

The New Normal: Prediction of Workplace Belonging in post-Covid Times

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## **Management Summary**

### **Background**

With the entrance of Covid-19, workplace designs have changed drastically, and employers around the world arrived in the so-called “new normal”. Ways of working were taken over from the pandemic and workplaces were adapted. Considering that the concept of belongingness is one of the most fundamental human needs that people also strive for at work, we need to know how workplace belonging is affected by the new-normal related changes. Consequently, this research investigated four new-normal related factors as predictors for workplace belonging. More specifically, we expected a positive prediction by job autonomy and inhouse team presence on workplace belonging while non-territorial working and remote work time were expected to predict workplace belonging negatively. In addition, interactions between the variables “Inhouse Team Presence x Remote Work Time” and “Remote Work Time x Job Autonomy” were expected in the prediction of workplace belonging.

### **Methods and Results**

The data were collected among employees of a German company utilizing an online questionnaire. Of the four predictors, only job autonomy predicted workplace belonging significantly. Beta coefficients indicated that employees with a high job autonomy tend to experience more workplace belonging. A look at the sub-dimensions of job autonomy showed that decision-making autonomy was more predictive of workplace belonging than work scheduling autonomy. The other variables (i.e., remote work time, inhouse team presence, non-territorial working) did not show any predictive values for workplace belonging.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The reason why both variables, inhouse team presence and remote work time were not identified as predictors of workplace belonging might root in the fact that both variables do not measure interaction with colleagues but rather a (social) set-up someone works in. Therefore, it is recommended to include social interaction measures in future research. Additionally, remote work time might not predict workplace belonging negatively in the context of the new normal because employees had two years to get used to the work circumstances. In line with that, the two years of experience in an ambiguous work environment at home might also be the reason why non-territorial working or the switch to non-territorial working were not perceived as threat to belonging. The findings on job autonomy, however, show that employers can foster workplace belonging in the future by involving employees in decision-making processes and using time models that enable work-scheduling autonomy.

The study enabled a valuable insight into the prediction of workplace belonging by new-normal-related variables. However, it needs to be regarded that the new normal is still evolving dynamically, and therefore, the investigated features need to be researched in a longitudinal fashion. It is especially recommended to involve employees in change- and decision-making processes in organizations, keeping in mind that decision-making autonomy is more predictive of workplace belonging than work-scheduling autonomy. As a result, this study reveals some interesting insights and practical implications for the facilitation of workplace belonging in post-Covid times.

### **Abstract**

“Belonging” is one of the most fundamental human needs. Because people spend a significant part of their lifetime working, they also strive for belongingness at the workplace. The post-Covid time, however, brought new work designs and ways of working with it which can be described as the “new normal”. This research aimed to re-evaluate the concept of workplace belonging in the context of the new normal by (1) investigating four predictors of workplace belonging (remote work time, inhouse team presence, job autonomy, and desk policy) and (2) testing interactions among chosen predictors for workplace belonging. The model was performed by means of an online survey filled in by 405 employees of a German company and subsequent (hierarchical) regression analyses of the data. Employee’s job autonomy significantly predicted workplace belonging while its sub-component decision-making autonomy was more predictive than work scheduling autonomy. However, no other significant effects could be detected on workplace belonging in the other tested variables (i.e., remote work time, inhouse team presence, desk policy). Interactions among chosen variables could not be identified either. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of job autonomy and the involvement of employees in dynamic times of the new normal.

*Keywords:* new normal, workplace belonging, remote work time, inhouse team presence, job autonomy, desk policy

## **Introduction**

### **The New Normal**

The spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 19) massively reorganized workplaces around the world. About 88% of international workers have been exposed to prolonged lockdowns throughout the pandemic (Rigotti et al., 2021). Therefore, the pandemic had a major impact on how and where people work (Andel, Shen, & Arvan, 2021). Indeed, there is no turning back in terms of office and work design because the new ways of working are already deeply established (Kane et al., 2021). Consequently, the so-called “new normal” has evolved which describes the way people “usher in a new way of working, taking lessons from the pandemic, deciding what to keep and what to throw out” (Tomsett, 2020, p.1). In doing so, it should not be disregarded that psychological, social, and health factors were impacted by the new normal (Shaw et al., 2020).

### **Workplace Belonging**

Because the new normal especially had a great impact on the social connections and relations between workers/employees (Šakan, Žuljević, & Rokvić, 2020), a factor that might be chiefly threatened by the new normal is “workplace belonging”. Workplace belonging refers to “the positive experiences in the form of interpersonal engagement to be the part of the entire system” (Ali & Ahmad, 2019, p. 3) and is based on the general concept of belonging. Belonging is “an individual’s perceptual assessment of relational value in the eyes of others” (Hagerty & Patusky, 1995, p.1). According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), belonging (i.e., relatedness) is one of the three fundamental psychological needs that grant human functioning. In line with that, Maslow (1954) already identified belonging as one of three deficiency needs which are the base for growth needs and, in turn, self-actualization. Baumeister and Leary (1995) went one step further and stated that interpersonal attachment is crucial to understanding human beings and their nature (McClure & Brown, 2008). The authors propose two features of belonging. On the one hand, “people need frequent interactions or personal contact with another person”. On the other hand, “people need to perceive that there is a relationship or interpersonal bond marked by stability, affective concern and continuation into the foreseeable future” (as cited in McClure & Brown, 2008, p. 7).

Workplace belonging has been positively linked with employees’ mental health and wellbeing, lower levels of stress, and increased job satisfaction (Shakespeare-Finch, & Daley, 2017; Jena & Pradhan, 2018). In turn, employees who do not feel like they belong in a workplace are likely to have suffering psychological well-being and an incoherent sense of

self (Waller, 2020). Consequently, it is important to evaluate how workplace belonging is affected by the new normal. In doing so, employers around the world can tailor their workplaces according to the new needs of the employees but also to upcoming economic needs, such as reducing empty office spaces (Mantesi, Chmutina, & Goodier, 2022). Accordingly, future work designs become human-oriented and not only a reaction to the pandemic (Rigotti et al., 2021). Therefore, the overarching purpose of the present study is to investigate new-normal-related factors as predictors of workplace belonging. Additionally, relevant interactions among predictors will be investigated. Consequently, the research question of this paper is “*The New Normal: What are predictors of workplace belonging in post-Covid times and are there interactions among chosen predictors?*”. Figure 1 shows an overview of the research model.

