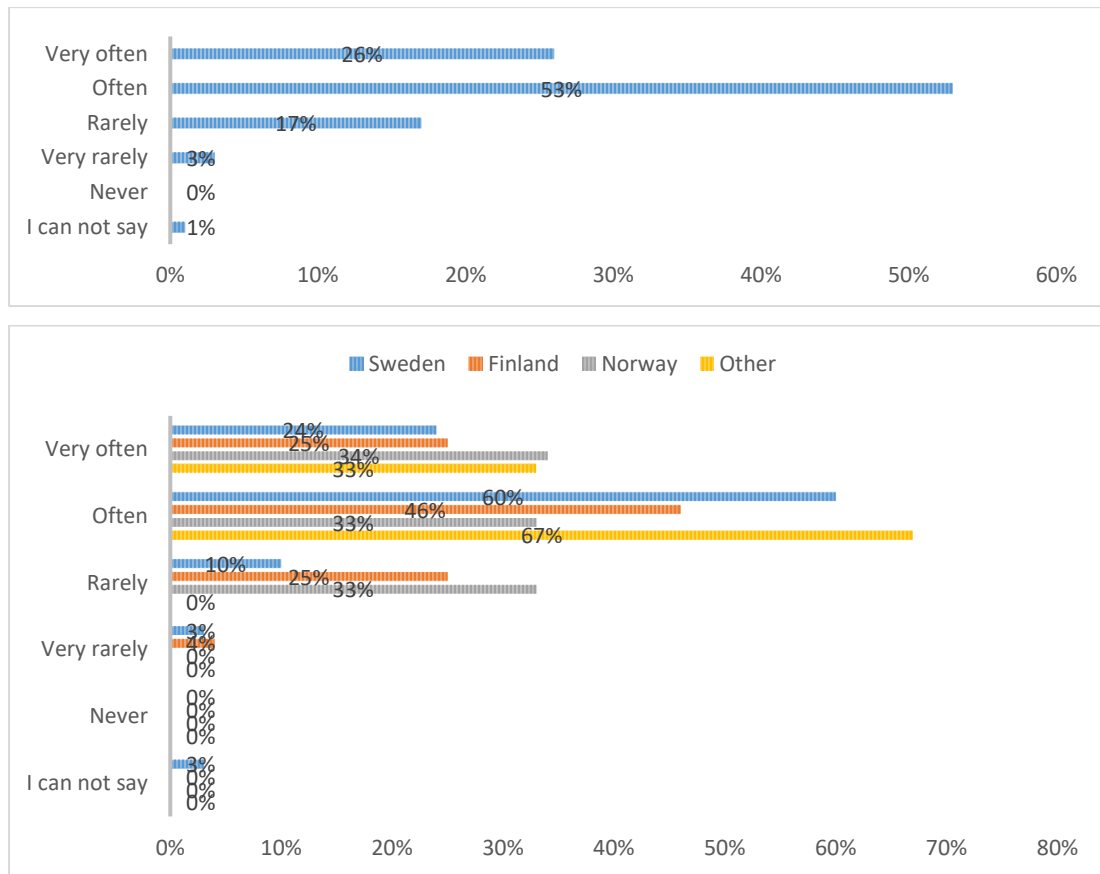


Figure 38. Do you often communicate at work with people from different cultural backgrounds?

Question 42 was about prejudices and do they affect the way people work. This question had many variations in answers. “Very much” and “much” answers were given the least with only 13 %. Fifty-two percent of respondents answered little or very little, and “not at all” answers were given with 19 %. These results showed that employees do not let prejudices affect the way they act with colleagues. Swedes thought the most with very much (13 %) and being the only country to answer so. Also, Finland did not choose “much” answers while Sweden answered 10 % and Norway with 16 %. Finns thought the less with answering not at all with 32 %. Prejudices are affecting more in Sweden and Norway than in Finland. Results varied so much that it can depend on different situations and how prejudices are affecting them. (Figure 39.) One respondent answered: “Improvements in understanding and respect for diverse cultures. More personal contacts and meetings should be initiated and seen for better development of getting rid of prejudices.” (Appendix 5/1, Q5.)

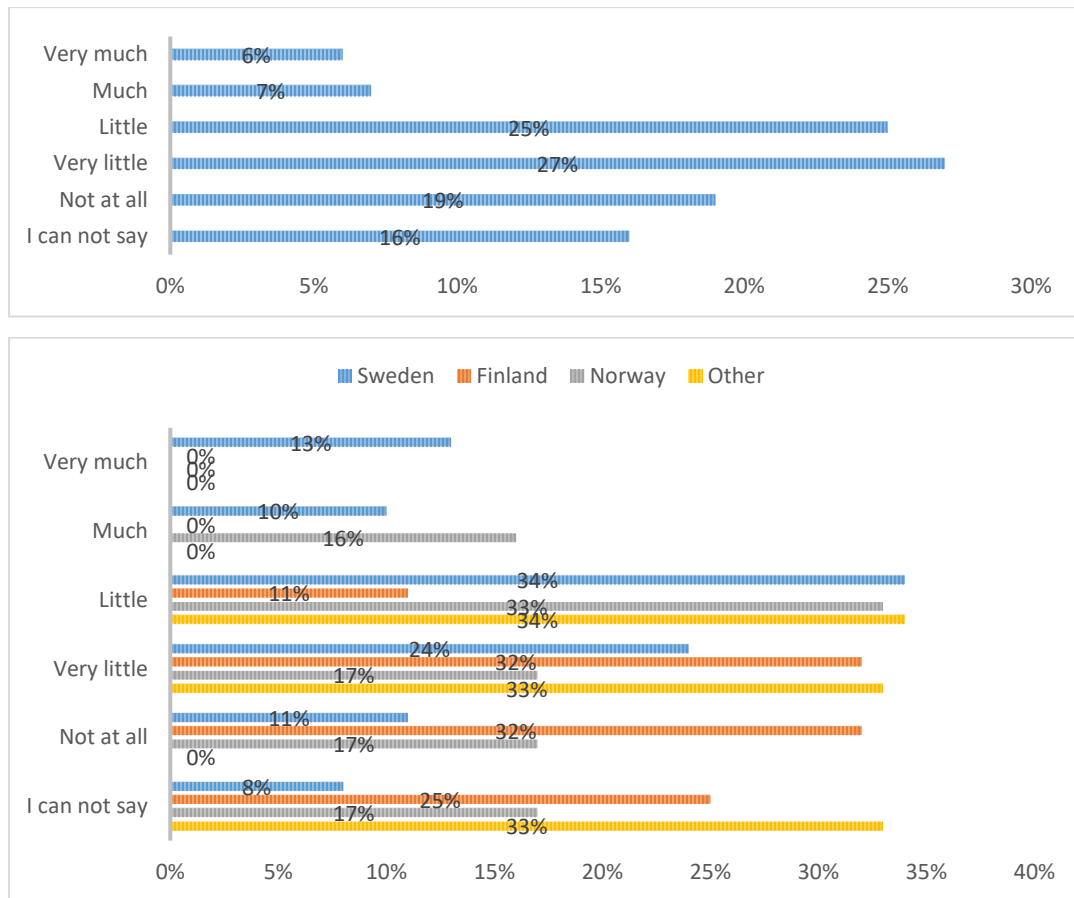


Figure 39. Do you think the prejudices of different countries guide your attitude at your workplace?

