

Well-being and motivation of generation Y individuals in self-directive work

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<p>This thesis researches motivation and well-being of generation Y individuals in self-directive work. Self-direction is a part of the changing working life and on the individual level self-direction refers to an individual's ability to function autonomously. The objective of this thesis is to gain understanding about generation Y individuals' perspective of self-direction – to examine and introduce aspects that affect motivation and well-being of self-directive individuals. In addition, this thesis aims to find out what kind of qualities or skills help individuals succeed in self-directive work, and in turn, what the organization can do to support the individuals to make it possible to be self-directive.</p> <p>This thesis comprises of five main chapters, which are introduction, literature review, conducting the research, interview findings, and discussion. With the help of the literature review, existing research and information about the topic is examined and the main concepts are defined, such as self-directive individual, self-managing organization, generation Y, motivation and well-being. In turn, in the empirical part of the thesis, qualitative data is gathered on the basis of the initial information gathering, with the help of six theme interviews.</p> <p>For this research-oriented thesis, qualitative methods were used to collect and analyze data. Qualitative methods were an appropriate choice for this thesis, because the objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Data for this thesis was collected through six theme interviews, that were conducted in September 2019 with generation Y representatives. In addition, an expert interview was conducted in order to get insight to the topic from the organizational perspective.</p> <p>The research findings reveal that clearly defining objectives and expectations as well as giving feedback is essential for individuals' motivation and well-being in self-directive work. Self-direction is seen as a positive thing, but also acknowledged that it might not suit every individual and can have factors negatively affecting motivation and well-being. Motivation and well-being in self-directive work are enhanced by the ability to make decisions and affect one's own work, try new things and solve problems. Certain kinds of qualities and skills can support self-direction, such as communication and problem solving skills, being self-imposed and able to prioritize and manage one's own work. Furthermore, individuals need to be given space to be self-directive and make decisions. Even though self-direction requires autonomy and independency from an individual, they might need guidance and support in their work, especially generation Y representatives when they are starting out their careers.</p> <p>The findings support generation Y individuals' adaptation in the changing working life, and help organizations get a deeper understanding of the generation Y in self-directive work.</p>	
Keywords Self-directive individual, generation Y, job well-being, motivation	

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1 Introduction

The working life is rapidly and radically changing alongside with the rest of the world, and it can be said that working life is in the midst of a revolution. Work is undergoing change from many perspectives – among others, digitalization and globalization are shaping the world as we know it. Frederic Laloux examines self-direction as a revolutionary way of managing organizations in his book *Reinventing organizations*. He also mentions that “Humanity evolves by sudden leaps”, and that we are currently in the midst of taking a new leap, where the old ways are starting to break but new ones have not taken form yet. (Laloux 2016, 18.)

The changing working life will affect especially generation Y, which will be the largest age group in working life in the year 2020. This generation appreciates different things in working life than generations before, and is for example more open to change. (Piha & Poussa 2012, 10.) The objective of this thesis is to find out the connections between self-direction and individuals’ motivation and well-being and examine how the values of generation Y combine with self-directive work.

Self-direction might be the answer for some of the challenges brought on by the changing working life. Frank Martela and Karolina Jarenko define self-direction as a person’s ability to function voluntarily without the need for external guidance and control (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 12). Stiff, bureaucratic organizations cannot fend for themselves in the changing environment, and self-directive individuals help the organization quickly adapt new ways of working in an agile way. Modern jobs have been shaped by digitalization and automatization, and they require creative expertise and independent decision-making. (Martela 2017.)

It takes time to learn how to function in this new situation and environment, both for the employees and the managers (Savaspuro 2019, 14). According to occupational health expert Jan Schugk, mental health issues are a common cause for disability to work, and today’s working life is affecting both physical and mental well-being and coping at work more than before. In Schugk’s opinion, everyone cannot be forced to embrace the change. He also mentions the phenomenon of self-direction, and how it can be detrimental for some individuals. It does not fit everyone and it can affect negatively people who want and need more guidance. (Haapala, 2019.)

The inspiration for this thesis came from seeing in working life that self-direction does not fit everyone and might be detrimental to an individual's health and crucially affect motivation and even cause exhaustion or inability to work. As a representative of generation Y I started to wonder, could there be something an individual can do to succeed in self-directive work, and in turn what can the organization do to support the individuals. This thesis focuses on the individual's perspective and experience in self-directive work, and the focus is especially on the perspective of generation Y individuals.

There are many different definitions for generation Y, but in this thesis it refers to individuals born between years 1981-2000 (Al-Asfour & Lettau 2014, 59). Generation Y was chosen as a limiting factor for this thesis because generation Y representatives have a different view on working life and it is a significant factor explaining individuals' behavior in self-directive work.

1.1 Objective of the thesis

The objective of this thesis is to find out the how generation Y individuals experience self-directive work. The thesis focuses on particularly on the effects to individuals' motivation and well-being, and what is required from them to thrive as self-directive individuals and what kind of support they need.

This thesis is important for generation Y representatives working in self-directive positions. In addition, the working life is in the midst of a revolutionary change, and the issues discussed in this thesis might have an even more significant role in working life in the future. This thesis also aims to help the management level at organizations understand the phenomenon from the individuals' perspective, and how they can be supported. The topic is current and worth researching for, because of the beneficial knowledge it can bring in the revolutionary situation. Both self-direction and well-being are current topics, especially for generation Y representatives. With this thesis I hope to gain some perspective to the connection between self-direction, well-being and motivation.

1.2 Research questions and hypotheses

The research problem described above was approached with the help of following research questions.

- How does working in self-directive positions affect individuals' well-being?
- Which elements of self-directive work affect motivation of individuals and how?

- What qualities or skills are needed from the individual to succeed in self-directive work?
- What kind of support do individuals need to succeed as self-directive individuals in an organization?

The following hypotheses were formulated on the basis initial presumptions of the topic, and the literature review in chapter 2.

Hypothesis 1: Self-directive work has a negative effect on some individuals' motivation and/or well-being. It needs to be taken into consideration, that self-direction is not ideal for all the individuals in an organization.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals need varying levels of support and different kinds of guidance in self-directive work. In the midst of a changing world individuals and especially young people about to enter the working life need support, and the amount and type of support and guidance needed is different in the beginning.

Hypothesis 3: Managers' role and responsibilities regarding their subordinates are different in self-directive work and need to be adjusted to fit the self-directive work and the needs of the individuals. Some individuals need even more support from their manager, and it is important for employees to learn how to be self-directive individuals in the best possible way without sacrificing job motivation or well-being, and the managers need to support their subordinates to be self-directive.

There was also an additional hypothesis about the effects of different personalities in self-directive work, but it was chosen to be left out because it appeared to be quite complicated to research and the emphasis was leaning more on a psychological aspect.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis proceeds according to a traditional research report structure, and comprehends of five main chapters and their subchapters.

Chapter 2 defines the main concepts and introduces related research and the historical context of self-direction.

Chapter 3 describes the research process and introduces the methodological choices as well as justifications for the choices, and the introduction of the data collection. Chapter 3

also introduces the analysis method used to analyze the collected data, and concepts related to the trustworthiness and ethical viewpoints of the research. The trustworthiness is evaluated in more depth in the final chapter.

Chapter 4 introduces the gathered interview data. The data for this thesis was collected through qualitative methods, and more specifically, through theme interviews. The data was analyzed using qualitative analysis method called content analysis. The data is first introduced theme by theme, and then the main findings are summarized and the research questions are answered. Chapter 4 also reflects the research findings in relation to theoretical part in chapter 2, as well as comments from the expert interview. Conclusions are made in the end of the chapter.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter of this thesis, and it includes consideration of the results and the thesis scope, the evaluation of the trustworthiness of the research as well as ethical viewpoints and the assessment of own learning and the thesis process in general.

2 Connections between self-direction and well-being and motivation of individuals

This chapter introduces factors related to the changing working life and the values of generation Y representatives. In addition, the main concepts related to the thesis topic are defined and existing information about self-direction and its historical context are explored. The well-being and motivation sections describe common aspects that affect individuals' well-being and motivation in general, and not necessarily in self-directive work. This is because there seems to be no definitive research results or information about these factors in relation self-direction, and the factors are mentioned as a basis for the research, to find out the factors in self-directive work.

2.1 The changing working life

The changing working life emphasizes the individual's responsibility of their own work and focuses more on what an individual can and wants to learn, and not so much on what they already know. People skills and constant learning are important skills in today's working life. (Lämsä & Hautala 2008, 29.) Constant change requires constant learning (Virtanen & Sinokki 2014, 203). As a result, it becomes even more important to be able to be in control of changes and continuously improve professional knowhow (Sinokki 2016, 21). According to Liisa Uusitalo-Arola, the individuals that survive best in the new working life are agile, self-directive, and fast-learners that can adapt fast to new situations (Uusitalo-Arola 2019, 13). In addition, flourishing in the new environment requires flexibility, adaptability, and the right attitude from individuals (Piha & Poussa 2012, 42). The flexibility of work and the fact that it can be done nearly anywhere sets challenges for managers to monitor their subordinates' well-being (Robbins & Judge 2017, 60).

2.2 Main concepts

This chapter defines the main concepts relevant to the thesis topics and examines the concepts in relation to each other.

The main concepts used in this thesis can be divided into two categories – ones concerning the phenomenon of self-direction and its different definitions and forms, and ones concerning individuals' personal experience; motivation and well-being. The main concepts in the figure below will be explained in the following subchapters.

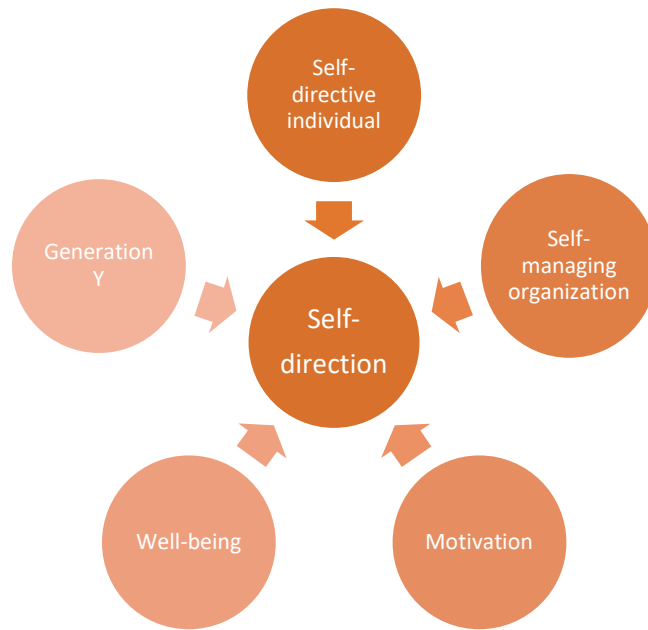


Figure 1. Main concepts related to the thesis topic.

2.2.1 Generation Y

This thesis focuses on the effects of self-direction for job well-being and motivation, especially on generation Y. The term generation describes a group of people, that have been born and raised in the same time period. Generations are divided by the basis of not only age, but also by the experiences, memories, language and manners that unite the representatives of a certain generation. (Piha & Poussa 2012, 27.) There is some debate about which time period is included in generation Y, but in this thesis generation Y includes people born between 1981-2000 (Al-Asfour & Lettau 2014, 59).

As mentioned in the introduction, representatives of generation Y will be the largest age group in working life in 2020, and they appreciate different things in working life than generations before (Piha & Poussa 2012, 10). It can be said that this generation's representatives have quite a different experience of self-direction as well. This delimitation is important for this thesis, because it is a different thing to be self-directive for a young person entering or having been in working life for a short amount of time, than to having been for decades.

When talking about the connections between generation Y and well-being, there is some debate about whether individual factors can affect the risk of suffering from work exhaustion. Age is one of these individual factors, and especially young age can expose to work

exhaustion, because of being inexperienced, vulnerable and having unrealistic expectations. Exhaustion is more common in the beginning of a career. (Lämsä & Hautala 2008, 77.)

Generation Y representatives hope for possibilities to advance in one's own career in an organization, and the possibility to have influence and be heard. They want to be appreciated and work with colleagues with a similar mindset. (Piha & Poussa 2012, 10-12.) The work needs to be challenging, but also clearly defined (Piha & Poussa 2012, 22). People feel more motivated and committed if they have a chance to influence and have power (Leppänen & Kortevuo 2013, 17). In addition, Generation Y representatives feel it is important to be able to affect the contents of work, have freedom to make choices and decisions in the work and affect their own schedule, and these are more important than for example fringe benefits (Leppänen & Kortevuo 2013, 13-14). Generation Y representatives are team-oriented and want to work in groups. They want to have responsibility, but they do not necessarily want to carry the responsibility on their own but share it in a team. They also want a sense of freedom in turn. (Piha & Poussa 2012, 31-34.)

Generation Y wants flexibility and the possibility to define their own working hours (Piha & Poussa 2012, 40). Y yearns for positive feedback and receiving thanks for their work. Y wants work to be meaningful, and that means that the work gives feelings of success, possibilities to solve problems, develop new things, and get concrete results. The meaning of work seems to be more important for this generation. (Piha & Poussa 2012, 70-72.) Generation Y has certain expectations towards working life and they will find new work if their expectations are not met (Piha & Poussa 2012, 79-87).