### **Predictors of Workplace Belonging**

The first two potential predictors of workplace belonging are “remote work time” and “inhouse team presence”. Both became solid components of the new normal with the return to the office but at the same time, predictably 27% more remote working as compared to pre-Covid times (Boland, De Smet, Palter, & Sanghvi, 2020). *Remote work* can be defined as “a flexible work arrangement whereby workers work in locations, remote from their central offices or production facilities, the worker has no personal contact with co-workers there, but can communicate with them using technology” (Wang, Liu, Qian, & Parker, 2021, p. 17). *Inhouse team presence* describes the proportion of present colleagues in the office on an average day. Therefore, remote work time characterizes the pure setup someone works in while inhouse team presence describes the social work environment.

Considering the belongingness features by Baumeister and Leary (1995), it is expected that remote work time negatively predicts workplace belonging (McClure & Brown, 2008). According to the theorists, one of the two features of belonging is frequent interactions with personal contact to people. It can be argued whether working from home offers sufficient opportunities to connect on such an interpersonal level. In fact, previous work revealed that employees who see their colleagues less (in person), experience lower workplace belonging in comparison to those employees who see their colleagues more (Dery & Hafermalz, 2016). Therefore, the first hypothesis is:

***H1: Employees who work a higher percentage of their contract working hours in a remote setting, experience lower workplace belonging.***

Inhouse team presence, in turn, is expected to predict workplace belonging positively. Employees might experience more belongingness the more they are surrounded by colleagues

because the office offers opportunities to interact and build social contacts (McClure & Brown, 2008). Accordingly, previous research validated that employees who have a higher proportion of colleagues present in the office, experience more belonging, collegiality, and trust within the group (Darics & Gatti, 2019). Based on these findings, the second hypothesis is:

**H2:** *Employees who have a higher percentage of colleagues present in the office on an average day experience more workplace belongingness.*

At this point, the potential interaction between inhouse team presence and remote work time needs to be depicted. An individual who decides to work fully remotely can have a very high inhouse team presence at the same time. Consequently, the individual is not part of the team's physical work environment. This could lead to feelings of social exclusion in the employee, and therefore, lower feelings of belongingness as compared to the colleagues working on-site (Golden, Veiga, & Dino, 2008; Marshall, Michaels, & Mulki, 2007). So, it is expected that the negative effect of remote work time is especially strong when there is a high inhouse team presence. Therefore, the third hypothesis is:

**H3:** *The negative effect of remote work time on workplace belonging is especially strong when there is a high inhouse team presence.*

The third variable that is investigated as a predictor of workplace belongingness is the desk-policy. Since the pandemic, many offices were designed non-territorial with unassigned workstations because they can accommodate between 20-40 % more employees than traditional offices (Elsbach, 2003). Referring to belongingness theory by Baumeister and Leary (1995), (see Leary, 2010 for review), it can be questioned whether the second belongingness feature of stability and continuation of interpersonal bonds into the foreseeable future can be fulfilled in an environment where workstations are switched on a daily basis. Especially the need for continuation might be threatened when employees know that they are giving up their personal workstation after permanently working next to the same colleagues. Accordingly, Elsbach (2003) found that the switch from a personal workstation to a shared workstation can threaten personal distinctiveness. It is the loss of the personalized office that intimidates the employee's identity and can lower the sense of belonging in workers (Brunia & Hartjes-Gosselink, 2009; Morrison & Macky, 2017; Haapakangas et al., 2019). Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is:

**H4:** *Employees with a permanent non-territorial workstation or who will soon switch to a non-territorial workstation will experience less workplace belonging compared to employees with a permanent territorial workstation.*



Lastly, a key component in both the new normal and workplace belonging is job autonomy. It can be defined as “the extent to which a job allows freedom, independence, and discretion to schedule work, make decisions, and choose the methods used to perform tasks” (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006, p. 1323). During the pandemic, workers have learned to structure their day autonomously and therefore, took these patterns over to the new normal (Wang, et al., 2021). The researchers Hodgins, Koestner, and Duncan (1996) have confirmed the positive relationship between the general concept of belonging and autonomy against the background of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017). They stress that autonomy can allow for more open and honest interpersonal experience which, in turn, heightens the sense of belonging. Consequently, they suggest that fulfilling either belonging or autonomy can raise the chance that the other is heightened as well, which was confirmed by Wang et al. (2021) in the context of work. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is:

***H5: Employees with a higher job autonomy experience higher workplace belonging.***

Additionally, job autonomy will be investigated for its potential interaction with remote work time in the prediction of workplace belonging. Remote work can become a job demand (Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012) which can, according to the job-demands-resources-model, be buffered through the feeling of autonomy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In this buffering effect, job autonomy acts as a researched job resource (Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012) that compensates for the job demand (remote work time). In line with that, previous research revealed that employees who experience higher job autonomy are more satisfied and productive in remote work set-ups (Schall, 2019). Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is:

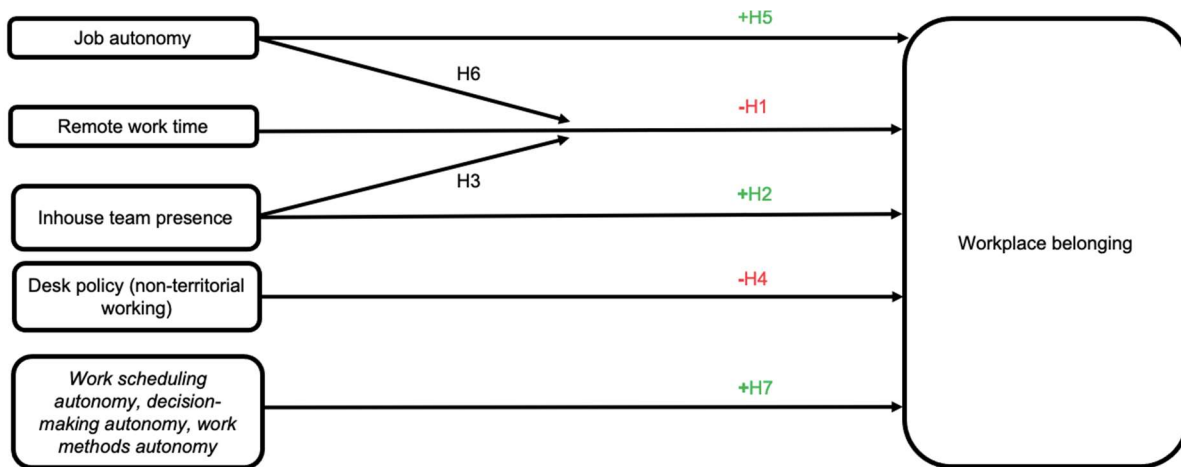
***H6: The negative effect of remote work time is especially strong when employees experience low job autonomy.***

Lastly, it will be investigated in an exploratory way, which of the sub-dimensions of job autonomy have the strongest predictive value for workplace belonging. The first dimension, “work scheduling autonomy”, describes to what extent employees can arrange their work while the second dimension, “decision-making autonomy”, describes the degree to which employees can make their own decisions. The last dimension, “work methods autonomy”, describes how free employees are in choosing the methods they want to use (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Consequently, the seventh (exploratory) hypothesis is:

***H7: Work-scheduling autonomy, decision-making autonomy, and work methods autonomy have different predictive values of workplace belonging.***

**Figure 1**

Research Model on the Predictors of Workplace Belonging in Post-Covid Times



## Methodology

### Design

This study investigated the prediction of workplace belonging by remote work time, inhouse team presence, desk policy, and job autonomy. Additionally, the interactions “Remote Work Time x Job Autonomy” and “Inhouse Team Presence x Remote Work Time” were analysed. For the implementation, a correlational survey design combined of two questionnaires was provided via Alida.com. Because the study was conducted in a company, five questions that were in interest of the organization were included. This paper will only focus on the results regarding the prediction of workplace belonging. The Ethics committee of Radboud University approved the research and allocated the reference number ECSW-LT-2022-2-23-66645.