Question 43 was about how information flow in multicultural teams. Five percent of respondents answered excellent, 40 % good, and 31 % moderate. “Good” answers were given the most from all countries. Sweden (8 %) and Norway (16 %) were the only countries to answer excellent. Sweden answered good with 42 %, Norway with 50 %, Finland with 32 %, and other countries with 67 %. “I cannot say” answers (20 %) were given many for this question. Finland was uncertain about this issue the most (39 %). Sweden answered I cannot say with 8 % and Norway with 17 %. (Figure 40.)

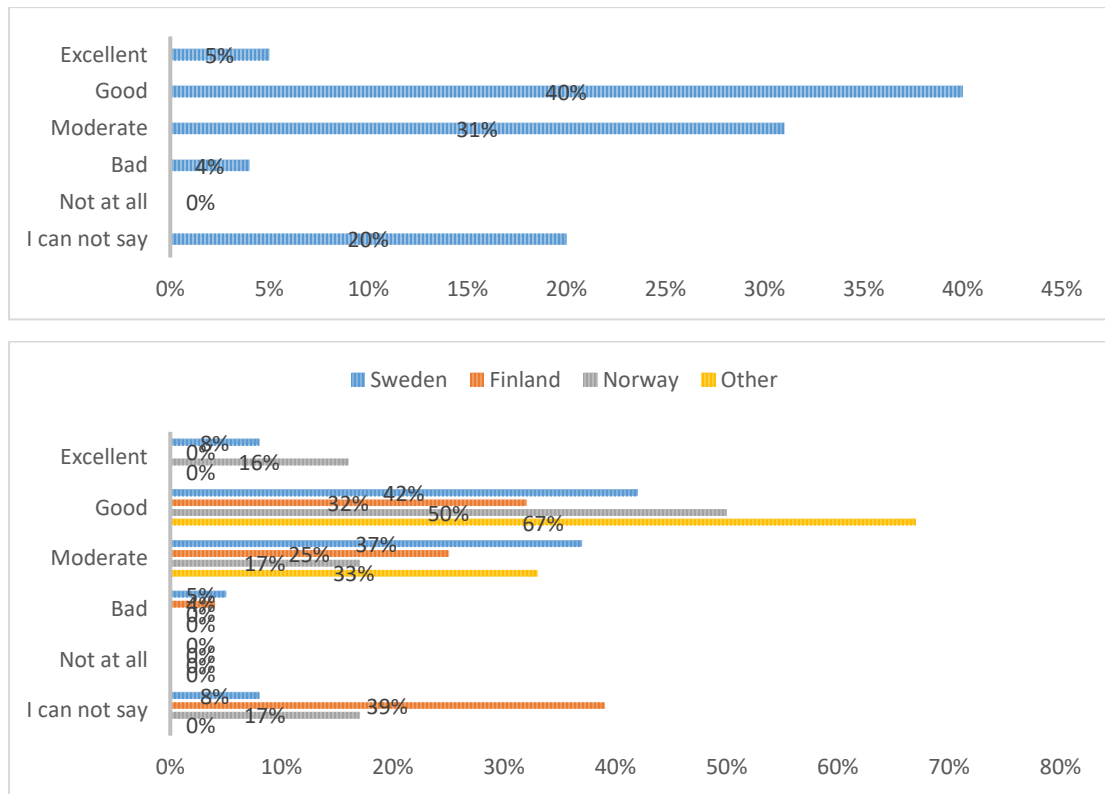


Figure 40. How well does information flow in a multicultural team?

Question 44 was: “On a scale of 1-10, how much do you think the company’s organizational communication can be improved?” The majority answered with 7-8 points, which suggested that the company has the possibility to improve communication. Some answers were related to the that the case company does not have many opportunities to improve communication. The answers were mostly neutral. (Figure 41.)

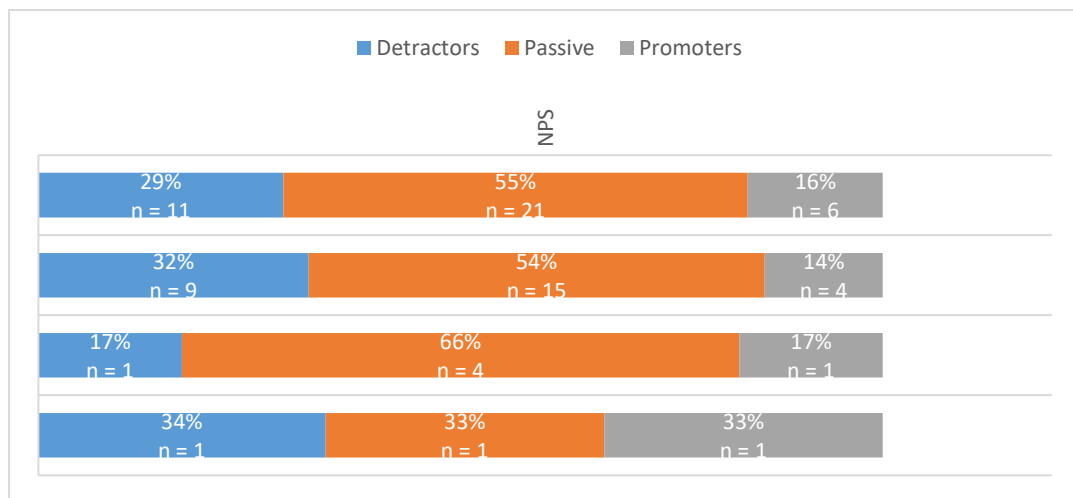


Figure 41. On a scale of 1-10, how much do you think the company’s organizational communication can be improved?

The last question was: “How do you think organizational communication could be developed?” Answers to this question are placed in different theme sections under each figure of results. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents had the opportunity to share open comments and greetings, which are found with the results in 5 Findings, and at the end of the Discussion chapter 6. All the answers are listed in Appendix 5 in the respondent’s answering language (Appendix 5).

6 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section starts with a summary of the study and its main findings. This section focuses on the research questions which were answered. The results and analysis are divided into sections based on the topics of the study. First, the analysis focuses on background information, then organizational communication, and employee communication. The last part is about culture and language in communication, and what methods can be used to develop communication. This section combines research questions, theoretical framework, and findings in the studies.

6.1 The research summary

The purpose of this thesis was to understand the culture between Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian cultures, and how communication is different. The purpose was to find similarities and differences, and how those are described. The objective was to find out which communication channels are used and how those are different from each other. The purpose was to conduct mixed-method research which is a mix of qualitative and quantitative studies. After these two studies and analyses, it was easier to know which methods would improve communication in the future. It helped better to understand how each country communicates, and which communication channels are used.

The theoretical framework supports the thesis and the research that was conducted. The theoretical framework focuses on organizational communication, language in the work community, and cultural issues related to case countries, Finland, Sweden, and Norway. Also, Hofstede’s six dimensions model is used to

support the analysis of communication in a multicultural environment. These theories were selected because it was valid to know which is the current state of communication in general and which factors are important. The thesis was about finding out how cultures affect communication and if there are any differences between the case countries. Because different languages are used and are an important part of communication in a multicultural company, language was part of the theoretical framework. Also, understanding different cultures help to analyse why and how communication is different or similar.

In the qualitative study, the purpose was to collect data with qualitative methods from the Human Resources and the Communication Departments. The main purpose was to ask questions to obtain data about the current state of the company's digital organizational communication. The results received in the qualitative study were used to create the quantitative questionnaire. In that study, it was important to examine how different teams communicate because they have different nationalities in the group. The purpose was to understand the challenges it causes, and which solutions the company has brought up to solve them.