This generation wants their manager to be encouraging, easy-going, fair, just, reliable and one that gives feedback, that enables their subordinates' work, and does not restrain it. Managers do not need to breath down one's neck or tell them what to do, but to support them. (Piha & Poussa 2012, 131.) The following figure summarizes the expectations of generation Y individuals towards working life.

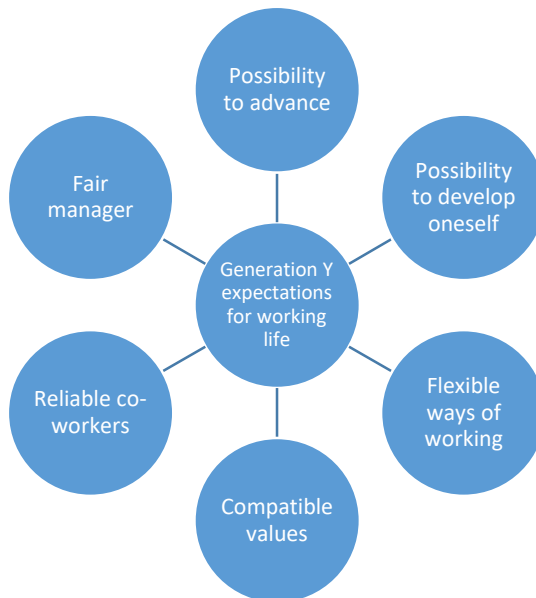


Figure 2. Generation Y expectations for working life. (Piha & Pousa 2012, 141.)

2.2.2 Self-directive individual

According to Frank Martela and Karoliina Jarenko, self-direction is something that usually means a person’s ability to function without the need for external guidance and control – ability to manage themselves (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 12). Self-directive individual is an individual who is able to function by their own self-initiative without the need for outside guidance – acknowledging objectives and pursuing them independently (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 80). In turn, a self-managing organization is defined as “efforts that radically decentralize authority in a formal and systematic way throughout the organization” (Lee & Edmondson 2017). Self-direction as a term has many different definitions and the term itself can be different depending on the source, but in this thesis the term self-direction is used to describe the phenomenon. This thesis focuses especially on self-directive individuals.

Martela and Jarenko also separate the terms self-direction and self-organisation – self-direction can be defined as something that concerns the individual, and self-organization something that concerns a group. Self-organization can be defined as the opposite of a traditional hierarchical way of organizing inside a group or an organization, where there are no predefined order of command, fixed roles or even a designated superior to run every decision through. In these kinds of organizations there are still certain structures and guidelines according to which they function. In addition, there are organizations that function in a more traditional hierarchical manner, but still have a strong self-directive working culture among individuals. In addition, there are organizations that have self-directive teams that function on their own. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 12-15.) Self-direction

can define the organisation or the individuals, and this thesis focuses on the individuals despite of what kind of organisation they work in. Lauri Pietinalho from Aalto University also approaches the term as an opposite of hierarchy and describes an ideally self-managing organization as a complete opposite of a hierarchical organization. The objectives in a self-managing organization are everyone's responsibility. Pietinalho explains that decision-making in self-managing organization is different than in hierarchical organizations – decisions are made by people who have the appropriate knowledge and skills, and something to contribute to the decision-making, while the rest trust them to make the right decision for all. (Savaspuro 2019, 26.)

Self-direction allows individuals to make responsible decisions by themselves, with the assumption that they want to do things well. The basis of self-direction is strong autonomy of individuals. (Martela 2017.) Self-direction does not mean that everyone can do what they want and there are no structures according to which the functions base on. Self-direction in itself is a pre-defined way of functioning – it is based on certain structures, instructions and rules. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 14.)

According to Martela, self-direction requires individuals in an organization to be proactive and wanting to do what is best for the organization within their duties and skills. As mentioned before, self-direction is based on the autonomy of the individuals, and the decision-making power is spread between them and they are trusted to make the best decisions through interaction between one another. (Martela 2017.) Being self-directive might be quite demanding for an individual and create new kinds of challenges. Individuals need to be able to and control and lead themselves and their work. Being able to control one's own work, make decisions independently, and define one's own working hours are positive changes, but might also be burdening responsibilities. Individuals need to learn how to be self-directive, and there should be structures that support the individuals. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 318-319.) Martela and Jarenko say that on its own, permission to make decisions and experiment are not necessarily enough to create the experience of autonomy. Also the organization's structures impact on the individuals' ability to function autonomously. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 255.)

Martela explains that in order to be self-directive, an individual needs to be motivated to function and perform tasks by their own free will to work towards the wanted objective and the common goal. It is important that the individual knows which objective they are working to achieve, and in order to achieve that objective they need to have the proper skills and know-how. In addition to the task related know-how, the individual needs to know how to self-manage, which includes time, task and resource management, and the ability to

prioritize. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 12.) These aspects are summarized in the figure below.



Figure 3. Requirements for a self-directive individual. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 12.)

2.2.3 Well-being

Well-being is a broad concept that applies in all aspects of an individual's life, but this thesis focuses especially on the job well-being, and more particularly, its psychic and social dimensions. Job well-being, and especially its negative aspects as a topic of discussion are emphasized now more than ever, and not for nothing, because work exhaustion and sickness absenteeism are on the rise. (Piha & Poussa. 2012, 23.) Individuals and organizations need to be flexible in the constantly changing environment. Constant changes can be detrimental for individuals' well-being, especially, if the possibilities to have an effect are low, resources are not sufficient to carry out the work, or power and responsibility are not in balance. (Rauramo 2012, 46.)

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland describes job well-being as a whole that consists of pleasant work that is done healthily and safely by professionals and supported by motivating management (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health). Job well-being can be divided into three dimensions – physical, social and mental well-being. The physical aspect of job well-being includes individual's physical health and condition. Social well-being is about aspects related to the individual's co-workers, functioning in a team and the work community, and mental well-being includes appreciating individual's know-how, individual appreciating their own work and continuous development. (Ojala & Ahonen 2003, 20-24.) Atmosphere at the workplace among colleagues is an important aspect affecting social well-being of individuals. The community at the workplace can be a source of sup-

port for its members, but also it can have harmful effects. Issues at the workplace, for example unwanted changes that are managed poorly, can cause strain to the relationships between the individuals, and they need to be addressed. (Suomen mielenterveysseura Ry.)

In turn, Päivi Rauramo approaches job well-being in terms of five different aspects – health, security, sense of community, feeling of appreciation and competence. Health and security form the basis for job well-being, and they include physical and mental health, safe and fair working environment and stable employment. Openness, trust, and healthy superior-subordinate relationships support sense of community at the workplace. Individuals should be able to feel that they have a possibility to affect their own work and develop themselves, and the superior should be supportive in this. (Rauramo 2012, 14.)

Job well-being needs to be managed – in some organizations it is unclear whether the responsibility belongs to the employee, manager or occupational health care unit (Sinokki 2016, 194). According to Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, job well-being is not only the individual's responsibility, but also the organization's. Maintaining and developing job well-being is an integral part of managing an organization. The workplace should be a safe, trusting environment with an open, invigorative and supportive atmosphere, where positive feedback is given but also problems can be discussed openly. To maintain and develop individual's job well-being, the work should have clear objectives and offer challenges where they can utilize their strengths and skills. Individuals should feel motivated and responsible of their own work and get feedback. Work should provide feelings of success and enthusiasm. (Työterveyslaitos a.) When an individual experiences feelings of success and satisfaction in their work, it enhances their overall well-being (Virtanen & Sinokki 2014, 31-33). In addition to this, the feeling of control is significant for well-being (Virtanen & Sinokki 2014, 201-202).

Stress and exhaustion are terms closely related to job well-being. Stress, rush, decreased motivation and exhaustion might have detrimental effects on individuals' job well-being. The individuals' wellbeing should be monitored by the superiors, and action needs to be taken in case there are concerning signs visible. (Rauramo 2012, 39.) The key is to take notice to the possible problems early (Rauramo 2012, 43). Constant changes in an organization can cause stress for individuals (Sinokki 2016, 94). The role of the work community is even more important in managing change. Individuals handle stress in different ways, and this should be taken into consideration in leading an organization. (Sinokki 2016, 22.)

The World Health Organization WHO defines work-related stress as an individual's response to not coping at work, because the individual's knowledge and abilities do not correspond with the job demands and pressure (World Health organization). According to WHO stress-related diseases are the main cause for sickness absenteeism in Europe (Uusitalo-Arola 2019, 11). One fourth of the Finnish workforce experience work-related stress. Work-related factors that can be detrimental to health are among others unclear objectives, not receiving enough feedback or appreciation, constant changes, and not having a possibility to develop in one's work. Detrimental work-related stress and exhaustion can be prevented, and superiors have a role in that. (Työterveyslaitos b.) Stress is a part of life, but if it is excessive and constant, it can lead to exhaustion (Rauramo 2012, 57).

Exhaustion is a state of the human body caused by prolonged stress that transpires in physical and mental symptoms, and that can lead into serious illness. Exhaustion is a serious issue that is not easy to recover from, and that is why it is important to find what causes it, and the means to prevent it beforehand. The most significant reasons causing exhaustion are related to the straining working circumstances, and the ways to prevent exhaustion are related to developing the work and management. (Uusitalo-Arola 2019, 9-10.) Exhaustion, or work strain has a physical and psychosocial dimension. The psychic factors are among others, responsibility, goals, feedback and appreciation, the workload and pace of working, and the possibility to impact one's own work and develop, and maybe the most crucial part - actually liking the job. The social dimension of work strain is affected by the collaboration with colleagues, communication and flow of information at the workplace, the quality of management, or possible conflicts and inappropriate behavior or even disturbance. Most of these can be affected by the superior's actions, and the relationship between the superior and the subordinates must function well. (Rauramo 2012, 54-55.)

Employee autonomy and flexibility are factors that affect the individual's workload or work strain. Autonomy gives individual's the possibility to affect their own work which affects their job motivation and well-being, but it also means that the monitoring of well-being is left to be on the individual's own responsibility. Rauramo suggests that committed and diligent individuals might have a bigger risk to get exhausted, if they do not identify their own boundaries. (Rauramo 2012, 45.)

2.2.4 Motivation

Motivation is an important part of work and the satisfaction it brings. It affects the quality of work but also the well-being of an individual. Motivated individuals thrive at work – motivation has effects on individuals' resilience, commitment, ability to focus and performance. (Sinokki 2016, 80.)

Motivation is tightly connected to job well-being, and motivation is a significant factor in maintaining the ability to work, thus it is connected to the topic of this thesis. Motivated individuals tend to take better care of their health and are keener on focusing on coping with work. (Lääkärikeskus Aava.) Motivation is an integral part of an individual's and the whole work community's well-being and it has an effect on the quality and efficiency of the performed work. Motivation cannot be forced but it can be supported. Motivation adds the joy of work, and in turn the joy of work increases motivation. (Sinokki 2016, 11.)

Marjo Sinokki defines motivation as a force that drives us forward to achieve our own goals. Motivation is voluntary and subject to a person's own will, and it affects how we behave and function, and the intensity, commitment, and quality of our action. Motivation consists of an individual's personality, feelings, reason and social environment. (Sinokki 2016, 60.) Job motivation is affected by several factors, and the effects differ between individuals. (Sinokki 2016, 80). Robbins and Judge also mention that the intensity of one's motivation depends on the individual, but also the situation (Robbins & Judge 2017, 247). Mikko Kuitunen, founder of Vincit, suggests that work should be done because individuals are inspired to do it, not because it must be done (Martela & Jarenko 2015, 13).

Motivation can be divided into two – intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within, it arises from psychological needs and values of an individual. It cannot be encouraged by external incentives, but instead by an individual's own personal desire. Intrinsic motivation is affected by how satisfied the individual is by the contents of their work, and how versatile, challenging and meaningful it is. Extrinsic motivation is less effective and it includes the external factors, such as rewards and punishments. According to research, intrinsic motivation can enhance well-being. (Sinokki 2016, 98-99.)

Receiving extrinsic rewards makes the job feel like something that has to be done, instead of wanting to do it (Robbins & Judge 2017, 253).

Self-determination theory examines the different types of motivation. It is an approach to motivation and personality development that divides motivation into autonomous motiva-

tion and controlled motivation, and it suggests that the type of motivation is more significant than the actual amount of motivation. Autonomous motivation includes both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Controlled motivation consists of external regulation and introjected regulation. External regulation is something where the individual's behavior is guided by rewards and punishment, and in turn, introjected regulation is affected by wanting to get approval, avoiding shame, and matters concerning ego and self-esteem. Through many researches done using the self-determination theory, it has become quite clear that the different types of motivation lead to different behavior and very different outcomes. According to the theory, everyone has three innate psychological needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness (feeling socially connected) that, to some extent, explain how for example social conditions affect autonomous and controlled motivation. (Deci & Ryan 2008.) These needs enhance self-motivation and well-being when satisfied, and in turn, when not satisfied, deteriorate these feelings (Deci & Ryan 2000).