### Participants and Procedure

All participants who took part in the survey were employed in a German-based company. In total, the questionnaire was made available to 1.145 employees via e-mail communication with an encrypted HTTPS Alida-link. Therefore, only employees who were part of the organization could participate in the questionnaire. Additionally, teleworkers were not included in the sample because not all survey questions were applicable to them. Considering that this paper is part of a 5-month-long Master project conducted in an organization, limited resources were available for data collection. Based on the average participation rate of past surveys in the company, it was expected to achieve a sample size of  $n=583$ . An a priori sensitivity analysis was conducted to determine the effect that could be

detected with this sample size and a power of .80. The analysis was executed using G\*Power 3.1 (T-tests, linear multiple regression, fixed model, single regression coefficients). Based on the results, the research aimed to be sensitive to detect effect small effect sizes of  $d = 0.02$  with a power of 80% (Cohen, 2013).

The true effect size, however, might deviate from the expectation because fewer participants filed out the survey than expected ( $n=403$ ). 13 of them were excluded due to missing values. 85 Teleworkers were excluded from the research because not all survey questions were applicable to them. One regression outlier was removed. This resulted in 304 participants in total. Therefore, the sensitivity analysis was run again with the true sample size, revealing that medium effects of  $d = 0.04$  could be detected with a power of 80%.

In the survey, the participants were first informed about the aim of the research and the right to withdraw at any time. Following, they agreed to informed consent (Appendix A). Next, two questions were asked about remote work time and inhouse team presence. After that, the participants indicated their desk policy, followed by the job autonomy- and workplace belonging questionnaire. The total questionnaire took the participants approximately 15 minutes. In the end, the participants received the chance to withdraw their participation, and a “thank you” note popped up.

## **Materials**

All questions included in the study (Appendix A, Appendix B for an English version) were selected via relevant literature. Before the data collection, the questionnaire was translated via back-and-forth translation to ensure similar content. The part of the questionnaire that is relevant for this research consists of five parts: Questions on remote work time, inhouse team presence, desk policy, job autonomy, and workplace belonging.

### **Remote work time**

To measure remote work time, participants answered one question: “What percentage (%) of your contract do you work remotely?” The answers were provided in percentage on a slider. Therefore, the lowest achievable score was 0 while the highest achievable score was 100.

### **Inhouse Team Presence**

To measure inhouse team presence, participants answered one question: “On an average workday, what percentage (%) of your team is present in the office?” The answers were provided in percentage on a slider. Therefore, the lowest achievable score was 0 while the highest achievable score was 100.

### **Desk Policy**

To measure which desk policy the participant currently experiences, the participants were asked to “indicate the current work set-up in the office”. Four answer options were provided to the participants: “I have my own desk”, “I work in a shared-desk space”, “I have my own desk but will transition to a shared-desk space this year”, and “Does not apply”.

### **Job Autonomy**

Next, participants filled out the job autonomy questionnaire which was invented by Morgeson and Humphrey as part of the Work Design Questionnaire (2006). In total, nine items were answered with three of each autonomy category (work scheduling-, decision-making-, and work methods autonomy). The items were answered on a 5-point-Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The participants answered items like “The job allows me to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work”, (Item 1, work scheduling autonomy) or “The job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own.” (Item 2, decision-making autonomy). All items were worded positively so that there was no need to reverse items. A total score for job autonomy and each subdimension was calculated in each participant by adding the scores of the relevant items. Participants with higher scores experience more job autonomy than participants with lower scores. The highest score that could be achieved was 45 while the lowest score that could be achieved was 9. In the subscales, the highest achievable score was 15 while the lowest achievable score was 3. Within the original work design questionnaire, Cronbach’s alphas of work scheduling autonomy, decision-making autonomy, and work methods autonomy (measuring internal consistency) were .85, .85, and .88, respectively. Additionally, a three-factor structure of the three sub-components of job autonomy could be confirmed (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). For this study, Cronbach’s alpha for the job autonomy questionnaire was .92, which is excellent (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Cronbach’s alphas for work scheduling autonomy, decision-making autonomy, and work methods autonomy were .86, .85, and .87 respectively, which is good (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

### **Workplace belonging**

Finally, the participants filled out the workplace belonging scale invented by Jena and Pradhan (2018). 12 items were answered on a 5-point-Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). All items were worded positively, for example, item 5 “Being part of this organization inspires me to do more than what is expected.” or item 9 “Whenever I have any personal or professional issues, my organization extends necessary help and support”. A total score was calculated for each participant by adding all item scores. Participants with a higher

score experienced more workplace belonging than participants with a lower score. Consequently, the highest achievable score was 60 while the lowest achievable score was 12. Cronbach's alpha for the 12 workplace belonging items was .86. Additionally, high construct validity was found with all 12 items measuring the same factor (Jena & Pradhan, 2018). For this study, internal consistency of  $\alpha=.92$  was found, which is excellent (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

### **Data Analysis**

All obtained data were transformed into the statistical software SPSS version 27.0.1.0 (IBM Corp., 2017). At first, some data preparations needed to take place, starting with the calculation of total scores for the job autonomy scale (including each sub-scale) and the workplace belongingness scale. Next, the variables remote work time, inhouse team presence, and job autonomy were mean-centered. The categorical variable desk policy was recoded into dummies (non-territorial working, switch to non-territorial working, and others). "Territorial working" was used as a reference category in all analyses.

After the dataset was fully prepared, preliminary analyses were conducted. For the workplace belongingness scale, the job autonomy scale, and the three underlying job autonomy scales, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to test internal consistency. In addition, the three underlying factors of the job autonomy scale were tested with principal axis factoring, Promax rotation, & fixed factors. The data distributions were examined with a scatterplot, histogram, and distribution tables. Outliers, normal distribution, and extreme scores were investigated. In all analyses, missing values were excluded pairwise.

