

# Organizational nostalgia as a novel pathway toward greater employee well-being

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## Abstract

Employee well-being is a critical consideration for organizations. It may be particularly so in the post COVID-19 era, where many still suffer from the pandemic's after-effects. We propose a novel pathway to maintain and improve employee well-being: organizational nostalgia, one's sentimental longing or wistful affection for past organizational events. We advocate that organizational nostalgia is associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment and that telecommuting frequency (i.e., the extent to which employees work remotely) moderates this association. Additionally, we examine employees' perceptions of organizational cultural strength as an antecedent of organizational nostalgia. Findings from two studies support our theoretical proposals and offer fresh insight into how organizations could sustain their employees' well-being by leveraging organizational nostalgia.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

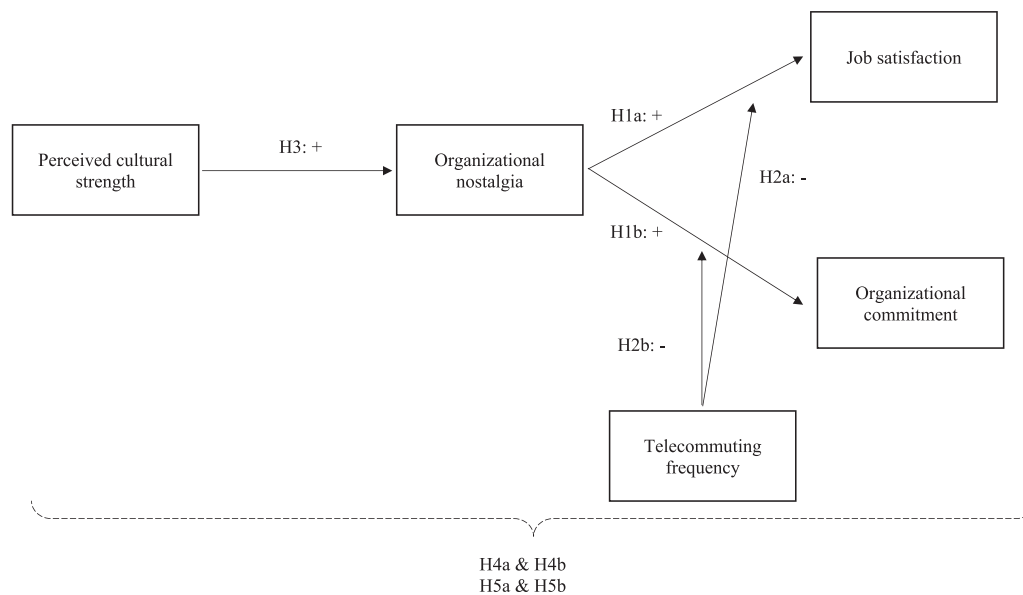
Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, employees across various occupations have been reporting lower job satisfaction (Jones, 2020; Makowicz et al., 2022; Mohammed et al., 2022). In the presence of adverse events, like the pandemic, employees commonly experience nostalgia (Barauskaite et al., 2022; Wildschut & Sedikides, 2021; Wulf et al., 2021), "a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past" (Pearsall, 1998, p. 1266). Presumably, when the present does not measure up, mentally transporting to the carefree, pleasant past reinforces one's current negative outlook in general and of organizational life in particular.

However, accumulating evidence over the past two decades runs contrary to this presumption (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2022; Sedikides et al., 2015). Nostalgia is a predominantly positive emotion that promotes well-being or goal pursuit (Baldwin & Landau, 2014; Hepper & Dennis, 2023; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2020). Nascent research in organizational contexts suggests that personal nostalgia also contributes to the welfare of organizational members. For example, personal nostalgia helps employees cope with occupational stressors and fuels intrinsic motivation in their work (Van Dijke et al., 2015, 2019). In addition, organizational nostalgia, longing for one's past

organizational life, weakens turnover intentions by rendering one's work more meaningful (Leunissen et al., 2018).

Although organizational nostalgia has potential implications for employee well-being, it still receives relatively little empirical attention. In this article, we focus on the association between organizational nostalgia and employee well-being during the pandemic. Specifically, we examine whether organizational nostalgia is associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, two key indicators of employee well-being (Nielsen et al., 2017). Further, telecommuting has become increasingly common since the pandemic; thus, we test whether telecommuting moderates the association between organizational nostalgia and employee well-being. Finally, we identify an elicitor of organizational nostalgia, perceptions of organizational cultural strength, aiming to pinpoint an effective pathway for increasing employee well-being during adverse events.

We address these issues purporting to advance the empirical and theoretical scope of organizational nostalgia. To begin, we elaborate on why organizational nostalgia can facilitate job satisfaction and organizational commitment. We then probe circumstances under which the influence of organizational nostalgia is stronger (vs. weaker) on employee well-being outcomes. In particular, we postulate that office-based (vs. telecommuting) employees reap more benefits from organizational nostalgia, as physical office environments afford more opportunities to



**FIGURE 1** Theoretical model.

act upon organizational nostalgia; for example, after fondly recalling an office party, an employee might decide to have a brief catch-up or lunch with a colleague. Finally, we address an antecedent of organizational nostalgia. Given prior evidence that organizational nostalgia is tied to various artifacts of organizational culture (e.g., work environment, atmosphere, colleagues, buildings; Gabriel, 1993; Leunissen et al., 2018), we propose that employees are more likely to experience organizational nostalgia when they perceive their organizational culture to be stronger (than weaker).

Our research makes three contributions. First, we demonstrate that organizational nostalgia promotes employee well-being, even during the early phases of the pandemic (July 2020) in countries (the United Kingdom, the United States) where economies and working lives were severely affected. Second, by documenting the moderating role of telecommuting frequency, we build a granular view of organizational nostalgia's influence and clarify for whom organizations should encourage nostalgizing. This also extends the literature of telecommuting by identifying its negative role in employee well-being. Last, by identifying organizational culture as an antecedent of organizational nostalgia, we show how organizations could improve employee well-being. Our findings call for investing in organizational culture during adverse events. We present our theoretical model in Figure 1.

## 2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 | Organizational nostalgia and employee well-being

We consider first how and why organizational nostalgia is beneficial to employee well-being. Organizational nostalgia is a bittersweet, yet

predominantly positive, emotion that entails meaningful (i.e., personally relevant) memories of one's experiences at work (Gabriel, 1993; Leunissen et al., 2023; Milligan, 2003; Ylijoki, 2005). Thus far, two studies have addressed the role of personal nostalgia, referring to experiences from one's private life, in organizations. These studies showed that personal nostalgia contributes to greater cooperation and work motivation under threat. In particular, personal nostalgia sustained (1) cooperation in the face of low (vs. high) procedural justice (Van Dijke et al., 2015), and (2) intrinsic motivation in the face of low (vs. high) interactional justice (Van Dijke et al., 2019). A few other studies addressed the role of organizational nostalgia. These studies showed that the emotion confers psychological benefits in the workplace (i.e., higher work meaningfulness, lower turnover intentions) and aids employees in coping with adversity (i.e., buffers the aftereffects of burnout; Leunissen et al., 2018), while predicting in-role and extra-role performance as well as eagerness to engage in novel experiences (Leunissen et al., 2023). Both personal and organizational nostalgia, then, can counteract undesirable situations at work, helping employees regulate aversive psychological reactions (Van Dijke & Leunissen, 2023).

We extend these benefits of organizational nostalgia to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction refers to a sense of fulfillment or enjoyment that one derives from their occupation along with favorable appraisals of it (Judge et al., 2012; Locke, 1976). Personal nostalgia often involves reflecting on momentous life events that implicate the self in interactions with close others (Madoglou et al., 2017; Wildschut et al., 2006). As such, nostalgic recollections are mostly social (Juhl & Biskas, 2023; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019) and imbued with meaning (Abeyta & Pillarisetty, 2022; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). It is no surprise, then, that personal nostalgia is positively associated with psychological well-being (Hepper et al., 2021; Kelley et al., 2022; Lalous

et al., 2022). In organizational contexts, reflecting on, and talking with colleagues about, momentous or meaningful experiences relevant to one's jobs and organizations, such as achievements or instances of camaraderie (e.g., thank-you letters or gifts from colleagues), would likely conduce to employees interpreting their work experiences in a favorable light, raising job satisfaction.