Motivation is individual, and there are multiple factors affecting work motivation, such as the work itself, working environment and the personality and life situation of the individual that need to be taken into consideration in supporting motivation. In turn, motivation affects individuals' productivity, work quality and job well-being. (Sinokki 2016, 80.) Individuals' motivation is increased if they feel their work is significant, and they feel qualified to do it, and get feedback from their performance. The feeling of autonomy and the ability to effect on one's own work responsibilities increase job motivation. (Sinokki 2016, 12-13.) The sense of control is important in today's working life. Work community and atmosphere at the workplace have an enormous effect on personnel's motivation. (Sinokki 2016, 47.)

2.3 Related research and historical context of self-direction

This chapter introduces existing research that is related to the thesis topic and the history of the phenomenon.

According to Miia Savaspuro, self-direction as a term in its current form is fairly new, but it has existed as a phenomenon for decades. Luther Gulick, an American social scientist, brought up the phenomenon as early as the 1930's, describing it as an opposite for bureaucracy. (Savaspuro 2019, 25.) The phenomenon has changed its form over time, and it is now emphasized more, or rather, in a different way than before. According to Martela & Jarenko, possibly the most significant difference now and for example in the 1990's, is that back then organizations created self-directive teams but still remained hierarchical, and now the focus is on making the whole organization self-managing, and the structures and organizational culture are redefined in a more comprehensive way. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 320.)

Similarly, according to research professor Jari Hakanen, some qualities associated with self-direction, such as self-managed teams, have been a topic of discussion since the 1990's, but the term has now emerged in a new light and it seems like a brand-new phenomenon. There is also some debate and confusion about whether the phenomenon concerns individuals, teams or the whole organization of work. There is hardly any scientific research done about self-direction in organizations in its current form and the existing research focuses on self-managed teams. (Savaspuro 2019, 25.) The research in this thesis does not examine self-directive organizations or even the teams but focuses on the individuals in self-directive work.

According to a survey conducted by occupational psychologists Tuuli Viranta and Hanna Poskiparta, individuals need even more support in self-direction from supervisors, but the manager's work is different than before. Viranta and Poskiparta list qualities that are needed from an individual to learn to become self-directive – getting to know one-self, strengths and natural tendencies, as well as sore points values and motivators. (Poskiparta & Viranta 2018.)

A study conducted in 2014 examining the relationship between self-leadership and emotional exhaustion and burnout concludes that low level of self-leadership results in emotional exhaustion and vice versa. According to the study, several case studies have proven that working in self-managed teams increase employee satisfaction, autonomy, performance and motivation, and reduces absenteeism. The study was conducted five years ago, so it can be said that in that time the situation has changed quite radically, and the study has quite a different perspective, focusing mainly on emotional exhaustion caused by low self-leadership - lack of autonomy and empowerment, at the workplace which results in the feeling of lack of control. The main concept in this study is self-leadership, and not self-direction as in this thesis. According to the study, at that time there were no studies conducted concerning the relationship between self-leadership and burnout. (Elloy & Patil 2014, 7-11.)

Martela and Jarenko explain that there are three main reasons why self-direction as a phenomenon has recently surfaced as a topic of discussion – a change in the environment organizations work in and in the characteristics of work and thirdly, technology. Globalization, the speed of information transferring and automatization have resulted in an environment of rapid change that requires the ability to adapt to the changes in an agile way. In this kind of situation stiff hierarchy can be an obstacle. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 11.) There are also many self-managing organizations that have already figured out how

to successfully implement self-direction into their organization, for example Buurtzorg, Reaktor, Vincit and Morningstar. Some organizations have been functioning as a self-managing organization for decades successfully. (Laloux 2016, 62.) Frederic Laloux explains that the problem with failed attempts to be a self-managing organization have failed because the change in an organization was made too abruptly without careful planning. In order to successfully implement self-management, the management practices of an organization need to be revised. (Laloux 2016, 63.).

Jari Hakanen also examines the problems related to self-direction and suggests that one problem with self-direction is that responsibility and power do not distribute between the individuals in the same relation. Leaders fail to profoundly understand what the term means and how to implement it properly, and instead use it as a slogan. Increasing individuals' responsibilities without increasing the amount of power, will evidently decrease employee autonomy and increase feelings of anxiety. (Savaspuro 2019, 32.) Furthermore, if control is distributed amongst individuals unevenly, and co-workers can control each other too much, this can cause problems in the work community (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 320).

In addition to the thoughts of Martela, Jarenko, and Hakanen, Lauri Pietinalho also examines self-direction in terms of possible issues related to it and lists in his dissertation research six possible reasons why self-direction has not been implemented well or at all to an organization. While this thesis focuses on the individual's perspective, the organizational aspect is significant because how the organization works (or does not work) has an effect on the individual. That is to say that if self-direction is not well implemented in an organization, it will probably not work on an individual working in said organization. Often in organizations the changes are left half-way, and the implementation is not well thought through. The change needs to be applied to the whole organization, and it needs to be evaluated and developed along the way. Changing just one aspect in the organization should not be seen as a solution or a short cut to self-direction. Another main reason is that people are set in their ways, and hierarchy has deep roots in most organizations, so the changes need to be implemented little by little while giving people some time to adapt. If somewhere in the organization, for example in a team, there is power or responsibility undistributed, it is inevitable that someone will fill the void. Some people in the organization might be eager to take too much responsibility and take risks, while others do not have courage to take any. New ways of working obviously require the ability to try new things and not always take the safest route. Self-direction is easier to implement to a smaller group of people, and the individuals should share the same objectives and have a sense of meaning in what they do. (Savaspuro 2019, 34-35.)

3 Conducting the research

This chapter introduces the research process, data collection and analysis methods and the justifications for the choices. This chapter also introduces the data collection itself and introduces concepts related to evaluating the trustworthiness of a research.

The main objective of this thesis was to find out how generation Y individuals' motivation and well-being are affected in self-directive work, how their own qualities and skills support self-direction, and what can organizations do to support individuals. After the initial familiarization to the topic with the help of the literature review, understanding about the connections between self-direction and the motivation and well-being of self-directive individuals was deepened with the help of collecting qualitative data through theme interviews.

3.1 Qualitative research process

This chapter describes the qualitative research process. Qualitative data was collected through theme interviews.

After the initial topic decision, the research process started with defining the research problem and questions. The hypotheses were composed on the basis of some initial presumptions of the topic, and with the support of a literature review. After composing the hypotheses, the research methods were chosen after exploring different options for research, data collection and analysis methods. Qualitative research method called theme interview was chosen to collect data, for reasons that are explained in chapter 3.2. The data collection included six theme interviews that were conducted after careful planning in September 2019. An expert interview was conducted in addition to the theme interviews, but that was not until after initial analysis of the theme interviews. The theme interviews were transcribed and analysed using content analysis.

The expert interview was conducted with Johanna Vuori, a principal lecturer in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. At the time of the interview, Johanna was involved in Minimalist Organizational Design project (MODe), which researched self-direction and self-organization. Said research focused on structures and management practices that enable self-organization. The purpose of the expert interview was to get insight into what the organization can do to support self-directive individuals. The expert interview was conducted after the theme interviews in order to discuss development suggestions based on the initial research findings. Vuori did not comment on the research findings from the theme interviews, and that was not the purpose of the interview, but discussed the matter

in a more general level. The comments from the expert interview were utilized in comparing them to the views of the individuals.

The next step in the research process was making interpretations on the basis of the analyzed data. The last steps of the research included evaluating reliability and validity of the thesis and piecing the different parts of the thesis report together. The thesis process is summarized in the figure below.



Figure 4. Timeline of the thesis process.

The methodological choices for this thesis are examined in the following chapter. The analysis method is introduced in chapter 3.4., after introducing the conducting of the interviews.

3.2 Methodological choices

The research in this thesis was qualitative. Both the data collection and analysis were done using qualitative methods. Qualitative data measures qualities, such as feelings, ideas and beliefs, and the data has a more descriptive character (Walliman 2010, 71-73). Qualitative is the appropriate research method when trying to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Kananen 2010, 37). Qualitative methods were appropriate for this

thesis, because motivation and well-being of individuals are topics that can be quite sensitive for individuals. The research method helps gain a deeper understanding about the phenomenon on self-direction.

Interview is one of the basic methods for acquiring information. Interview was the best choice of method for this thesis, because it is a flexible method and it can help acquiring deeper information about the research topic. Interview is a suitable method to gather information, learn about people's opinions, perceptions, beliefs, and understand how people behave in a certain way. Interviews that are in the form of an interactive discussion, give an opportunity to approach topics that might be more complicated to research otherwise. Free-form, profound discussions can reveal things that might be unlikely to find out using other methods. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 11.) Interview is a flexible research method, and the researcher can direct the data gathering themselves in the interview situation. In the interview situation it is easier to make sure that the interviewee has understood the question. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 34-36.) Interview as a research method does have its issues – researching knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, values, and meanings can be problematic. The research findings concluded from the data always require interpretation, and this needs to be taken into consideration when making conclusions. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 12) Despite of these shortcomings of interview as a method, it was the most suitable research method for this thesis because of the nature of the topic.

The data was collected through a qualitative data collection method called theme interview. Theme interview is a semi-structured interview method that divides the interview into themes, and the method is semi-structured since the interview questions follow the same themes in every interview, but the questions might not be exactly the same in every interview, and the questions are not in a specific order. Theme interviews are more like discussions and leave room for people's own interpretations and meanings. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 47-48.) Theme interviews give an opportunity to look closer to a phenomenon without asking straight forward questions from the interviewee. The themes of a theme interview aim to reveal the underlying "secret" underneath the phenomenon. Theme interview proceeds theme by theme, and each theme has questions that go from a general level to a more detailed one. The conclusions are made by collecting clues and signs from the interview. (Kananen 2010, 52-58.) The topic in this thesis is quite sensitive, so theme interview was the best choice because interviewees might not necessarily want to answer the questions or reveal everything on their mind.

3.3 Conducting the interviews

The interviewees were found through posting an announcement in LinkedIn about seeking interviewees (see Appendix 1.) The LinkedIn post, as the interviews, were in Finnish. The post briefly introduced the research, and defined the term self-direction, so that it would reach the wanted crowd and attract interviewees that were working in self-directive positions. Shortly after posting in LinkedIn, people from the LinkedIn contacted me to volunteer to be interviewed. LinkedIn was a great channel to seek interviewees, since it is a broad network of professionals with higher education, and it was a good way to reach a big crowd of people. It also allowed me to find interviewees who were not only from my own inner circle, and the interviewees had a chance to approach me by their own initiative, which meant that the interviewees were not chosen by me.

Interviews were conducted in September 2019, and they each lasted around 30 to 60 minutes. The total amount of held interviews was six. The interviews were held at Haaga-Helia Pasila campus, and a few other locations, such as the home or workplace of an interviewee. The interviews were conducted in a casual, conversational form, in interaction with the interviewee. The interviewee was given space to lead the conversation and the role of the interviewer was to be in the background. The language in the interviews was Finnish, because it was the native language of the interviewees as well as the interviewer. The interview data and direct quotations are consequently translated from Finnish to English, with paying special attention to keeping the meanings the same in the translations. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, since this was not a topic to discuss in a group, and individual interviews generate more detailed information. (Kananen 2010, 53.)

The interviews were anonymous, and it was made sure that the interviewees understood what that meant. The interviewees were told that they would remain completely anonymous, and the specific interviewees could not be recognized from the data introduced in this thesis. They were given a form that explained the meaning of the anonymity. (See appendix 2.) Anonymity was especially important in these interviews, because of the sensitivity of the topic.

The interviews proceeded according to the following themes:

1. Interviewee's background and nature of work
2. Organizing at the workplace and manager's role
3. Self-direction in the work
4. Motivation of self-directive individuals
5. Well-being of self-directive individuals

6. Supporting self-direction of individuals

Each interviewee was asked questions related to the same interview themes, but unlike the themes, the questions were not exactly the same in every interview. The questions varied in the course of each interview, according to which direction the discussion was moving. The frame for questions was the following.

- How would you describe your own background – education, work experience etc.?
- How would you describe the nature and content of your work?
- Do you have a designated manager, and how is their role defined?
- How would you describe self-direction and how it appears in your own work?
- How and why was the transition made into a self-directive way of working?
- Are there certain skills or competencies that are needed in self-directive work, and what could they be?
- Describe your motivation in self-directive work.
- Describe objectives set for your work, and the feedback received for it.
- How would you describe decision-making power and possibility to influence your work?
- What kind of aspects can affect well-being in self-directive work?
- How would you describe the relationship between the expectations about the job performance and coping at work?
- How should organizations support self-directive individuals?

The interview also initially included a personality-related question, but this segment of the interview was decided to be left out from the analysis, and the hypothesis from the thesis overall, because it did not suit the scope of the thesis, and personality might go too deep into psychology.

The interview recordings were transcribed immediately after each interview. Transcribing can be defined as the process of converting voice recordings, pictures or videos into written form. Transcribing can be done in different levels, and they produce transcriptions with a different level of accuracy. The levels are word-for-word, standard language, and propositional transcription. The interviews for this thesis were transcribed in standard language level. The interviews were transcribed, because it made easier to analyze the data. It was not necessary to transcribe word-for-word, since the essential part of the interviews was in the meanings, but a more accurate level than propositional level was used in order to avoid the risk of losing meanings in the process. (Kananen 2010, 59-60.)