Next, preparations needed to be taken for hierarchical regression analysis. First, two interactions were calculated by multiplying mean-centered scores and therefore, creating interaction variables after the Baron and Kenny moderation method (Baron & Kenny, 1986). These interactions were "Remote Work Time x Job Autonomy" and "Inhouse Team Presence x Remote Work Time". Additionally, the assumption of independent observations was tested with the Durbin-Watson Statistic while linearity, normal distribution, and homoscedasticity were tested with residual plots. Correlation coefficients, tolerance, and VIF values were examined to ensure the absence of multicollinearity. Additionally, Cook's distance was investigated to identify regression outliers.

In the first block of the regression model, the variables remote work time, inhouse team presence, job autonomy, and desk policy were analyzed as predictors for the dependent variable: workplace belonging (H1, H2, H4, H5). In the second block of the model, the interactions "Remote Work Time x Job Autonomy" and "Inhouse Team Presence x Remote

Work Time” were added to the model, testing H3 and H6. For the interpretation of findings, the t-test was used ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) to determine the significance of each predictor. Beta coefficients were used to determine the extent of prediction for each independent variable. The explanatory value of the model with and without interactions was investigated with help of  $R^2$  and the change in  $R^2$ .

Next, a separate exploratory regression analysis was conducted, investigating whether the sub-components of job autonomy have different predictive values of the dependent variable workplace belonging (H7). The model was not included in the first hierarchical regression model to avoid co-variance. After checking the five assumptions for multiple regression using the same steps as for the first analysis, the t-test was used ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) to determine the significance of each predictor. Beta coefficients were inspected to compare the extent of prediction for each job autonomy component that could be extracted from the previous factor analysis.

## Results

### Preliminary analyses

#### Factor analysis

The factor analysis tested whether the explained variance of the scale can indeed be explained with the three dimensions of job autonomy (work scheduling autonomy, decision-making-autonomy, and work methods autonomy). Principal axis factoring and a Promax rotation were chosen because the data were non-normally distributed and the dimensions were correlated with each other. The KMO test showed a value above .5 while the value of Bartlett was significant which means that the data were suitable to conduct factor analysis (Kaiser & Rice, 1974; Arsham & Lovric, 2011). Raw scores of the nine items were included in the factor analysis, resulting in two factors with Eigenvalues larger than 1. Therefore, as opposed to the assumed three-dimensionality, the factor analysis revealed only two dimensions of job autonomy. This was also confirmed with a Scree Plot. Together, the two factors explained 66.51% of the variance. By adding the third factor, 70.51% of the variance could be explained. The rotated factor matrix (table 1) showed that the two identified factors were work scheduling autonomy and decision-making autonomy. Both components entailed three items each with loadings  $> .40$ .

Table 1

*Results from a Factor Analysis of the Job Autonomy Questionnaire*

|   | Factor loading |            |            |
|---|----------------|------------|------------|
|   | 1              | 2          | 3          |
| Factor 1: Work scheduling autonomy  |                |            |            |
| The job allows me to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work.                   | <b>.84</b>     | -.09       | .16        |
| The job allows me to decide on the order in which things are done on the job.               | <b>.73</b>     | .03        | .04        |
| The job allows me to plan how I do my work.   | <b>.84</b>     | .06        | -.05       |
| Factor 2: Decision-making autonomy  |                |            |            |
| The job gives me the chance to use my personal judgment in carrying out the work.           | .18            | <b>.40</b> | .25        |
| The job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own.                                     | .03            | <b>.99</b> | -.12       |
| The job provides me with significant autonomy in making decisions.                          | -.07           | <b>.79</b> | .17        |
| Work methods autonomy   |                |            |            |
| The job allows me to make decisions about what methods I use to complete my work.           | .01            | .08        | <b>.68</b> |
| The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my work. | .09            | .08        | <b>.75</b> |
| The job allows me to decide on my own how to go about doing my work.                        | .05            | -.07       | <b>.90</b> |

*Note.*  $N = 304$ . The extraction method was principal axis factoring with Promax rotation. Three fixed factors have been pre-determined. Factor loadings above .30 are in bold.

The results of the factor analysis provoke consideration of job autonomy as a two-dimensional construct leaving out items 6-9, rather than a three-dimensional construct. Even though items 6-9 (work methods autonomy) loaded on one factor, they only added 4% to the

explained variance and did not show an Eigenvalue above 1. Therefore, they will be left out in analyses that include an investigation of work method autonomy as a single construct (H7). However, they will be kept in all analyses that include job autonomy as a whole (H5, H6) because work methods autonomy was correlated to the other dimensions. In line with that, a one-factor analysis confirmed that all items load on one construct which was also confirmed by previous research (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Therefore, all 9 items will be kept when testing H5 and H6.

### **Assumption Testing**

The analysis of standard residuals indicated that the data contained no outliers (Std. Residual Min.= -3.10, Std. Residual Max.=2.24). A Shapiro-Wilk test showed a significant departure from normality for all continuous independent variables while the dependent variable (workplace belonging) showed a normal distribution (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965). Because the distribution of errors was normal for all variables, the non-normality of data did not hinder conducting multiple regression. All other assumptions were met as well, indicating that multiple regression analysis could be conducted. With the help of Cook's distance, one regression outlier was identified which had a value that was nearing 1 and was observably larger in relation to the other values.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 2 shows an overview of all (continuous) variables involved in this research. On average, the participants' scores on job autonomy were relatively high ( $M = 34.82$ ,  $SD = 6.52$ ). Interestingly, the scores of each sub-dimension of job autonomy were similar, laying between 12 and 13. Furthermore, all three autonomy dimensions were positively correlated with each other. The average score of workplace belonging was relatively high ( $M = 44.34$ ,  $SD = 8.12$ ). Participants on average had 23% of their colleagues present in the office and worked about 75% of their contract in a remote setup. Inhouse team presence was positively correlated with remote work time, indicating that a higher team presence goes in hand with higher remote work time.