The study focused on the research questions to help finding out the current state of digital organizational communication. The main research question was: "How is digital communication different in Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish cultures?" The sub-research questions for the thesis were: "Which digital communication channels do employees use? Do employees know how to communicate through digital channels? Does a multicultural environment increase challenges in digital communication?" Answers to these questions were obtained with two different methods: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research was made with e-mail and phone interviews. Quantitative research was made with the Webropol program with a digital questionnaire, which was sent through e-mail to respondents. Answers helped to find solutions to improve communication and knowing the current state of the case company's communication, and how culture is affecting it.

The sampling of respondents was small which affected the analysing. The study had some answers about how different countries consider issues related to communication. The study also had comprehensive results and points of view about how the case company could improve the communication. Because these were gathered, it can be concluded that the research questions were solved. The results were analysed from cultural aspects and differences between countries. It would have also been interesting to study more differences between people who work in office and stores.

6.2 Main findings

Previous studies showed that staff should be trained more to talk and write in English. Different researchers have proven the same issue to be profitable. If people communicate better in English, the business will be more successful. Companies should focus more on the tone of the language, instead of just on the message itself. The focus on cultural differences should be on people and their personalities. It is important to understand how people can adapt to new surroundings. Some research suggested that it should be studied how differences between different industries affect communication. Companies should study cultures to know how different nationalities act. At the same time, some studies showed that employees should respect differences instead of knowing the cultural type. A good theory to use to compare cultural differences is the theory of Hofstede (2022a) and his six dimensions. In the next chapters findings are categorized with different themes and with more detail.

Respondents represented different gender which made the study more variable to have multiple answers from different roles. The largest respondent group was working in the office, so the communication styles and channels can differ compared to employees working in stores. Swedish was the language that was spoken the most. Each country had people who also speak some other language than just their native language. The case company is a multicultural company that needs to consider different cultures in its communication. The largest group had worked in the case company for less than five years, so the results need to be analysed in a way that most answers are based on recent experiences.

6.2.1 Organizational communication

Organizational communication was very important to all countries. The current state of communication is moderate because half of the respondents answered that it was good and another half bad. Finland was the least satisfied, and Norway the most. When asked about the amount and availability of information third of respondents were displeased. Sweden was the most satisfied with this situation. People must know when people leave the company or change work tasks. Also, when new employees are hired it is crucial to know new people with a new role. The company does not share enough information about changes and decisions. Half of the respondents answered that company gives enough information about changes, but the other half answered not enough or was not able to say. People highly thought that communication cannot be improved. Hietanen (2019) pointed out that for further studies the importance of decision-making is an important part of communication. Organizational structures are complicated, so it would be important to study how and who communicates what and to who.

When asking about misunderstandings and conflicts the results were divided equally. Half of the respondents answered rarely and another half often. Employees revealed in the study that Store Managers and communication channels can inform decisions in different ways. Sometimes information can be new to Managers, which can cause misunderstandings among stores. The staff should be better informed because they must have all the information they need. Also, answering time was an issue that should be focused on because if someone does not answer in a decent time this can turn the conversation into conflict. Leaders ensure that everyone participate actively. Leaders must give support and the possibility for communicating virtually. Also, leaders need to know all cultures that exist in the work community. This would reform multicultural teams to better communicate globally and locally. If employees are not familiar with the language, they can be misunderstood. Communication between employees and leaders is excellent or good, which all countries agreed on. Leadership communication works in the company. Employees can have help from their supervisor when needed.

Hietanen (2019) studied organizational communication as a part of her thesis. She studied the current state of communication and what employees thought about it. Hietanen (2019) considered that the largest negative impact was that information did not move effectively between different functions. The study showed that when organizational communication is developed, leadership requires evaluation and how leaders can improve the whole communication culture inside the company. Employees would want to increase face-to-face communication, but they feel that the challenges are hurry and the increasing amount of information.

The culture of communication is built with the interaction between how people act and communicate. The culture changes constantly and improves slowly with one mode of operation at a time. (Juholin 2022, 23.) Communication affects motivation, which is an important part of employees' daily work. Most respondents believed based on the results that it has a huge impact on how people communicate and how it affects motivation. The atmosphere in the company is built partly in communication. Employees would improve their skills as communicators with instruction, virtual training, and with support and coaching from supervisors. Also, support from colleagues and practical exercises were seen as important. It was also suggested that the company could arrange external training related to communication and clear communication channels for employees. Half of the respondents answered that training would be necessary. One-third were not able to answer. This is an issue which should be considered because results showed that training is needed. For example, the need for training could be discussed in a satisfactory questionnaire for employees or be a part of development discussions.

One-third use digital work channels at home in their free time. Norway uses the most, then Finland, and Sweden uses the least. One-third of Swedish answers were never, which tells that Swedish people can separate work and free time more easily. Employees want more transparency in conversations. All must give information, not just receive it. If something is published it requires that the

information does not change right away. Communication requires especially shared feedback, which would improve working habits.

6.2.2 Communication channels

The two sub-questions for this study were related to employee communication and communication channels: “Is it clear for employees how to communicate through digital channels? Which digital communication channels do employees use?” In the next chapter gives answers to these questions.

Ravi (2019) has conducted research on organizational communication, why it does not work, and why the information lacks. He considered that employees will use more digital communication platforms, like WhatsApp. Ravi (2019) considered that platforms have their risks, so he created instructions for the staff on how to use the platforms correctly. This way employees stay focused on the main issues and do not send other irrelevant information. The case company uses a similar platform in its communication. It would be great to have instruction in the case company as well. For example, e-mail is not a relevant communication channel anymore, so one aspect is to focus on which tools are available, and how effectively those are used.

It was suggested that communication should be better in different work areas, not only inside a team. The company should have rules or instructions on how channels should be used and how people should communicate. Instruction on how to use Workplace and Intranet was hoped, and how the information is more easily found. The company needs clear boundaries on what to communicate through e-mail, Teams, and Workplace. Finland thought instruction is needed the most, and Sweden and Norway were little uncertain in this matter. Almost seventy percent of respondents thought that instruction which is related to one's work is easy to find. The company should have instructions on who to contact, and which channels to use. Also, the company should have some guidelines for suitable answering times. On this issue were not many cultural differences.

The company has users for all communication channels. Almost sixty percent of respondents hoped for clearer information on which channel to use because there are too many channels to choose from. Swedes rarely hoped more information, but Finns and Norwegians hoped it often. Virtual channels are used daily, and sometimes it is required to answer quickly to questions in virtual channels. Almost eighty percent thought that often or very often others insist that answers are given in a short time. For the issue, one respondent suggested that the company should have a rule or instruction to avoid escalations. The company should have fewer communication channels and a layout that simplifies the information. The results showed that info is often lost because the company has so many communication channels to choose from. People are not aware of which is the right channel for each matter. People are not aware of job responsibilities which complicates choosing the right channel and person to contact. The information should be always in Intranet, and there should be information about projects that are going on inside the company. Finland understands better which channel to use than Sweden or Norway.

The company should have one main communication channel. Workplace was hoped to ease the communication channel problem. Now Intranet has a commercial calendar and other current information. E-mail is used for different invitations. Workplace has many groups that are recommended to follow, which is one reason information is difficult to locate. Also, if one person asks something, the answer can be concluded in some posts' comments. People in stores and offices use different channels. Some do not know which channel to follow. That is why the company needs to have more transparency in communication. Sometimes messages are difficult to find. It takes too much time to search for information in different channels. Some employees do not know which information is found in which channel. Most respondents thought that channels have too much information. Most respondents also agreed that channels need to be reduced. One-third were not able to answer. Norway was the country which would reduce the most, and Sweden and Finland answered the same.