3.4 Analysis method

Analyzing qualitative data means reading the data repeatedly, its pondering, comparison and interpretation (Rantala 2015, 110). The data collected through the interviews was quite extensive, and content analysis was used as the analysis method to go through the data. Content analysis is an analysis method for qualitative research, where the data is gone through systematically and repeatedly, in order to find relevant aspects in relation to the research questions (Drake & Salmi 2018). More precisely, a content analysis method called thematizing was used to analyse the data. Thematizing means examining certain common traits that arise from the data that are common for the interviewees (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 173). Since the data gathering method was theme interview, it was quite natural to also analyse the data by dividing it into themes.

After transcribing the interviews into a written form, the analysis of the interviews was done in a few separate steps. During the whole transcribing and analysis process, notes were made about aspects that stood out from the data. First, the data was divided into themes, which were more or less the same as the interview themes: the interviewee's background, self-direction in the work, manager's role, objectives and feedback, decision-making power and possibility to have influence, well-being (including the relationship between expectations towards the individual and their abilities and coping at work), motivation, qualities and skills in self-directive work and supporting self-directive individuals. The themes were determined on the basis of the interview themes, and also themes that occurred in the course of the interviews. The following figure summarizes the analysis process.

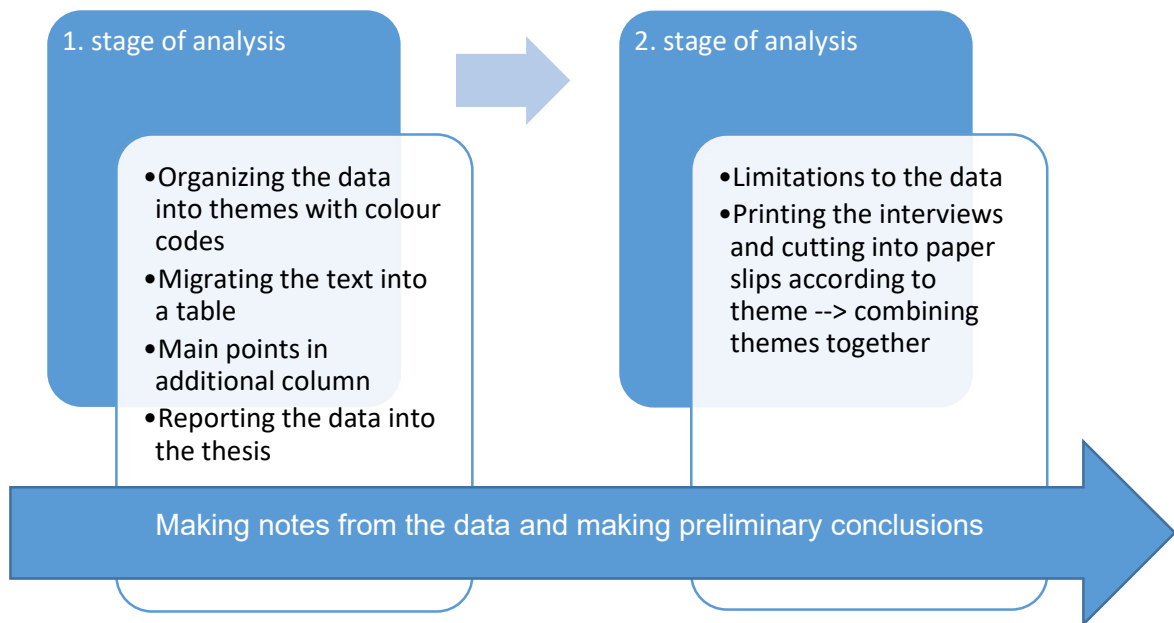


Figure 5. The analysis process.

At the first stage of the analysis, the individual interviews were organized by dividing them into themes with the help of coding with colours, but the interviews were kept separated from each other at this point. The text was migrated into a table, where each theme had its own space. After this, an additional column was added to the table, and in that column was written the main points of each theme. Based on these, the interview data was written into shorter passages in the thesis, and direct quotations were picked from the transcribed text and translated. At this stage, the passages were only drafts, but it helped going through the data. After these, the themes in the interviews were combined, by printing all of the interviews, and cutting the interview sheets according to the themes, and putting the same themes from different interviews together. This helped analyse the interviews theme by theme, and it was easier to make research findings according to the research questions. With the help of the paper slips, the data also was now easier to delimit. In each stage of the analysis, I carefully read through the data and made notes if needed, so it would eventually be easier to write a summary of the research findings and draw conclusions. The interview passages were shown and accepted by the interviewees who in the interview had expressed their will to see them before publishing the thesis.

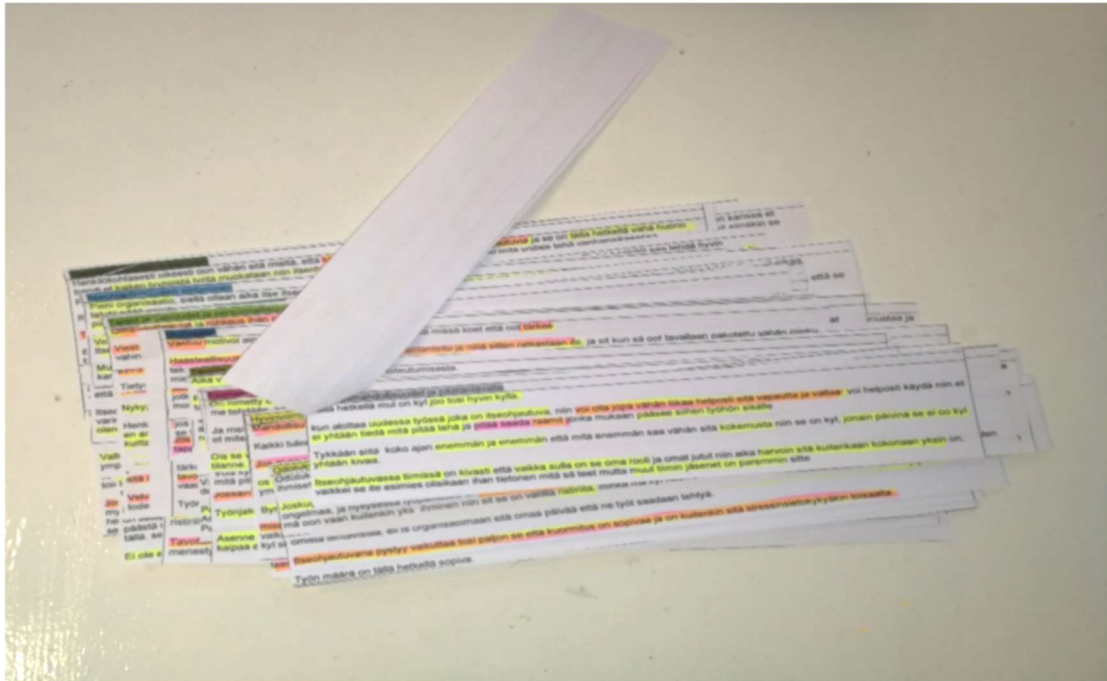


Figure 6. Interviews cut into paper slips and stapled together according to the theme to help the analysis.

3.5 Reliability, validity and ethical viewpoints

Reliability and validity are terms related to the trustworthiness of a qualitative research. Reliability is about whether the measurement and research results are consistent and repeatable, or in other words whether a research would receive the same results if it was repeated. Validity is about how well the research answers the research questions. Human beings are thinking and feeling creatures, who can change their opinions abruptly for no specific reason, and despite the fact that validity and reliability questions are important for any kind of research, their verification can be more complicated in qualitative research, because individuals as human beings do not always behave rationally or systematically, but randomly. (Kananen 2011, 66-67.)

An important aspect of reliability is documentation – documenting and reasoning choices made in the research process. Documentation increases the credibility of the research and makes it possible to repeat the research and reach similar results. The research data in this thesis was collected through interviewing human beings, who are individual, and might also change their viewpoints in course of time, so the results might not be exactly the same. In qualitative research, even if the research was documented thoroughly, another researcher might not end up in similar results, and that does not necessarily mean that the original research or method used was unreliable or weak. Individual's viewpoints of a certain object can change in a small amount of time. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 189.)

“There are as many interpretations as there are interpreters” (Kananen 2011, 67). Researchers are also thinking and feeling human beings, who can make different interpretations from the same data. In the expert interview conducted, Johanna Vuori talked about being careful with making too generalized interpretations with this kind of research data. In order to make comparisons between a traditional organization and a self-directive one, it would have been better to conduct a quantitative research. (Vuori 2019.)

Ethical viewpoints are also present in every kind of research, but when researching human beings, they are present in every stage of the research (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 19-20). In this thesis, the ethical viewpoints have to do with confidentiality and privacy.

Reliability, validity and ethical questions in relation to this thesis are examined more thoroughly in chapter 5.

4 Interview findings

This chapter introduces the interview data and research findings. The research data is first introduced theme by theme, and then the main findings are summarized according to the research questions and reflected with the literature review and the expert interview. This chapter introduces the main points of the interviews and includes only comments that are relevant for the research, leaving out parts that are not significant in relation to the research questions.

4.1 Data collected from theme interviews

The amount on interviewees were six, and they all were generation Y representatives. Three of the interviewees worked in expert duties, two in assistive duties and one in managerial duties. The interviews were held in September 2019, and they were all recorded. All the comments in this subchapter reflect on the interviewee's opinions.

As stated in chapter 2, there are organizations that function in a more traditional hierarchical manner, but still have a strong self-directive working culture among individuals (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 15). All of the interviewees worked in these kinds of organizations, where the structure of the organization was not clearly one of a self-managing organization, but the individuals functioned in a self-directive way.

The interview data is introduced theme by theme. The themes in this chapter are not exactly the same as the predefined themes in the interviews, and some of the themes are ones that emerged in the interviews. The interview data is introduced according to the following themes: interviewee's background and nature of self-directive work, manager's support in self-directive work, motivation of self-directive individuals, well-being of self-directive individuals, objectives and feedback, individuals' skills and qualities supporting self-directive work, supporting self-direction of individuals. In the following chapters, the six interviewees are referred to as interviewees A, B, C, D, E, and F.

The table below summarizes the interviewees' background and the duration of each interview.

Table 1. Summary of the interviewees.

Interviewee	Work description	Education	Interview duration
Interviewee A	Assistive duties	Bachelor of Business Administration & Bachelor of Health Care	00:24:04
Interviewee B	Assistive duties	Bachelor of Business Administration	00:36:39
Interviewee C	Manager duties	Bachelor of Engineering	01:14:40
Interviewee D	Expert duties	Bachelor of Business Administration	00:31:05
Interviewee E	Expert duties	Master's degree in Law	00:34:29
Interviewee F	Expert duties	Bachelor of Business Administration	00:39:50

4.1.1 Interviewee's background and nature of self-directive work

Half of the interviewees were in their first self-directive positions, and half had already done work that was self-directive. Two interviewees described to be self-directive by nature. For any of the interviewees, there had not been any actual planned transition to working in a self-directive way. All of the interviewees felt they had decision-making power and possibilities to have an influence in their work. Interviewee E felt that for a new employee it is possible that the amount of freedom and power can be too extensive, because one might not know at all what they need to do in the beginning, and might need some sort of guidelines in order to learn the job and how to function in it. A majority, five out six of the interviewees had recently graduated from or were still finishing their studies.

Interviewee A was a female and at the time of the interview was in between jobs. She had altogether about 10 years of working experience and in addition about 1,5 years in her current field. In the interview, interviewee A reflected on her last job, where she worked in a big company in assistive duties. Interviewee A felt that assistant work is generally quite self-directive.

Interviewee B was a female doing assistant work in a small company. B had been working at her current organization for about six weeks. B described her work to be very self-directive, and she felt that she had the freedom to work on things she recognized needed to be done and could do them as she saw best. Interviewee B described the self-direction in

her organization comes from the organizational culture and that people are trusted and not watched over.

The work is like that by nature, or actually the work would not necessarily be (self-directive) in some other company, but the organizational culture is the kind where people are trusted and not watched over. Instead you receive thanks for getting things done. -- I know that to anyone this amount of autonomy and self-direction wouldn't fit, but for my character it's just right. (Interviewee B.)

Interviewee C was a male and at the time of the interview, had been working in managerial and expert duties for thirteen years in a large company. C described self-direction as something that has multiple levels and might not fit every work task - it depends on the nature of the work, organizational structure and culture, and of course all of the people as individuals, and some of them need more support and guidance than others. Self-direction is a part of organizational culture, and it should be adapted in the different levels to each individual in the best possible way.

Interviewee D was a female and at the time of the interview had been working in her own field for a few years. She mentioned that she did not have the most positive experience of self-direction, and that self-direction did not actualize in her work, that it was just a presumption. The working culture in D's organization was self-directive. The organization was quite small.

Well pretty much I have the freedom and responsibility to do, or kind of decide on the contents and prioritizing of my own work. There is basically little traditional leadership. (Interviewee D.)

Interviewee E was a female who at the time of the interview was doing counselling work. She had been working in her own field for about six years, and for the last year or so had been working in self-directive positions. Interviewee E worked in a quite small organization, and she felt it was easier to be self-directive in a small organization, and rather the work needed to be self-directive for the organization to function.