We further propose that engaging in organizational nostalgia, alone and with colleagues, is positively linked to organizational commitment, "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in an organization" (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226). For one, if organizational nostalgia conduces to positive appraisals of organizational events and experiences, it will contribute to one's willingness to stay in the organization. In addition, personal nostalgia is positively associated with approach-oriented motivation (i.e., one's orientation characterized by moving toward desired end states or positive stimuli; Abeyta et al., 2015; Stephan et al., 2014) including optimism and inspiration (Cheung et al., 2013; Stephan et al., 2015). Provided that organizational nostalgia functions similarly, that is entails an approach motivation (Leunissen et al., 2023), optimism, and inspiration about one's occupation, it will conduce to greater commitment among employees.

**Hypothesis 1a.** Organizational nostalgia is positively associated with job satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 1b.** Organizational nostalgia is positively associated with organizational commitment.

## 2.2 | The moderating role of telecommuting frequency

The benefits of organizational nostalgia will be more evident when employees can act upon their nostalgizing. For example, when recalling office parties or organizational events that highlight rewarding interpersonal experiences, employees would be more likely to initiate interactions with their colleagues such as a brief catch-up or informal conversation, thereby boosting their job satisfaction or organizational commitment. However, employees might not always be able to do as they wish, depending on work location. Telecommuting frequency, or the degree to which employees work remotely from the office, is likely to moderate the benefits of organizational nostalgia on employee well-being (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment). Working remotely, either telecommuting or in a hybrid arrangement, is becoming increasingly common and prevalent among a variety of occupations owing to technological advancements (Allen et al., 2015; Spreitzer et al., 2017).

Thus far, research on telecommuting has largely focused on its relevance for individual work-related outcomes. Telecommuting is related to low levels of work-role stress, work exhaustion, and turnover intention, whereas it is positively related to job performance, positive work attitudes, and contextual performance (Bloom et al., 2015; Gajendran et al., 2015; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). The

pros of telecommuting are primarily explained by two mechanisms: perceived autonomy and flexibility. Telecommuting is considered advantageous, because it is conducive to one's perception of control over work procedures, schedules, and ambient factors (e.g., clothing, breaks, music) in an occupational setting. As a result of autonomy and flexibility, telecommuting facilitates employees' capability to manage demands from work and family, and conduces to reduced conflict between these two domains (Allen et al., 2013; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden et al., 2006).

Yet, working from office has also merit. We propose, in particular, that working from office magnifies the benefits of organizational nostalgia for employee well-being. Office-based employees are embedded in an environment where they can immediately act upon their nostalgia, such as bantering with colleagues next door, walking to the familiar lounge area in the office building, or reaching out for advice or help. Consequently, working in an office facilitates memory retrieval and renders recollection more feasible (Smith & Vela, 2001), enhancing organizational nostalgia's contribution to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. By contrast, telecommuters and hybrid employees, who work remotely often by themselves at home or in a café, are not typically immersed in an environment where they can act upon their nostalgia. Taken together, we advocate that the relation of organizational nostalgia with job satisfaction and organizational commitment varies, depending on employees' work arrangement. The benefits of organizational nostalgia are magnified when telecommuting frequency is low, compared to when it is high.

**Hypothesis 2a.** Telecommuting frequency moderates the relation between organizational nostalgia and job satisfaction, such that a positive relation will be stronger at the low (than high) level of telecommuting frequency.

**Hypothesis 2b.** Telecommuting frequency moderates the relation between organizational nostalgia and organizational commitment, such that a positive relation will be stronger at the low (than high) level of telecommuting frequency.

## 2.3 | Perceived organizational culture as an antecedent of organizational nostalgia

We elaborate on a potential antecedent of organizational nostalgia to understand how organizations can increase employee well-being by fostering organizational nostalgia. The emotion often refers to one's work environment and atmosphere, interpersonal relationships with colleagues, leadership, work challenges, or office buildings (Gabriel, 1993; Leunissen et al., 2018; Milligan, 2003; Ylijoki, 2005). Its targets pertain to cultural artifacts of organizations, which represent aspects of organizational culture that can be visible and easily felt by employees (e.g., company logos, photos of landmark achievements, or social events; Schein, 1992). Based on these features of organizational nostalgia, we propose that employees

who perceive that they are embedded in a strong culture will be more likely to engage in organizational nostalgia.

To begin, employees who perceive their organizational cultures to be strong are more likely to identify situational cues available at the workplace that might trigger organizational nostalgia. Even when being in the same organizational environment, employees attend to different cues and give their own meaning to their experiences (Ocasio, 2010); they selectively tune in to cues that are attitudinally congenial to their pre-existing beliefs and opinions (Hart et al., 2009). Believing that their organizational cultures are strong, those employees are more likely to perceive and process situational cues that are associated to the cultures, including both tangible (e.g., company logos or images and physical structures like office design and buildings) and intangible (e.g., interactions with colleagues and languages, and daily routines commonly used among employees) ones, all of which constitute triggers of organizational nostalgia (Gabriel, 1993; Leunissen et al., 2018; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Indeed, sensory inputs like images, music, odors, or tastes, which bring vivid and affect-laden experiences to one's mind, are well-documented antecedents of personal nostalgia (Huang et al., 2023; Reid et al., 2014, 2023; Sedikides et al., 2022; Wildschut et al., 2006; Yang et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the perception of a strong culture likely engenders more situational affordance for organizational nostalgia. Affordance refers to behavioral possibilities that a given environment offers to the individual, for better or worse (Chong & Proctor, 2020; Gibson, 1979). When employees perceive their organizational cultures to be strong, they are more likely to regard the organization as a suitable environment to engage in nostalgia, experiencing nostalgia as a reinforcement of their cultural reality instead of a distraction from the work. Taken together, employees who perceive their organizational cultures to be strong will selectively attend to organizational cultural cues, embracing opportunities for nostalgizing.

**Hypothesis 3.** Perceived cultural strength is positively associated with organizational nostalgia.

Also, we extend Hypotheses 1a and 1b by testing organizational nostalgia as a mediator between perceived cultural strength and job satisfaction on the one hand and organizational commitment on the other.

**Hypothesis 4a.** *Organizational nostalgia mediates the relation between perceived cultural strength and job satisfaction.*

**Hypothesis 4b.** Organizational nostalgia mediates the relation between perceived cultural strength and organizational commitment.

Finally, assuming that telecommuting frequency moderates the link between organizational nostalgia and employee well-being, we postulate that the indirect effects of perceived cultural strength will also depend on how often employees telecommute. Specifically, we

propose a second-stage moderated mediation model where the associations between perceived cultural strength and both job satisfaction and organizational commitment are mediated by organizational nostalgia, and these indirect associations are conditional on telecommuting frequency.

**Hypothesis 5a.** The indirect effect of perceived cultural strength on job satisfaction via organizational nostalgia is greater at the low (than high) level of telecommuting frequency.

**Hypothesis 5b.** The indirect effect of perceived cultural strength on organizational commitment via organizational nostalgia is greater at the low (than high) level of telecommuting frequency.

### 3 | STUDY 1<sup>1</sup>

In Study 1, we aimed to validate the measure of perceived cultural strength and test our hypotheses. A construct similar to perceived cultural strength is cultural tightness<sup>2</sup> (Gelfand et al., 2006), referring to normative control and sanctioning aspects of organizational culture. We expected cultural strength and cultural tightness to be independent at both the organizational and individual levels. We elaborate on conceptual distinctions and present detailed results from construct validity testing in Supporting Information: Appendix A.

We conducted this study amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Owing to pertinent occupational challenges, telecommuting had become prevalent (Bennett et al., 2021; Min et al., 2021). It has been argued that telecommuters differ from office-based employees (e.g., high-performing employees are allowed to work remotely; telecommuters earn more; telecommuting may be more readily adopted in technology-based companies) and that telecommuting constitutes a career premium (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Leslie et al., 2012). However, given that the pandemic accelerated organizations' shift toward telecommuting across industries and nations, even those who previously used to work exclusively in the office were required to work remotely. That is, telecommuting was no longer available to a few select employees. Hence, we were able to access telecommuters from a wider range of occupations and industries, boosting the generalizability of our findings.

