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THE EFFECTS OF REMOTE SUPERVISION ON EMPLOYEES

Case: Finnish Red Cross (FRC) Fundraisers

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ABSTRACT

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Global landscape has transformed significantly in terms of where, when and how the work is carried out. Thanks to advanced technology, organizations can offer flexible working patterns for employees. In particular, employees no longer need to be at the same location as their managers to function. This however has changed the way of leading and managers would like to understand employees' experience of the new leadership style. This study therefore discovers the underlying reasons behind the effects of remote supervision on employees, with a focus on the face-to-face fundraisers of the Finnish Red Cross (FRC) in Vaasa city, who are managed remotely by a coordinator locating in Oulu.

The theoretical framework is developed based on the following themes: Research concept, remote supervision, employees under remote supervision and management strategies. Qualitative approach was used in this research to conduct exploratory interviews. There were three participants in total and the interviews were held in person with a semi-structured questionnaire in order to encourage the interviewees to elaborate their thoughts and opinions further.

Findings included the advantages and challenges of the FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa when they work independently from their coordinator. While autonomy was agreed as the biggest benefit, the lack of face-to-face communication were found as the most critical problem that the interviewees face. The results also indicated that the interviewees have strong and positive connection with the coordinator and instead, they are more concerned about the relationship with the team leader.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Working from a distance is predicted to become a part of the future, which can surpass working in a fixed location by 2025, due to its advantages (Remoters 2019). In the Nordic nations and particularly in Finland, agile working patterns involved in remote work have been embraced for decades (Savage 2019). Thanks to technology, these flexible working strategies allow employees to decide where, when and how to carry out their job duties. Remote employees therefore do not need to be in the same location as their employers to accomplish their tasks (Market Business News 2020).

The Finnish Red Cross (FRC), the biggest Finnish civic organization providing humanitarian aid, has launched face-to-face fundraising campaigns for more than a decade. Face-to-face fundraising is a broadly used fundraising method for non-profit organizations to recruit monthly donors through ambassadors who work in public streets, grocery stores or at people's front doors. Since the majority of FRC's revenue is funded by regular supporters, face-to-face fundraising becomes the most significant fundraising channel for the FRC (Varainhankinnan yhteenvetoraportti vuodesta 2018). FRC has about 50 to 60 in-house face-to-face fundraisers throughout Finland with outsourcing excluded. Face-to-face fundraisers reside in the same city working together as a team. In charge of recruitment, training and managing team performance are face-to-face fundraising coordinators. There are four coordinators and they each may oversee more than one team. Thus, teams that located in different cities than their coordinators are under remote supervision. Each team has a leader who is responsible for day to day operations such as scheduling work shifts, providing needed supplies and communicating instructions to team members. In general, team leaders act as intermediates between the coordinators and the team members in order to ensure their teams perform at peak efficiency.

While managing remotely, one of the coordinators of the FRC has encountered several issues among fundraisers in the city of Vaasa. Hence, the research topic for this thesis was suggested with a purpose to identify the effects of remote supervision on employees. This study will assist managers to understand the advantages and challenges of remote employees behind those effects. By knowing these, the coordinator in charge of the

fundraising team in Vaasa, as well as other coordinators, can benefit from it as they can draw better management strategies which help their fundraisers feel more comfortable when working independently from their managers. The results of this research can be used as a reference for other non-profit organizations confronting similar contexts and generally for managers who lead remote workforce.

1.1 Objectives

This thesis aims to explore how remote supervision influences employees. In addition, considering the employees' perception towards employers in remote work whilst offering solutions should challenges occur. In other words, the study focuses on the benefits as well as the obstacles from the employee's perspective under remote supervision.

As the research subject for this thesis regards the matters of the FRC's fundraising team in Vaasa when being supervised by an off-site coordinator, the main research question is "***How does remote supervision affect the FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa?***". In particular, the study attempts to find out the issues that Vaasa fundraisers face at work when working remotely from their manager. Below are the research questions which need to be solved in this thesis:

1. What are the advantages of the FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa city when working remotely from their coordinator?
2. What are the challenges of the FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa city working remotely from their coordinator?

The desired outcome of this thesis should be able to clarify elements that generate the effects on remote employees. While addressing the impacts of distance on the concerned employee's work, the research also determines the relationship between the employee and their remote supervisor, with the final aim in finding solutions for such issues. Thus, the following questions are considered:

3. How does remote supervision affect Vaasa fundraisers' perceptions of their manager?
4. What solutions could improve any negative effects that exist?

1.2   Case Company

Established in 1877, the Finnish Red Cross (FRC) is one of the largest non-governmental organizations in Finland that provides humanitarian assistance to those in great need. As a part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the FRC's mission is to aid people and protect the weakest when catastrophes or crises happen both in Finland and abroad according to seven fundamental principles. (Finnish Red Cross 2020). Since FRC functions independently, the organization has to raise funds by various methods. Among fundraising channels, monthly donations play a vital role in maintaining daily activities and ensuring that the organization is ready to save lives in emergency situations.

As other face-to-face fundraising teams around Finland, Vaasa's entity was formed in summer 2018 in order to seek new monthly donors for the FRC. The Vaasa team is managed remotely by a coordinator from Oulu. The team has four members, including the leader, and all are of different nationalities. Besides reports from the team leader, the coordinator monitors the activities of Vaasa fundraisers via a private group on Facebook where all the members can communicate about work-related topics. The team leader is responsible for planning fundraising locations as well as developing the schedules based on team member's wishes. Team members can discuss with their leader if there are any changes in agreed shifts and locations. In other instances, fundraisers can contact their coordinator by phone calls, emails or other communication methods.

1.3   Structure

This thesis includes five main chapters: Introduction, Theoretical study, Empirical study, Results and Analysis and Conclusion and Discussion. The introduction aims to direct the readers towards the main research context by providing information about remote work phenomenon, case company and final objectives. The theoretical frame defines the study concept as well as summarizes existing theories relevant to the current research. In the empirical methodology, the research will be implemented to explore the advantages and challenges of remote employees through FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa. Lastly, after the results are analyzed, the conclusion will present with further discussions regarding the reliability, validity, limitations and potential research that could be done in the future.

2 THEORETICAL STUDY

This section will present the theoretical outline by answering the core question of how remote supervision affects employees. The study concept and the remote supervision will be demonstrated in order to clarify unique natures of remote working environment that employees must confront. Conclusively, the main research problem will be developed through the study of Bardhi, Lassk & Nanavaty-Dahl (2009) whereby the challenges from remote employees' view is highlighted to suggest potential solutions for managers.

2.1 Research Concept

Concepts are used in theoretical study in order to explain new phenomena, contexts that help the readers comprehend what they otherwise would not be able to. Since this research relates to the broad field of remote work while there are numerous terms to describe the work that employees can perform without being in the same place with their managers. In addition, when the distance is considered in the relationship between the employers and the employees, classifying its scale is necessary to define the level of effects on the commuter's work. For instance, if the supervisors and the employees are in different countries, a great distance like that creates more challenges for the employees since it resonates with other factors such as time and culture. Hence, in order to direct the reader attention to the context that the research aims and avoid the possible confusions, this part delivers key definitions which are used during the thesis.

2.1.1 Working from a Distance

Working from a distance refers a working style in which employees can work from where else than the common workplace and the professionals usually choose to work from home (Douglas Öhrbom, 2018). However, thanks to advanced technology, the mobility at work becomes possible more than ever. In simple terms, people today are able to complete their tasks from multiple locations which generates a network of places for work named "Net Work" (Harrison et al., 2004). "Net Work" is classified into three main groups which are Office (first place), Home (Second place) and Anywhere (third place) (Ropo, Salovaara, Sauer & Paoli 2015, 56).

Figure 1. The Scale of Remote Working (Gascoigne 2017).

According to Gascoigne, founder and CEO of Buffer (2018) who has several years of experience in remote management, distance working can be divided into five levels from "not remote" to "fully distributed" (Figure 1). In the first level, the whole team works in the same office. Next on the second level are companies who start to offer their employees work-from-home options. The third level is described as a stage where work is more truly remote, but most of team members are still in one time zone. The fourth level is where teammates are located in different time zones. The final level indicates a team including nomads who move from place to place and bring work along their travel. In the last level of remote work, the possibility of geographically distributed collaboration has led to a special working environment called "Virtual Workspace".

2.1.2 Virtual Workspace

"Virtual spaces. A wide variety of tools and devices enable individuals that are not in the same working location or are at a great distance from each other and whose interaction is mediated by a computer and internet to perform collaborative work together. A virtual world is a very specific and powerful collaborative working environment. In virtual

worlds, the contextual factors and actors are shown as digital representations of real-world contexts and actors." (Ropo et al. 2015, 135)

From the definition of Ropo et al. (2015), a virtual workspace is defined as a workplace which is not located in any physical space. It is established by the worldwide network of several locations connected by global Internet and organization-wide intranet. In short, people are able to carry out their work and connect to each other from any places such as homes, offices, airports, hotel lobbies regardless of geographic boundaries. In virtual world, communication between team members is maintained by both simple tools like phone, email as well as the complex environments which are integrated by many tools such as video conferencing and group calendar.

