**Dissertation Interview - Participant H – 20 May 2024**

Participant H: Okay.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, perfect. Can you just maybe start with describing the organisation that you work for?

Participant H: So, it's financial. It's in the financial services, we deal with investments mainly and we provide almost want to say like investment vehicles to clients.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and what is your role in the organisation and where does your team fit in?

Participant H: I'm currently part of the actual product team, so I'm on the product development side, very high level. It's like reviewing the fees, the product rules, those that type of stuff.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and how would you describe the culture of the organisation?

Participant H: I'd say it's good. I think it depends on which team you're in, but for my team I think it's good. This doesn't seem to be micro management.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and how many people do you manage?

Participant H: Currently four.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and how long have you been managing people?

Participant H: Officially since October last year.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and how would you describe your leadership style?

Participant H: I think it's more like very trusting. Yeah, like not checking up on people all the time or not checking that they're online. More just trusting that if I ask you to do something, you're going to do it. And if you need help, you know you should feel comfortable to reach out to me.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, so obviously if you started managing people last year, have you always been managing people in a virtual setting? And by that, I mean in hybrid or remote working.

Participant H: I think since October last year has always been a hybrid setting a bit of both in person and at home.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, so does your team and do you work from home sometimes? How is the work structure?

Participant H: Currently it's three days in the office, two days at home, but it's almost it's not a set three days where, you have to be in every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Each person in the team is given their freedom to decide which three days they want to go into the office and which two days to work from home. It doesn't always overlap in terms of like you'll be in the office, it doesn't need your entire team with the office and vice versa.

Fanie Mordaunt: What do you believe are some of the challenges that you encountered when you started managing these employees remotely? So, with people not being physically in front of you.

Participant H: I think the main thing is you can't just walk up to someone and ask for something. You have to make sure they're available and then talk. I mean virtually over teams and then sometimes people aren't always available at that precise moment, just because they're working from home, you know they're busy with other stuff.

Fanie Mordaunt: How did you overcome these challenges?

Participant H: So, I think I try and keep it as you know. I try and set meetings when I know we're all in person at the office, especially if it's something big. If it's something small, then all I'll give you a call about it, but if it's something big, something you're doing for the first time and I need to really go through something with you in depth or in detail. And I just find it easier to do it in in-person.

Fanie Mordaunt: And how did you overcome, sorry, how did you deal with power cuts? So like let's say, for example, somebody's working from home and they offline for quite some time and they tell you, there's load shedding or things of that nature. How do you deal with those things?

Participant H: So, with that I think we do have a schedule that says like who in the team has backup power at home and who doesn't. It's also company policy that if it's stage 6 and above for loadshedding, then everyone's almost back to office. Unless you can prove you have backup power at home, so even when we do hit stage four or six that load shedding time. It's quite a lot of load shedding then you almost only allowed to work from home if you have backup power.

Fanie Mordaunt: You spoke about trust in the beginning and you said your leadership style is one of trust. So, how do you develop trust with your team, especially when they're not physically there with you?

Participant H: I think it's just been open. You know, it's like, don't be a dictator. It's almost more like, you know, you it's okay if you comfortable telling them when you don't know something, you feel like they're comfortable saying when they don't know something. I always say like communication, I think is the biggest thing. If they can be honest with you, then you know it's all good. I'm not asking you to know how to do everything, but be able to speak up when you don't know and when you do know.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and have you ever had a situation where you've had a new joiner in your team since you've started managing? And how do you welcome new joiners if people are working from home?

Participant H: Currently company policy is so our new joiner is a graduate. Their first year of working, so company policy is that they have to be in the office every day. So, I haven't really had the situation where they're working from home, but there is a situation, when I'm working from home and they're in the office, but like I said, it's all about open communication like they know I'm just a message or call. So, you also tried to make yourself available.

Participant H: Yeah.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, and have you ever been in a situation where there's been a conflict? So maybe you said something that was misunderstood or maybe you've misunderstood something that somebody else has said or maybe two colleagues and that you've had to manage a conflict.

Participant H: I wouldn't say like a conflict that kind of that, call it a conflict, that I mean definitely like sometimes when you're explaining especially technical things, they can be a bit of misunderstanding. And then you kind of have to take a step back and understand the way they're understanding something and how I'm explaining it and kind of marry the two. But nothing like a major conflict.

Fanie Mordaunt: There hasn't been a major conflict.

Participant H: Yeah.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay, but in those cases where they have not maybe understood you or you not maybe understanding them. How should you take a step back? So, how do you do that practically?

Participant H I asked him okay, how are you interpreting what I'm saying? Like, what's your thought process? I try and understand the way they understand it so I can see where the misunderstanding is or where the gap in knowledge is and then take it from there.

Fanie Mordaunt: And how do you track performance? So, how do you make sure that people are doing what they supposed to be doing is especially when they're not with you physically?

Participant H: So, I think it's just like I did ask him to send me an email. I don't need to be easy to everything, but I mean if it's something you, if it's something they're not sure of, like I'm always firstly ask, if you're not sure before you send an email to someone that's maybe not in our team. But when you do reply like just cc me so that if there is a question or a query that comes back then I'm aware of it and it's not like you know if something goes wrong I'm hearing about it for the first time like I know what's happening basically.

Fanie Mordaunt: Based on your experience and do you believe that there are any specific characteristics that you need to have if you're going to be managing people that are not in front of you? Cause obviously it's so much easier when you can see them and you're monitoring and controlling. But if they're not with you, What do you think that are some other behaviours’ that are manager must have to be able to manage successfully?

Participant H: Think for me it's just like have open communication because you know you're not with the person, you're not seeing them. You can't see if they're struggling kind of thing. So if you have that open communication, you can trust that they're going to tell you. If they're struggling, you know, I think your communication is the biggest.

Fanie Mordaunt: And is there anything that you've personally struggled with or that you've observed around, you know, maybe other managers that you work with that you would like to also mention that I didn't touch on?

Participant H: No, not that I can think of here.

Fanie Mordaunt: Okay. I think that's all I think you you've basically given me everything I needed and thank you so much, Kirana. I really appreciate your time.

Participant H: No problem. Hopefully that was helpful.