#### 3.1 | Sample and procedure

We administered a survey to Prolific participants, who were full-time employees of organizations in either the United Kingdom or the United States on July 9, 2020, remunerating them at an hourly rate of £10. At data collection time, the United Kingdom<sup>3</sup> and the United States had on average 587 and 53,239 daily COVID cases per week, respectively (GOV.UK, 2021; New York Times, 2021). We thus expected to observe large variation in employees' use of

telecommuting practices. Taking a conservative approach, we estimated a small effect size ( $r = .20$ ) and aimed for a minimum of 400 participants to achieve sufficient statistical power ( $1 - \beta = .95$  at  $\alpha = .05$ ). We recruited 400 participants and received 399 responses. We excluded four participants due to having duplicate IP addresses, resulting in a final sample of 395 valid responses ( $M_{\text{age}} = 33.53$  years,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.25$  years; 56.71% women, 42.03% men, 1.26% other). Of them, about 90% were White/Caucasian, 3.80% Asian, 2.53% African, and 4.30% mixed race or other. Participants' mean organizational tenure was 6.00 years ( $SD = 5.94$  years). Participants worked in diverse sectors, including education and training (10.63%), healthcare (8.61%), financial services (5.82%), and governmental agency (5.57%). In addition, 13.92% of them lived alone, 73.42% of them lived with a partner/family, and 12.66% had children.

## 3.2 | Measures

We presented the scales in a separate random order for each participant. We also randomized the items within each scale, separately for each participant.

### 3.2.1 | Organizational nostalgia

First, participants read a definition of organizational nostalgia (“a sentimental longing or wistful affection for past events, and aspects of, one’s organisational life”; Leunissen et al., 2018, p. 44). Then, participants rated how nostalgic they felt (1 = *not at all nostalgic*, 7 = *very nostalgic*) for the following 13 aspects of their organizational life (Gabriel, 1993; Leunissen et al., 2018): “my coworkers,” “my supervisor,” “the office building,” “meetings,” “my routines at work,” “my team,” “my friends at work,” “meaningful work,” “the fun I had,” “banter with colleagues,” “the work climate,” “the camaraderie,” “the challenge” ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

### 3.2.2 | Job satisfaction

We measured job satisfaction with five items (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951): “I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job,” “Most days I am enthusiastic about my work,” “Each day of work seems like it will never end” (reverse coded), “I find real enjoyment in my work,” “I consider my job rather unpleasant” (reverse-coded; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 10 = *strongly agree*;  $\alpha = .87$ ).

### 3.2.3 | Organizational commitment

We measured organizational commitment with Allen and Meyer's (1990) six affective organizational commitment items: “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization,” “I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own,” “I do not

feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization” (reverse-coded), “I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization” (reverse-coded), “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me,” “I do not feel like part of the family at my organization” (reverse-coded; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*;  $\alpha = .88$ ).

### 3.2.4 | Telecommuting frequency

We measured telecommuting frequency by asking how many days per week (0–7 days) participants worked from home in the ongoing pandemic ( $M = 3.28$  days,  $SD = 2.33$  days).<sup>4</sup> We constructed this question.

### 3.2.5 | Perceived cultural strength

We created a 3-item scale based on the definition of organizational cultural strength as “one in which there is both intensity around one or two key norms and broader consensus about a comprehensive set of norms” (Chatman et al., 2014, p. 788). Participants rated the items on a 7-point bipolar scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ): “I would describe my organizational culture as”: weak (–3) ... strong (3); “The intensity level of my organizational culture is”: low (–3) ... high (3); “The consensus among the employees regarding the culture of my organization is”: low (–3) ... high (3).

### 3.2.6 | Cultural tightness

We adopted the 6-item scale developed by Gelfand et al. (2011) on national cultural tightness to measure participants' perceptions of cultural tightness of their organizations. The items were: “There are many strong norms that people are supposed to abide by in my organization,” “In my organization, there are clear norms for how people should act in most situations,” “People agree upon the norms for what behaviors are considered appropriate versus inappropriate in my organization,” “In most situations, norms in my organization give people a great deal of freedom in deciding how they want to behave,” “In my organization, if someone acts in a way that deviates from the norms, others will strongly disapprove,” “People in my organization almost always comply with norms at work” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*;  $\alpha = .70$ ).

### 3.2.7 | Control variables

We controlled for three demographic variables: age, gender, organizational tenure. We controlled for age given its positive relations with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ng & Feldman, 2010). We controlled for gender and organizational tenure, given that women and senior employees manifest greater commitment than men and junior employees, respectively (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

**TABLE 1** Means, SD, correlations, and scale reliabilities among Study 1 variables.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Gender	0.57	0.50									
2 Age	33.53	9.25	-.18***								
3 Organizational tenure	6.00	5.94	-.15**	.59***							
4 Telecommuting frequency	3.28	2.33	.03	.03	-.05						
5 Perceived cultural strength	1.02	1.32	.05	-.07	.02	-.03	(.85)				
6 Organizational nostalgia	4.20	1.23	.10*	-.06	.05	-.04	.44***	(.92)			
7 Cultural tightness	4.24	0.66	-.01	.04	.03	-.17***	.33***	.24***	(.70)		
8 Job satisfaction	6.71	1.92	-.03	.11*	.11*	-.04	.52***	.35***	.19***	(.87)	
9 Organizational commitment	4.45	1.49	-.05	.08	.17***	-.03	.61***	.48***	.23***	.69***	(.88)

Note:  $N = 395$ . We present reliabilities in parentheses. For gender, we coded male and other as 0 and female as 1.

Abbreviation: SD, standard deviation.

\* $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### 3.3 | Results

#### 3.3.1 | Descriptive statistics

We present in Table 1 descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and scale reliabilities. Organizational nostalgia was positively related to both job satisfaction ( $r = .35$ , 95% CI [0.25, 0.43],  $p < .001$ ) and organizational commitment ( $r = .48$ , 95% CI [0.39, 0.55],  $p < .001$ ). Perceived cultural strength was positively associated with organizational nostalgia ( $r = .44$ , 95% CI [0.36, 0.52],  $p < .001$ ), job satisfaction ( $r = .52$ , 95% CI [0.45, 0.59],  $p < .001$ ), and organizational commitment ( $r = .61$ , 95% CI [0.55, 0.67],  $p < .001$ ). Perceived cultural strength was also positively associated with cultural tightness, but the effect size was smaller ( $r = .33$ , 95% CI [0.24, 0.42],  $p < .001$ ). Telecommuting frequency was unrelated to our focal variables, except for cultural tightness ( $r = -.17$ , 95% CI [-0.26, -0.07],  $p < .001$ ).

#### 3.3.2 | Construct validation

We carried out an exploratory factor analysis on the perceived cultural strength scale. All three items loaded onto a single factor with an eigenvalue of 2.03, explaining 67.7% of the total variance. The mean factor loading of the items was 0.82 (SD = 0.12). We then conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess perceived cultural strength and cultural tightness as separate latent variables.<sup>5</sup> Compared to a single-factor model ( $\chi^2[22] = 305.48$ , CFI = 0.81, RMSEA = 0.18, SRMR = 0.13), the two-factor model ( $\chi^2[21] = 163.94$ , CFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.13, SRMR = 0.06) had a significantly better fit ( $\Delta\chi^2[1] = 141.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (Supporting Information: Table A1).

Despite perceived cultural strength and cultural tightness being positively and moderately correlated, they were uniquely associated with our focal variables (Table 2). Partialling out cultural tightness did not reduce the size of correlations of perceived cultural strength with other variables ( $M_{\Delta r} = 0.04$ ,  $SD_{\Delta r} = 0.01$ ), except for

**TABLE 2** Partial correlations of perceived cultural strength and cultural tightness with Study 1 variables controlling for their shared variance.

Variables	Perceived cultural strength	Cultural tightness
Telecommuting frequency	0.03	-0.17**
Organizational nostalgia	0.39**	0.11*
Job satisfaction	0.49**	0.02
Organizational commitment	0.58**	0.04

Note:  $N = 395$ .