As claimed by the research of Fisher & Fisher (2001), virtual teams, which in this thesis represent the connection between supervisors and employees, can be classified into six categories. Each category consists of different attributes which are based on three critical dimensions: Time, Space and Culture. Table 1 below displays six types of virtual teams.

Table 1. Types of Virtual Teams (Fisher & Fisher 2001)

Team Type	Same Time	Same Space	Same Culture
1	No	Yes	No
2	No	No	No
3	Yes	No	No
4	No	Yes	Yes
5	No	No	Yes
6	Yes	No	Yes

In a nutshell, there are various terms used to describe the work that is completed in other locations than the organizational premises such as telecommuting, telework, work-from-home (WFH), remote work, flexible work and virtual work (Rozier 2017). In spite of certain differences, these buzzwords are overlapping on one point: There is a physical distance between the employees and their managers as well as their coworkers and clients in which the interactions are built by telecommunication-related technologies. Therefore,

in this thesis, these terms are interchangeable and the relationship between the supervisors and the employees will act as teams so that the theories about virtual teams can be applied flexibly.

2.2 Remote Supervision

The result of globalization and advanced technologies have emerged new ways of working in both levels of individual telework and distributed teamwork. These tasks are completed regardless of the locations of participants, which include the geographical separation between the supervisors and the employees. Therefore, besides explaining the growth of remote work by discussing its advantages from the enterprises view; this section also points out communication methods used in remote supervision as a fundamental distinction from face-to-face environment.

2.2.1 Advantages of Remote Workforce

In terms of advantages of remote workforce, the State of Remote Work (2019) survey shows that 56% of global corporations allow the employees working from a distance and this statistic is on the rise. The reason why remote work is gaining popularity is because this style of work benefits businesses in several ways. Below are three most essential benefits of using tele-workforce which are collected from different sources:

Cost savings: Since remote workforce provides the flexibility in working locations, the companies can save a large sum of money spending on office estate, electricity, furniture and other overhead costs. According to Global Workplace Analytics report, businesses in the U.S could save more than $500 billion every year in operating expenses if half of the employees used 50% their time to complete the tasks from home than regular office (Moseley 2019). Additionally, using flexible workforce can be a solution for organizations balancing the budget during crisis times as well as avoiding having excess labor and redundancies. From the perspective of companies using virtual teams, travel expenses such as plane tickets, hotel, food and transportation fees can be reduced substantially by replacing in-person meetings with affordable communication technologies. (D. DuFrene 2011, 5).

Talent pool enhancement: Offering remote working arrangements becomes the key driver in today's business success because of its capability of attracting and retaining top talent (WeWork 2019). With remote working options, companies can expand the professional searching radius to reach more suitable candidates without being limited to geographic boundaries. The firms can hereby not only open themselves up to a larger pool of applicants but also increase the savings account by hiring employees who have the same skills as local workers at the lower cost (Remoters 2019). Location independence also has a great influence on the decisions of youth about whether to work for a company or not; since 68% of millennials would favour a position that can be worked remotely rather than a fixed site one (Shepherd 2020). Furthermore, allowing employees to work from a distance supports corporations to deal with brain-drain of Boomer retirement because 75% employees who belongs to this generation would continue working if the remote working was possible. (Moseley 2019).

Greater productivity: Having remote options in companies equals a rise in productivity of both the employees and the managers. Studies found that the employees work more effectively when they feel trusted by their superiors as well as when they can decide the work routines themselves. As proof, according to a research of Stanford University, there was not only an impressive productivity boost, fewer sick days, but also a 50% reduction in employee attrition among home-based workers compared with the traditional ones. (WeWork 2019). On the other hand, incorporating distributed teams into business processes also improves the efficiency of the employers because the management layers and a lot of bureaucratic hassle are eliminated (D. DuFrence 2011, p. 6). For instance, instead of wasting time on micromanaging, a supervision style characterized by extreme control and attention to minor units of the employee's workflow, the managers can employ their time in other duties (HRZONE 2020).

Besides three strongest arguments mentioned above, there are plenty of other benefits delivered by remote workforce such as positive environmental impact, the diversity in workplaces and the increase of employee loyalty. These plusses explain why companies are embracing more flexible working patterns on businesses. (Bibby 2019).

2.2.2 Distance Communication

Communication is emphasized in this part since it is one of the primary distinctions in the collaboration of remote workspace compared with the traditional environment (Nydegger & Nydegger 2010). Thus, in this thesis, the methods in distance communication are considered as fundamental differences between the remote supervision and the face-to-face one in order to analyze the influences of the distance on the employee's work in the coming section.

Distance communication is defined as situations of interpersonal interaction in which the geographical distance between the participants is over the limitations on human physiology (Oxford University Press 2019). However, technical advancements provide the communicative solutions to shorten the physical gap in communication within the relations of remote teams. The mediated communication technologies are divided into two groups which are: Asynchronous communication and synchronous communication. Asynchronous communication refers the exchanging of information between remote participants at individual pace. In other words, the employees use their own computer terminals to complete independently the tasks assigned before in their own time. The tools deliver asynchronous communication including email, newsgroups and distance education software. On the other hand, synchronous communication refers the simultaneous interactions between remote participants. This means using synchronous communication delivering face-to-face conversations for the users. The tools provide synchronous consisting of video conferencing, conference calls and Web conferencing. (Smith 2014, 3-5)

According to Nydegger (2009), the quality of communication defines the success of a team collaboration. However, the information technology is unable to transferred fully communicative acts like in face-to-face interactions. The drawbacks of distance communication are described in the figure below.
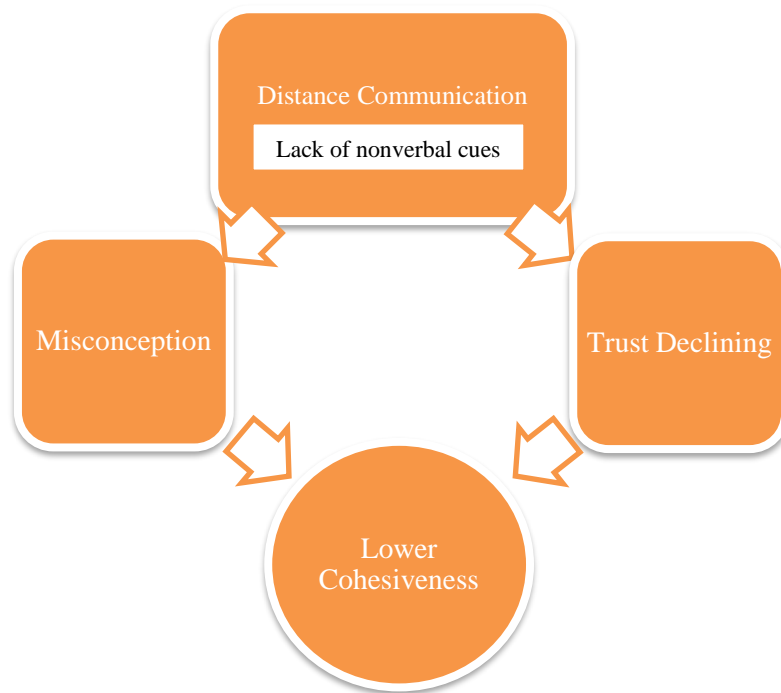
Figure 2. Challenges in Distance Communication.

Nydegger et al (2010) highlights that the lower cohesiveness in remote relations is the consequence caused by misunderstanding and the decline of trust in distance communication. The reason is that the participants find difficulty in building the common context based on technologies due to the lack of non-verbal cues and voice inflection. Moreover, information delivered by asynchronous or even synchronous tools has fewer visual signals than in physical contacts, hence the trust between remote members tends to decrease. These are core issues leading to the diminution of group connection, which affects directly to the cohesiveness, a key factor of any collaboration success.

2.3   Employees under Remote Supervision

In the book, titled "Working at a Distance", Smith (2014) claims that a geographically dispersed team requires different strategies than a traditional team. In particular, while remote managers need suitable tactics to lead the teams from a distance, the employees need certain skills to be able to perform their work independently. Moreover, the author also mentions that virtual employees, who use Web technologies to complete the tasks

remotely, play the crucial roles in the team's success since they are people who contribute majorly to the development of organizations (Smith 2014, 77). In the context of this study, virtual workforce is considered as remote employees in general. This section therefore presents crucial competencies for success in remote environment as well as positive and negative effects of remote supervision on employees.

2.3.1 Essential Competencies of Remote Employees

Duarte & Snyder (2001) state six key qualifications added to face-to-face team members in order to ensure the productive collaboration in virtual workspace, which are project management competency, co-operative skills, technological orientation, self-managed ability, the capability of boundary awareness and interpersonal understanding. However, since the research problem concerns distance work, this thesis identifies five characteristics needed for an employee to succeed in the remote work. These include technical proficiency, remote collaboration, self-management, interpersonal awareness and communication, these will be considered further below.