The most suitable channels in the work community are e-mail, Workplace, and Teams. Also, WhatsApp was discussed in an open section. Swedish prefer Teams the most, then e-mail and Intranet. Finnish prefer Workplace the most, then e-mail and Intranet. Norwegian prefers Workplace the most, then e-mail and Teams. These results show that Sweden is not so used to communicate with Workplace like Norway or Finland. Communication between both ways is most effective through Teams, then through e-mail and Workplace. Sweden thought also that the phone is an effective tool to use. Finland also prefers Intranet, but Norway thought the opposite towards Intranet. It was suggested that Intranet should have information related to different statistics, and e-mail should contain basic information. Some respondents considered that Workplace wastes work time, and feels more like social media, Facebook, instead of actual work tools. Workplace is suitable for those who use Facebook in their free time. Teams are a more common tool in Sweden than in Finland. Employees use the most Intranet, e-mail, and Workplace in personnel matters. Sweden uses the most Intranet, then e-mail, Teams, and Workplace. Norway uses the most e-mail, then phone, Intranet, and Workplace. Finland uses the most Intranet, then Workplace and e-mail. In personnel matters, the most used channels commonly are Intranet and e-mail. Workplace is used but is not a popular channel to receive information on personnel matters. E-mail is more common to Swedish and Norwegian people than it is to Finns. Also, Workplace is more common among Finnish people than it is among Swedes and Norwegians.

Organizational issues are best found in Intranet. All countries related to that with many of the answers. Workplace have become a more popular tool compared to e-mail. The best channels to receive information about issues related to one's work are e-mail and Teams. Although, when comparing those three different countries, Sweden prefers Teams, Finland Intranet, and Norway e-mail. It can be stated that it had many variations on which channel to choose from. This can also tell that employees are not aware of which channel to use. They are not sure which channel has the information they are looking for. Employees could use OneDrive to share files and other information. The case company should have

less information on its platforms. Intranet and Workplace should have a balance between them.

Workplace is experienced to be a conversion forum. One-third of respondents thought that Workplace has improved communication inside the company. Over twenty percent of respondents were not able to decide if it has improved or not. When asked if that is information easy to find in Workplace, most answers it is not. Answers were divided quite equally, but the strongest opinion was in Norway which thought information is easily accessible only rarely. Workplace do not have any barriers to communication with different people. For example, it is possible to summer workers to talk to CEO if they want. Workplace has improved the communication between colleagues. Employees need to have instructions on how to use Workplace because it is full of too much information, and groups. Sometimes it can be difficult to know which Workplace groups to take part in. Employees want to have instructions for Workplace, who, what, and when something is posted. Organization charts are not up to date, so it is difficult to know who to contact. Organization charts are hoped, which should include roles and job descriptions. This could help to contact the right person. While in Workplace is full of information, those are commonly easy to understand.

According to Kankaanpää et.al. (2021, 206) creating new communication channels and tools does not improve interaction. This has led to a situation where too much information is divided into different places. This gives employees the challenge to find the right information. Commonly, people choose a communication channel based on its useability. The easier the channel is to use, the most commonly it is chosen. People do not often consider how effective a channel is or whether is it the right channel to use. For example, e-mail is seen as a tool that is quick and easy to use, but sometimes more interactive communication is needed according to the issue that was discussed. This is one reason companies tend to use more digital platforms, which enable them to use chats and other instant messaging. These also have a negative impact which is the amount of information. Also, people may digress from the actual topic and start to speak about some irrelevant issues. (Kankaanpää et.al. 2021, 208.)

According to Kankaanpää et.al. (2021) companies tend to focus more on the channels, instead of the reason people communicate. One good way is to focus on reasons and to choose the right tool based on that. The definition of the goal is the first issue to be considered. One good request is to categorize messages into not-so-urgent categories. The urgent ones are communicated in interaction with another person. This way the issues are solved quickly and have fewer possibilities for errors. Other not-so-urgent ones can be sent for example through e-mail. Those are more “nice-to-know”-kinds of issues. (Kankaanpää et.al. 2021, 209-210.) When to start using new communication channels, it is important to consider what all participants need and focus on the communication which works both ways. In a digital work environment, every employee must know how communication channels work. This requires training and the attitude and thrive to want to learn and use the new working tools. (Juholin 2022, 113.)

6.2.3 Culture and language in communication

Two of the research questions for this study were related to culture and language in communication. One sub-research question was: “Does a multicultural environment increase challenges in digital communication?” The main research question was: “How digital communication is different in Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish cultures?” In the next chapter the answers are given to these questions.

Language is an important part of management inside the company. It affects how employees act, which means that managers must know the role of language. Managers and other employees must relate to people with different cultural backgrounds. (Punnett 2013, 105.) English is a common language in business which is chosen because it is more related to business concept words, like management and operations (Punnett 2013, 107). People are more creative with their language, which changes, if necessary, for example in meetings. More Swedish translations should be used in Finland. Almost all respondents answered that it is important to know how to communicate in English. Finnish respondents were considered the most, and Swedish the least. Swedish

respondents were the only country to answer that English is not important. English is not challenging for any of the countries. Also, with other foreign languages, it did not seem to have challenges. Non-native English speakers use the language with different accents which can lead to situations where receivers can understand the issue wrong. This problem is not certain for one specific country, it is a global problem. (Talbot 2019, 72.)

Staff should be trained to have skills to write and communicate in English. If a company wants to be successful, it is crucial to have employees that can communicate in English. (Talbot 2019, 84.) Keisala (2012, 69) made her research conclusion that successful communication requires a common language between different functions. The common language was English. Research showed that everybody did not speak or understood the language well, which was seen as problematic. This leads to an issue where employees should be better trained for the language they use. Mostly, companies are required new employees to have the skill to speak English, but rarely the standard is assessed.

Nurminen (2020) considered that virtual communication is not based as much on cultural differences as it has been thought. The research showed that companies need to be familiar with different cultures and how they interact together. Remote communication is lacking from the Finnish point of view. The study showed that all countries were not sure what to say about this matter. People should be more active and have some assignments in virtual meetings. Remote communication works in Sweden and Norway better than in Finland. Half of the answers were good and over a third were bad. In the study, communication between different teams was seen as mostly moderate or bad. For example, it is considered that the Sales and the Marketing Departments do not co-operate together enough. These affect sales and customer satisfaction. The office must think from the store's point of view and communicate in a way that its information is understandable for all participants. Communication between teams was mostly moderate. Countries did not have differences between them. Every department can communicate how they want, and in each channel, which may lead to conflicts and misunderstandings.

Nurminen (2020) considered that trust and interaction are the main factors to create the most efficient communication between different functions. The distance between employees and leaders has been challenging because that way people do not feel so connected, like a team. When asked if cultural backgrounds affect communication, the results varied. Most answers were little or very little, so culture does not affect so much when people communicate. Sweden thought the most that it has affected much. All respondents collaborate daily with people in different cultural background. Swedish work more than Finland or Norway. Nobody answered never, which assumed that employees cannot avoid contacting multicultural teams. Work communities may have prejudices against foreign people. Most respondents did not feel that prejudices affect the interaction between colleagues. Information flow in multicultural teams is more moderate. Some respondents were not able to answer this question. It depends on different situations and how information flows. Norway and Sweden thought that information moves well, but Finland thought differently. Countries do not have many cultural differences between them. Personalities may be different, but the humour is the same.