\* $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\* $p < .001$ .

telecommuting frequency. By contrast, partialling out cultural strength reduced the size of correlations of cultural tightness with other variables ( $M_{\Delta r} = 0.12$ ,  $SD_{\Delta r} = 0.09$ ). This set of results provides further evidence for the discriminant validity of perceived cultural strength versus cultural tightness. Given that our hypotheses were specific to perceived cultural strength, we did not include cultural tightness in the analysis reported below. Ancillary analyses including cultural tightness in the measurement model and controlling for its effects in hypothesis testing yielded the same pattern of results for perceived cultural strength (Supporting Information: Tables A3 and A4).

Next, we conducted a series of CFAs to examine the measurement model's fit for the focal variables, that is, perceived cultural strength, organizational nostalgia, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.<sup>6</sup> The four-factor measurement model had good fit indices ( $\chi^2[308] = 788.73$ , CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.05). We compared the four-factor solution to several alternative models (Supporting Information: Table A2). The four-factor structure evinced a better fit than these alternative models, supporting the discriminant validity of our focal variables.



### 3.3.3 | Hypothesis testing

We used the *lavaan* package (Rosseel, 2012) in R version 4.2.2 to conduct our analyses. We present in Table 3 the results of two path models: one in which perceived cultural strength predicts job satisfaction and organizational commitment via organizational nostalgia while controlling for demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, organizational tenure) to test Hypotheses 1, 3, and 4, and the other in which we added the interaction effect between organizational nostalgia and telecommuting frequency on job satisfaction and organizational commitment for Hypothesis 2 and 5. Supporting Hypotheses 1a and 1b, organizational nostalgia was positively related to job satisfaction ( $b = 0.24$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.38],  $p = .001$ ) and organizational commitment ( $b = 0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95% CI [0.22, 0.42],  $p < .001$ ). Telecommuting frequency did not have a significant relation with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Before testing Hypothesis 2 concerning the moderating effect of telecommuting frequency on the link between organizational nostalgia and employee well-being, we mean-centered organizational nostalgia and telecommuting frequency. In support of Hypothesis 2a, telecommuting frequency moderated the association of organizational nostalgia with job satisfaction ( $b = -0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [-0.14, -0.02],  $p = .005$ ). As seen in Figure 2a, organizational nostalgia was positively associated with job satisfaction at the low level (1 SD below the mean) of telecommuting frequency ( $b = 0.45$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ , 95% CI [0.26, 0.64],  $p < .001$ ), but this association disappeared at the high level (1 SD above the mean) of

telecommuting frequency ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ , 95% CI [-0.12, 0.27],  $p = .44$ ). To add precision to the interaction pattern, we also examined an exact value of the moderator where the relation between organizational nostalgia and job satisfaction became nonsignificant. This relation became nonsignificant when telecommuting frequency was  $\geq 0.56$  SD (or 4.58 days of telecommuting per week) above the mean ( $b = 0.16$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [-0.001, 0.32],  $p = .051$ ).

Additionally, we obtained support for Hypothesis 2b, as telecommuting frequency moderated the association of organizational nostalgia with organizational commitment ( $b = -0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI [-0.09, -0.01],  $p = .014$ ). The association of organizational nostalgia with organizational commitment was stronger at the low ( $b = 0.44$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI [0.31, 0.58],  $p < .001$ ) than at the high ( $b = 0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI [0.08, 0.35],  $p = .001$ ) level of telecommuting frequency (Figure 2b). The relation between organizational nostalgia and organizational commitment became nonsignificant when telecommuting frequency was  $\geq 1.47$  SD (or 6.70 days of telecommuting per week) above the mean ( $b = 0.16$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [-0.0004, 0.33],  $p = .051$ ).

Further, supporting Hypothesis 3, perceived cultural strength was positively associated with organizational nostalgia ( $b = 0.39$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.31, 0.48],  $p < .001$ ). To test Hypothesis 4 concerning the mediating role of organizational nostalgia, we estimated the indirect effects of perceived cultural strength on job satisfaction and organizational commitment via organizational nostalgia, using 10,000 bootstrap samples (MacKinnon et al., 2007; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). As hypothesized, organizational nostalgia mediated

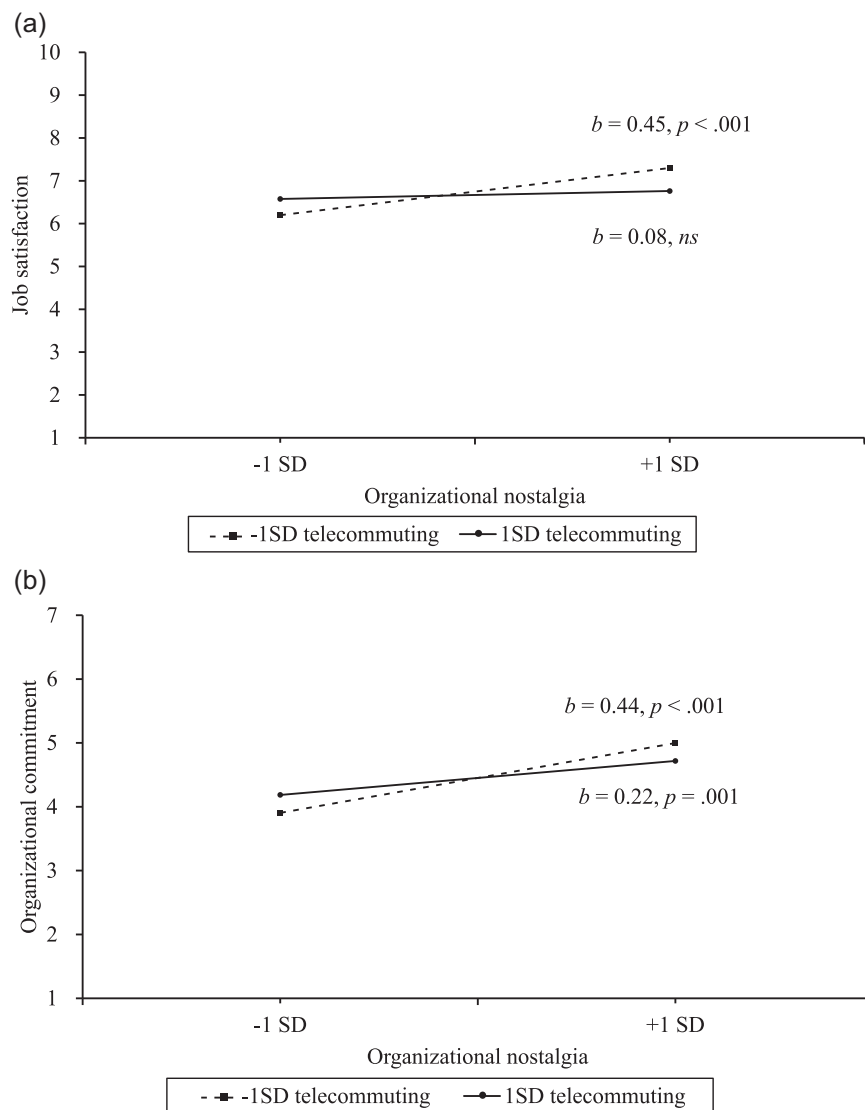
**TABLE 3** Results of path analysis in Study 1.

Variables	Without an interaction effect			With an interaction effect		
	Organizational nostalgia	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Organizational nostalgia	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment
Perceived cultural strength	0.39 (0.04)***	0.68 (0.07)***	0.57 (0.05)***	0.39 (0.04)***	0.67 (0.07)***	0.56 (0.05)***
Organizational nostalgia		0.24 (0.07)**	0.32 (0.05)***		0.26 (0.07)***	0.33 (0.05)***
Telecommuting frequency		-0.02 (0.04)	0.00 (0.02)		-0.02 (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)
Organizational nostalgia × telecommuting frequency					-0.08 (0.03)**	-0.05 (0.02)*
Gender	0.20 (0.11)	-0.17 (0.17)	-0.23 (0.11)*	0.20 (0.11)	-0.22 (0.17)	-0.26 (0.11)*
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03 (0.01)**	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03 (0.01)*	0.01 (0.01)
Organizational tenure	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)*	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	0.03 (0.01)*
<b>Fit indices</b>						
AIC		3771.41			5692.23	
BIC		3862.81			5799.52	
Loglikelihood		-1862.62			-2814.21	

Note:  $N = 395$ . Gender is coded as: 0 = male and other, 1 = female.