Technical proficiency refers to the employee's ability to apply technology to working activities. This competency is expected higher in remote work than in face-to-face work because the coordination and communication between the remote participants are mostly conducted by technology. Therefore, even every team member has different backgrounds, a certain technical knowledge is required to ensure that the employees are able to select and access appropriate tools to collaborate from a distance (Duarte et al. 2006).

Remote Collaboration includes the skills that allow the employees to cooperate effectively toward the particular goals regardless of the physical distance (Finch 2018). On the other hand, this trait is defined as "Networking" competency which requires the members to be aware of organizational overview and stakeholders. Moreover, the capacity to schedule suitable time and employ proper types of communication technology to assure smooth cooperation with others is also considered as related skill of networking (Duarte et al. 2006).

Self-Management in this context, is concerned with the ability of employees in establishing a work-life balance. Since without this competency, the flexibility in remote work might blurs the boundary between work life and personal life which leads the laborers to overwork or underwork (Christoff 2019). Therefore, Duarte & Snyder (2006) also clarify self-management as a key capability which supports the geographically distributed members to set the priorities, goals, limits for professional work and home life as well as to create the guidelines for individual improvement.

Interpersonal Awareness concerns self-awareness of the employees and relevant skills which support them to create the connection with other participants (Janowiak 2016). On the other hand, interpersonal awareness is described by Duarte et al. (2006) as the competency assisting the virtual laborers in being aware of their roles, their influences on the team result as well as in recognizing the strengths, weaknesses of them and others to execute the development. This explains why teams including members who have strong interpersonal awareness achieve better performances (Janowiak 2019).

Communication plays a crucial role in the success of any remote teams where the long geographical distance becomes a barrier between the members. Even with technological advances, good communication skills are needed for the employees to succeed in flexible work. An effective communication refers to a smooth information exchange process in which all the parties understand the current situation and avoid as much misunderstandings. Therefore, remote participants should always be clear and concise in expressing messages as well as be clever to use appropriate tools at the right time. (6Q Blog 2019)

2.3.2 Positive Effects

According to Mulki, Bardhi, Lassk & Nanavaty-Dahl (2009), the positive effects of remote supervision on employees are lower absenteeism, higher job satisfaction and greater retention. These are results translated from the benefits that employees acquire from the flexible working pattern. Hence, the greatest advantages of working remotely from the view of employees will be explored below as reasons explicating those good influences.

Autonomy is one of the biggest pros of distance work which contributes the most to the beneficial effects on employees agreed by most studies. This advantage provides remote employees the freedom to tailor their professional schedules to their personal obligations and preferences (Smith 2019). When the employees have more opportunities to decide when to perform their work, they do not need to be absent from the office for personal needs such as attending a health check, picking kids from school or other miscellaneous tasks (James 2019). Accordingly, remote workers can spend more quality time with their loved ones and themselves than those who are tied to traditional working routines. This explains why remote employees feel more satisfied with their jobs since they are happier when they can achieve a better work-life balance. (Toggl 2019).

The autonomy of working under off-site manager also allows employees to determine where, and how the tasks are done, if they ensure the quality of their performance and meet the deadline set for them. The employees hereby have the freedom to customize their workspace and operate in a way that they are most productive. For instance, some people are only able to perform at their best in a tidy room in the daytime, while others are more creative when working at a messy desk or curled up on the couch in the late night. (Hunkeler 2018; Summers 2020). Furthermore, with the right to control working environment, the employees can dodge typical distractions and etiquette rules of regular company's premises, thus they are more efficient because they can devote more time to the main duties and customers (Apgar 1998).

Another great plus for people working remotely is that they do not need to deal with daily commutes, especially long-distance journeys. Commuting, whether by private vehicle or public transport, is a serious day to day nuisance consuming a significant amount of time and money. For example, one-way travel to work in the US requires an average of 26.1 minutes while in Finland, commuting adds approximately three-quarters of an hour to the working day (The U.S Census Bureau, 2017; Yle, 2015). At the same time, as reported by Global Workplace Analytics, commuters can waste annually between 2000 to 6500 U.S. dollars more on transportation expenses as well as in other expenditures such as eating out, formal outfits and childcare costs compared to half-time teleworkers (Jay 2019). Alternatively, when commuting to work, people frequently confront with several

sources of stress including traffic congestion, crowds and inclement weather. These are obvious causes for the higher rates of lateness and absence in the workplace. Besides, enduring the pressure of extended commutes in the long run can leads the employees to medical problems and further matters relating to work performance, personal relationships and social connections. (Durham 2020). In a research with the aim of analyzing the impact of commuting on various facets of Subjective Well-Being (SWB), the authors also indicate that shorter commutes are associated with increased job satisfaction, leisure time gratification and improved mental health (Clark, Chatterjee, Martin & Davis 2019). Therefore, no commute to work means employees have more time, extra money and better wellness which are prerequisites for a healthier work-life balance.

From the previous analysis, job autonomy and no daily work commute are contributing factors to a greater sense of work-life balance. The employees reach this comfortable state when they are able to reconcile their employment priorities and private needs. In other words, the demands of an employee's career should not become threats to their personal happiness and wellbeing (Business Dictionary 2020). This means an employee with the right equilibrium has less burnout and sickness, which are top causes of absenteeism in the workplace (Sidekicker 2020). Moreover, with a good work-life balance, the employees are more engaged and mindful in their work since they can dedicate their focus on the tasks instead of worrying about family responsibilities and other private commitments. From the arguments presented, it can be concluded that the employee's pleasure in life affects greatly their work's success which is reflected comprehensibly in lower absence rate, higher degrees of job enjoyment and loyalty. (Wedgwood 2019).

Besides work-life balance, the rise in employee engagement is the second common value generated from the direct advantages of mobile work that explains the higher levels of employee's satisfaction and retention. In remote working environment, the employees experience great faith from their supervisors because they are given the freedom to do their basic responsibilities and make decisions that they believe benefit the organization. As trusted employees feel more valued, they engage more in their tasks which translates into higher profitability and stronger sense of job enjoyment (Harriss 2019). A study from PayScale revealed that 72% of employees said they are satisfied in their jobs when they

can work on their own while only 26% have similar feeling when they always need to ask their managers for their actions. The study also shows a larger percentage of workers planning to pursue new jobs inclines to the ones who do not receive any confidence from their employers compared with those who are trusted by their superiors. Hence, trust, an essential foundation of any effective teams in traditional workplace, becomes a key to employee's positive effects in distance work. (Business News Daily 2020).

In sum, autonomy and zero-commute are two major advantages of remote work assisting employees on maintaining a healthy work-life balance as well as making them feel more valued and motivated in their jobs. When employees achieve those benefits, they have lower absenteeism rate and experience more joyful at work which generally results in higher level of organizational commitment. The figure below will summarize the main points of this section.

Advantages
- Autonomy
- No commute/ Relocation

Benefits
- Healthy work-life balance
- The rise in employee engagement

Positive Effects
- Lower absence
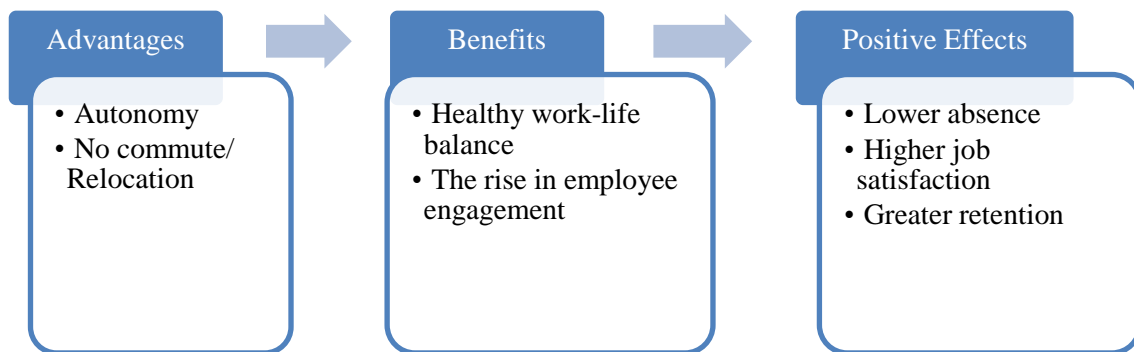- Higher job satisfaction
- Greater retention

Figure 3. Positive Effects of Distance Work on Employees.

2.3.3 Negative Effects

Aside from various conveniences, working at a distance has its fair share of matters that employees need to pay attention. According to Mulki et al. (2009), there are four critical challenges in remote work: Setting the right work-life balance, the isolation, the shortage of face-to-face communication and the lack of visibility. However, this segment will examine the difficulties of remote employees in staying disciplined and communication as two main elements shaping the attendance rate, the levels of job satisfaction and retention to the negative direction.