Table 2

*Correlations between All Continuous Variables Involved in Analysis*

|                             | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1     | 2      | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7 |
|-----------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Workplace belonging      | 44.34    | 8.12      | -     |        |      |       |       |       |   |
| 2. Remote work time         | 74.59    | 27.99     | -.09  | -      |      |       |       |       |   |
| 3. Inhouse team presence    | 22.90    | 21.24     | .03   | -.35** | -    |       |       |       |   |
| 4. Job autonomy             | 34.82    | 6.52      | .52** | .02    | -.07 | -     |       |       |   |
| 5. Work scheduling autonomy | 11.94    | 2.38      | .39** | .02    | -.05 | .85** | -     |       |   |
| 6. Decision-making autonomy | 11.52    | 2.52      | .51** | -.06   | -.03 | .86** | .56** | -     |   |
| 7. Work methods autonomy    | 11.36    | 2.55      | .48** | .08    | -.09 | .91** | .70** | .68** | - |

*Note.*  $N = 304$ . The job autonomy variable with its sub-components and workplace belonging were measured with total scores on a 5.-Likert-scale. Remote work time and inhouse team presence were measured on a scale from 1-100

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$

### Hierarchical Regression Model Testing H1-H6

As visible in table 4, Model 1 of the hierarchical regression included all predictor variables and resulted in a significant regression equation with an explained variance of 29% ( $F(6, 297) = 20.80, p < .01$ ). Model 2 added two interactions and resulted in a non-significant increase of variance explained ( $\Delta R^2 = .01, F(2, 295) = 15.93, p = .29$ ).

Model 1 revealed that both, remote work time and inhouse team presence have no relation to workplace belonging (respectively,  $\beta = -.06, t(297) = -1.07, p = .28$ ;  $\beta = .04, t(297) = 0.80, p = .43$ ). Therefore, H1 and H2 could not be confirmed. H4 could not be confirmed either. Both, non-territorial working and the switch to non-territorial working did not show

significant effects as compared to the reference category “territorial working”, respectively, ( $\beta = -.03$ ,  $t(297) = -0.41$ ,  $p = .68$ ;  $\beta = -.08$ ,  $t(297) = -0.30$ ,  $p = .19$ ). H5 could be confirmed because there was a significant positive relationship between job autonomy and workplace belonging ( $t(297) = 19.58$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Based on the regression coefficient ( $\beta = .52$ ), it can be concluded that one standard deviation increase in job autonomy results in a .52-increase of a standard deviation in workplace belonging.

In model 2, the interaction between remote work time and inhouse team presence in the prediction of workplace belonging (H3) could not be confirmed ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $t(297) = 1.54$ ,  $p = .12$ ). Additionally, hypothesis six could not be confirmed because remote work time and job autonomy did not interact in the prediction of workplace belonging ( $\beta = .00$ ,  $t(297) = -0.03$ ,  $p = .97$ ).

Table 4

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Workplace Belonging by Inhouse Team Presence, Remote Work Time, Job Autonomy and Desk Policy, Interactions were added in the Second Model*

|   | Workplace belonging |          |                     |         |          |
|---|---------------------|----------|---------------------|---------|----------|
|   | Model 1             |          |                     | Model 2 |          |
|   | $\beta$             | <i>B</i> | 95% CI for <i>B</i> | $\beta$ | <i>B</i> |
| Remote work time                          | -.06                | -0.02    | [-0.05, 0.02]       | -.07    | -0.21    |
| Inhouse team presence                     | .04                 | 0.02     | [-0.02, 0.06]       | .06     | 0.02     |
| Job autonomy                              | .52**               | 0.65     | [0.53, 0.77]        | .52**   | 0.64     |
| Desk policy                               |                     |          |                     |         |          |
| Dummy “non-territorial working”           | -.03                | -0.46    | [-2.67, 1.75]       | -.04    | -0.62    |
| Dummy “switch to non-territorial working” | -.08                | -1.44    | [-3.61, 0.74]       | -.08    | -1.44    |
| Dummy “other”                             | -.10                | -2.87    | [-6.08, 0.35]       | -.10    | -2.86    |
| Remote Work Time x Inhouse Team Presence  |                     |          |                     | .08     | 0.00     |
| Remote Work Time x Job Autonomy           |                     |          |                     | -.00    | -7.99    |

|                  | Workplace belonging |         |
|------------------|---------------------|---------|
|                  | Model 1             | Model 2 |
| R <sup>2</sup>   | .29**               | .30**   |
| F                | 20.80               | 15.93   |
| Δ R <sup>2</sup> |                     | .01     |
| Δ F              |                     | .29     |

*Note.*  $N=304$ . *CI*= confidence interval. For the variable desk policy, territorial working was used as the reference category.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$

### Multiple Regression Model Testing H7

Testing the regression assumptions for the second regression analysis revealed that all assumptions were met. A significant regression equation was found ( $t(2, 301) = 56.64, p < .01$ ) with an  $R^2$  of .27, indicating that 27% of the variance in the workplace belonging scores may be predicted by the two job autonomy dimensions.

Both, work scheduling autonomy and decision-making autonomy showed a significant positive relationship to workplace belonging (respectively,  $\beta=.15, t(301) = 2.60, p = .01$ ;  $\beta=.42, t(301) = 7.18, p < .001$ ). Based on the regression coefficient of work scheduling autonomy ( $\beta = .15$ ), it can be concluded that one standard-deviation-increase in work scheduling autonomy results in a .15-increase of a standard deviation in workplace belonging. For decision-making autonomy, the regression coefficient ( $\beta=.42$ ) reveals that a one standard-deviation-increase in decision-making autonomy results in a .42-increase of a standard deviation in workplace belonging. Therefore, based on the standardized coefficients, the prediction of workplace belonging by decision-making autonomy was stronger than by work scheduling autonomy (Table 5), and hypothesis 7 can be confirmed.

Table 5

*Results of Univariate Linear Regression with the Sum-score of the Dependent Variable Workplace Belonging and the Two Identified Variables of Job Autonomy*

| Variable                 | Workplace belonging |          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|
|                          | $\beta$             | <i>B</i> | 95% CI for <i>B</i> |
| Work scheduling-autonomy | .15*                | 0.52     | [0.13, 0.92]        |
| Decision-making-autonomy | .42**               | 1.36     | [0.99, 1.74]        |
| Total R <sup>2</sup>     | .27                 |          |                     |
| F                        | 56.84               |          |                     |

*N*=304.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$

### Discussion

The present study enhanced insight into new-normal-related predictors of workplace belonging. The results of this study showed that job autonomy and two of its sub-components (decision-making autonomy and work scheduling autonomy) positively predict workplace belonging. No evidence was found that remote work time, inhouse team presence, or the desk policy predict workplace belonging. In addition, it could not be confirmed that remote work interacts with either job autonomy or inhouse team presence in the prediction of workplace belonging.

### Major findings and theoretical implications

Contradicting expectations of H1, employees who worked more time in a remote set-up did not experience less workplace belonging. At first sight, this stands in contradiction to the studies of Dery and Hafermalz (2016) and Wang et al. (2021) who found that employees who see their colleagues more in person experience more workplace belonging. However, these comparisons need to be taken with caution because not working remotely does not necessarily imply that the person sees its colleagues. Beyond, remote work time and workplace belonging might not be connected in the context of the new normal. Considering that the employees already spent two years in a fully or partly remote set-up might have affected that they found new ways to connect with colleagues by now (Lal, Dwivedi & Haag, 2021). Therefore, an interesting component is added to existent research by revealing that solely the proportion of time someone works remotely, detached from the social environment someone experiences, could not predict workplace belonging in the new normal.