Abbreviations: AIC, Akaike information criteria; BIC, Bayesian information criteria.

\* $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**FIGURE 2** Interaction between organizational nostalgia and telecommuting frequency in predicting job satisfaction (a) and organizational commitment (b) in Study 1.

the association of perceived cultural strength with job satisfaction ( $b = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.16]) and organizational commitment ( $b = 0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.08, 0.18]). Also, perceived cultural strength had a direct effect on job satisfaction ( $b = 0.68$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI [0.55, 0.81],  $p < .001$ ) and organizational commitment ( $b = 0.57$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95% CI [0.47, 0.66],  $p < .001$ ).<sup>7</sup>

Last, we tested Hypothesis 5 concerning conditional indirect effects of perceived cultural strength on job satisfaction and organizational commitment via organizational nostalgia at the low and high levels of telecommuting frequency. With 10,000 bootstrap samples, we observed a significant conditional indirect effect of perceived cultural strength on job satisfaction mediated by organizational nostalgia at the low ( $b = 0.18$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.27]) but not at the high ( $b = 0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [-0.05, 0.12]) level of telecommuting frequency. The index of moderated mediation (i.e., the difference between these two indices) was significant (0.15,  $SE = 0.06$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.27]). Perceived cultural strength had a stronger association with organizational commitment via organizational nostalgia at the low ( $b = 0.18$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.11, 0.25])

than high ( $b = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.15]) level of telecommuting frequency. Again, the index of moderated mediation was significant (0.09,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.007, 0.17]). Taken together, the results supported both Hypotheses 5a and 5b. Moreover, we tested the reverse mediation effects (Supporting Information: Table A5). Regardless of telecommuting frequency, we observed a significant indirect effect of organizational commitment on perceived cultural strength via organizational nostalgia, whereas the indirect effect of job satisfaction on perceived cultural strength via organizational nostalgia was not significant. Telecommuting frequency did not moderate the reverse mediation paths.

### 3.4 | Discussion

The results were consistent with all of our hypotheses. Organizational nostalgia was associated with higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and office-based employees benefited more from organizational nostalgia. In particular, we obtained a



significant positive association between organizational nostalgia and job satisfaction for those whose telecommuting frequency was less than approximately 4½ days per week. Put differently, given a 5-day workweek, employees with greater organizational nostalgia are more satisfied at work, provided they spend at least half a day in the office per week. As for organizational commitment, the positive relation with organizational nostalgia remained significant until employees work remotely more than 6 days per week. That is, although we obtained empirical support for our hypothesis, on a practical note, telecommuters who experience organizational nostalgia may be more committed at work. Finally, the relation between perceived cultural strength and organizational nostalgia was positive, indicating that employees who perceived their organizational cultures to be strong were more nostalgic for their organizations.

Despite overall support for our hypotheses, our measurement-of-mediation design using cross-sectional data is unable to establish causality among study variables (Maxwell & Cole, 2007). In tests of reverse mediation, we observed an indirect effect of organizational commitment (but not of job satisfaction) on perceived cultural strength via organizational nostalgia. Thus, it is premature to infer a causal direction between perceived cultural strength and organizational commitment. Given that organizational commitment reflects employees' social exchange relationships with an organization as a whole (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006), organizational commitment might increase nostalgia by fostering belongingness and favorable memories about employees' organizational lives. Committed employees might engage in organizational nostalgia more voluntarily, contributing to a perception of heightened cultural strength.

However, the findings still provided insights into organizational nostalgia as a novel pathway for increasing employee well-being. In line with our theorizing, employees who experienced more organizational nostalgia felt more satisfied and committed at work, despite the role of organizational nostalgia weakening as telecommuting frequency increased. Also, in line with our theorizing, perceptions of a strong culture were relevant to the emergence of organizational nostalgia among employees.

## 4 | STUDY 2<sup>B</sup>

The Study 1 findings reinforce the relevance of investigating perceived cultural strength. The findings, though, invite replication given the construct's novelty. We engaged in such a replication in Study 2.

### 4.1 | Sample and procedure

Based on the correlation between organizational nostalgia and job satisfaction observed in Study 1, we estimated a medium effect size ( $r = .30$ ) and aimed for a minimum of 400 participants to achieve sufficient statistical power ( $1 - \beta = .95$  at  $\alpha = .05$ ). We recruited via

Prolific 495 participants working in the United Kingdom at an hourly rate of £10, on September 22, 2020.<sup>9</sup> We excluded two individuals who had the same IP address, resulting in 493 participants (36.31% men, 62.47% women, and 1.22% other;  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.48$  years,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.96$  years). Of them, 83.16% identified as European, 4.46% as Asian, 2.64% as African, and 10.34% as others/mixed race. Participants' average tenure with their current organization was 6.02 years ( $SD = 5.99$  years). Participants worked in diverse sectors, including education and training (13.39%), healthcare (11.97%), financial services (7.51%), services (6.69%), and retail (6.09%). In addition, 14.81% of them lived alone, 63.49% were married/cohabiting, 34.08% had children, and 7.71% had an elderly or other dependent.

### 4.2 | Measures

As in Study 1, we presented all scales in a different random order, and randomized items within each scale, separately for each participant. We assessed perceived cultural strength, organizational nostalgia, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment with the same scales as in Study 1. We included gender, age, and organizational tenure as control variables. Finally, in terms of telecommuting frequency, we asked participants to indicate the number of days per week (0–7) on which they telecommuted. Specifically, participants indicated the frequency of working remotely, not just from home as in Study 1, but also from other places such as café or library, given the gradual ease of the COVID-related regulations. Participants teleworked for 3.06 days a week on average ( $SD = 2.25$  days).

## 4.3 | Results

### 4.3.1 | Descriptive statistics

We present in Table 4 means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliabilities among study variables. Organizational nostalgia was positively related to job satisfaction ( $r = .28$ , 95% CI [0.19, 0.36],  $p < .001$ ) and organizational commitment ( $r = .36$ , 95% CI [0.28, 0.43],  $p < .001$ ). Also, perceived cultural strength was positively associated with organizational nostalgia ( $r = .32$ , 95% CI [0.24, 0.39],  $p < .001$ ), job satisfaction ( $r = .50$ , 95% CI [0.44, 0.57],  $p < .001$ ), and organizational commitment ( $r = .52$ , 95% CI [0.45, 0.58],  $p < .001$ ). These findings replicate those of Study 1. Telecommuting frequency was weakly but negatively associated with organizational nostalgia ( $r = -0.10$ , 95% CI [-0.19, -0.01],  $p = .023$ ).

### 4.3.2 | CFA

We conducted a CFA to assess the fit of the measurement model of our variables: perceived cultural strength, organizational nostalgia, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The four-factor model ( $\chi^2[306] = 1017.50$ , CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.06)

**TABLE 4** Means, SD, correlations, and scale reliabilities among Study 2 variables.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender	0.62	0.48								
2 Age	35.48	9.96	-.11*							
3 Organizational tenure	6.02	5.99	-.08	.52***						
4 Telecommuting frequency	3.06	2.25	-.01	-.06	-.05					
5 Perceived cultural strength	1.27	1.16	.09*	.02	.03	-.08	(.83)			
6 Organizational nostalgia	3.89	1.32	.08	-.04	.08	-.10*	.32***	(.94)		
7 Job satisfaction	6.79	1.93	.03	.07	.04	.04	.50***	.28***	(.89)	
8 Organizational commitment	4.31	1.53	.09*	.14**	.22***	-.001	.52***	.36***	.72***	(.90)

Note:  $N = 493$ . We present reliabilities in parentheses. For gender, we coded male and other as 0 and female as 1.

Abbreviation: SD, standard deviation.

\* $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**TABLE 5** Results of path analysis in Study 2.