The first challenge of telecommuters is how to stay disciplined so that a firm boundary between professional work and personal life is maintained. Most of employees struggle to keep a regular schedule because when working from a distance, they have all the freedom to control their day without the management oversight. Accordingly, employees will fall into two cases: Overload or slacking off. In the initial scenario, since employees find difficult to disengaging from work, they not only put extra hours per day but also keep working on weekends, holidays or even in sick days. A study suggests that remote professionals work 1.4 more days every month resulting in three more weeks per year than traditional counterparts (Caramela 2020). Among several reasons, a study of Mulki et al. (2009) claims three solid arguments explaining why employees are overcompensating in remote arrangements. The first reason is the absence of the common spatial, temporal and social dividing lines between work and life domains. Unlike classic workplace with established regulations, mobile environment requires employees to separate their personal roles from their professional duties themselves which is more difficult to achieve because of the 24-hour availability of technological supports. The second reason is the nature of distance work turning against work-life balance itself. Remote work is likely to be performed differently so employees frequently confront with greater volume of electronic communication due to the lack of contexts and norms. The third reason relates to employee's psychological need for acknowledgement. Numerous teleworkers, especially who belong to distributed teams, admitted they have great demands for being recognized by other participants, hence they strive to work extended hours and accomplish all expectations to be more visible. In the end, no matter which case employees involve in, working

excessive overtime results in stress and burnout impacting massively on well-being and work-life equilibrium. (Mulki et al. 2009).

The second outcome of a poor discipline is that remote employees tend to slack off due to both self-directed and external interruptions during their day. With the authority to work from anywhere and anytime, the employees have strong awareness that there is no manager over their shoulders to monitor them, hence they easily fall into distractions or the traps of procrastination. According to Mobile Workforce report 2018 of Avast Business, 45.5% and 40.5% of employees confirmed that distraction and procrastination are two pitfalls of distance work, respectively. It means instead of working, the employees can go back to bed, surfing social media networks or taking other favorite activities such as going for a swim, going for a movie during their set working hours. (Orchard 2020). On the other hand, the lack of remote employee performance is caused by interruptions from their families, neighbours or surrounding people. For example, the employees are expected to share household chores and childcare provision by their significant others. The reason is families of remote employees, especially young kids do not understand that their parents are not available even they are at home (Pinola 2020). Therefore, dealing with different kinds of distractions and interruptions when working remotely, employees hardly dedicate to their tasks which leads to the decreases of productivity.

The second challenge in remote work that employees have to face is the lack of face-to-face communication. This is selected as one of the two foremost challenges in remote workplace because it explains why employees feel more isolated and invisible. As mentioned in 2.2.2 section, in remote working environment, the information is exchanged among participants primarily via electronic mode which includes asynchronous and synchronous communication (Smith 2014, 3-5). Compared with face-to-face interaction, the limitation of electronic communication is the shortage of richness and social presence, and thus it requires longer time to express the ideas. This accordingly amplifies feelings of isolation at work because it is difficult for remote employees to build trust and social relationships due to the lower degree of attentiveness and the missing cues. Remote employees perceive isolation senses when they are devoid of support from their colleagues and supervisors. Specifically, isolation perceptions are described as a state where

employees experience disconnected feelings from others in the same organization and do not know whom or when they should contact to get advice or assistance. These perceptions arise understandably because remote employees miss more opportunities for social and emotional connections with their coworkers which they frequently have in traditional setups such as informal conversations and coffee breaks. From another perspective, Mulki et al. (2009) paper emphasizes that the lack of management action is a major element in the sense of workplace isolation of an employee. Management actions can be interpreted as one-to-one meetings and other follow-up activities which show care for employee's contributions from their supervisors. Thusly, employees experience isolation when their supervisors do not provide enough attention to their work and achievement. Employees who feel isolated are inefficient, demotivated and disengaged at work since they do not have a sense of belonging at their organization (Robinson 2019). That is why employees, especially those feel isolated are unsatisfied with their jobs as well as have lower level of organizational commitment. (Mulki et al. 2009).

Another concern of distance communication, especially asynchronous methods, is that the employees feel they are invisible because of the lower volume of physic interactions (Stahl 2019). Consequently, remote employees consider their lack of visibility as an obstacle in their contributions to the company's success and their professional development. Although it is not a major matter, remote employees feel they have to work harder than their traditional counterparts to be acknowledged. As evidence, in several cases, remote employees are not able to access information about important events, new projects, or future career opportunities until they become old news. Remote employees believe that their low visibility is a result of their reluctance to talk proudly about their accomplishments. In other words, people work remotely find the experience to be invisible when their contributions are ignored by their superiors. Therefore, beside losing out on opportunities, remote employees, who feel their contributions are not appreciated have lower work outcomes. (Mulki et al. 2009).

In short, maintaining self-discipline to achieve a healthy work-life balance and the lack of face-to-face communication are two critical challenges that employees face in remote working environment. Without essential competencies, remote employees could endure

consequences of a poor work-life balance as well as isolation and invisibility perceptions. Those negative effects are reflected in the higher absenteeism rate, lower degrees of job satisfaction and retention. The figure below will present the whole ideas of this section.
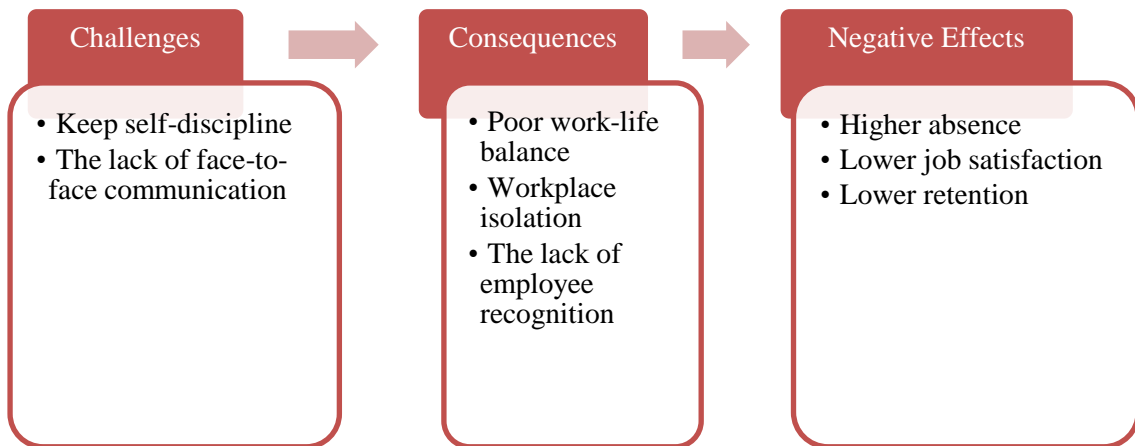
Challenges	Consequences	Negative Effects
• Keep self-discipline • The lack of face-to-face communication	• Poor work-life balance • Workplace isolation • The lack of employee recognition	• Higher absence • Lower job satisfaction • Lower retention

Figure 4. Negative Effects of Distance Work on Employees.

2.4   Management Solutions

The purpose of navigating major concerns in remote work from the employee perspective is to explore appropriate solutions for the manager's benefit. This segment hereby suggests management strategies that are drawn based on numerous interviews with remote employees and their supervisors from the research of Mulki et al. (2009). These strategies will be addressed respectively following the two foremost issues which are setting the right work-life balance and the lack of face-to-face communication. The section also offers detailed tactics for managers to reduce employee's accompanying feelings of isolation and invisibility.

In order to support remote employees finding the balance between work and life, or in other words, to maintain workplace discipline, the managers need to set certain organizational norms. Due to the absence of structured routines in traditional work environment, the employees tend to overwork. Thus, the first action that the managers need to do is to establish remote work guidelines for their employees. A successful manager is the one who knows how to formulate and communicate remote policies in the most practical way. For instance, the managers should make their subordinates understand the importance of leisure time and advise them not to work in weekends or holidays. Besides discussing good practices of a healthy work-life, the managers should model how they stabilize those domains for their juniors. The second management strategy to prevent employee burnout is to prioritize work assignments. By ranking which tasks should be completed first based on their importance and providing feedback frequently, the supervisors can assist their employees to manage excessive workload without feeling overwhelmed. Finally, the managers need to remember that remote work has its unique nature which requires greater volume of communication in various methods; therefore, when planning activities, the managers should estimate carefully how long the task will take. (Mulki et al. 2009).

Contrary to working long hours, slacking off is the flip side of a poor discipline that remote employees likely to get when there is no direct oversight. In order to counter employees slacking off, the managers need to set clear expectations for their remote teams. An explicit goal accompanies by specific measurements as well as structured schedules for check-ins and assessment. Creating a smart goal equals formulating a clear direction which keeps the employees on track so that they can deliver desired outcomes for the organization. (Remote Year 2020).