Considering this finding, it is very alluring that neither inhouse team presence nor its interaction with remote work time could be identified as a predictor of workplace belonging (rejecting hypotheses two and three). One reason for that might be that both, inhouse team presence and remote work time measure solely a (social) set-up someone works in and not the extent of interaction with colleagues which was identified as main reason for employees to come to the office in post-Covid times (Colenberg & Keyson, 2021). Therefore, simply being in the office and seeing colleagues might not cover the needs of employees in the new normal. They might strive for more than that, namely, for social interaction.

This might also explain why the negative effect of remote work time on workplace belonging cannot be intensified by high inhouse team presence. Solely the inhouse team presence might not be perceived as an additional threat when working from home. Moreover, the scores of the sample were very centered around high remote work time and low inhouse team presence. These work circumstances in combination might lead to the fact that employees rarely experienced the benefits of a high inhouse team presence in combination with low remote work time. Therefore, the interaction effect but also the main effect of inhouse team presence might have been disrupted by a lack of variance.

Contradicting the expectations, H4 could not be confirmed. The hypothesis was based on the underlying assumption that the stable and continuous bonds between colleagues (Leary, 2010) might be threatened by shared desks or the switch to shared desks. However, it can be questioned whether the employees have experienced this continuation and stability in the previous two years. For instance, employees switched their workstations from the kitchen counter in one week to the bedroom in the other (Ng, Lit, & Cheung, 2022). Therefore, the added value of this research is that non-territorial working or the switch to non-territorial working might not be a threat to workplace belonging after times of crisis with an ambiguous work environment at home.

In consonance with the expectations of H5, job autonomy was positively related to workplace belonging. The findings prove that, if one of the components of self-determination theory (autonomy) is fulfilled, the chance is heightened that the other is heightened as well (belonging) (Hodgins, Koestner, & Duncan, 1996). This is in line with previous research by Wang et al. (2021) and Winter-Collins and McDaniel (2000) who investigated both variables in the context of work and found a positive relationship. Therefore, this research makes prior research on the relation between job autonomy and workplace belonging evident.

The confirmation of exploratory hypothesis seven adds meaningful information to this finding, suggesting that decision-making autonomy is more predictive of workplace

belonging than work scheduling autonomy. The reason for the different predictive values might be that work scheduling autonomy is a less acute need of employees in post-Covid times in comparison to decision-making. After Covid, employees were especially striving for participation in decision-making because they experienced low perceived control over their jobs during the pandemic (Goodwin et al., 2021). In line with this argumentation, research proves that the degree of perceived control can predict workplace belonging (Nichols, 2020). The need for work scheduling autonomy, however, might be lower because the pandemic allowed for high flexibility in work scheduling which has also manifested in the new normal (Mitchell, 2021).

Lastly, the hypothesis stating that job autonomy and remote work time interact in the prediction of workplace belonging could not be confirmed. This was not expected because previous findings prove that job autonomy can buffer the degree to which employees can cope with remote work (Schall, 2019). An explanation for the missing interaction could be that, due to experience with the remote set-up, remote work might not be experienced as a job demand in the first place (Lal, Dwivedi & Haag, 2021) and therefore, there would also be no need to buffer it with job autonomy (Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012).

### **Limitations and suggestions for future research**

Some limitations must be considered in the interpretation of results. The first issue concerns the restriction of range in all continuous variables. For workplace belonging and job autonomy, the mean scores were relatively high. This could be explained by social desirability (Van de Mortel, 2008). The relationship between workplace belonging and job autonomy might have been artificially strengthened if participants gave socially desirable answers for workplace belonging and job autonomy. Therefore, it is recommended to future researchers to include a social desirability scale to detect, minimize, or correct social desirability. Beyond, the restriction of range in remote work time and inhouse team presence might have limited the chance to find effects on workplace belonging. Hence, it is recommended to conduct the research at a point of time again when the inhouse team presence and remote working scores are less centered around high remote work time and low inhouse team presence. The range could also be extended by using a less homogenous and bigger sample with employees from different companies and backgrounds (Alexander, 1988).

Second, it might be interesting to include a “social interaction” variable in the research. As explained above, social interaction might be an underlying dimension that is more predictive of workplace belonging than either inhouse team presence or remote work time. Therefore, it might be of interest for future researchers to include the measure of Winslow et

al. (2019) that quantifies the degree of informal social interactions. By including the measure, it is controlled for the component of social interaction in the model and the relationships between the variables become clearer.

Third, only two of three dimensions of the job autonomy scale (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) could be confirmed with the factor analysis. The third factor did not add much to any explanatory value to the measurement of autonomy. This is contradictory to previous studies which found that the three-factor structure of job autonomy fits their data the best (Dong, Wu, Ni, & Lu, 2021; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Therefore, future research on the dimensionality of job autonomy deserves some attention, specifically, the sub-dimension work methods autonomy. It should be considered to re-frame the concept of job autonomy regarding the new normal because especially work-methods have drastically changed throughout the past two years (Karunaratne, 2021).

### **Practical Implications and advice**

There is no simple answer to the question of what predicts workplace belonging in post-Covid times because the workplace and the expectations of employees change drastically (Andel, Shen, & Arvan, 2021). Notwithstanding, this research provides relevant findings for future work designs. First, management practice should consider that decision-making autonomy is more predictive of workplace belonging than work scheduling autonomy. Based on this finding, it can be recommended to involve employees in organizational decision-making processes to foster workplace belonging. More specifically, it is advised to make use of management techniques such as the high involvement management model by Lawler (1992) which was proven to have beneficial effects on decision-making degrees in employees (Boxall & Huo, 2022). With the model, organizations work to identify opportunities throughout the work design that reinforce acceptance, respect, inclusion, and support (Nichols, 2020). With decision-making autonomy being covered, work scheduling autonomy should also be endorsed, considering that decision-making autonomy takes on more weight in the prediction of workplace belonging. For instance, some companies offer flexible working hours, job-sharing, staggered start, or flexitime to foster autonomous work schedules (Pierce & Newstrom, 1982).

Moreover, the relationship between workplace belonging and the desk policy should be investigated again at a point where the new normal has established itself more. The employees have just returned to the offices at the point of measurement, coming from an exceptional work situation at home. Additionally, in many companies, like in this research, the shared-desk policy was introduced very recently. To get an adequate understanding of the

relationship between the desk policy and workplace belonging, a triangular research design involving a rotating panel study, observations and interviews could be used. With such a design, the experience with the desk policy cannot only be measured over time but also via a combination of qualitative and quantitative means, reducing the chance that relationships are overlooked (Rolfö, Eklund & Jahncke, 2018).