Variables	Without an interaction effect			With an interaction effect		
	Organizational nostalgia	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Organizational nostalgia	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment
Perceived cultural strength	0.36 (0.05)***	0.79 (0.07)***	0.59 (0.05)***	0.36 (0.05)***	0.79 (0.07)***	0.59 (0.05)***
Organizational nostalgia		0.21 (0.06)**	0.24 (0.05)***		0.21 (0.06)***	0.24 (0.05)***
Telecommuting frequency		0.09 (0.03)*	0.05 (0.03)		0.09 (0.03)**	0.05 (0.03)
Organizational nostalgia × telecommuting frequency					-0.05 (0.03)*	0.00 (0.02)
Gender	0.12 (0.12)	-0.05 (0.15)	0.17 (0.12)	0.12 (0.12)	-0.10 (0.15)	0.17 (0.12)
Age	-0.02 (0.01)*	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)*	0.02 (0.01)*	0.01 (0.01)
Organizational tenure	0.03 (0.01)**	-0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.01)***	0.03 (0.01)**	-0.01 (0.01)	0.04 (0.01)***
Fit indices						
AIC		4842.95			7290.04	
BIC		4939.38			7403.23	
Loglikelihood		-2396.78			-3611.02	

Note:  $N = 493$ . Gender is coded as 0 = male and other, 1 = female.

Abbreviations: AIC, Akaike information criteria; BIC, Bayesian information criteria.

\* $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

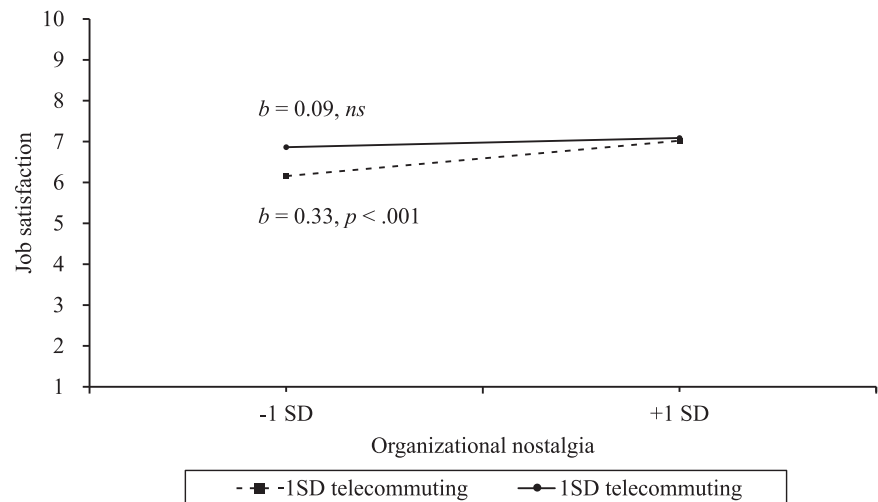
had a significantly better fit than did alternative models (Supporting Information: Table B1).<sup>10</sup>

### 4.3.3 | Hypothesis testing

We conducted our analyses using the *lavaan* package in R version 4.2.2. We display the results of the path analysis in Table 5. We present the model with and without the interaction term between organizational nostalgia and telecommuting frequency. In support of Hypothesis 1, organizational nostalgia was positively related to both

job satisfaction ( $b = 0.21$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ , 95% CI [0.09, 0.32],  $p = .001$ ) and organizational commitment ( $b = 0.24$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95% CI [0.15, 0.32],  $p < .001$ ). Supporting Hypothesis 2, the interaction between organizational nostalgia and telecommuting frequency (both were mean-centered) on job satisfaction was significant ( $b = -0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [-0.10, -0.01],  $p = .030$ ). Specifically, the relation between organizational nostalgia and job satisfaction was significant at the low (1 SD below the mean;  $b = 0.33$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [0.17, 0.49],  $p < .001$ ) but not at the high (1 SD above the mean;  $b = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [-0.07, 0.25],  $p = .29$ ) level of telecommuting frequency (Figure 3). The relation became nonsignificant when

**FIGURE 3** Interaction between organizational nostalgia and telecommuting frequency in predicting job satisfaction in Study 2.



telecommuting frequency was  $\geq 0.61$  SD (or 4.43 days of telecommuting per week) above the mean ( $b = 0.13$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI  $[-0.0006, 0.27]$ ,  $p = .051$ ). These results are consistent with Hypothesis 2a. However, telecommuting frequency did not moderate the association between organizational nostalgia and organizational commitment ( $b = -0.001$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI  $[-0.04, 0.04]$ ,  $p = .96$ ), inconsistent with Hypothesis 2b.

Supporting Hypothesis 3, perceived cultural strength was positively related to organizational nostalgia ( $b = 0.36$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95% CI  $[0.26, 0.45]$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Also, aligned with Hypotheses 4, we found (using 10,000 bootstraps) that organizational nostalgia significantly mediated the positive associations of perceived cultural strength with job satisfaction ( $b = 0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI  $[0.02, 0.13]$ ) and organizational commitment ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI  $[0.05, 0.13]$ ). Perceived cultural strength had a direct effect on job satisfaction ( $b = 0.79$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI  $[0.66, 0.93]$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and organizational commitment ( $b = 0.59$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95% CI  $[0.49, 0.69]$ ,  $p < .001$ ) as well.

Finally, we examined the conditional indirect effect of perceived cultural strength on job satisfaction via organizational nostalgia with 10,000 bootstraps to test Hypothesis 5. The indirect effect was significant at the low level ( $b = 0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI  $[0.05, 0.20]$ ), but not at the high level ( $b = 0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI  $[-0.03, 0.10]$ ), of telecommuting frequency. The index of moderated mediation was significant ( $0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95% CI  $[0.0002, 0.18]$ ). However, the conditional indirect effect on organizational commitment was significant at both low ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI  $[0.03, 0.15]$ ) and high ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI  $[0.04, 0.14]$ ) levels of telecommuting. The index of moderated mediation was not significant ( $0.002$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI  $[-0.07, 0.07]$ ). In summary, the results were consistent with Hypothesis 5a, but inconsistent with Hypothesis 5b. As in Study 1, we tested reverse mediation models in Study 2 (Supporting Information: Table B2). Although the indirect effect of organizational commitment on perceived cultural strength via organizational nostalgia was unmoderated by telecommuting

frequency, the indirect effect of job satisfaction was significant only among those who telecommuted less.

#### 4.4 | Discussion

In Study 2, replicating the Study 1 findings, we found that organizational nostalgia was a mediator between perceived cultural strength and both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Moreover, as in Study 1, the relation between organizational nostalgia and job satisfaction became stronger as the number of days employees telecommuted decreased. Specifically, organizational nostalgia was more positively related to job satisfaction for those who spent at least half a day in the office per week, corresponding to Study 1 findings. Participants indicated the number of days per week on which they worked from locations other than the office. Therefore, this study produced more generalizable results on how working outside the office, not just from home, influences the relations among perceived cultural strength, organizational nostalgia, and job satisfaction.

However, the interaction between organizational nostalgia and telecommuting frequency on organizational commitment was not significant; that is, the benefits of both perceived cultural strength and organizational nostalgia for organizational commitment were observed across office-based, telecommuting, and hybrid employees. In contrast to Study 1, we did not obtain support for Hypotheses 2b and 5b. It is possible that the relaxation in COVID-related regulations contributed to greater flexibility for social gatherings and outdoors interactions, which may have provided both office-based and telecommuting employees with the opportunity to act upon their nostalgia. Consequently, the change in the regulations may have qualified the interaction between organizational nostalgia and telecommuting for organizational commitment. Nevertheless, we deem these findings generally to align with Study 1, where the positive relation between organizational nostalgia and organizational

commitment remained significant unless individuals telecommute almost every day (6.70 days).

As in Study 1, we cannot exclude the possibility of reverse causality. The reverse mediation models demonstrated that more satisfied employees reported greater organizational nostalgia and perceived cultural strength when telecommuting frequency was low but not when it was high. Furthermore, as in Study 1, the reverse mediation model suggested that committed employees are more likely to engage in organizational nostalgia and perceive their organizational culture to be stronger than their less committed counterparts. Although the reverse mediation models were significant, the CFA results confirmed that perceived cultural strength, organizational nostalgia, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment are four distinct variables. There are two possibilities: (1) perceived cultural strength and organizational commitment have a mutually reinforcing relation, and (2) perceived cultural strength and job satisfaction reinforce each other among office-based employees.