To tackle the lack of in-person contact, remote managers should utilize fully the opportunities to activate and enhance face-to-face interaction as well as assist their employees overcome the challenges in virtual communication. Depending on the extent possible of organization, the managers should meet their employees in person at least once a year. In case physical meetings are not feasible, electronic communication tools can be used as alternative solutions. However, to strengthen the relationship with remote employees, the managers need to know how to communicate effectively using technology. A manager

with appropriate strategies is able to conduct powerful remote conversations which can bust employee isolation and invisibility feelings. (Mulki et al. 2009).

Workplace isolation in remote environment is closely associated with management actions since the employees perceive their superiors as organizational representatives, who are responsible for creating effective communication and a sense of belonging at work. To mitigate employee isolation, managers can apply four strategies concluded from the research of Mulki et al. (2009). The first tactic that managers can do is to use technology to conduct informal and periodic check-ins with their employees. This action can be held as one-on-one or team meetings with the purpose of understanding the matters that employees face in remote arrangements. During casual conversations, give and take are unconsciously developed inside remote employee's mind which conveys a great sense of manager's availability and support. The second management action to foster a stronger feeling of belonging is to encourage social interactions among remote participants, especially between the managers and their subordinates. In other words, besides formal meetings; managers should organize frequent teleconferences whereby attendees can share their news rather than work-related concerns. Online workshops, virtual birthday celebrations, or remote contests are examples of social events that managers can network with their juniors. Those casual activities not only support managers to bond with their subordinates but also provide opportunities for employees to learn more about the organization as well as share their experiences about working remotely. The third management solution to reduce the isolation in remote working is to pair up employees. If remote employees lived close to the company office, the managers could match them to traditional colleagues. Otherwise, the managers can set up some mentoring programs in which an experienced remote worker can be an adviser to a new one. Lastly, by providing facilitation packages and encourage team members to be more supportive, managers can ensure a smooth transition to remote work and a high sense of togetherness for their newly hired employees. (Mulki et al. 2009).

Similarly, the techniques managers apply to deal with their subordinates play a crucial role in reducing employee invisibility. For this concern, the study of Mulki et al. (2009) proposes three critical strategies that managers can leverage the employee recognition in

remote workplace. First, managers should praise their employees' achievements to make them feel more noticeable. Whether success is driven by an individual or a team, skillful managers would ensure their employees' contributions are acknowledged by others throughout the organization. For instance, managers can publish the greatest accomplishments on company channel where all members are able to engage with the recognition (Nelson 2020). Second, managers must signal management accessibility to their remote employees. Accessible managers are the ones who inform their subordinates that they remain open to both formal and informal discussions. In order to have effective virtual communication, managers should set guidelines on when they are active and how they response to different connection tools. Moreover, managers should address common workplace or personal issues during team meetings and individual conversations. Third, organizations should formulate best practices to reinforce inclusion in remote working environment. For example, companies can execute specialized training courses which approach unique concerns of remote work and best practices to overcome those. The programs should be provided broadly not only to new remote hires, but also to experienced employees and to relevant supervisors. To ensure effective communication flows in the organization, managers should create a database which stores information about team members as well as a collection of frequent questions and answers relating to issues in remote work arrangements.

CHALLENGES	• MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
Work-life balance	• Establish remote work guidelines • Prioritize employee assignments • Consider the nature of remote work when planning activities
Lack of face-to-face communication	• Schedule in-person meetings • Use communications technology to stay connected
Workplace isolation	• Conduct informal and periodic check-ins with employees • Encourage social interaction among team members • Set up mentoring matching programs • Provide facilitation packages for new remote hires
Lack of visibility	• Praise employees' achievements • Signal management accessibility • Formulate best practices to foster inclusion in remote work

Figure 5. Management strategies

Figure 5 above summarizes four sets of management strategies for critical corresponding challenges in remote work environment that managers can apply to support their teams thrive. However, even with the best experienced managers, not all employees succeed by working remotely. Therefore, managers need to put extra effort into recruitment process to hire qualified candidates who have necessary competencies mentioned in sub section 2.3.1 to be able to operate in challenging workplaces.

3   EMPIRICAL STUDY

Empirical research refers the collection of data based on observation and measurement of phenomena through experiments in actual field (Emerald Publishing 2020). In order to identify root causes behind the effects of remote supervision on employees, the empirical research of this thesis will be applied to fundraisers of the FRC in Vaasa who are managed remotely by a coordinator from Oulu. This section will present the research methodology, data collection and methods used to analyze the data.

3.1   Research Methodology

An academic research can be conducted either by deductive or inductive approach. A deductive approach starts with the acknowledgement of existing theory then check it against the data. On the contrary, an inductive approach begins with the data collection then develop new theory. (Emerald Publishing 2020). This research aims to interpret the advantages as well as challenges of FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa regarding the lack of direct supervision from their coordinator. As there are existing findings related to remote employees' experiences and the results of this research intend to reinforce the existing theories, deductive approach will be used in this research.

In empirical research, quantitative and qualitative are methods which are used to collect the data from participants. While quantitative technique focuses on gathering numerical data to establish facts, qualitative technique focuses on obtaining non-numerical data such as texts, images or sounds to explore extensive insights into phenomena. Accordingly, the sample size required for qualitative method is smaller compared to quantitative method. In addition, qualitative research prefers open-ended questions rather than closed ones since they allow respondents to express the answers freely. (Streefkerk 2020).

In this research, qualitative approach is chosen over quantitative approach. The topic of this study was suggested by an area coordinator of the FRC who would like to understand the experiences of fundraisers located in Vaasa when they are under remote supervision. Quantitative method therefore may be insufficient to express the thoughts and feelings of

those fundraisers. Moreover, face-to-face fundraising team in Vaasa is a small team with totally four members while quantitative method requires a greater number of respondents.

A research can involve using one or more methods of data collection and the four most common ones used in qualitative approach are: Interviews, Focus groups, Observations and Oral histories. As this research aims to obtain in-depth information on the opinions, thoughts and feelings of FRC's fundraisers in the city of Vaasa, qualitative research will be conducted through interviews. In particular, the data collection process in this study will be held as in-person conversations where the researcher personally goes through all the open-ended questions with the respondents. Moreover, face-to-face interview allows the researcher to adjust the upcoming questions to responses in the real time exchange. (Ainsworth 2020).

The sample of a research can be selected either by probability or non-probability method. Probability sampling is a technique whereby the research participants will be selected randomly. Non-probability sampling works the opposite direction, where the participants will be selected intentionally according to some criteria such as convenience or quota. For this research, purposive sampling is applied to select the individuals of the population for the interviews. Purposive sampling is also known by different names, for instance, selective, judgmental or subjective sampling. This sampling is a form of non-probability sampling technique that is used to choose research participants based on the subjective judgment of the researcher. In this study, the original idea of the researcher is to identify why there are more problems arising from FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa than the other teams. Therefore, when using purposive sampling, FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa become the interviewees who are most relevant to the purpose of this research. (Foley 2018; McCombes 2020).

The interviews in this research are designed based on semi-structured format in order to gather information related to the theoretical frame, but also provide the interviewees the opportunity to elaborate further on the topic. In other words, semi-structured interviews include the features of both unstructured and structured interviews. On the other hand, an unstructured interview with unprepared questions would be too broad to evaluate a set of

data and a structured interview with pre-determined questions could limit the researcher to explore insights on a phenomenon. (McLeod 2014).

3.2   Data Collection

The data collection process of empirical research begins when the interview questions ready. These questions are formed based on the main research problem as well as the theoretical framework. Since the goal of this research is to explore in-depth reasons for the effects on employees of remote supervision, advantages and challenges of working from a distance **(subsection 2.3.2 and 2.3.3)** is the main part to receive answers in the interviews. Moreover, the interviews include questions to assess briefly the competencies of the participants as those are elements which influence how employees perceive the challenge level of remote work. In semi-structured interviews, the questions start with "what", "how" and "why" to encourage the respondents to express their experiences, thoughts and feelings (Cullen 2019). The interview questions are displayed in appendix 1.

The next step is to contact the research participants who are fundraisers of the FRC in Vaasa city to arrange the interviews. Since the interviews are conducted in-person, not only is the duration of meetings estimated in advance but also interview schedules and locations are agreed based on the convenience of both the researcher and the respondent. The interviews are recorded in audios so that the researcher is able to pay fully attention to the conversations rather than taking notes as well as easily produce the transcripts later.

3.3   Analysis of Data

The answers of participants from the interviews are analyzed based on Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA), which is a process of transformation of collected statistic into useful information or understandable explanation of the research subjects. QDA involves four main steps: data collection, transcription, data comparison and summary of results. (Udemy 2014). In this research, the key answers of participants to interview questions based on the theoretical sections are classified by different colors for the ease of studying. **Table 2** below is an example of how the qualitative collected data is analyzed.