Beyond that, it needs to be mentioned that employees are still very cautious, and two years of social distancing have left their traces in their ways of working (Boland et al., 2020). As can be observed in this study sample, remote work time still overweighs and the inhouse team presence is still rather low. Therefore, it can be questioned if the new normal is already achieved or if it is rather a development over time (Vyas, 2022). It could be interesting to introduce initiatives to the organization that can help employees to understand belonging in the new normal better. This might strengthen the connection employees make between their ways of working and a feeling of belongingness. In workshop formats such as BarCamps (Dennerlein et al., 2015), the hybrid workplace could be shaped together and expectations towards each other can be set in consideration of workplace belonging. That way, not only the common understanding of belonging in the new normal is fostered but also the feeling of decision-making autonomy, going in hand with our suggestions on autonomy.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, this study highlights that job autonomy is an important component for employees to experience workplace belonging in the new normal. Considering that especially decision-making was predictive of workplace belonging, it is advised for companies to actively involve their employees in change processes and let them participate in decision-making. However, the new normal seems to be a time frame still dynamically evolving rather than one point in time. Thus, it is recommended to investigate its connection to workplace belonging longitudinally, in consideration of social interaction variables that might add relevant value to the model.



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## Appendix A – German Questionnaire

**Für die Teilnahme an der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, gib bitte unten deine Zustimmung.**

**Ich bestätige hiermit, dass:**

- ich schriftlich ausreichend über die Studie informiert worden bin;
- ich die schriftlichen Informationen gelesen habe;
- mir die Möglichkeit gegeben wurde, Fragen zur Studie zu stellen;
- ich ausreichend Gelegenheit erhalten habe, über meine Teilnahme an der Studie nachzudenken;
- die Teilnahme an der Studie auf freiwilliger Basis erfolgt.

**Ich verstehe, dass:**

- ich die Umfrage jederzeit ohne Konsequenzen abbrechen kann;
- die Teilnahme an dieser Studie völlig freiwillig ist.
- die Umfrage anonym ist.

**Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass:**

- meine Daten im Rahmen dieser Studie zu wissenschaftlichen Zwecken erhoben werden und 10 Jahre lang zur Überprüfung zur Verfügung stehen;
- Aufsichtsbehörden meine Forschungsdaten zum Zweck der Überprüfung der Forschung einsehen können.

**Ich bin damit einverstanden, an der Studie teilzunehmen.**

- Ja
- Nein [**FILTER Drop-out**]
- 

Neue Seite

**In den kommenden 6 Fragen wirst du zunächst zu deiner aktuellen Arbeitssituation befragt.**

Wie lange bist du Teil der (Firmenname)?

- Weniger als 1 Jahr
- 1-10 Jahre
- 10-20 Jahre
- Über 20 Jahre

---

Welchem Ressort gehörst du an?

(...)

(...)

(...)

(...)

(...)

(...)

---

Bist du ein Telearbeiter\*?

*\*Nach der Betriebsvereinbarung "Telearbeit" in Abgrenzung zur Betriebsvereinbarung „mobile Arbeit“*

Ja [FILTER Drop-out]

Nein



**Untenstehend wirst du nach prozentualen Einschätzungen gefragt. Bitte mache deine Angaben, wie sie deine Situation am besten beschreiben. Es gibt keine falschen oder richtigen Antworten.**

Wie viel Prozent (%) deiner vertraglichen Arbeitszeit arbeitest du durchschnittlich "remote\*"?  
*\*"Remote" steht für flexible Arbeitszeiten, in der MitarbeiterInnen von verschiedenen Orten außerhalb der Gebäude arbeiten. Persönlicher Kontakt besteht nur mit Hilfe von digitalen Lösungen.*

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Wie viel Prozent (%) deines Teams ist an einem durchschnittlichen Tag im Büro anwesend?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Welcher Sitzplatzordnung im Büro gehörst du momentan an?

- Ich habe meinen eigenen Schreibtisch.
- Ich arbeite in einem "shared-desk" Büro.
- Ich habe aktuell meinen eigenen Schreibtisch aber werde im laufenden Jahr zu einem "shared-desk" Büro wechseln.
- Keine der Optionen trifft auf mich zu.

Neue Seite

**Untenstehend werden verschiedene Aussagen zum Thema Autonomie gemacht. Bitte mache unten die auf dich zutreffenden Angaben auf einer Skala von 1-5 (1=Stimme überhaupt nicht zu, 5=Stimme voll und ganz zu)**

|   | Stimme<br>überhaupt<br>nicht zu | Stimme<br>nicht zu    | Stimme<br>weder zu<br>noch lehne<br>ich ab | Stimme zu             | Stimme<br>voll und<br>ganz zu |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bei meiner Tätigkeit kann ich selbst entscheiden, wie ich die Arbeit einteile.                                      | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         |
| Meine Tätigkeit erlaubt mir, über die Reihenfolge zu entscheiden, in der die Dinge erledigt werden.                 | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         |
| Meine Tätigkeit erlaubt es mir, meine Arbeit selbstständig zu planen.   | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         |
| Meine Tätigkeit gibt mir die Möglichkeit, meine persönliche Initiative oder mein Urteilsvermögen einzusetzen.       | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         |
| Meine Tätigkeit erlaubt mir, viele Entscheidungen selbst zu treffen.  | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         |
| Meine Tätigkeit bietet mir eine große Entscheidungsfreiheit.  | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         |
| Meine Tätigkeit ermöglicht es mir, selbst zu entscheiden, welche Methoden ich zur Erledigung meiner Arbeit anwende. | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         |
| Meine Tätigkeit bietet mir ein hohes Maß an Unabhängigkeit und Freiheit bei der                                     | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         |

Ausführung meiner  
Arbeit.

Meine Tätigkeit  
erlaubt es mir, selbst  
zu entscheiden, wie  
ich meine Arbeit  
erledige.