## 5 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

Despite its relevance to the welfare of organizations, the organizational nostalgia literature is in its infancy. Here, we developed theoretical accounts of an antecedent, consequence, and boundary condition surrounding organizational nostalgia, and carried out studies that highlight the utility of the emotion for organizations. Organizational nostalgia is positively related to employee well-being. Further, working remotely from one's office environment can weaken the relation between the emotion and employee well-being. Our research clarifies why, how, and when organizations should foster organizational nostalgia among their employees. In the following sections, we elaborate on the theoretical and practical implications of our findings.

### 5.1 | Theoretical implications

We provided evidence for the link between organizational nostalgia and employee well-being. Although few studies have suggested that organizational nostalgia may indirectly promote employee well-being through various mechanisms (e.g., work meaning, lower turnover intention, intrinsic motivation, work effort; Van Dijke & Leunissen, 2023), our research was the first to test empirically whether organizational nostalgia is directly associated with common indicators of employee well-being (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment). Organizational nostalgia emerged as a wellspring on which organizations can rely to maintain and nurture employee well-being. Employee well-being is an umbrella term subsuming various indicators, such as emotional exhaustion, stress, work engagement, and happiness. We thus hope that our findings pave the way for follow-up investigations to examine how organizational nostalgia is related to such indicators.

Although the literature has uncovered several predictors of personal nostalgia (e.g., memory of friends, stories from one's childhood, old photographs; Sedikides et al., 2015; Wildschut & Sedikides, 2022), no research has examined directly workplace triggers of organizational nostalgia. We identified such a trigger in perceived cultural strength. As mentioned above, perception of cultural strength is tethered to one's experience of cultural artifacts of organizations, including work atmosphere, physical environments, and interactions with colleagues. Hence, our findings indicate that the source of organizational nostalgia, similar to personal nostalgia (Wildschut et al., 2006, 2010), is social; that is, the source of organizational nostalgia is grounded in one's social experiences in organizations. Follow-up investigations could explore other organizational factors as potential triggers of the emotion, such as justice and fairness, promotion and rewards, as well as human resource management practices.

Moreover, by illustrating a qualified positive role of organizational nostalgia among telecommuting employees, our findings contribute to the debate on the efficacy of telecommuting. Despite its various advantages (Allen et al., 2015; Leslie et al., 2012), telecommuting may not always be preferable to working in the office. The positive association between organizational nostalgia and job satisfaction was stronger for office-based employees than telecommuters or hybrid employees. Though telecommuting is often considered in positive light due to increased flexibility and control granted to employees, research outside of the management discipline notes the potential risks of telecommuting for disrupting employee health and well-being (Buomprisco et al., 2021; Kubo et al., 2021; Magnavita et al., 2021). We showed that frequent telecommuting might entail employee well-being risks, and these findings attest to the value of office-based work while introducing an important caveat to the practice of telecommuting.

The interaction effect between organizational nostalgia and telecommuting frequency was significant for job satisfaction in both studies, but it was significant for organizational commitment only in Study 1. One explanation is that organizational nostalgia is more closely related to organizational commitment than it is to job satisfaction. Whereas job satisfaction pertains to positive appraisals about specific aspects of one's job, organizational commitment represents one's global attitude toward their organization (Krackhardt & Kilduff, 1990; Mowday et al., 1979). Organizational commitment, then, would be amplified anyway, insofar as individuals reflected on positive organizational events and felt nostalgic about them, regardless of their access to situational cues and physical office environment tied to nostalgic memories. In contrast, as job satisfaction stems from rather specific instances of one's work experiences, it may be most facilitated when employees nostalgize about a past organizational experience (e.g., an instance where one was able to perform better at work after getting help from a colleague) and can immediately act upon it (e.g., reaching out to an adjacent colleague). Consequently, the presence of situational cues and inputs available to office-based employees and hybrid employees—but not telecommuters—can

augment the positive association between organizational nostalgia and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, we developed an individual-level measure of cultural strength and offered a tool to examine how individual members embedded in the same organization perceive its cultural strength differently. In line with theoretical perspectives emphasizing that individuals make sense of their own environments, and interpret and give personal meaning to social phenomena in an idiosyncratic manner (Weick et al., 2005), our research complements literature on organizational culture by revealing that cultural strength not only exerts collective-level influence but also manifests itself as an individual-level factor that affects each employee differently.

Our research additionally offers fresh insights into the “black box” of organizational culture. We addressed this gap by clarifying how perceived cultural strength serves as a basis for organizational nostalgia and thereby enhances employee well-being. In a similar vein, by focusing on organizational nostalgia as a mediator, we highlighted the role of the emotion in linking perceived cultural strength and employee well-being. For the most part, the oft-adopted theoretical arguments in the cultural-strength literature revolve around behavioral and cognitive explanations, such that a strong culture could regulate employees' attitudes and behaviors by facilitating coordination and goal alignment (Corritore et al., 2019; González-Romá & Peiró, 2014). Nevertheless, this literature has indicated the relevance of organizational cultures for employees' affective states (Giorgi et al., 2015; Lawrence & Maitlis, 2012; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997; Vaara & Tienari, 2011). An example concerns storytelling, a common artifact of organizational culture, which can resonate with employees; effective delivery of stories can boost positive emotions while regulating negative ones (Brockington et al., 2021; Pasupathi et al., 2017). Hence, potential implications of organizational cultures in evoking employees' emotional reactions deserve more empirical attention. Interventions such as sharing memorable stories at the workplace could strengthen organizational nostalgia and subsequently employee well-being.

## 5.2 | Practical implications

The effect sizes of the relations among our focal variables were medium across the two studies ( $0.28 \leq \text{Pearson's } r \leq .61$ ). Put otherwise, our findings affirm the value of fostering organizational nostalgia and perceived cultural strength in the workplace to improve employee well-being. Managers could strengthen employees' perceptions of organizational culture by reminding employees of the core values and beliefs that characterize the organization through both formal (e.g., internal meetings) and informal (e.g., water cooler, lunch breaks) channels. They could also elicit organizational nostalgia by structuring employees' work experiences in a way that they cue nostalgic memories (Leunissen et al., 2018). For example, the management could attempt to reinforce stories that highlight employees' valuable contributions to organizational achievements, and establish rituals (e.g., Christmas parties, team outings) that signify

camaraderie and close-knit relationships among employees (Milligan, 2003; Wildschut et al., 2006). Such attempts could elicit nostalgia, with its downstream consequences on job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Moreover, our research showcased the utility of fostering organizational nostalgia and, by implication, organizational culture, which might be critical in the post-COVID-19 era. Not only is organizational nostalgia associated with better employee well-being, but it might also mitigate the impact of negative stimuli by restoring psychological equilibrium (Huang et al., 2023; Wildschut & Sedikides, 2023a, 2023b; Zhou et al., 2008, 2022). Looming uncertainty and ambiguity about job security, work arrangements, and financial circumstances that still persist even after the pandemic can adversely influence employee well-being. Organizational nostalgia might regulate this adversity. Further, although telecommuting has become more accepted as a work arrangement in many organizations, there are still work tasks and activities that need to be carried out on site (Lund et al., 2020). In addition, it is often expected that more employees will start returning to their office. Given its stronger influence on office-based employees, organizational nostalgia may be particularly effective for returning office-based employees, who have suffered from the after-effects of the pandemic, to bounce back quickly and achieve better well-being.

Last, our research reaffirmed the value of investing in concrete representations of organizational culture to induce organizational nostalgia. Employees were nostalgic for both invisible aspects of organizational culture and physical or observable aspects of it (e.g., office buildings, office parties). Conceptually and empirically, organizational culture is often considered as entailing intangible features such as norms, values, or organizational practices and strategies (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Schein, 1990). In practice, though, organizations should not neglect investing in cultural artifacts (e.g., workspace, company logos) that could provide the building blocks for nostalgia.

## 5.3 | Limitations and future directions

Our cross-sectional designs did not allow us to test causal directions underlying our theoretical model. It thus remains elusive whether organizational nostalgia is indeed triggered by perceived cultural strength and subsequently improves employee well-being. Follow-up investigations with experimental or longitudinal designs are needed to address the issue of temporal and source separation and to determine whether perceived cultural strength precedes both organizational nostalgia and employee well-being or if there are reciprocal relations as suggested by our reverse mediation models.