According to Hofstede (2022a), individualism is high in all three cultures, which means that society is more focused on the role of the individual. Uncertainty Avoidance is high in Norway and Finland, but lower in Sweden. High cultures try to secure that the company has less uncertainty and tries to find ways to reduce it. It is stated that uncertainty avoidance can also relate to be more innovative. Sweden tends to be comfortable with the current uncertainty and does not change it. Uncertainty Avoidance is about the future and how it can be predicted. Finland has fifty-nine points which mean that Finns need rules and do not waste time. They are punctual and like to have individual motivation. Norway gained fifty points, but Sweden scores the lowest with twenty-nine points. Sweden tries to be flexible and innovative in everything they do. They do not need many rules to be able to do the work. (Hofstede 2022a.)

Power distance is the same in all three countries. While the number is low it means that the culture wants equal rights for everyone and allows changing a

position inside the company. The low number also lowers the thinking that some people have more power in society than others. Masculinity is high in Finland but low in Norway and Sweden. Masculinity is about male values that contain performance, ambition, achievement, and material possessions. It is seen that Finland is more used to dominating culture, and there are clear differences between sex roles. Norway and Sweden are more equal with woman and men and tries to focus more on equality. In long-term orientation, Sweden is higher than Finland or Norway. This means that Sweden is concerning the future and its events further while Finland and Norway focus more on the present or soon coming events. (Punnett 2013, 29-31.)

All three countries communicate directly and are task oriented. They are loyal and follow the rules. They plan their work and value collaborative leaders. (Hofstede 2022b.) All three countries have equal rights and are independent and collaborative. Sometimes they need consulting, but others' opinions are highly appreciated. Nobody wants to be the best, which means that colleagues are appreciated. Finns need rules and do not want to waste time. Norwegians appreciated the same values. Swedish people are more innovative, and rules are not so important to have. All three countries value their free time. They are optimistic and social people. (Hofstede 2022a.) Finns are more direct in their expressions than Norway or Sweden. According to Wolff (2020), communication in the Swedish environment is wider than in Finland. Swedish people have a soft tone in their communication. They want to improve outcomes even if the case is about something constructive. Wolff (2020) herself works in a company where both Swedish and Finnish people work. She is also a Swede who lives in Finland herself. Swedes take their emotions to the conversation, at least in text form. Finland could be colder and keep emotions off in the work environment. According to Wolff (2020), Nordic communication styles are almost the same, but the minor difference matters. Companies need to consider all little aspects that may impact communication and through that the business results. It is an advantage to understand why some talk directly and others with an improved attitude.

The main research question was: “How digital communication is different in Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish cultures?” Based on the results it showed that these three countries do not have major cultural differences between them. Each of the countries has its own aspects and routines that they follow. Those are only personal issues, and not actual cultural issues to be concerned about. One thought was that the case company may have strong organizational culture that guides employees. They have different culture behaviour at work and other in their free time. Also, the company had some differences in communication channels, which may have affected efficient communication and good results. If all countries act differently, communication will stay confused. The company must have common changes that consider all three countries. Some recommendations are suggested in the next chapter.

6.3 Recommendations

The results show that current organizational communication in the case company should be improved. Here are listed some suggestions that the case company could consider focusing on.

- **Better organizational chart**

When something changes in the company, there needs to be some informative message related to that. For example, if someone new is hired to the office or someone is leaving, there needs to be official information about it. Sometimes employees do not know who is responsible for what. The company has considerable variations in job descriptions, so it could be difficult to follow who to contact. This should be informed clearly in Workplace. Employees want roles and responsibilities to be well explained, and organizational charts updated constantly. Especially, because the case company is a multicultural company that has teams collaborating with people with different cultural background.

- **Better channel structure and instructions**

The case company has various channels in its use. Workplace eased and improved communication. When Workplace became one communication channel for the company, it made employees confused. After the change, information was divided into different digital channels, and it was not clearly explained where certain information was found. Or if it was explained, it was not clear to many employees. The study showed that people are hoping to have instructions on how to communicate, and through which channel. It is more understandable for office people how to communicate than for people working in stores. The office must think of communication from the store's point of view to improve communication. Instructions require focusing on key issues, and how irrelevant information stays at a minimum the way relevant information is not lost.

Workplace is a platform, which does not have the information on the wall in a logical order which may cause difficulties to find some information all over again. It was suggested that the number of the channels should be reduced, but it is not possible to reduce them. There were some cultural differences in using channels, some were using more e-mail and Teams than focusing on Intranet or Workplace. The efficient way is to focus on dividing the information into correct places. Also, it would be important to create guidelines on where all information is placed. The main channels should be used and consider if e-mail and Workplace are effective ones to be used. For example, Teams are more popular with office people, so it requires considering whether Workplace should only be a conversation forum. Normally channels are chosen because they are easy to use. The case company needs to focus on its useability and content, and not the number of channels. Communication should be categorized as urgent, and not urgent.

- **Better remote communication**

Remote communication has become more popular because of the COVID-19 pandemic. People were already working in different countries but in the same team. There are multicultural teams and work assignments, so nothing is always based on one country. The study showed that remote communication should be improved, mostly, from a Finnish point of view. Sometimes the teamwork does not function well, which leads to misunderstandings. There should be some improvement conducted in the communication between different functions. This usually affects for example stores and wastes time in vain. For example, the company should focus on communication channels and common instructions related to that. This way all countries work in the same way.

- **Better language strategies and instructions**

The main research question was related to cultural differences between Sweden, Finland, and Norway. The study results showed that documents and important information require translation into all languages. Training for languages should be provided if someone needs to improve their language skills. The case company should create an official language policy and guidelines. Language guidelines are required in specific internal communication situations. Translations cannot be based on voice translations or answers cannot be in the comments. Language strategies for all regions and corporate are required. There should be instructions or some guidelines for answering times. People tend to use digital work channels in their free time, and they feel pressured to answer quickly if there is some question for them. These issues should be considered in employee questionnaires and development discussions.

6.4 Limitations and the quality of the studies

The reliability of the studies is measured carefully. It is essential to focus on how the research material is gathered and who answered the questions. The amount of how many have answered affects how reliable studies are. The reliability can also be measured in terms of the time that the studies took. It is always important

to be critical of the results and assess them carefully. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 164.) Validity measures how the respondents have understood the questionnaire and the questions. Answers may be faulty if respondents do not think as they were supposed to. Thorough plans on who to interview are necessary, and for example which concepts to use. (Vilkka 2021.)

The research process started in February 2022, when finally, the research topic was accepted. After focusing on the theoretical part and other assignments related it was time to start making the studies and find respondents for them. It was suggested to contact both the Communication and the Human Resources Departments. After answers were received in the qualitative study, the results were analyzed. The quantitative questions were made related to the qualitative study. The studies were about answers from Sweden, Norway, and Finland. The purpose was to have answers from all countries, but unfortunately, that did not happen in both studies. One limitation was that the response rate was low and was not divided equally between countries. There were more answers from Sweden and Finland than from Norway. Because the percentage and the number of respondents were low from Norway, the results were very limited. This could have affected the cultural aspect analysis and its differences. On survey related website it was discussed that questionnaires that were made online and had not been sent to the same respondents before, it is realistic that the respondent rate stays in 10 to 15 percent. (SurveyMonkey 2022.) The results of this research could still be valid because almost ten percent of respondents answered the questionnaire. However, the amount of data is always a limitation for studies, and that is why there cannot be any generalizations.