Interviewee F was a male, who at the time of the interview was working in expert duties in a large organization. Interviewee F said that his current position was somewhat self-directive, but there were things that needed to be done by the book, and which did not have any room for one's own creativity.

4.1.2 Manager's support in self-directive work

All of the interviewees had designated managers, but the managers were not involved in the interviewees' daily work nearly at all. For interviewees B and D, the designated manager was also the organization's managing director.

Interviewee A described the main role of the manager as being a safety net for the individual.

Well the manager's role is really just to support one's own mental growth and supporting the individual's ability to be self-directive in the work, make decisions, and organize work. – Mainly just a kind of safety net that if you fall, they catch you and if you need raising up in for example developing oneself and career advancement, they are there to be a kind of stepping-stone to bounce from. (Interviewee A.)

For interviewee B, the role of the manager was not particularly defined, and it varied daily. B said that if working in a self-directive way is required from individuals, their roles need to be defined. B was even unsure what her role was at times, and she could have used some guidance. B felt that her duties should have been more clearly defined and clarified. B felt she was a bit left alone in the beginning and was confused at first about what was relevant in the job.

Interviewee C and his manager discussed together the annual objectives, and if there was something that needed to be taken to a higher level, C could ask for support in that, and they had some routines, such as weekly or monthly check-ups. C seemed content about the amount of support he got from his manager. Trust and openness between a manager and the individual are important in C's opinion, and self-direction cannot be actualized in its deepest meaning if they are not in order.

Interviewee D worked in a small organization. D felt her manager was quite distant, and she, as a representative of generation Y working in her first actual position in her own field would have hoped for more encounters, development discussions, and regular cheering on and sparring. People working there had their own ways of working and did not need support from the manager like D felt she would have needed as a fairly new employee. In D's organization had formed certain kinds of self-directive ways of working, on the basis of what people felt were the best ones, and for many it was a good fit, especially people who had been in the organization for a long time, because it was easier for them to be autonomous and do things just the way they feel right to do them. She felt that the ways of working sometimes felt strange to her.

Interviewee E felt she could always go to her manager if she had something to ask or some problem for example. Both interviewees D and E would have experienced it useful to have regular meetings with their manager, but felt it was not that easy, because their managers were so busy.

Interviewee F and his colleagues in the same positions were organized into a team where they could discuss matters and solve problems together, through sharing knowledge and helping each other figure out things some were more familiar with than others.

We do have a designated manager, but they are not daily present in our work, even though they are designated to be our manager, they do not interfere with what we do, so it's basically just a title there (Interviewee F).

4.1.3 Motivation of self-directive individuals

All of the interviewees felt motivated by having responsibility and the freedom and autonomy of self-directive work – doing tasks when one wants, when they want to do it and in a way that feels good to them. Half of the interviewees also mentioned the feeling of significance was something that motivated them. Half of the interviewees mentioned the work community as a source of motivation - being able to communicate with colleagues and pitch new views to one another. In interviewee A's opinion self-direction in itself is not motivating to everyone, but people who are able and want to be self-directive, can develop their own way of working, and hence feel more motivated.

In interviewee B's opinion, negative effects for motivation can be a job description that is really dictated and limited, and not receiving feedback or receiving only negative feedback. Interviewee C felt that being self-directive is a right and a duty acquired based on his own professional skill and competence. C would not be able to function in a working environment that was not self-directive, it would make him feel frustrated and like he was not trusted. C felt that he was self-directive by nature and could not function in a situation where someone would start telling him what to do and when to do it.

I'd rather if they say that we want to achieve this, or this needs to be achieved in two days, that's fine but if someone would start saying that you do this and this, without telling why we are doing and what do we want to achieve with this. The objective and the meaning of certain activities in a bigger picture, it's about that opening that and after that we do it. (Interviewee C.)

Interviewee D felt her motivation in self-directive work varied a lot. She felt motivated when working with certain work tasks, where she felt she was significant and meaningful. For interviewee E, it was hard to get motivated if it was really hard for her to see why something needs to be done. Interviewee F in turn felt motivated by getting the chance to solve problems and use creativity in his work.

And also in a way, challenging work, when you possibly run into problematic situations, and then you solve them yourself, and when you are forced to find the solutions yourself, then you possibly have to use creativity to solve it (Interviewee F).

4.1.4 Well-being of self-directive individuals

All of the interviewees agreed that the most significant factor affecting individuals' well-being is that they have an opportunity to affect their own job - possibility to influence what one does and how, in which order and how to schedule it. This improves motivation, which in turn enhances well-being. Interviewee A described that well-being is all about having sense of control and decision-making power over one's own work. Interviewee F felt that being able to define one's own work schedule is a part of self-direction and supports the well-being and motivation by giving the individual the opportunity to do things they enjoy on their free time, for example hobbies.

Interviewee A told that she had had some problems with coping at work, and as a result it became harder to manage her own work.

I just had to survive from one day to another and then being self-directive suffers in that situation. To be self-directive, and continue to be that, is affected a lot by whether the burden is appropriate and not too much, and it is also about the ability to handle stress. (Interviewee A.)

Interviewee B felt that not giving feedback or giving only negative feedback negatively affects individuals' well-being. Not having enough resources can affect well-being, and B emphasized that in a self-directive working culture where there is an enormous amount of responsibility and autonomy, there should also be resources in the same relation. B felt it supported her well-being that she had the power to function without someone watching over what she did or having to explain the things she did. If someone interferes in the individual's work, even if their role is self-directive, it negatively affects their well-being.

If it belongs to one's role that it is self-directive, but someone still comes and criticizes that you are doing the wrong things, it definitely eats away from job well-being as well as motivation and self-direction. Then you get the feeling that should you

now always go ask that person what you should do, and that what is your priority.
(Interviewee B.)

In interviewee C's opinion it could affect individual's well-being, if they have a really strong sense of direction, ambition, and in addition are really self-directive and hard-workers, they might end up in a situation where they work too much. Interviewee D shared more or less this same thought, and interviewees D and E also emphasized clear, common boundaries set for the employees. Interviewee C continued, that if a person is really self-directive and has a lot of work, and they do not share their current activities with the manager on a regular basis, the manager and the organization around them might lose touch of how much the individual actually has work. This can result in those people working around the clock and if no one is monitoring them, they can easily start showing signs of exhaustion.

That can lead to situations where you realize that now I have an awful lot of work to do, and at that point the self-direction, if you can't say no or leave anything out of your hundred-page to-do list, can turn against itself (Interviewee C).

Interviewee D felt that she did not know what was expected from her.

I'm currently in a situation that I don't really know what is expected of me. I just do my best and what I know and what I'm capable of, but I don't actually really know what is expected of me. There are certain things that I do with some team, and then of course I get feedback from the team members, and of course they correct my doing if it is needed, but the one person I actually would need the feedback from, rarely gives it and I don't really know what is expected of me when it is not told to me so it's hard for me to say, and that definitely brings a bad feeling quite a lot. -- and I don't know if I am developing and growing. (Interviewee D.)

Interviewee D described that it enhanced her job well-being tremendously if through her own work and ideas comes significant successes, and they result in finding new ways of working and that can be shared among the team or the organization. Another significant factor was that she had a possibility to try new things and they could result in something great and new, and she concluded that this sort of innovation that results in something useful improves motivation as well as well-being.

Interviewee F felt that having power in one's own work can be a risk for well-being because not everyone is that capable of actually managing their own work, and it can lead to

stress of having an extensive work burden, because of not being able to manage the burden evenly.

4.1.5 Objectives and feedback

Interviewee A did not have clear objectives in the beginning of her last position, since she was a trainee at first, but later she did have objectives set out for her, and she received feedback about how they were met. The objectives were clear and individualized, which helped her work towards them every day.

In interviewee B's organization objectives for her work had not been discussed and she was not given any guidelines for the work, so she mostly created objectives for her own work by observing her surroundings. The culture of giving feedback was poor in B's organization.

In interviewee C's opinion, it might be really nerve-wrecking to try to be self-directive, if the objectives are not clear or they are conflicting in the organization and not working towards a common objective. Interviewee C felt he did not get a lot of feedback from his work, but he tried to give feedback to his own team frequently.

Interviewee D hoped for more conversation and defining the direction of the organization – defining what the organization wants to achieve and in which direction it is going. D did not have objectives defined for her and she did not really get feedback.

The lack of feedback makes it hard to be self-directive and it also eats away from motivation. -- I of course want to do a good job and succeed, but because of not getting feedback it's hard to say how I am doing. (Interviewee D.)

There are no predefined objectives and no tracking of objectives, so it feels like just churning in the waves without getting anywhere. That makes me feel anxious, especially when I am in my first position on my own field and I hope I would be guided even though I am given responsibility. (Interviewee D.)

Especially because of her young age, D felt she would have benefitted a lot from feedback. It would have considerably helped her develop, and having objectives defined together and guidelines would have also increased motivation. It would have been easier to self-direct, if she had had frames she could have functioned within.

Interviewees E and F felt they had quite clear objectives in the sense that they got the idea why they were doing the job in the first place and got feedback about their performance.

4.1.6 Individuals' skills and qualities supporting self-directive work

All of the interviewees agreed that self-direction might not suit everyone, and interviewee E felt that if an individual's personality does not fit self-directive work, it might be really exhausting. Interviewee A felt that to be self-directive depends a lot on the character of a person, and the independent working might be too demanding for some people.

Interviewee A mentioned individual's attitude against one's own work and development was an important to have in self-directive work. Individual needs to be interested in their own job, and if the work does not feel meaningful, an individual might be more prone to take orders from the above and not be self-directive. Individuals need a possibility to actually be self-directive and have enough space to do that. Sometimes the manager's support can even be too much and take too much of that space. Individuals also need to have great social skills and networking skills, because they support the individual in coping and advancing with the work tasks on their own. It supports self-direction to be independent and have good networking and problem-solving skills, that one can survive daily tasks without constant support from the manager.

The most important thing must be openness, in a way, to the new things, because that what it (self-direction) essentially is about, learning new things and constantly being able to self-direct, and kind of not be dependent on others, or being independent. -- In order to lead your own project or other job assignments, you have to know how to be independent. (Interviewee A.)

Interviewee B said that important abilities for an individual are self-initiative, courage to really take action and communication skills.

Interviewee C said that in his mind everyone can be self-directive, but it depends on the duties and especially on the versatility of the assignments. An important aspect is that individuals know their objectives and understand the big picture they function in. In interviewee C and likewise interviewee D's opinions, prioritizing and being able to see the big picture are important abilities to have in self-directive work. In C's opinion a person cannot be self-directive efficiently, if they do not have any kind of professional pride or ambition, and interviewee D shared this same thought.

Interviewee D felt a self-directive person needs to have sense of direction. A person should know well which areas and topics they work with, and what they are capable of, but also the boundaries of their own coping with work – knowing how far their own mental endurance stretches. Self-knowledge and everything related to it are immensely important. Individuals in each organization need to know what self-direction is about in their organization. In interviewee D's opinion, time management and self-leadership are extremely important in self-direction.

Interviewee E said that in order to be self-directive the individual needs to know their own work well, and their knowledge and know-how need to be on a high level. In E's opinion, it is hard to be self-directive if you do not know what you are doing or what the next step is while doing an assignment, and if you constantly have to be asking questions from someone. Being self-directive can be hard in the beginning, because the familiarization and learning the professional skills are in progress. Being self-directive might come naturally for those who have been working in the same expert assignments for decades, because they know how things are done, but it is not the same for people who come to the job without much experience. In self-direction, one needs to be flexible and considerate of others, since in teams one cannot always get their way or do things the way they see best. Diligent personality might even be dangerous in self-direction because there is a risk of having a burnout.

When interviewee F was asked to describe certain abilities or skills self-directive individuals should have, he emphasized self-confidence.

In a way I think that a kind of healthy self-confidence is one quality that a self-directive person needs to have, because if you don't have healthy self-confidence, you can't usually bother to take responsibility to take care of things. I feel that if a self-directive individual is given a task, they do not need to be told many times how to do it or repeat it, that the person can quite quickly catch the ball and take the thing forward themselves, and that requires of course a kind of self-confidence and also one needs to be smart in a way to perform tasks with quality. (Interviewee F.)

4.1.7 Supporting self-direction of individuals

Interviewee A thought the most important way an organization can support individuals in being self-directive is to provide sufficient resources. The individuals should also be given space to make decisions and have the right amount of support from the manager – not having them breath down on one's neck, but not be unreachable either. Organizations

should focus on the familiarization in the beginning and provide the right amount of support. Before a proper familiarization an individual might not be able to be self-directive.

Suitable support from the manager and the space to make decisions, and of course the opportunity to educate oneself and getting a familiarization, and all the basic things that should be in order, that sustain self-direction in the future as well (Interviewee A).

Interviewee B felt that managers should try to understand younger people's views and needs in working life, and as interviewee A, interviewee B mentioned providing sufficient resources. By resources B meant the working tools, time, the right and possibility to prioritize things by oneself, possibility to educate oneself and acquire information.

Different people need different resources, so it is about listening to what they need to perform the work as well as they ever could (Interviewee B).

Interviewee C mentioned that the first thing to support individuals is to talk openly with the individual about what is the best way for them to do their own job and to sit down once in a while between the manager and the employee and discuss the individual's well-being in general and reflect on the work, and see how things are advancing, and if needed, it is important to be there for them regularly. The basic things need to be in order, for example well-being at work and in other life as well, how well the team dynamics are working, and the working conditions in general. Supporting self-direction is all about clear objectives as well as trust and respect from both sides.