Table 2. Analysis of collected data

THEORY	SECTION	KEY ANSWERS FROM PARTICIPANTS
Background Information	Essential Competencies of Remote Employees (2.3.1)	"I graduated from Hamk University of Applied Sciences"
Advantages of Remote Employees	Possitive Effects (2.3.2)	"I feel trusted by my coordinator"
Challenges of Remote Employees	Negative Effects (2.3.3)	"I think the biggest challenge related to communication issues"
Suggestions for Management Strategies	Management Solutions (2.4)	"I think the coordinator should assist employees to use appropriate methods of communication in the right situations"
Other	Team Situation	"The coordinator should remain neutral mind when something happens among his employees"

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results and analysis of the interviews as well as the findings of the research will be present. First, the results of the interviews will be described one by one with focus on the key points and themes based on earlier theories and research questions. There are four FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa including the team leader and the researcher of this thesis is one of them, wherefore only three interviews were conducted in total. The interviews were held as one-on-one meetings between January and February 2020 with specific schedules and locations agreed by both parties. They lasted around 15 to 30 minutes and the audio recorder was used during those times. Although the sample of this research is small, the results were concluded as being saturated since there were no new ideas appearing in the final interview. In the last sub-section of this chapter, a summary of all interview results will be given.

In this research, although the FRC's coordinator manages a multinational fundraising team in Vaasa, cultural aspect will not be taken into consideration. Hence, there are two ways to classify the team based on the earlier theory. In the manner of Gascoigne (2017), the team, which includes the coordinator and their fundraisers, falls into the third level of remote working scale. This means even the coordinator and their fundraisers locate within the same time zone, they communicate with each other mainly via electronic devices. On the other hand, according to the team models of Fisher & Fisher (2001), the team belongs to category 6. In other words, the coordinator and their team members share time but not space and culture.

4.1 FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa

Background information of the respondents is present in general before the results are provided in detail in the next subsections to protect participant confidentiality due to the small sample. Among three participants, there were one female and two males, and they come from different nations. All of the respondents have attained a university level of education in Finland. Besides working as a face-to-face fundraiser for the FRC, two of them have another job in addition while the other left used to be self-employed.

4.1.1 Interview no. 1

The first interview was conducted in the end of January and it took place in a reserved room at Tritonia library. The interview lasted about 25 minutes. The respondent has been working as a face-to-face fundraiser for the FRC more than one year by the time getting involved in the interview.

When being asked to share the positive experience of working independently from the coordinator, the interviewee made a solid comment: "I think one of the biggest advantages is being trusted…". In saying that, the interviewee believes it requires a lot of trust from a manager to offer employees the opportunity to work remotely. Hence, the interviewee feels greater sense of responsibility when they are allowed to design activities themselves and commit to what they planed; for example, scheduling work shifts. Moreover, working under remote supervision provides the interviewee the freedom to perform their tasks in their own way rather than being told what to do for every aspect. In other terms, since micro-management is eliminated, the interviewee can make their decisions at work and request for assistance if necessary. In particular, when the interviewee raises fund, they are able to communicate comfortably with the donors without any interferences from their coordinator which make them more productive.

As mentioned by the interviewee, one of the greatest challenges due to lack of direct oversight from the coordinator relates to communication issues. The interviewee clarifies that when they have personal problems, they could not discuss with their coordinator in person but using digital devices. In the interviewee's opinion "…other communication methods can hardly deliver the entire information since they lack voice inflection and body language compared to face-to-face conversations". Also, if the situation is urgent and the coordinator is not available to respond, the interviewee cannot receive immediate assistance but wait. The same matter goes for the coordinator, when they have emergency announcement and their employees are not reachable. In addition, since the coordinator manages the fundraisers at a distance, they only rely on the daily reports from the leader and thus they do not know what actually happened in the field, especially when conflicts arise within the team.

Aside from communication barriers, when being questioned about other matters in remote working environment, the interviewee stated like: "Those are not big deals". For example, with regard to the discipline, the interviewee admitted that although they could sometimes take longer or extra breaks, they must stay on task to achieve the set goals as fundraising is a results-oriented job. The efficiency of fundraisers' performance is measured based on statistics and wherefore the coordinator is able to notice obviously whether the employees are slack off or not. On the other hand, from the interviewee point of view, as a remote employee, they should be able to establish a crystal-clear boundary between work and life. In this case, they must agree with their coordinator on working hours as well as when they can be contacted. The employees themselves should know when and when not to respond to work related issues to avoid the pressure for "constant availability" in order to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

The overall connection presented by the interviewee was positive towards the coordinator even though they could not meet their manager face-to-face frequently. One subjective reason why the interviewee does not feel isolated and invisible while being under remote supervision is because they enjoy working independently. Furthermore, the interviewee claims to feel a sense of belonging in the organization as their coordinator periodically provides feedback on employee effectiveness, information about ongoing activities of the FRC as well as responding to their requests. Additionally, whenever the interviewee achieves great results, the coordinator gives specific praises on the Facebook group which makes them feel more valued and noticeable. In the interviewee's opinion, the emotional connection with other teammates, especially with the leader is more important in this case since they are the ones "make things happen".

The interviewee emphasizes that open communication is the key principle to overcome challenges in remote work environment. Accordingly, while the coordinator needs to clearly state responsibilities, expectations and organizational goals, the employees must be honest about their present at that moment. For instance, the fundraiser should inform the coordinator before transferring work locations because any changes without consent could foster mistrust among parties. Also, the interviewee claims that there needs to be a standard for remote interaction whereby the coordinator and their employees are able to

use the appropriate communication tools at the right time to be connected with each other. "It does not make any sense to write an email to the coordinator if they rarely check them", the interviewee comments. The coordinator should be accessible at least during reasonable working hours and in case they are not, they should depute another person to respond to employees' questions.

To conclude, the interviewee states that they acquire more benefits than drawbacks when working under remote supervision. While the autonomy allows them to do work and make decisions freely, critical barriers belong to the nature of remote work and wherefore the employees cannot avoid. Hence, to operate effectively in this challenging environment, certain competencies are required of employees and one of them is communication, which were mentioned several times by the interviewee. Communication skills assist employees in being "clear and concise" in conversations to prevent misunderstandings. Moreover, employees should offer open and honest communications as they establish trust between parties. The claim that remote employees should have an ability to maintain a work-life balance was also brought up by the interviewee and it was defined as self-management capability in subsection 2.3.1. In regard to emotional connection, the interviewee seems to be satisfied with the remote management of their coordinator and instead, they are more concerned about the relationship with other teammates, especially the leader. Figure 6 below presents the main thoughts of the first interviewee.
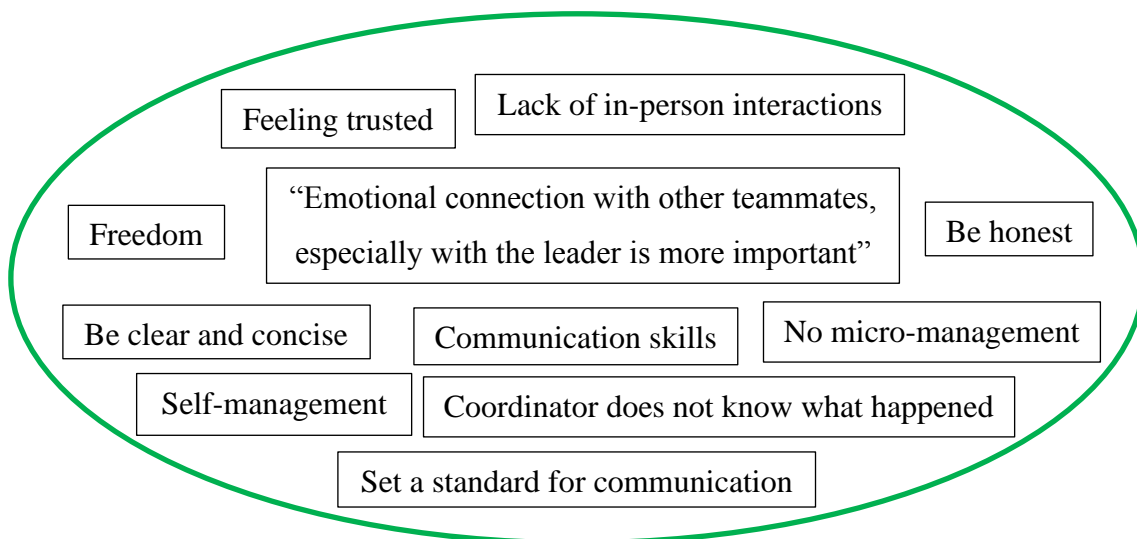

Figure 6. Mind Map of Interviewee no.1

4.1.2 Interview no. 2

The second interview was conducted few days after the first one and took around 25 minutes. The interview took place in a closed meeting room at Tritonia library. "This is the first time I work where my manager does not present in the same city as I do", the interviewee commented when being asked to introduce themselves.

As explained by the interviewee, they had been recruited through a Skype interview and their coordinator had never met them in-person before. The interviewee "was surprised" at how much trust the coordinator has been investing in them since they started to work. Hence, they feel the need to respond to the trust by maintaining effective communication with their coordinator. Besides, working independently from the coordinator adds more responsibility and value to the role of the interviewee. In contrast with the pressures of traditional management, remote supervision offers the interviewee more freedom to make decisions related to work on their own. The interviewee therefore can select options which benefit the most to the organization based on actual situations in the field without being dominated by the imposition of the manager. One more advantage of remote arrangement is the flexibility, and in this case, it allows the interviewee to schedule their shifts as they wish and thus, they can take on another job while working as a fundraiser for the FRC.