The results of the study are based on just a sampling of employees. This is just one aspect and thought of how communication is seen. The purpose was to focus on the office and managers in stores, to gain some leadership perspective, and to better understand how the people in the office communicate because it is a vital part of being information responsible, which informs about different changes and instructions that effect on the work in stores. The study was made in the summer, which also impacted the respondent rate. The summer is a holiday

period, so many employees may have not been at work when the questionnaire was sent. The results were compared mostly on Finnish written theories, so the same issues may not be accurate in Norway or Sweden. The research consisted of two different studies, which were qualitative and quantitative. There were used citations in the study and in the analysis, which increases the credibility of the study. The same study with the same results cannot be executed again because digital organizational communication changes constantly. Results can be used for other organizations, which have the same organizational structure, is an international company, and uses Workplace application as a daily communication channel. There were some other studies made on the same topic, which were discussed in the discussion chapter. This also increased the credibility of the study and the results.

When people from China and the United Kingdom answered the questionnaire that could have been calculated as study error because the purpose was to study three countries: Sweden, Finland, and Norway. There was only little respondent rate from these two countries, and it only increased the credibility of the study. It was interesting to see also, how two other countries were considering about communication and the current situation inside the company. It can be stated that there were more cultural differences between Nordic countries and China and the United Kingdom than between Nordic countries themselves. This could also explain the current state of communication in the company. The United Kingdom and China are an important part of the company and should be allowed to focus on their communication too.

Open comments on the quantitative study impacted the results because some questions were misunderstood. Some comments were about understanding questions correctly in all language versions. That could have affected the percentage of answers. One respondent answered that they were hoping for an alternative option “sometimes” in the questionnaire. Also, some thought that the multiple choices were not understandable or suitable for the question. This could also have resulted in limitations in the results. Multiple choices were made to match as many questions as possible to gain better analysis.

One respondent answered: "I hope the results of this work are going to be used to strengthen us as an organization." Another respondent answered: "Excellent topic, I hope that communication will improve." There was also a comment: "Great, that you are doing a clarification of this topic." Many comments were related to the topic also by stating: "Good and important topic" and "Excellent research topic!" Many respondents were thankful for a good and timely questionnaire. One comment indicated that communication is an important issue for the company by stating: "Thank you that you do an important study. Developing communication is important because communication needs to be fluent and have easy access in a workplace."

As a researcher, it is important to know the current state of the case company's digital organizational communication. When working in the company and knowing something about the level of communication, it was interesting to find out if the perception was the same as the author's personal experience. It was important to understand what was important for employees and did cultural differences affect them. The author may have had some prejudices about how people communicate with different cultural backgrounds and wanted to know if the prejudices were true. The fact that the author works in the case company may have affected the results and made them little biased. The credibility of a qualitative study is based on the author's credibility telling everything confidentially and explaining how respondents were chosen. The author also points out all mistakes and does not hide anything, which could state that the research has had a good quality and the credibility.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

Based on the results a few suggestions can be listed for further research. The sampling of respondents was quite small for the company, which has thousands of employees working in the company. One further study would be executed about the same topic for all employees. The case company should give more impact and time to develop communication and investigating it more from

an employee perspective. The company should be focusing on communication with the same time and input as on satisfaction in the workplace.

Service Design has become more popular in a business environment. There could be an opportunity to develop communication through the Service Design, which develops with the help of visualizations. For example, this tool could be used in employee engagement. This is a modern way to develop, and there should be an opportunity to try this and acknowledge how it works for the case company. Service design would help to improve transparency and optimize employee productivity. In Service Design different factors are tailored to be more suitable for employees and solve difficulties and other obstacles in an innovative way. (Engine 2022.)

One study could be made from the perspective of headquarters, and this way compares results to how they differ from people working in the office and stores. This research was only focusing on a sampling of employees. It could be interesting to study more on employees' thoughts about the current state of communication, with a larger sampling. Valo and Sivunen (2020, 199) indicated in their work that communication is moving towards to digital environment. Employees will use more internal or public social media in their interactions. It was suggested that there will be new communication channels in the future that are not being invented yet. (Valo & Sivunen 2020, 199.) So, it cannot be stated which is the right communication channel to use for each country. It is also hard to predict how cultures and remote communication will modify the status of communication in the future.

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COVER LETTER FOR QUALITATIVE STUDY

Hi,

I am studying International Business Management, and I am doing my master's thesis about cultural differences in digital organizational communication for Company X. I have been working in Company X for nine years and am currently on family leave.

Organizational communication is a vital part of a successful business, the topic is current and important. The main purpose of my study is to know the current state of communication inside the company and study how cultural differences are affecting it. I have divided the study into two parts, first I will interview some people from the HR and communication departments. Second, based on the answers, I will do a larger study, and create a questionnaire for all that work in the office.

I would like to ask if you are interested in taking part in this study. It takes about 15-20 minutes to answer all the questions. The answers will be anonymous, and you can either answer in English or your native language. Your answers will be priceless because they help to know the current state of communication and improve it if possible. It will also help me with my studies and my self-development.

You will find the questions below. If you prefer to answer, please fill up the questions and send answers back to me until 22 May 2022. Also, if you have any questions regarding this study or the thesis itself, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you do not feel comfortable answering or do not have time, I understand and want to thank you for your time.

Thank you for your time, help, and interest. Have a great upcoming summer!

With best regards,
Henna Takala

QUESTIONS OF A QUALITATIVE STUDY

1. In your point of view, what is the current situation of Company X's organizational communication?
2. Does the company have common instruction for communication? What instruction?
3. Which communication channels the company uses? Are those used for various occasions?
4. What factors, according to your experience, are important for the success of virtual communication? Could you give examples of successful communication situations?
5. English is Company X's corporate language. How do you choose which language to use? Does it depend for example, on the person, situation, country, region, or headquarters?
6. Would you like to see a change in any language or communication aspects? Could you give examples?
7. How do different cultural backgrounds affect communication? Do they affect?
8. What training the company has related to communication or cultural issues?
9. Please state anything else you would like to add about communication inside the company.
10. Could you briefly describe yourself and your job responsibilities, for example, your current role in the team and work history?

COVER LETTER FOR QUANTITATIVE STUDY

Hi YOU!

I am Henna Takala, a team leader from Finland, and I am doing my master's thesis about cultural differences in organizational communication in Company X. This questionnaire is related to my thesis. The main purpose is to know the current state of communication inside the company and study how cultural differences are affecting it. Organizational communication is a vital part of a successful business, the topic is current and important. Organizational communication is internal company communication, the task of which is to keep the employee up to date.

You will find the survey QR code underneath which you can use with your phone, or with a survey link to the questionnaire. You can choose the language of the questionnaire, and it takes max. 10 minutes to answer and is open until Friday the 12th of August. The questions are multiple-choice questions. Answers are processed completely anonymously. The study material is not forwarded, and the information is treated confidentially.

If you have any questions regarding this study or the thesis itself, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you do not feel comfortable answering or do not have time, I understand and want to thank you for your time. Hopefully, you are interested in and be a part of developing the communication inside the company. It will also help me with my studies and my self-development. Your answers will be priceless! Thank you!

With best regards,
Henna Takala

ANSWERS OF A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Question1:

"Nykytilanne mielestäni on ihan ok tasolla. Ei ehkä erityisen hyvä, muttei myöskään huonoa. Yleisenä haasteena pitäisin kuitenkin monikanavaisuutta. Kentällä myymälöissä käytetään mieluummin eri kanavia kuin toimistolla. Näin se tarkoittaa omalta osaltani pyrkiä seuraamaan useita väyliä, mikä aiheuttaa omat haasteensa." (Q1.) "Tällä hetkellä koen, että se on vähän epäselkeätä. Kuka tulee kommunikoida mistä, miten ja missä kanavassa. Kaipaisin myös avoimempaa kommunikointia, esim. kaikissa asioissa, jossa yritys on tehnyt joitain päätöksiä, Välillä tuntuu, että unohdetaan kommunikoida näistä koko henkilöstölle ja silloin syntyy helposti puskaradio efekti." (Q2.)