Like interviewee C, interviewee D felt that the best thing to start with is open conversation. It is important for the individual to feel confident and sure of themselves and know they have a role in taking the organization forward in a better direction and that their input has a meaning, and also that others care about you growing and developing. Interviewee D felt that it should be made very clear when recruiting new people if an organization or the working culture in an organization is self-directive, because it might be a disappointment to some people.

How self-direction is seen in an organization, it should be in general defined and gone through with every team member and subordinate that what it means in each firm, that always when new employees come, they understand what they are coming to and what would the expectations be, that because it does have a really big effect on the mental well-being and that when you realize that hey now everyone here is just self-directing in their own directions, and I didn't for example know at all what is

expected of me, and in that situation it has a tremendous significance, and it does make you want to go somewhere else pretty fast. (Interviewee D.)

In interviewee E's opinion, an organization can support individuals by setting clear objectives and a clear job description. The individuals should have a comprehensive understanding of what is expected of them so that is easier to be self-directive. There can be many challenges to make self-direction genuinely work in an organization and it requires a lot from a person. Interviewee E felt that in some organizations the self-direction is emphasized quite a lot, but the activities might not necessarily be too self-directive, and it might take a long time for an organization to actually start operating in self-directive ways.

In interviewee F's opinion, an important part of supporting individuals in self-direction is the possibility to have an effect and that the work is challenging enough. Individuals should also have the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them, and the possibility to make decisions even though it might not go perfect the first time. F felt that in supporting individuals in being self-directive it is important for the individual to feel themselves important. It helps to have a team around the individual.

One relieving factor is, at least in my mind, the fact that you have a certain kind of team around you, let it be one person besides you, or a bigger or a smaller team, but the fact that you aren't alone. (Interviewee F.)

Interviewee F felt that even though it is a part of self-direction that an individual can function on their own, an organization can also support the individuals by providing continuous guidance, for example if they are struggling with something, the manager can help solve the situation with the individual without giving any straight-forward answers. Interviewee F said that organizations need to find just the right way of working and the right amount of self-direction in each job description.

4.2 Answering the research questions

This chapter summarizes the research findings and considers them in relation to the theoretical part, as well as the expert interview. The findings are divided according to the initial research questions. The chapters first summarize the interviewees' viewpoints and comments in relation to the research questions, and then reflect to the theory and expert interview.

The interviewees seemed to be quite interested about the phenomenon of self-direction and the research itself. Reflecting the interview data to the theoretical part of this thesis,

the interviewees agreed that there might be aspects in self-direction that might not suit for everyone, and some aspects might affect motivation and well-being of individuals.

As mentioned in chapter 2, generation Y appreciates being heard and appreciated, having influence, possibilities to advance in their own career (Piha & Poussa 2012, 10-12) and freedom to make decisions and affect their own schedule. (Leppänen & Kortevuo 2013, 13-14). Almost all of these were highlighted in the interviews, except for the career advancement, but when talking about motivation and well-being in self-directive work, it might not be a topic that would arise strong thoughts about career advancement. As described in chapter 2, the interviewees felt it was important to have flexibility, feedback, feeling meaningful and success, possibilities to solve problems and develop new things. Chapter 2 describes a manager that generation Y appreciates to be encouraging and one that gives feedback, enables individuals' work without restraining it, not breathing down on individual's neck or giving orders, but one that supports them. (Piha & Poussa 2012, 131.) The thoughts of the interviewees were surprisingly similar to these.

Chapter 2 explains that self-direction in an organization is based on rules, structures, and instructions (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 14), but it seems that in the organizations of some of the interviewees these had not been clearly defined or adjusted to fit self-direction of individuals. This might cause some confusion and affect motivation as well as well-being.

4.2.1 How does working in self-directive positions affect individuals' well-being?

Factors that can enhance well-being in self-directive work are about the **autonomy** and the possibility to **make decisions** and **affect and control** one's own work. This allows the individuals to prioritize their own work and schedule it using their own judgement and preference. This enhances individuals' well-being because they can decide how, when and where to do their work, and in which order. It might be easier to experience **workflow**. The flexibility of work and freedom to adjust one's own work schedule gives an opportunity to focus also on other aspects of life and do things that balance work. Well-being is enhanced when individuals can work independently, and do not have to constantly explain themselves. The possibility to **experiment and try new things** improves job satisfaction especially if it results in successful outcomes. On the other hand, the amount of independency and power **might not fit everyone** – it might be too much for someone and not everyone is capable of handling their workload and prioritizing on their own, and this can cause stress.

All interviewees shared a similar concern about the **risk of getting exhausted** in self-directive work, because individuals might end up having a work load they cannot handle anymore. This could happen as a result of working too hard, being enthusiastic about one's own job, or taking too many responsibilities. These can result in a situation where there is too much work to do, which can cause stress and even lead to exhaustion. The manager, who is not too involved in the individual's daily work, might not be **aware** of the situation, and thus can be hard for them to intervene in the situation. Individuals in self-directive working culture need to be able to set **boundaries** for themselves, and acknowledge with how much they can cope. It is also important for the organization to define the boundaries, and **objectives** need to be clear and not in conflict. It is important to know what is expected from the individual, and the expectations need to be suited according to each individual. If the expectations are too high or are not clearly communicated to the individual, they might feel stressed.

According to the theoretical part, individuals' well-being can be maintained and developed if the work offers challenge, clear objectives, possibility to affect the work and develop oneself, and if the individuals feel motivated, responsible and successful in their work (Työterveyslaitos a), and these same aspects came up in the interviews. Of course, these are not important in only self-directive work, but for example having clear objectives becomes more important when an individual is working autonomously, because it helps them manage their work in a certain direction and they know what they must achieve with their work. According to Vuori, one exposing factor for burnout can be unclear objectives, and it can be thought in the public discussion that in hierarchical organizations the objectives are well defined unlike in self-managing organizations, but in fact, the objectives can be clear in self-managing organizations as well, and it depends on the organization itself. (Vuori 2019.) This also supports the idea that the mentioned problems that might occur in self-directive work are not solely related to self-directive work, and can appear in all kinds of organizations, but they can be emphasized in a different way in self-directive work. It can be concluded that the factors that affect motivation and well-being of individuals can be affected a lot by the organization itself, and they are factors that should be taken into consideration and should be emphasized in an organization.

The figure below summarizes the positive and negative aspects for well-being in self-directive work.

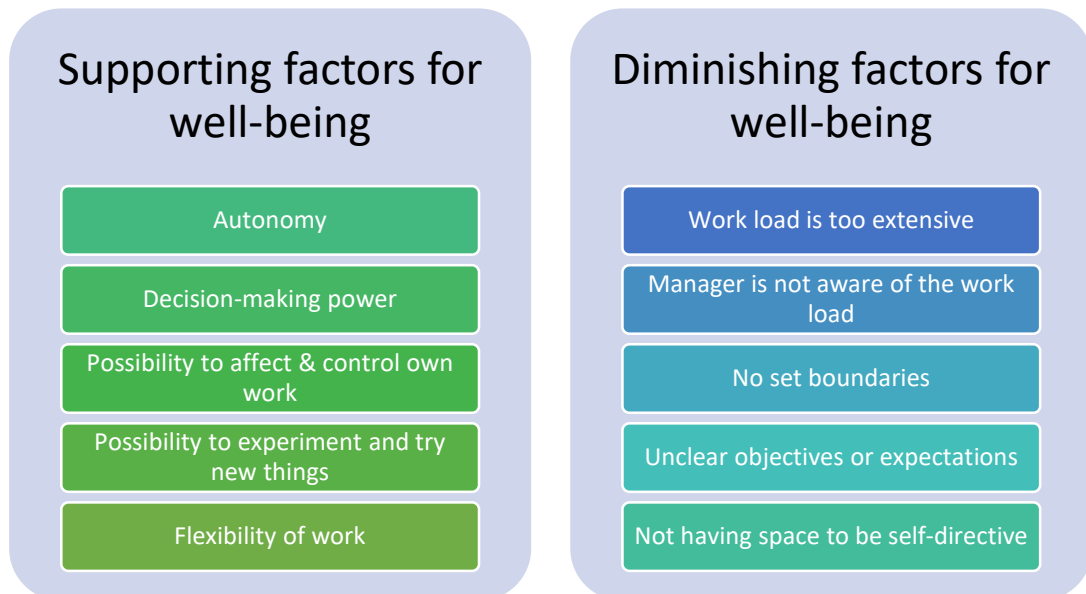


Figure 7. Factors supporting and diminishing well-being in self-directive work.

4.2.2 Which elements of self-directive work affect motivation of individuals and how?

The interviewees were motivated in self-directive work by more or less the same things. The most significant motivators were **responsibility**, **independency**, and the **freedom to make decisions** and having one's **own area of responsibility**. It is important for motivation if an individual feels they are **important** and can affect their own work. Self-directive work offers **autonomy** for individuals - getting to decide which work tasks to do, when to do them and how, the freedom to do things one feels are important and in a way that is natural for them. In addition, **challenges**, **solving problems** on one's own, and **finding solutions** with the help being creative are motivating for generation Y individuals.

The **working community** is a significant factor for motivation - sense of community, communicating with colleagues, and **sharing ideas** and perspectives are factors that motivate individuals. The working community can support self-direction and is a significant factor for motivation. Self-direction offers a great opportunity to develop one's own work, try new things, being creative and start pursuing things that feel good to oneself.

The interviewees felt motivated by the independent and autonomous ways of working, but also acknowledged that it **might not suit everyone** – it might be too demanding for some people and that way affect motivation. Things that can be demotivating in self-directive working culture are the **lack of feedback** or having **unclear objectives**. If the organization's objectives are not in line with each other, it can be frustrating for the individuals to acknowledge that everyone is working towards different goals. Giving feedback would help individuals develop, and the feedback should not be negative, but encouraging and

constructive. Even if individuals are self-directive, there should be some sort of **guidance**, and the **guidelines and framework should be defined** in which the individuals can be self-directive. On the other hand, it should not be **too accurately defined or restricted/limited**, because it can also be demotivating, since it diminishes the feeling of autonomy and independency.

Chapter 2 lists common motivators in working life: individuals feel their work has meaning and they are qualified to do it, they get feedback, are autonomous and can affect their own responsibilities (Sinokki 2016, 12-13) and have sense of control (Sinokki 2016, 47), and these aspects were also highlighted in the interviews. These factors are significant in any kind of work, and it was not surprising that they came up in the interviews, but on the other hand it was surprising how poorly some of these factors were handled in some of the interviewees' organizations. For example, giving feedback is a basic part of work, but it did not actualize for some of the interviewees and it caused confusion about the work performance.

According to Vuori, self-direction can create favourable conditions for growing individuals' intrinsic motivation. In self-directive work individuals get to have a more significant impact on things and affect the content of the work. One thing that often is forgotten in the public discussion is that there are in fact structures in self-managing organizations that make it possible to be self-directive, and it is not about everyone going in their own directions. (Vuori 2019.) For some of the interviewees it seemed that there were no proper structures that would support their self-direction. Vuori mentioned that many people might feel motivated by the sense of community, and that has a big role in self-direction (Vuori 2019), and that was in fact was a source of motivation for some of the interviewees.

The figure below summarizes the positive and negative aspects for motivation in self-directive work.

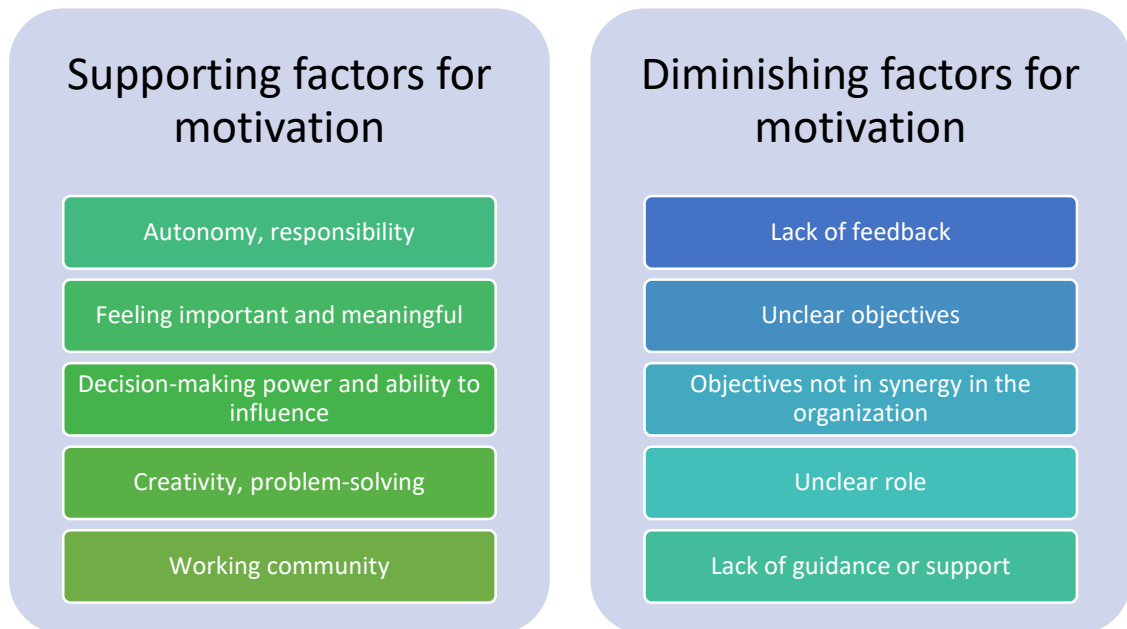


Figure 8. Factors supporting and diminishing motivation in self-directive work.