Untenstehend werden verschiedene Aussagen zum Thema "*Zugehörigkeitsgefühl zu (Firmenname)*" gemacht. Bitte mache unten die auf dich zutreffenden Angaben auf einer Skala von 1-5. (1=Stimme überhaupt nicht zu, 5=Stimme voll und ganz zu)

|  | Stimme überhaupt nicht zu | Stimme nicht zu       | Stimme weder zu noch lehne ich ab | Stimme zu             | Stimme voll und ganz zu |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Ich bin in der Lage, in dieser Organisation zu arbeiten, ohne meine Prinzipien zu opfern.  | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |
| Ich spreche eher von "wir/uns" als von "sie/ihr", wenn ich mich nach Außen hin auf die Firma beziehe.                            | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |
| Ich habe das Gefühl, dass zwischen meiner Organisation und meinen eigenen Werten/Überzeugungen eine gewisse Ähnlichkeit besteht. | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |
| Im Allgemeinen empfinde ich bei meiner Arbeit mehr positive als negative Gefühle.  | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |
| Die Zugehörigkeit zu dieser Organisation spornt mich an, mehr zu tun, als von mir erwartet wird.                                 | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |
| In meiner Arbeitseinheit habe ich viele gemeinsame Themen mit meinen KollegInnen.  | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |
| Bei der Umsetzung von Regeln und Richtlinien in meiner Organisation wird auf Fairness geachtet.                                  | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |

|  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Meine persönlichen Bedürfnisse werden von meiner Organisation gut erfüllt.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Wann immer ich persönliche oder berufliche Probleme habe, bietet mir mein Unternehmen die notwendige Hilfe und Unterstützung an.           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Meine beruflichen Ziele werden von meiner Organisation gut berücksichtigt.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Mein Unternehmen bemüht sich, meine Arbeit so spannend und vielversprechend wie möglich zu gestalten.                                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Leistungen bei der Arbeit werden in meinem Unternehmen angemessen belohnt (sowohl monetäre Vergütung als auch immaterielle Wertschätzung). | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**Final werden dir drei Fragen zur zukünftigen Arbeit gestellt. Das hilft uns, den Status Quo mit dem Wunschstatus der Mitarbeitenden zu vergleichen.**

Wie viel Prozent deiner vertraglichen Arbeitszeit möchtest du zukünftig gerne "remote" arbeiten?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Wie viel Prozent deines Teams möchtest du zukünftig gerne an einem durchschnittlichen Tag im Büro anwesend haben?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Was sind Faktoren, die dich zukünftig dazu bewegen ins Büro zu kommen?

---

**Falls du nicht mehr an dieser Studie teilnehmen möchtest, kreuze bitte die untenstehende Option an.**

- Ich möchte nicht mehr an der Studie teilnehmen und veranlasse hiermit, dass meine Daten wieder gelöscht werden. **[FILTER Drop-out]**

**ENDE**

Liebe Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer,

Herzlichen Dank für die Teilnahme! Du hilfst uns damit, unser „new normal“ zu gestalten und voraussagende Faktoren für das Zugehörigkeitsgefühl zu untersuchen. Du hast nun das Ende des Fragebogens erreicht. Falls du noch Fragen zum Inhalt, Zweck oder Forschungsethik dieser Erhebung hast, wende dich bitte an [hannah.ciroth@ru.nl](mailto:hannah.ciroth@ru.nl).

Wir danken dir nochmals herzlich für deine Zeit und Mühe! **[ENDE]**

### Appendix B – Translation of Questionnaire

**For participation in the scientific research on predictors for workplace belonging, please give your consent below.**

**I herewith confirm that:**

- I have been satisfactorily informed of the study in writing
- I have read the written information
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study
- I have been given ample opportunity to think carefully about participating in the study
- I participate in the study entirely on a voluntary basis.

**I understand that:**

- I can stop the survey at any time without consequences
- the participation in this study is completely voluntary
- the survey is anonymous

**I agree that:**

- my research data within this research will be obtained for scientific purposes and will be available for verification for 10 years
- supervisory authorities may inspect my research data for the purpose of auditing the research.

Yes

No [**FILTER Drop-out**]

**I agree to participate in the study.**

Yes

No [**FILTER Drop-out**]

**In the following six questions, you will be asked about your current work situation.**

How long have you been working for (company name)?

- Less than 1 year
  - 1-10 years
  - 10-20 years
  - More than 20 years
- 

To which department do you belong?

- (...)
  - (...)
  - (...)
  - (...)
  - (...)
  - (...)
- 

Are you a Teleworker\*?

\*Teleworker according to the works council agreement “telework” – in distinction from the works council agreement “mobile work”

- Yes [**FILTER Drop-out**]
  - No
-



**Below, you will make indications in percentage. Please answer in a way that describes your situation the best, there are no right or wrong answers.**

What percentage (%) of your contract do you work remotely\*?

*\*Remote working = working in locations remote from your central office, where you can only communicate with co-workers using technology, but not in person.*

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



On an average workday, what percentage (%) of your team is present in the office?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Please indicate your current work set-up in the office.

- I have my own desk.
- I work in a shared-desk space.
- I have my own desk but will transition to a shared-desk space this year.
- Does not apply.

**Below, different statements about job autonomy are made. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements on a scale from 1-5 (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree or disagree, 4=agree, 5= strongly agree)**

|   | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Neither agree or disagree | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The job allows me to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work.                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The job allows me to decide on the order in which things are done on the job.               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The job allows me to plan how I do my work.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The job gives me the chance to use my personal judgment in carrying out the work.           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own.                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The job provides me with significant autonomy in making decisions.                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The job allows me to make decisions about what methods I use to complete my work.           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my work. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

|  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The job allows me to decide on my own how to go about doing my work. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

Page Break

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**Below, different statements about workplace belonging are made. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements on a scale from 1-5. (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree or disagree, 4=agree, 5= strongly agree)**

|  | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Neither agree or disagree | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I am able to work in this organization without sacrificing my principles.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I use to refer as “we/us” rather than “they/them” when I refer my organization to outsiders. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel that there is a semblance between my organization and my own values and beliefs.      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I generally carry more positive emotions than negative ones during my job.                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Being part of this organization inspires me to do more than what is expected.                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

|   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <p>In my work unit, I have many common themes with my co-workers.</p>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <p>Fairness is maintained while executing rules and policies in my organization.</p>                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <p>My personal needs are well met by my organization.</p>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <p>Whenever I have any personal or professional issues, my organization extends necessary help and support.</p> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <p>My career goals are well considered by my organization.</p>  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <p>My organization tries to make my job as exciting and promising as possible.</p>                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <p>Accomplishments at work are adequately rewarded in my organization (monetary and non-monetary).</p>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page Break

**The last three questions deal with the future of work. These questions help us to compare the status quo with the desired state of our employees.**

What percentage of your contract working hours would you like to work remotely in the future?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



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On average, what percentage of your team would you like to have present in the office in the future?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



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What are factors that will drive you to come to the office in the future?

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Page Break

**If you no longer wish to participate in this study, please indicate below.**

- I still want to participate in the study.
- I no longer wish to participate in the study and hereby arrange for my data to be deleted. [FILTER Drop-out]

**END**

**Thank you** very much for participating! You are helping us to shape our "new normal" and to investigate predictive factors for the sense of belonging in the workplace. You have now reached the **end of the questionnaire**. If you have any questions about the content, purpose, or research ethics of this survey, please contact [hannah.ciroth@ru.nl](mailto:hannah.ciroth@ru.nl). Thank you again for your time and effort!