Question2:

"En ole törmännyt varsinaisiin ohjeisiin. Enemmän viestintään on oppinut käytännön kautta. Itse asiassa nyt kun asiaa miettii, niin etenkin Facebook tyylinen "Workplace" kanavana tarvitsisi oman "etikettinsä". Muussa tapauksessa voi taipua liian someksi peittäen asiasisällön, sekä voi aiheuttaa asiattomuuksia." (Q1.) "Ja tässä tarkoitan ehkä, miten siellä kommunikoidaan ja millä sävyllä jne., jotta on helpompi puuttua, jos joku keskustelu alkaa menemään epäasialliseen suuntaan." (Q2).

Question3:

"Viestintävälineinä toimivat sähköposti, Teams, Workplace ja intra. Lisäksi on erilaisia asiakasportaaleja toisiin sidosryhmiin, joissa on mm. tikettijärjestelmiä. Käyttötarkoituksen mukaan riippuu tosiaan mitä välinettä tulee käytettyä. Sähköposti on näistä se universaalein, Teams enemmän toimistolaisten välillä ja Workplace puolestaan myymälän suuntaan." (Q1.) Meillä on Intranet, Workplace, Teams, Sähköposti. Henkilökohtaisesti koen, että niitä on vähän liikaa, helposti jää viestejä huomaamatta, kun on liikaa eri kanavia mitä voi käyttää." (Q2.)

Question4:

"Virtuaalisessa kanssakäymisessä yleensä on hyväksi saada mahdollisimman paljon myös muut kommunikointivälineet, kuten kehonkieli mukaan. Siksi siis kameralla on oma paikkansa, vaikkei se pystykään täysin ajamaan samaa asiaa paikan päällä tapahtuvaa keskustelemista. Täytyy aina muistaa, että kirjoitettu viestintä voi aiheuttaa tulkintaa ns. "äänen painossa". Herkästi joku nopea vastaus voidaan tulkita töksäytykseksi. Kanssakeskustelijan mielialaa, kun on ruudun takaa lähes mahdotonta arvata." (Q1.)

Question5:

"Kielivalinta riippuu täysin, kenen kanssa keskustele. Toimistolla keskustelut käydään suomeksi. Kommunikoidessa Ruotsin suuntaan, niin englanniksi. Ruotsia kuulee myös erittäin paljon. Englanti ei siten kuulu ehkä niin pääkielenä, kun voisi ajatella. Tämä ei välttämättä ole huono asia, sillä jollain englannin käyttö saattaisi aiheuttaa lisäjännitystä, eikä tietynlainen luovuus pääsisi loistamaan arkailun vuoksi. Tällaista kielijännitystä on havaittavissa enemmän tilanteissa, jossa on useampi henkilö samaan aikaan läsnä." (Q1.) "Riippuu siitä kenelle kommunikoidaan. Jos kommunikoidaan suoraan Suomen henkilöstölle niin silloin kommunikointi tulee olla suomeksi/ruotsiksi, varsinkin jos kommunikoidaan myymälöille. Yleistä koko konsernia koskevaa infoa tulee monesti englanniksi. Joskus näitä käännetään suomeksi, jos info tärkeä ja pitää tavoittaa myös myymälähenkilökuntaa." (Q2.)

Question6:

"Kommunikointikanavia tulisi jotenkin pyrkiä vähentämään. Monikanavaisuus on omalta osaltaan ihan ok juttu, mutta sillä on myös työllistävä vaikutus. Sähköpostien määrää lähtisin vähentämään käyttämällä modernimpia työkaluja. Ihan jo M365 tarjoaa monenlaisia välineitä, ettei joitain Exceleitä tarvitsisi pyörittää useamman sähköpostin kautta, vaan olisi esimerkiksi OneDrivellä kaikkien muokattavissa. Keskustelu sen ympärillä puolestaan toteutettavissa Teamsin kautta." (Q1.) "Ei tällä hetkellä ei muuta, kun että Intranetin info tulee Suomessa olla myös ruotsiksi koska meillä on paljon ruotsinkielisiä myös töissä, esim. Ahvenanmaalla." (Q2.)

Question7:

"Kulttuuritaustojen en ole nähnyt suuresti vaikuttaneen. Ruotsalainen tapa taitaa olla sähköpostien aloitus: "Hope all is well" tyyppinen ilmaisu, joka näkyy sitten useinkin kirjoitetussa tekstissä eri muodoissa. Näin suomalaisena tapana on herkästi kertoa vain asia ja mennä eteenpäin. Tietysti perus ystävällisyys ja asiallisuus huomioiden. Kulttuurillisesti muuten ollaan kuitenkin sen verran lähellä, että hurttia huumoria uskaltaa välillä viljellä yleensä puolin ja toisin." (Q1.) "En ole huomannut tässä mitään sen suurempaa eroa. Välillä huomaa ehkä, että ruotsin kommunikointitapa eroaa jonkin verran siitä miten suomalaiset kommunikoivat. Ruotsissa voi kommunikointi olla "pehmeämpää" ja ei ehkä aina niin suoraa. Suomessa taas mennään monesti lyhyesti suoraan asiaan." (Q2.)

Question8:

"Tähän en osaa vastata. Itse en muista käyneeni erillistä harjoittelua aiheen suhteen.

Perehdytyksessä toki esiin nousee organisaatiokulttuuri, joka omalta osaltaan tietysti pitää sisällään joitain asioita kommunikointiin ja kulttuuriin liittyen." (Q1). "Tähän en osaa vastata.

Meidän kommunikointiosastomme antaa kyllä erittäin paljon hyvää tukea, vinkkejä ym. tarvittaessa." (Q2).

OPEN COMMENTS ON A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

"Narrowing it down to fewer channels as well as improving the layout and simplifying where to find information." (Q1.)

"Kaikki tärkeät asiat intraan ja helposti saataville, jotta ne ovat nähtävillä "yhdellä silmäyksellä". Kaikki vanhat turhat linkit ja sivut pois intrasta, sillä näihin tuhlautuu turhaan aikaa, kun etsii jotain ohjetta tms. Workplace on vapaampi "tila", jossa käydään keskustelua ja on paljon hyvää asiaa, mutta sieltä on vaikea jälkeensä löytää infoa. Workplacesta on välillä vastakkainasettelua ja tuntuu ihmeelliseltä, että samassa firmassa työskentelevät haastavat toisiaan. Näissä keskusteluissa saattaa olla kyse tiedon puutteesta." (Q2.)

"Toiveena olisi ehkä vieläkin läpinäkyvämpi keskustelu. Aika usein julkaistaan jotain, joka muuttuu kuitenkin vielä ja samaa asiaa saatetaan käydä läpi siitä syystä monet kerran. Toiveena olisi myös eriosastojen välisen keskustelun paraneminen. Usein on niin että mainoksissa on väärää tuotteita tai hintoja, jota kassa taas ei tunne. Tästä tulee olo, ettei myynti ja markkinointi välttämättä ole samalla sivulla. Tähän lisäten vielä monet kerran, kun keskusvarastolla ei ole vielä tuotetta saapunut sitä saatetaan markkinoida jo erikavissa. Valitettavan usein tällaiset asiat vaikuttavat merkittävästi myymälässä tapahtuvaan työhön. Paljon on hyvää tapahtunut esim. juuri Workplace ja itse tykkään ainakin siitä, että se on alusta, jossa toimitusjohtajasta kesätyöntekijään pystyy osallistumaan keskusteluun." (Q3.)