Compared to the first interview, critical drawbacks of remote supervision brought up by the second interviewee tend to associate with the importance of manager's presence in the workplace instead of communication issues. The interviewee commented that there are conflicts within the team caused by miscommunications among members or by the dissatisfaction with the leader's decisions, wherefore the coordinator needs to be present to solve the arguments. The interviewee also believes that the absence of the coordinator limits significantly the authority of their subordinates. There have been some problems regard fundraising locations whereby shop owners demand to speak with the manager before allowing the fundraisers to work in their areas. As the coordinator is not in Vaasa, they are not able to contact those in person, but by phone, so they could not avoid refusals. Additionally, the interviewee said sometimes they suggest new ideas for work which did not get accepted by their coordinator, thus they assume it is because the coordinator does not reside in the same city as they to understand all the circumstances.

In the interviewee's opinion, since they are able to communicate effectively in remote environment, and they can meet their coordinator in person every two months wherefore obstacles caused by the lack of face-to-face interaction are not serious. They only find "it a bit difficult" to use the M2, a system where fundraisers can claim their travel expenses. The interviewee commented: "It would be greater to receive the direct instruction as the software has been updating and I often have problems logging in". In regard to work-life balance, the same claim as the first interview that a guideline on remote communication should be agreed between the coordinator and employees was presented. Also, as the FRC has clear targets for the fundraisers, "slacking off is not a problem while the coordinator is not around".

As previous interview, the relationship of second interviewee to the coordinator seems to be strong and positive. The interviewee reported feeling connected with the coordinator as they "always receive advice and support" whenever they need. However, the point brought up various times was the role of coordinator's presence in the workplace. The interviewee wished that "the coordinator could fundraise with them once in a while" to build public trust as well as to motivate and inspire them to achieve the goals. Finally, the interviewee stated that all the members "…play a part in the success of the team" and thus, they should be open and transparent when interacting with each other. In particular, due to the absence of the coordinator, the interviewee believes open discussion between team players and their leader is more necessary to avoid insignificant conflicts. Figure 7 recaps the main thoughts of interviewee.
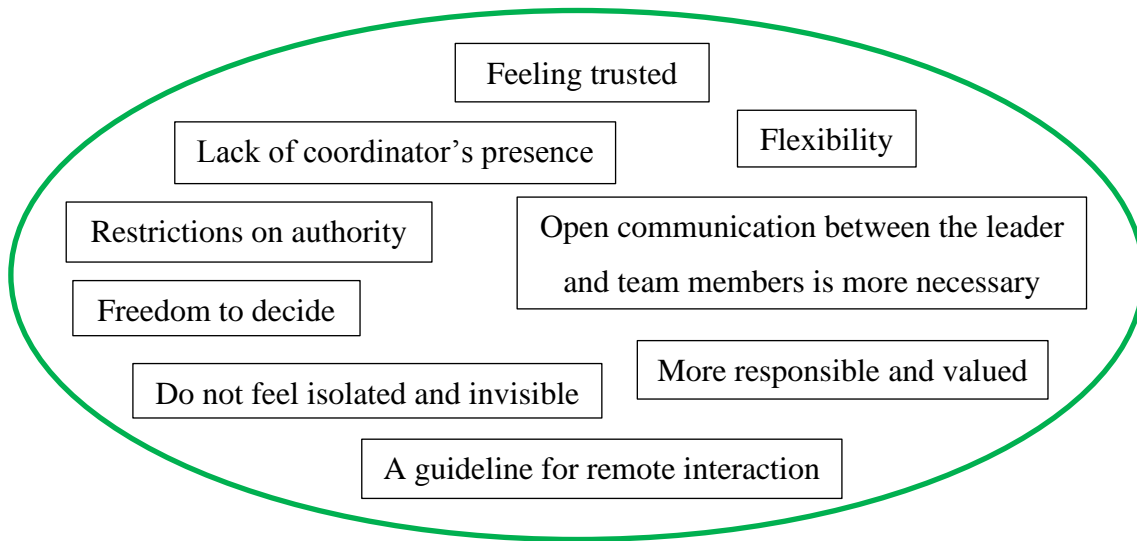
Figure 7. Mind Map of Interviewee no. 2

4.1.3 Interview no. 3

The final interview was conducted in the beginning of February and lasted about 15 minutes. With the questions regarding the benefits when working separately from the coordinator, the interviewee showed their confusion: "Well, I do not think there are so many advantages…" The interviewee explained that thanks to previous work experience, they are able to take responsibility without the direct oversight from managers. Moreover, while they can operate effectively in a team, they prefer to work independently wherefore the absence of the coordinator is not of concern to them. The only plus acknowledged by the interviewee is the freedom to function the tasks on their own. Also, they perceive the flexibility in time as a norm because "many companies in Finland offer employees the opportunity to create a work schedule that fits best for them".

In general, the interviewee reported not feeling major different under remote supervision compared to the direct method. One point brought up was that they could not discuss face-to-face with the coordinator when problem occurs. Additionally, the interviewee believes the presence of the coordinator would provide employees greater motivation to strive for higher levels of outcome. The vital factor appearing several times in the interview for why there is no big challenge confronted by the interviewee is that they used to have a

commission-based job where self-management is highly required. Hence, they do not find it difficult to stay disciplined at work. Besides, with "strict rules", the interviewee is able to keep work and personal life separate as they do not respond to work-related issues outside working hours agreed with their coordinator.

Although the coordinator does not locate in the same city as the interviewee and they only meet each other in person when team meeting is arranged, they feel a strong connection with their coordinator. The interviewee stated that the coordinator "is accessible" and they can make a phone call if help is needed. That seems to be the reason for why they tend to contact the coordinator rather than their team leader when problem happens. From the interviewee point of view, the coordinator provides effective remote supervision. They only suggest that the coordinator should remain an open mind to all their subordinates when conflicts arise within a team. Figure 8 below presents the last interviewee's main thoughts.
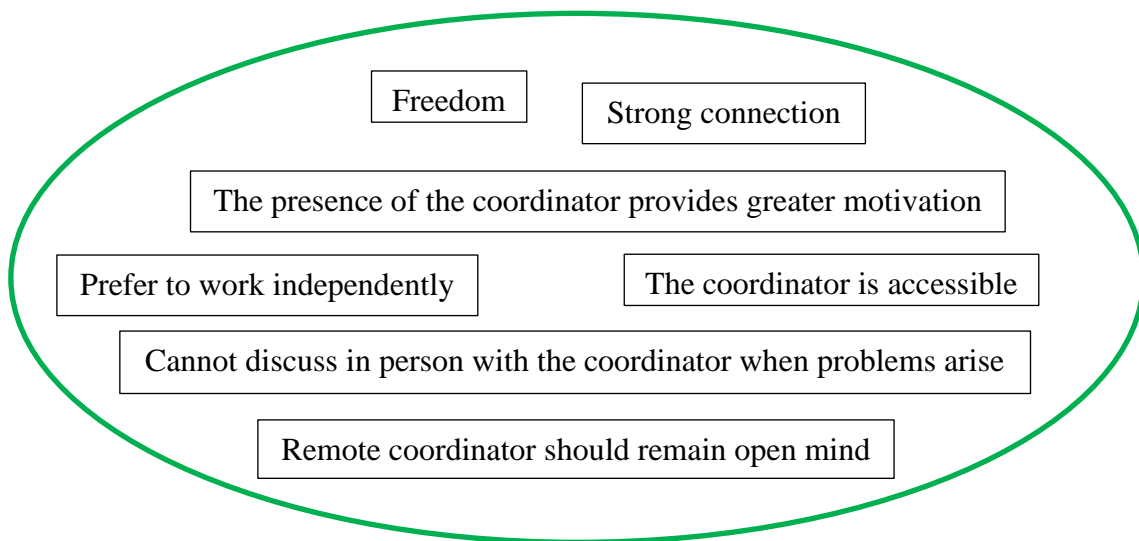

Figure 8. Mind map of Interviewee no. 3

4.2   Comparison of Results

Next, a comparison of three interviews is presented in order to determine which answers associated with the theory appeared more than once and if some were not brought up at

all. As an overview regarding the educational background and work experience of the interviewees, one can claim that they possess essential skills to operate independently. In addition, during the interviews, they all stated that they are able not only to communicate effectively with their coordinator at a distance but also to find a good balance between work and life. This can be one of the reasons why some concerns in remote environment mentioned by Mulki et al. (2009) are not significantly challenging to the interviewees.