4.2.3 What qualities or skills are needed from the individual to succeed in self-directive work?

Being self-directive should not depend on individual's personality (Vuori, J. 2019), but there can still be some qualities or competencies that can help the individual succeed better in self-directive work. Interviewee C also said that anyone can be self-directive, and it depends more on the nature of the work. Self-direction itself can be seen as an individual's quality. According to the interviewees, individuals in self-directive work should be **self-imposed, independent**, have good **communication** and **networking skills** and the **courage to take action**. **Social skills**, good **self-confidence** and **problem-solving skills** help the individual to get through daily tasks without constant support from the manager. The **attitude** against one's own work and development is important – as is being **ambitious** and taking **pride** in what one does. Self-directive individuals need to be **open to new things** and **independent** in order to advance tasks on their own.

Individual should be able to **prioritize** work tasks and see the **big picture** and manage their own work. This requires **time management skills as well**. An individual needs to be given **space** to be self-directive, and in turn the individual needs to be ready to take on **responsibility**. They need to understand the whole they function in, know well the area they are responsible for, and acknowledge their own **boundaries**. According to the interviewees, being **too diligent** might cause a risk for getting exhausted from the work.

Especially Y generation representatives who do not have a lot of working experience seem to have some difficulties in working in self-directive positions, and as interviewee E

described it, one needs to know their area of expertise quite well before they can be self-directive, and it might be hard to advance anything if one does not know much about them. Functioning in self-directive work might come more naturally for people who have been working for longer in a certain organization or field, because they already know well how to perform the work. Young people entering working life are learning many new skills related to the working life, and not only the contents of their work. They might feel they are bothering co-workers and managers when asking questions all the time and might not be too courageous to ask for help and support even if they need it.

In self-directive work it is important to learn with the support of colleagues. An individual needs to be flexible, and working in teams means taking other people's ideas and suggestions into consideration, and not always functioning according to one's own preferences. Being too confident might not be a good thing if that means that one cannot ask for help or guidance.

Chapter 2 also described that self-directive individuals need to have task-related know-how, time, task and resource management, and ability to prioritize (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 12). These same things were highlighted in the interviews. Vuori emphasized that it does not depend on an individual's personality or life situation whether they can be self-directive, but it is about the organization's structures that determine whether the individual can function in them. Functioning in the organization's structures and practices also teach the individual to function in them. According to Vuori, all kinds of people should be able to make decisions about their own work, if the structures are built in the way that they support this. Decisions in self-directive are not made alone, but with the help of co-workers who have expertise in the matter. This gives everyone a chance to participate in the decision-making. It can also cause stress individuals if they do not feel comfortable making decisions and would rather have someone else do them for them. (Vuori 2019.) The interviewees in this thesis felt quite content with the ability to make decisions, but this might not be the case for all individuals.

Vuori also explained that self-direction on the individual level is about one's ability to function in the structures and practices of the self-managing organization and individuals functioning in that environment need communication skills and problem-solving skills, that are of course required in all kinds of organizations, but the requirements are different in an organization where individuals are not told what to do and how to do things. (Vuori 2019.)

The figure below summarizes the qualities and skills of a successful self-directive individual.



Figure 9. Skills and abilities that support individuals in being successful in self-directive work.

4.2.4 What kind of support do individuals need to succeed as self-directive individuals in an organization?

All of the interviewees had a designated manager, but as mentioned earlier, they played a minor role in all of the interviewees' work. The meaning of the **working community** and team is highlighted when the manager's role is diminished. Some of the interviewees felt content with the situation, and some wished their managers would be more supportive and more involved in their work, especially in the beginning. For all of the interviewees, it seemed a bit difficult to define what their manager's role was, because the role was not clearly stated for them, and they did not know exactly what it was.

The most important responsibility of the manager is to define **clear objectives** together with the individual and give encouraging and constructive **feedback** about how the objectives are met and the work performance in general. The manager needs to **define the role** of their subordinates, and what is the most important objective for individuals functioning in that role. A manager should **support** an individual's ability to be self-directive, make decisions and organize work.

Although an individual needs to be able to function on their own in a self-directive work, they might sometimes needs **guidance** and support with different aspects of the work.

There needs to be **trust and openness** between the manager and the subordinate. The manager is someone who supports and helps **solve problems** when needed. In self-directive work the manager can be experienced as quite distant.

The support from the manager needs to be suited for each individual. Different people need different amount and kind of support. The support of the manager can also be too much – individuals should be given **space to be self-directive**. The interviewees emphasized that even if they might need more guidance, they do not want their manager to breath down their neck or restrict them too much – but just the opposite. They want to be able to make decisions on their own, and the freedom to try things even if they might go wrong and learn the hard way. The important thing is to set **boundaries** in which individuals can function and make decisions on their own. The interviewees felt they were given the **possibility to make decisions** in their work have an impact on things in the workplace, and they all felt content with it. Of course, with power comes responsibility. The freedom and power can be too much especially in the beginning, when the individuals might not know how to function yet. Especially younger people who are starting out their careers seem to yearn for regular support or guidance from their manager – in a reasonable amount. All of the interviewees experienced freedom and responsibility as good things. The significance of feedback and defining objectives was clear. Having regular meetings between the manager and the employee would be a good way to stay up to date with the individuals' situation. Individuals need to be taught well in their work responsibilities so that they can be self-directive. The manager should not restrict their subordinates, but instead **encourage** them.

Self-direction needs to be clearly defined with every individual, and what it means in each organization. It should be defined already in the recruiting phase, so it is clear for the candidates to that they understand what kind of working culture they are coming into and understand the expectations, and also Vuori shared a similar thought from a slightly different perspective: organizations could also focus on the recruiting process – recruiting such individuals into an organization who want to function in self-directive environment. It is possible that not everyone enjoys functioning in such an environment and culture. (Vuori 2019.)

Vuori explained that in order to support the individual to succeed in self-directive work, an organization can design and build structures and practices to support it – by getting acquainted with the topic. Trying and experimenting reveals what is a good option for the organization. The organization needs to build their own structures and practices, whatever

they might be, and the structures and practices can be built as they wish. They can for example take on practices that support job well-being – for example building a culture that does not allow making long working days and praising employees that can finish their work in the regular working hours. Vuori added that just having a manager does not solve all of the possible problems with job well-being, and there can be other roles that see to the well-being of individuals, for example a coach or some other role in the working community. (Vuori 2019.)

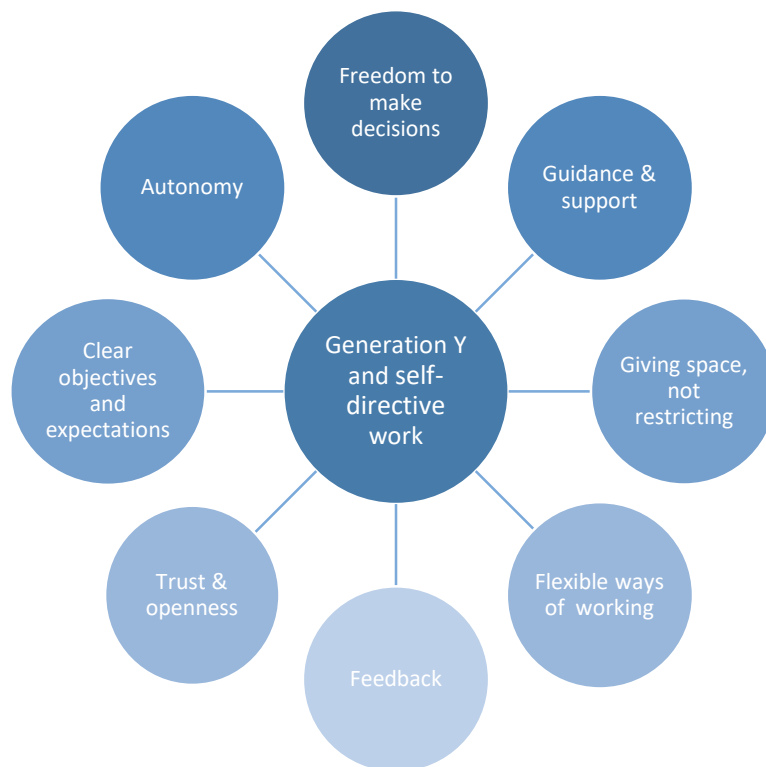


Figure 10. Generation Y expectations for self-directive work according to the interview data.

4.3 Conclusions

All in all, it seems that self-directive work provides a great opportunity to enhance motivation and well-being of individuals, but problems can occur if basic things or structures are not in order in the organization. Many of the mentioned aspects negatively affecting the interviewees' motivation and well-being in self-directive work are not issues related merely to self-directive work but can occur in all kinds of organizations. On the other hand, these aspects might receive less attention in self-directive work, especially for generation Y representatives starting new careers, who might not be prone to demand for those aspects to actualize in their work. Autonomy enhances well-being and motivation, but it might be too

much for someone, especially young people if they are unsure about their skills and abilities in their work, because the expertise is not on a high level in their first positions. It might be hard for younger people to ask for help or support. Autonomous individuals who feel their managers are distant is not a good combination with not knowing one's work that well and not being prone to ask for help and guidance.

Self-directive work can affect the well-being of generation Y individuals, but the factors that affect well-being are something that the organization and individuals can have an effect on. There were some concerns with all of the interviewees related to the well-being and motivation in self-directive environment. Almost all of the interviewees experienced some areas of development in their self-directive work, but at the same time, there was no clear definition about the self-direction in the organizations or a clearly planned transition to it. This could mean that if the structures are not designed to support self-direction, it causes confusion and dissatisfaction, but in an organization where the transition has been thoroughly thought out and planned, it might be a different situation. This provides an excellent opportunity for further research.

There are skills and qualities that can support individuals in being self-directive, but not having these skills or qualities does not restrict anyone from being self-directive and they can also be learned and developed. Being self-directive is more about having the right kind of environment and organizational structures that enable the self-direction of individuals.

Generation Y representatives might need more support when entering working life or new careers, especially in the beginning. Clear boundaries for work should be defined by the organization, and also the individual. If the individual finds it hard to define the boundaries, they should receive support in doing this. Organizations should focus more on the well-being aspect and offer support even though self-direction is about functioning independently and autonomously. The well-being of individuals should be closely monitored and made clear that they can get help if it is needed.

As concluded earlier, not having clear objectives, expectations or feedback is not because of working in a self-directive positions – these can be just as clearly defined in any kind of organization. Still, in self-directive work, special attention needs to be paid to these factors, both by the individual and the organization. It might be really frustrating to try to be self-directive if one does not yet know how to perform their own job, and individuals might not be able to make decisions if they do not know which is the best way to approach things and are unsure about the decisions. Power and responsibility should be given little

by little, after comprehensive familiarization to the work tasks. The working community can also support in the decision-making, that no one needs to make responsible decisions on their own, especially in the beginning.

Even if an organization is not officially a self-managing organization but the working culture is self-directive, they should still focus on defining what it means in their organization, and build appropriate structures and practices to support it, and the roles of individuals need to be clearly defined. It also needs to be defined what is the role of self-direction in each organization and what is expected from the individuals.

For some people, self-direction might come quite naturally, and some need more time and support to learn to be self-directive. Individuals should be listened to in their workplace about what they need and what kind of support they need to succeed in their work. On the other hand, Martela and Jarenko describe a self-directive individual is able to acknowledge objectives and pursue them independently. (Martela & Jarenko 2017, 80), but generation Y representatives might still need support in becoming self-directive, especially in the beginning.

5 Discussion

This final chapter of the thesis considers the results and discusses the trustworthiness of the research and evaluates the thesis process. The conclusions were presented in the previous chapter.

5.1 Consideration of the results

The purpose of this thesis was to find out factors that affect well-being and motivation of individuals working in a self-directive work, and what is needed from the individual to succeed in such environment and what kind of support they need from the organization. The research problem was approached with the help of the following research questions:

- How does working in self-directive positions affect individuals' well-being?
- Which elements of self-directive work affect motivation of individuals and how?
- What qualities or skills are needed from the individual to succeed in self-directive work?
- What kind of support do individuals need to succeed as self-directive individuals in an organization?

The interview data was sufficient and answered the research questions quite well. I think the thesis deepened the understanding about the different aspects of self-direction for generation Y, but the research findings were not ground-breaking. The interview data had many similarities with the theoretical part in this thesis, and that made me wonder that I could have tried to acquire even more deeper information from the interviewees about the core reasons for their thoughts. The research results can be utilized by individuals and organizations to understand the connections between self-direction and motivation and well-being.

It could be argued that the research data was not sufficient to draw conclusions on a general level, but I think the qualitative research method theme interview was an appropriate method to gain a deeper understanding about the topic. To acquire more broad information, the interviewees could have been more diverse, now they all were for example working in the private sector.

