Bachelor's thesis

Degree programme in International Business

General Management

2015

Mikko Saari

WORK ALIENATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN ORGANISATIONS

– Case study in an advertising agency

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WORK ALIENATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN ORGANISATIONS – CASE STUDY IN AN ADVERTISING AGENCY

The most recent studies on employee well-being have unceasingly shown some clear indications of employee dissatisfaction or even alienation at Finnish work places. Even though the general discussions of work satisfaction are mainly concentrated on the negative aspects and problems at work, simultaneously employees are feeling joy, happiness and felicity at work, in addition to sensing pride in working productively as a part of a team. (Hakanen, 2011) Consequently, the theories of the concept of employee engagement were implemented in this case study, as they carry notable importance on finding the right track after being alienated from one's job and by helping to prevent the causes of alienation through engaging employees' to being healthy and efficient in their own work position and pleased members of a work team.

The main purpose for this thesis is to present a background research behind the most well known and respected theoretical frameworks of alienation and engagement; and their association with each other. More importantly, this thesis aimed to examine the extent of experienced alienation and engagement among the employees of an advertising agency, and their assessment towards their well being at work, as well as, their knowledge and awareness of the certain alienation and engagement factors.

The study was implemented as a quantitative online questionnaire, wherein to study work alienation, Hirschfeld's and Field's (2000) altered survey was used. The altered survey only assessed the most valid statements regarding the meaninglessness dimension to give out clearer results. The study on work engagement was based on the internationally acknowledged survey created by Schaufeli and Bakker, called Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The survey framework was built on three different dimensions of work engagement vigour, dedication and absorption.

The research findings concluded that among the studied group of marketing and advertising professionals, the level of alienation is remarkably low, whereas inversely; the work engagement level is extremely high. The work alienation results disclosed that the studied employees are not aware of the sensation of work alienation, or are more likely, feeling particularly engaged into their work. The employees can be said to easily find enthusiasm towards to their meaningful work, with a great deal of enjoyment and motivation. The analysis combining all the employee engagement dimensions: vigour, dedication and absorption, concluded tremendous results as well. Correlation with age was discovered as the research findings revealed that the older the respondent, the higher the experienced work engagement. All in all, this thesis study concluded that work well being among employees is much more than lack of alienation, as in this case, it occurs as high levels of engagement instead.

KEYWORDS:
work engagement, work alienation, work satisfaction, job well-being

Mikko Saari

TYÖSTÄ VIERAANTUMISTA JA TYÖN IMUA – TUTKIMUS MAINOSTOIMISTOSSA

Viimeaikaisimmat työhyvinvointitutkimukset ovat kasvavissa määrin antaneet selviä merkkejä työntekijöiden tyytymättömyydestä ja jopa työstä vieraantumisesta. Vaikka yleinen keskustelu työhyvinvoinnista keskittyykin yleensä negatiiviseen puoleen, samanaikaisesti työssä kohdataan työn iloa ja onnellisuuden tunteita, sekä ylpeyttä toimia osana vaikuttavaa työtiimiä. (Hakanen, 2011) Tästä syystä, työn imun lisääminen tähän tutkimukseen toi merkittävää lisäarvoa, sen helpottaessa työntekijää ennaltaehkäisemään työstä vieraantumista, sekä löytämään keinoja toimimaan osana tervettä ja tehokasta työtiimiä.

Tämän opinnäytetyön päätavoitteena on esittää tunnetuimmat ja arvostetuimmat työstä vieraantumisen ja työn imun teoriat, sekä tutkia niiden välistä suhdetta. Ennen kaikkea, tutkimuksella haluttiin mitata kyseisen mainostoimiston työntekijöiden keskuudessa koettua työstä vieraantumisen sekä työn imua tunteita, heijastaen työntekijöiden yleiseen työnhyvinvointiin ja niiden vaikuttajiin.

Tutkimus toteutettiin kvantitatiivisena nettikyselynä, jossa työstä vieraantumisen osio mittasi työntekijöiden kokemuksia Hirschfeldin ja Fieldin (2000) muokattua tutkimuskyselyä apuna käyttäen. Muokattu kysely käsitti pelkästään aiheellisia väittämiä työn merkityksettömyyttä koskien selkeämpien tutkimustulosten saavuttamiseksi. Työn imun tutkimus toteutettiin kansainvälisestikin tunnetun ja hyväksytyn Schaufelin ja Bakkerin UWES-kyselyä hyväksi käyttäen. Kyselyn viitekehys rakennettiin työn imun kolmen ulottuvuuden ympärille, jotka ovat tarmokkuus, omistautuminen ja uppoutuminen.