"Kanavien vähentäminen ja tiedon helpompi löytäminen. Jos tehdään muutoksia esim. Conetissa niin siitä tulisi informoida Workplacesta." (Q4.)

"Improvements in understanding and respect for a diverse culture. More personal contacts and meetings should be initiated and seen for better development of getting rid of prejudices." (Q5.)

"Jag tror att man själv måste ta ansvar över att få den information man behöver. Man får vända sig till sin chef om man saknar information och vill uppnå förbättringar. Intranet - Statisk information, man kan själv söka informationen. Mail - Information ej kopplade direkt till teams-grupper. Teams - Arbetsforum för dagligt arbete. Workplace - Tidsödande, ungefär som facebook - för den som har tid över." (Q6.)

"Viestintäkanavien selkiyttäminen ja ohjeistusten tekeminen huolella silloin kun niitä vaivaudutaan tekemään. Esimerkiksi uuden työntekijän asemassa informaatio on pirstaloitunut liian moneen eri paikkaan ja sitä on hankala löytää. Ohjeissa usein viitataan myös johonkin toiseen ohjeistukseen

jos haluat tietää lisää, klikkaa tästä"-tyylillä, joka jälleen vie ohjeistusta lukevan ihmisen eri ohjeistuksen pariin." (Q7.)

"Bättre tydlighet vilka forum man kommunicerar på och vad de olika forumen i huvudsak är tänkta för. En fråga företaget rekommenderar om hur snabbt det förväntas att man svarar på meddelanden på exempelvis Teams och WP" (Q8.)

"Set up regular video conference meetings through Teams with your overseas product manager, to improve work efficiency since we are far from beyond the head office." (Q9.)

"Organisaatiokaavion luominen tehtävän kuvauksineen auttaisi selkeyttämään kehen olla yhteydessä missäkin asiassa." (Q10.)

"Ett mer konsoliderad informationsflöde, det är problem med att det är för uppdelat så det blir lätt att missa saker." (Q11.)

"Asioista voisi tiedottaa kaikille laajemmin. Esimerkiksi lopettaneista/lopettavista henkilöistä, työntekijöiden vastuualueista ja tiimien rakenteista (kuka tekee mitä). Nyt tietoa tulee sirpaleisesti sieltä täältä, ja tiedonsaanti riippuu siitä, oletko sattumalta onnistunut liittymään oikeisiin Workplace-ryhmiin. WP-ryhmiä on paljon, jolloin osa viesteistä häviää "virtaan". Tällä hetkellä ei tunnu olevan yhtä selkeää pääkanavaa viestintään." (Q12.)

"Teams fungerar bra, Workplace blir ofta" för mycket" information. Kanske en generationsfråga om man inte har Facebook och är van vid denna typ av information." (Q13.)

"Ta bort eller förenkla Workplace" (Q14.)

"Utvärdera nuvarande kommunikationsflöden som också hänger ihop med organisationen och roller." (Q15.)

"Vem ska veta vad och hur får jag reda på det? Vem har vilken roll och vilket ansvar? Viktigt att hålla den informationen uppdaterad och lätt att hitta. Vilka kommunikationskanaler ska vi använda? Och till vad? Vilken kanal är lämplig för det som ska kommuniceras? Vilka kanaler ska alla bevaka? Vilka kan användas i mindre grupper? Ska det vara ungefärliga rimliga svarstider för respektive?" (Q16.)

"Workplace ger alla en möjlig röst men det blir lätt rörigt och extremt arbetstidskonsumerande. Svårt att hitta tillbaka. Där kan också en fråga eskalera i fel riktning om inte den person som verkligen kan svara på den får tag på den i tid." (Q17.)

"Teams ger många möjligheterringa, snabba frågor kollegor emellan också helt nya kontakter inom företaget, dela dokument, jobba i grupp, möten externt o internt, webinar med mera. Utmärkt kommunikationsverktyg för att få flyt i arbetet. Men lite svårt med sparade dokument för andra än inom gruppen." (Q18.)

"E-post är en bra bas, har blivit en lite mer formell plats liksom bästa kontaktytan utanför organisationen." (Q19.)

"Ensiksi voidaan kysyä tietysti, mikä on Code Of Conduct sisäisessä viestinnässä, onko sellaista vai saako tietoa viestiä haluamallaan tavalla ja vain yleisten tapojen ja normiston säätelemänä? Rajaamalla & ohjeistamalla. Nyt jokainen organisaation osa valitsee mieleisensä tavan viestiä, ja sen myötä tieto paitsi on lisääntynyt, myös sirpaloitunut eri välineisiin. Informaatioähky on luonnollinen seuraus tästä. Tärkein tieto Intraan, täydentävä tieto esimerkiksi Workplaceen. Koulutusta vaaditaan, koska esimerkiksi edelleen näkee postauksia, joissa kohdehenkilö on tagattu #-merkillä @:n sijaan. Diginatiivien määrä laskee luonnollisesti mutta välivaiheeseen tarvitaan auttavaa kättä uppotukkeja varten. Välineet itsessään eivät integroidu täydellisesti työympäristöön ongelmitta. (Q20.)

"Tieto aina intraan ja siten että näkee 2kk vanhojakin myymäläinfoja." (Q21.)

"Jag tycker att Workplace är en plats för typ "fika snack". Det tar för mycket tid av sin arbetstid om man skulle hänga med där. Teams är mycket bättre anpassat till mitt sätt att arbeta." (Q22.)

"Toivoisin enemmän tietoa erilaisista projekteista mitä taustalla tehdään ja minkälaisia tuloksia niillä saavutetaan." (Q23.)

"Jag upplever att Workplace är (för) stort och finns väldigt många bra grupper, men hur vet man vad som är viktigt och lagom mycket info/lagom många grupper att följa? Kan vara lätt att missa något, eller drunkna i informationsflödet." (Q24.)

"Organisationsschemat på Workplace blir sällan uppdaterat gällande vilka rollermedarbetare har när det sker förändringar i team osv. När någon slutar/börjar." (Q25.)

“Svårt att veta om det är Workplace eller Intranet som är bästa plattformen för den info man söker.” (Q26.)

“Intranet är inte alltid uppdaterat med tillsatta tjänster, vilket är synd - om man är intresserad i nya tjänster är det också intressant att veta vem som fått en tjänst. Samt ett sätt att veta vem man ska kontakta i olika frågor (kopplat till att organisationsschema på Workplace inte heller är aktuellt alltid).” (Q27.)

“En tiedä mistä tieto löytyy. Niin monessa paikkaa on tietoa. Osa siellä ja osa täällä. Jälkeenpäin tiedon etsintään kuluu liikaa aikaa (40min). Ei järkevää ajankäyttöä.” (Q28.)

“Mistä löytyy mikäkin tieto? eli mitä viestintäkanavia tulisi milloinkin käyttää?” (Q29.)

“Englannin kieli pitäisi olla WP:n yhteinen kieli. Ruotsiksi ja Norjaksi kirjoitetut viestit ei aina käänny oikein kääntäjällä, minkä vuoksi jotkin infot jäävät ymmärtämättä.” (Q30.)

“Kaikki yrityksen funktiot viestintäalustoille. Nyt vain harva kommunikoi tai vastaa kysymyksiin.” (Q31.)