When it comes to the delimitation of the thesis, generation Y precedes generation Z, which could have been another choice for delimiting the research. Generation Y includes

quite a broad age range, but on the other hand, nowadays people go through many degrees, and might enter working life at later age, and this thesis did not focus only on the age factor but more on the aspects of being in the beginning of one's career.

The research was quite successful and I got answers for the research questions, but there is definitely room for further research on this topic and other aspects of self-direction. For example, the research questions could be divided into their own research topics and researched more thoroughly. The personality viewpoint was left out of the delimitation of this thesis because it was more of a psychology related question but researching self-directive individuals' personality aspect could be one possible suggestion for further research. This thesis only concerns the generation Y, so it would be one option to research other generations from the same viewpoint. In general, the phenomena related to the changing working life are worth researching and can provide beneficial and significant information for individuals as well as organizations. All of the interviewees worked in organizations that were not officially defined as self-managing organizations and there had been no planned transition to working in a self-directive manner but it was more about the nature of the work, so one possible opportunity for further research would be to research individuals in distinctly self-managing organizations. Comparison between generations could not be made in this thesis, since only one generation was examined, and that could be one suggestion for further research as well.

5.2 Trustworthiness of the research and ethical viewpoints

This chapter examines validity and reliability aspects of the thesis, as well as the ethical viewpoints.

In this thesis, I have justified and explained the choices made, for example the choice of research and analysis methods, and in addition the minor choices as well. These aspects increase the reliability and validity of this research.

In the beginning of this thesis, I did not have any experience as an interviewer, but I still managed to handle the interviews professionally, and focused on being on the background and not leading the discussion, or in other words, not asking questions that would lead the conversation in a certain direction. The number of interviews was 6, and I think that was a sufficient amount. The interviews provided sufficient data to answer the research questions and make valid conclusions. I was actually surprised, how much the interviewees had to say about the topic and how openly they talked about it, because I was worried at first of how the interviews would go and what kind of data I would receive be-

cause of the sensitivity of the topic. I was also a bit worried about how to make the situation as relaxed as possible for the interviewee, and how I could reach a trustful and open atmosphere in the interview. Despite of these initial worries, the interviews went well, and all in all, I was really satisfied with the interviews, because I feel I got a good amount of data to answer the research questions. Afterwards, I noticed that all of the interview questions were not that relevant for the research and could have been left out to spare time to get more deeper into the other topics. Despite of this, I felt like I got sufficient answers to the questions were relevant. Before making decisions about research and analysis methods for example, I studied their definitions carefully before applying them to make sure I would use them correctly. In order to reach data was relevant and reliable enough, the interviews were carefully planned beforehand.

One aspect that might affect the trustworthiness of the results, is the fact that self-direction as a term might mean different things to different people. Two people might be talking about being self-directive in the same way, even if the level and of self-direction in their work varied significantly from each other. The complexity of the phenomenon, and my inexperience as an interviewer and a researcher in general, might have had effects on the reliability. It could be argued that only individuals who had strong feelings about the topic volunteered to be interviewees, and that could have affected the results of the research. It would have increased the reliability of this research, if the results and conclusions were assessed by a fellow researcher to see, if they would have ended up in more or less the same conclusions.

As stated before in chapter 3.5, the ethical viewpoints in this thesis have to do with confidentiality and privacy of the interviewees. The topic is sensitive and personal, and the interviewees shared quite personal details, which made it even more important for them to remain anonymous. Some of the interviewees' most confidential comments were left out of the thesis in order to protect their anonymity. It was made sure that the interviewees understood how their comments would be used in the thesis, and how the anonymity was made sure so that the individual interviewees would not be recognized from the thesis. The interviewees were briefly presented with the topic of the research and the purpose of the interviews on the general level, but not in too much detail so that it would not guide them to answer in any kind of predefined way in the interview.

5.3 Assessment of own learning and the thesis process

The thesis process taught me to complete a scientific research and I learned about the different areas which concern it - for example terms related to conducting a research, finding

scientific, reliable information, utilizing different databases, and critically evaluate the reliability of information and sources. In addition I learned how to conduct interviews in the role of a researcher, which was a significant new skills for me, as I had never done interviews like this before. I learned especially important project management skills, which will definitely benefit me in my upcoming career.

The project was a lot to handle. Time and project management skills proved to be very important in this project. I have always been very organized, and from the beginning I focused on making a realistic schedule and keeping with it. At times, it felt like too much to handle, and especially working full-time set its own challenges, and it highlighted the importance of keeping with the schedule. I felt quite motivated through the whole process, since the topic felt interesting to me, and it felt important and useful to research. At times it felt challenging to research such a new and complex phenomenon, but in the end I felt satisfied that I had done this kind of research, and not just choosing an “easy” topic. I felt quite exhausted at times, but the passion I felt in completing the process with honour, drove me forward. Much like in self-directive work an individual can be motivated by having decision-making power and control over their own work, I felt motivated in this thesis process by the fact that I was in control and could make decisions independently – of course with the support of my thesis advisor. The whole process felt enjoyable for me, but it maybe would have not been as motivating and enjoyable if the topic was not genuinely interesting for me.

I experienced some challenges with finding the suitable analysis method, but eventually settled on the method and managed to analyse the data in a few different steps. It was very time consuming, but beneficial for making research findings and conclusions. At first it was a bit hard to make conclusions about the analysed data, and especially focusing on not generalizing too much.

Above all, I learned beneficial information about self-direction, well-being and motivation, and acquired new skills for working life – for example how to improve one’s own skills and abilities in becoming a self-directive individual, and to take care of my own well-being, but also be more prone to notice issues related to well-being in the working community. I hope my research can also benefit my peers as well as organizations struggling with these kinds of issues. In the thesis process I learned a great deal about self-direction, and that will definitely help me in my own career, and maybe even help me advance in my career. The process inspired me to learn even more about the topic.

I started the thesis process in the summer of 2019. I completed the whole process in about six months, and I managed to stick to my schedule quite well. Especially with working full-time on the side, it would have been better to start the process a few months earlier, but all in all, I felt like I had sufficient time to complete the thesis and focus on the quality of the research. The figure below visualizes the timeline of the thesis process.

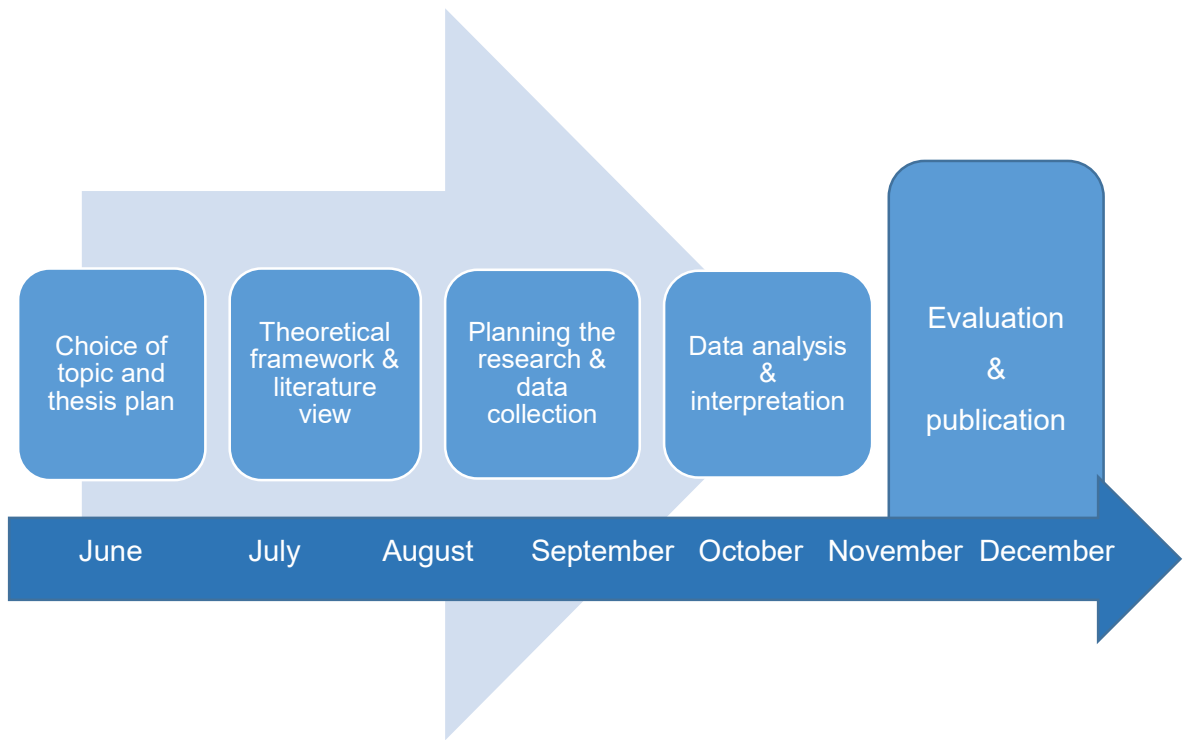


Figure 11. Timeline of the thesis process.

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Interview E. 23.9.2019.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. LinkedIn post



Vilma Eloheimo

Multi-skilled assistant with a passion for learning and development

1mo • Edited



Hei sinä itseohjautuva, tule haastatteluun!

Teen Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulussa opinnäytetyötä itseohjautuvuudesta. Tutkimus painottuu Y-sukupolven (vuosina 1981-2000 syntyneet) kokemuksiin asiasta, ja etsin haastateltavia tästä ikäryhmästä.

Työn alustava otsikko on "Well-being and motivation of generation Y individuals in self-directive working culture" ja tutkin sitä, miten työskentely itseohjautuvassa ympäristössä vaikuttaa yksilöiden hyvinvointiin ja motivaatioon.

Jos koet olevasi haastatteluun sopiva henkilö, pyydän sinua olemaan minuun pikimmiten yhteydessä yksityisviestillä, niin sovitaan haastattelu. Haastattelut pidetään viikoilla 37-39 Haaga-Helian Pasilan kampuksen tiloissa, tai vaihtoehtoisesti jossain toivomassasi paikassa pääkaupunkiseudulla. Haastattelu kestää 30-45min.

Itseohjautuvuudella tarkoitetaan toimintatapaa, jossa yksilöt johtavat omaa työtään autonomisesti ja jossa valta sekä vastuu valuu (tietyissä määrin) esimiehiltä yksilöille ja tiimeille. Itseohjautuva henkilö voi työskennellä itseohjautuvassa organisaatiossa tai tiimissä, tai henkilön työympäristö voi olla yleisesti ottaen itseohjautuva.

Haastattelut toteutetaan täysin anonymisti, eikä vastauksia pystytä yhdistämään yksittäisiin haastateltaviin. Haastattelut nauhoitetaan.

[#itseohjautuvuus](#)

Appendix 2. Confidentiality form



Tietosuojalomake

1 (1)

12.9.2019

Tutkimus itseohjautuvuudesta

Tervetuloa opinnäytetyötutkimuksen haastatteluun. Työn alustava otsikko on "Well-being and motivation of generation Y individuals in self-directive working culture" ja tutkin sitä, miten työskentely itseohjautuvassa ympäristössä vaikuttaa yksilöiden hyvinvointiin ja motivaatioon. Tutkimus painottuu Y-sukupolven (vuosina 1981-2000 syntyneet) kokemuksiin asiasta.

Taustaa

Itseohjautuvuudella tarkoitetaan toimintatapaa, jossa yksilöt johtavat omaa työtään autonomisesti, ja jossa valta sekä vastuu valuu (tietyissä määrin) esimiehiltä yksilöille ja tiimeille. Itseohjautuva henkilö voi työskennellä itseohjautuvassa organisaatiossa tai tiimissä, tai henkilön työympäristö voi olla yleisesti ottaen itseohjautuva.

Haastattelun luottamuksellisuus

Haastattelut toteutetaan täysin anonyymisti eikä vastauksia pystytä yhdistämään yksittäisiin haastateltaviin. Haastattelut nauhoitetaan.

Valmis opinnäytetyö julkaistaan opinnäytetyörekisteri Theseuksessa, ja lopulliseen opinnäytetyöhön päätyvä aineisto muodostetaan haastattelujen pohjalta niin, että yksittäisiä haastateltavia ei voida tunnistaa. Haastattelutilanteessa voi kuitenkin puhua avoimesti ja vapaasti, sillä rajaan aineistosta parhaan arvointikykyäni mukaan pois sellaiset asiat, joista henkilön voisi mahdollisesti tunnistaa. Jos haastattelun aikana sanot jotakin sellaista, mitä et halua otettavan huomioon aineistossa tai haluat perua jotakin sanomaasi, voit mainita asiasta, niin toimin toiveidesi mukaisesti. Jos haluat saada näytille haastattelun perusteella kokoamani aineiston ennen julkaisua, sekin onnistuu. Haastattelun aikana tallennettu ääninauha säilytetään ja hävitetään asianmukaisesti opinnäytetyöprosessin päättyessä.

Yhteistyöstä kiittäen

Vilma Eloheimo

Appendix 3. Interview data in more detail (confidential)

Appendix 3 included more detailed descriptions of the interview data and was left out of the public version of the thesis to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.