Another limitation concerns the reliance on single-source self-reports, introducing the possibility of common method variance (CMV). We made efforts to mitigate this possibility by using diverse response anchors and formats for each measure (e.g., *low/weak* [−3] to *high/strong* [3] for perceived cultural strength; *strongly disagree* [1] to *strongly agree* [7] for organizational commitment; *strongly disagree*



[1] to *strongly agree* [10] for job satisfaction), ensuring participants' anonymity, and including both positively and negatively worded items (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Furthermore, the significance of an interaction effect, despite the presence of CMV, is considered strong evidence for the effect (Evans, 1985; Siemsen et al., 2010). As such, the interaction between telecommuting frequency and organizational nostalgia on job satisfaction may be robust despite the use of single-source data. Nevertheless, follow-up investigations should incorporate informant reports (e.g., performance assessed by others) to reduce CMV and examine broader implications of both organizational nostalgia and perceived cultural strength.

We used newly developed scales to assess organizational nostalgia and perceived cultural strength. Although we obtained support for the construct validity of these scales, we relied on relatively homogeneous samples (from online panels) in both studies. Validation of these scales in more diverse populations is needed.

How is a strong but negatively viewed organizational culture related to the emergence of organizational nostalgia? In our theorization and measurement, perceived cultural strength only involved one's perception about how intensely organizational culture is shared and endorsed among employees. Thus, we were unable to fully control for the valence of organizational culture. Specifically, in our measure of perceived cultural strength, strong perceptions of cultural strength may not necessarily refer to a positive organizational culture, but might instead refer to a more negative culture where employees would be unlikely to see their organizational events as a source of organizational nostalgia. Future research could test whether perceived cultural strength interacts with valence of organizational culture, and whether its influence on organizational nostalgia manifests only for employees who appraise the culture as positive.

We examined perceived cultural strength as individual perceptions of group consensus without controlling for cultural strength at the organizational level. Cultural strength at the group level is typically measured as follows. First, individual group members respond to scale assessing a set of organizational practices or specific cultural dimensions (e.g., innovation, safety). Then, researchers use interrater agreement indices and aggregate individual responses at the organizational level (James et al., 1984) or calculate the average deviation for each scale (Burke et al., 1999) based on group members' ratings or take its inverse (Denison, 1984; Dumay, 2009; Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992; Kotrba et al., 2012). Alternatively, some researchers rely on external experts to rate the strength of organizational culture (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Sørensen, 2002), whereas others have implemented more complex procedures such as a discriminant analysis to classify organizations as having a strong versus weak culture (Smart & St. John, 1996), or language-based analysis via online textual reviews on a job search website to generate an index of cultural strength (Corritore et al., 2019).

Departing from the group consensus approach, perceived cultural strength gauges directly participants' perceptions of group consensus about cultural strength at the individual level (i.e., "The consensus among the employees regarding the culture of my

organization is": low ... high). Past research has suggested that perceived consensus is uncorrelated with members' consensus of a group culture (Shteynberg et al., 2009; Wan et al., 2007). Even though individual members can all agree on where the organization stands regarding a cultural dimension, they do not necessarily know that other members share the same opinion about cultural strength and instead might believe that others disagree with themselves and among each other. As people rarely have direct access to fellow employees' opinions, their perceptions of such opinions are likely to vary. For example, some research has documented overestimation of consensus as an incidental byproduct of ingroup communication; speakers' assumptions about the "common ground" of shared knowledge with an audience tacitly shape what they say and how they say it (Clark & Brennan, 1991). Consequently, the audience forms an impression of the speaker as personally aligned with their own views, inflating assumptions about mutual consensus. However, other research has documented phenomena of underestimation, such as pluralistic ignorance on university campuses (Prentice & Miller, 1993). At the group level, most of the students agree on the need to change a drinking culture. Yet, students misperceive their peers' attitudes, wrongly assuming that others disagree with them. As such, some employees' perceptions of cultural strength might be correct, but some will be incorrect, leading to overestimation or underestimation. Nonetheless, future studies will do well to test the relevance of perceived cultural strength for job outcomes beyond organizational-level cultural strength.

The benefits of organizational nostalgia might go beyond employee well-being and into other work-related outcomes such as creativity. When people engage in personal nostalgia that involves social and interpersonal experiences, they feel more socially connected and motivated to attain social goals (Abeyta et al., 2015; Juhl & Biskas, 2023; Wildschut et al., 2006). Specifically, personal nostalgia motivates people to pursue their social goals by boosting a sense of social efficacy (e.g., confidence in building and maintaining successful social relationships and in resolving conflicts with others). Bringing in a social network perspective, we expect that organizational nostalgia will contribute to the size and strength of one's social network by galvanizing their networking efforts (e.g., reinforcing current ties, diversifying one's ties through connection to people outside their department or organizations). Organizational nostalgia, then, could offer opportunities for employees to leverage both existing and novel ties, thereby conducing to creativity and innovation. By enriching interpersonal aspects of one's organizational life, organizational nostalgia can serve as a critical driver for effective work performance.

Finally, we encourage researchers to test whether other forms of alternative work arrangements (e.g., flexible work schedule, flexible employment relationships; Spreitzer et al., 2017) moderate the benefits of perceived cultural strength and organizational nostalgia. For example, the importance of organizational nostalgia might be diminished for part-time employees, independent contractors (Cappelli & Keller, 2013), or gig workers (Ashford et al., 2018). These employees may have limited opportunities to interact with their



colleagues and be involved in organizational events, thus not being exposed sufficiently to organizational cultures and failing to build a repository of nostalgic memories about the organization. How do organizational culture and organizational nostalgia play out among those in nontraditional employment relationships?

## 6 | CONCLUSION

Organizational nostalgia is positively associated with both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, in particular among office-based employees, thus offering new insights into management practices in the age of telecommuting. Organizational nostalgia can be used to create work environments that maximize employee well-being.

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### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

We deposited data sets, codes for the analyses, and stimulus materials (Appendices) at [https://osf.io/dt2hy/?view\\_only=f662c45b9a1b4ec5bf60bc2ff72dcd39](https://osf.io/dt2hy/?view_only=f662c45b9a1b4ec5bf60bc2ff72dcd39).

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### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the first author's University Institutional Review Board (IRB-2020-04-017; Title: Organizational Nostalgia—Its Triggers and Consequences).
- <sup>2</sup> Throughout the article, cultural tightness refers to the organizational context instead of the national context (as originally proposed by Gelfand et al., 2011).
- <sup>3</sup> Although the number of daily cases in the United Kingdom gradually started to fall around that time, the government was still taking cautionary measures to contain the spread of the virus, such as maintaining a 2-m social distance and limiting the number of persons in enclosed space (Practical Law Employment, 2020).
- <sup>4</sup> In Study 1, we only asked about telecommuting from home, but not from other locations like café or library, given that the general public in the United States and United Kingdom was recommended to stay at home as much as possible, and many public places were still closed for social gatherings during the time of data collection. Thus, the question on telecommuting frequency was about work-from-home. As the pandemic eased, we asked about telecommuting frequency away from office in Study 2.
- <sup>5</sup> We used a modification index (MI), allowing cultural tightness scale item pairs with MI >10 to covary. We included five covariances in both single-factor and two-factor models without making any changes to the factor structure (Appendix A).
- <sup>6</sup> We again used MI allowing pairs of the items within the scales that had MI >40 to covary, without making any changes to the factor structure (Appendix A). We included 10 covariances: one for the job satisfaction scale and nine for the organizational nostalgia scale.

- <sup>7</sup> By using the terms "indirect effect" and "direct effect," we are adopting the terminology of mediation analysis and do not claim evidence for causality.
- <sup>8</sup> We administered Study 2 under the same IRB approval as Study 1 (IRB-2020-04-017; Title: Organizational Nostalgia—Its Triggers and Consequences).
- <sup>9</sup> As the United Kingdom aimed to reinvigorate its economy after lockdowns, diners, and restaurants were open to the public with some regulations, providing the context in which employees could work remotely in more flexible ways (GOV.UK, 2020). Consequently, we expanded the options for telecommuting.
- <sup>10</sup> As in Study 1, we used MI, allowing those pairs of items within the scales that showed a high MI (>40) to covary, without making changes to factor structure (Appendix B). We included 12 covariances: one for the job satisfaction scale and 11 for the organizational nostalgia scale.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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