When it comes to positive effects of remote supervision on employees, all the respondents acknowledged freedom is an advantage. The freedom was described by the interviewees as an opportunity to perform assigned tasks and make work-related decisions on their own without being micromanaged by the coordinator. The hypothesis "*the autonomy of working under off-site manager also allows employees to determine where, and how the tasks are done, if they ensure the quality of their performance and meet the deadline set for them*" is therefore accepted, although fundraising locations are decided by the team leader in this case. The next hypothesis "*in remote working environment, the employees experience great faith from their supervisors because they are given the freedom to do their basic responsibilities and make decisions that they believe benefit the organization*" is also accepted. This is because two out of three interviewees emphasized that they feel trusted by their coordinator while the other did not bring it up. In regard to the autonomy in working hours, there was only one interviewee claiming to have a flexible schedule. However, the idea "*this advantage provides remote employees the freedom to tailor their professional schedules to their personal obligations and preferences*" is rejected since all the face-to-face fundraisers of the FRC are allowed to schedule their shifts whether their coordinators locate in the same city as them or not. Lastly, none of the respondents raised any benefits for a non-commute as they need to get to the fundraising sites themselves. Consequently, the hypothesis "*another great plus for people working remotely is that they do not need to deal with daily commutes, especially long-distance journeys*" is rejected.

When it comes to negative effects of remote supervision on employees, all the answers revolve around the lack of face-to-face communication. In particular, remote interaction via electronic devices is perceived as being sufficient for the respondents to contact their coordinator until problems arise. All three respondents claimed the need for in-person

meetings with their coordinator when they face "*personal problems*", "*conflicts within the team*" or when stronger "*authority*" is required to fundraise in a new site. This can be assumed that digital communication cannot fully replace face-to-face interaction due to "*the shortage of richness and social presence*", to some extent. Hence, the hypothesis "*the second challenge in remote work that employees have to face is the lack of face-to-face communication*" is accepted. Another point brought up by two respondents was the presence of managers may provide greater motivation for employees as well as enhancing the organizational image. As this idea was not mentioned earlier, the exploration will contribute to the existing theory. Next, all the interviewees stated to receive crystal clear expectations from their coordinator wherefore the hypothesis related to the "*challenge in staying disciplined when being under remote supervision*" is rejected. Finally, all of them refused to find it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance since they are able to know when they need to respond to work-related issues in accordance with agreed work hours. Therefore, the hypothesis "*In the initial scenario, since employees find difficult to disengaging from work, they not only put extra hours per day but also keep working on weekends, holidays or even in sick days*" is rejected.

In regard to the perception of the coordinator, all the respondents presented a strong and positive connection with their superior despite the lack of in-person meetings. While two of the respondents stated that they are provided sufficient assistance whenever needed, the other one confirmed the accessibility of the coordinator. As no one experience the feelings of being isolated in remote environment, the hypothesis is rejected in this case. Besides, there was one respondent claimed to be acknowledged since the coordinator gives praise to them whenever they achieve the goals. The other two did not bring up any negative comments associated with the feeling of being invisible and thus the hypothesis is rejected. All of the respondents seemed to be satisfied with the remote supervision provided by their coordinator; instead, they are more concerned about the relationship with the team leader.

5   CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

As stated by Mulki et al. (2009), organizations and employees experience remote work differently and thus they adapt to it in many different ways. This statement is confirmed by the findings of this research, to some extent, as the advantages and challenges behind the effects of remote supervision on the FRC's face-to-face fundraisers in Vaasa. While three respondents presented divergent opinions on independent operation, they all agreed to receive more benefits than drawbacks in this case. This is because not only they prefer to function autonomously but also, they have essential competencies and previous work experience.

Autonomy was agreed as the main advantage that employees obtain when working under remote supervision. In this case, autonomy refers to the respondents' freedom to execute assigned tasks and make work-related decisions without inappropriate interference from their coordinator. In addition, when being given the freedom at work, two out of three interviewees stated to feel trusted by their coordinator. The other respondent did not seem to be impressed by those benefits as they have relevant experience. When the respondents have higher levels of trust and autonomy at work, they emphasized that they feel more responsible and valued.

In this research, the lack of face-to-face communication is concluded as the most critical challenge in remote environment. However, the absence of in-person discussion becomes more concerning when the respondents confront with "*personal problems*", "*conflicts within the team*" or when they need to get the support of the coordinator in authority to fundraise in a new location. Besides, two respondents claimed that periodic presence of the coordinator in the field can boost the fundraisers' motivation as well as improving the FRC's image. Since this idea was not presented earlier, it can be considered to be an exploration which enriches the existing theory.

Cofell & Adams (2017) comments that supervisors need to "*be fair, be direct, be clear*" when leading a team remotely. The findings of this research confirm with this statement in all aspects since the answers of three respondents reflect their satisfaction with the coordinator's management. While two of them claimed to receive sufficient feedback and

assistance, the other one stated that their coordinator is reachable by cell phone whenever they need. Hence, they perceive their coordinator as being accessible, understanding and supportive. From this we can conclude that the coordinator of the FRC, who is in charge of Vaasa fundraising team provides effective management strategies. This is the reason why negative effects such as the feelings of isolation and invisibility did not appear in the answers of respondents.

5.1 Ethical considerations

The confidentiality of the participants was the main ethical consideration concentrated in this research. This was indicated to the respondents before the interviews started, together with the fact that the conversations were recorded to make the transcripts. As the sample in this research is small, all the information which can be used to recognize respondents' identity was not mentioned in the results. Private data obtained during the interviews which is not relevant to the aim of the research is also removed. The recordings of the interviews will be deleted when the research is done in order to ensure the security of the participants.

5.2 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are concepts defining how well a method used to analyze the data in order to assess the quality of a research. Validity is applied in a research to indicate the accuracy of the method in measuring what they are intended to measure. (Middleton 2019). In this study, qualitative approach is selected because the research question aims to obtain experiences and opinions of the FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa when operating under remote supervision, rather than statistics for how many have a similar thought. The research could have been done also with quantitative approach; however, the client would not have gained deep insights into the effects, with a focus on the FRC's fundraisers in the city of Vaasa. A pilot interview with the draft of interview questions had been tested on a close connection who has experience in working remotely, as an aid to the design of the real interviews. Later, three real interviews were conducted with the altered questions to suit the research better.

Reliability is applied in a research to indicate the consistency of the results when the research is done repeatedly under the same conditions (Middleton 2019). It is assumed that there are several constructs changing over the time which could affect the reliability of a research (Price, Jhangiani & Chiang 2015). In this research, the interviewees' work experience and the management strategy of the coordinator are two elements that future researchers should consider when intending to conduct the research again. The experience of the interviewees will be developed over the course of their tenure at the FRC and thus they will perceive remote supervision differently. Besides, as the coordinator gets to know their team over the time, they can draw better management strategies which might tackle current problems mentioned in this research. Therefore, the reliability of this research cannot be guaranteed 100%.

5.3   Limitations

Every study has potential limitations which impact its results and this research is not an exception. The first constraint of this research lies in the manner of how the research classifies the relationship between the FRC's face-to-face fundraisers in Vaasa and their coordinator. In particular, the research only focusses on the distance dimension while there is another element could have been considered in this research which is culture (Fisher & Fisher 2001). Second, the research is applied to the context of face-to-face fundraising teams at the Finnish Red Cross. In reality, fundraising job offered by the FRC is not a typical remote work, the remote aspect happens only when coordinators do not locate in the same city as their fundraisers. For that reason, the findings of this research should be considered carefully before being applied to other cases. Lastly, the research problem in this thesis considers the situations whereby there is a long distance between managers and employees regardless of the nature of work so the results might not specific enough.

5.4   Further Research Suggestions

This research did not include the culture aspect even most of the FRC's fundraisers in Vaasa have different nationalities than their coordinator. Hence, potential studies can be conducted from the manager's perspective when managing an international team from a

distance. Moreover, as the findings of this research indicated that all the fundraisers in Vaasa perceive a strong and positive connection with their coordinator, it can be assumed that problems within the team are not from the management strategies of the coordinator. In general, future researches can be done to define the importance of a leader in a team when the manager does not reside in the same location as other members. In case the FRC's fundraising teams would be chosen as the company case, the researcher could also conduct the interviews with fundraisers locating in other cities to gain a comprehensive answer.

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Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Background information:

1. Can you introduce yourself?

   - Educational background.
   - How long have you been working as a face-to-face fundraiser for the FRC?
   - Did you work remotely from your manager before?
   - Do you prefer to work independently?

The effects of remote supervision:

2. What do you consider as the advantages of working remotely from your coordinator?
   - Autonomy (freedom to decide where, when and how to work without the inappropriate interference/ micromanagement)
   - No commute.
   - Feeling trusted.

3. What are the challenges you facing when you work remotely from your coordinator?
   - Poor discipline.
   - Difficult in finding the right work-life balance (constant availability)
   - The lack of in-person communication.
   - How is your connection with your coordinator?
     - Do you feel isolated?
     - Do you feel invisible?

4. What do you think is the key to success in remote environment (with the focus on the relationship between you and your coordinator)?
   - From employees' perspective.
   - From employers' perspective (Do you think your coordinator manage you effectively from a distance?)

5. Anything related to this topic that you would like to add?