Tutkimustulokset osoittivat huomattavan matalaa työstä vieraantumisen tasoa kyseisten markkinointiammattilaisten keskuudessa, kun taas päinvastaisesti, työn imun tulokset antoivat selkeää osviittaa erittäin korkeista työn imun tuntemuksista. Työstä vieraantumisen tutkimustulososio kiteytti työntekijöiden kärsivän tietämättään työstä vieraantumisesta, tai tässä tapauksessa todennäköisemmin kokien työn imua sen sijaan. Tutkimustulosten perusteella, työntekijöiden voidaan sanoa kokevan innokkuutta ja suurta motivaatiota työtänsä kohtaan, jonka he kokevat erityisen merkitykselliseksi. Tarmokkuuden, omistautumisen sekä uppoutumisen ulottuvuuksien yhdistävä analyysi kokosi myös uskomattoman positiivisen lopputuloksen. Tutkimustulosten perusteella iän ja työn imun välillä voidaan sanoa olevan korrelaatio, sillä tuloksien mukaan, mitä vanhempi ja kokeneempi työntekijä on, sitä vahvempia ovat myös työn imun kokemukset. Kaiken kaikkiaan, tutkimus todensi työnhyvinvoinnin olevan paljon muutakin kuin työstä vieraantumisen välttämistä tai sen puutetta, sen sijasta, esiintyen mahtavina työn imun kokemuksina.

CONTENT

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. / Survey

FIGURES

TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UWES   Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

In today's business world, increasing recognition of the necessity to maximize the potential of an organization's human resources, in the pursuit of the goals of increased productivity and innovative capacity, has led to effectiveness in the management of the employment relationship consequently becoming a priority aim for managers in organizations. (Nelson, L. & O'Donohue) Also, the increasing worldwide phenomenon of employee alienation, a state where an employee faces separation from one's job (Kanungo, 1982), and overall dissatisfaction towards work has made it clear that "keeping employees healthy and efficiently working over a long working life is becoming a central challenge for human resource management", as Harper (2012) notes in her article. Ever since alienation was introduced as a concept in management theory, it has been variously linked to issues such work engagement and satisfaction at work. (Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006; Korman and Wittig-Berman, 1981) This has made professionals realize, that preventing employee alienation and improving employee engagement are crucial in making the workforce to operate on highest possible level without sacrificing ethical boundaries.

Nowadays managers and business owners expect their employees to put in their maximum effort for the team, to show and take responsibility in their day-to-day work tasks; and to develop their skills and expertise on a daily basis. Simultaneously, employees are required to tackle enermours workloads at an intensive phase that can fortunately be more manageable with the help of work life innovations including satisfaction control and understanding of happenings. Yet, everything generating well being is not essentially producing instant pleasure. Defeating the most difficult and challenging work tasks are usually considered to be the most satisfying and rewarding experiences by many

employees. In other words, it is fair to say that work engagement primarily is not just fun, as in reality; the feeling of enjoyment is merely an outcome of coping and overcoming struggle, ultimately leading to success. (Hakanen, 2011, p.19)

1.2 Research objectives

The objectives for this thesis are to present a background research behind the most well known and respected theories of the concept of alienation and engagement; and their probable correlation with each other, e.g. if one does not feel feel alienated from their work is one consequently engaged in their work. More importantly, this thesis aims to examine the extent of experienced alienation and engagement among employees and their assessment towards their well being at work, as well as, their knowledge and awareness of the certain alienation and engagement factors.

Statement of research objectives:

1. How much and how often employees are experiencing work alienation and engagement among the studied group?
2. What are factors of alienation and engagement among the studied group of employees?

1.3 Presentation of the study group

Considering the target group for this study it was desirable, that the studied group would have encountered both of these sensations at their workplace. As I started an internship in the spring of 2015, implementing the study to my employer, Zeeland Family, made sense and offered an intriguing option, as I had seen first hand in what kind of work environment the talent operate in. Zeeland Family is one of the most diverse marketing groups in Finland, having offices in Helsinki and Turku. It employs over 100 professionals within the field of marketing communications, offering a wide range of services.

1.4 Research motivation

The subject for this study came up to me by writing an academic paper on the same subject matter during my exchange year spent in England. Prior to that particular assignment, I was somewhat familiar with the concept of employee alienation, but did not have an overall understanding of the term and its different dimensions, not to even mention its implications on employees' attitudes towards themselves and their own work.

As the research process for the general explanatory paper on employee alienation went along, the rather old fashioned concept presented stimulating ideas and viewpoints, which are also applicable to modern-day organizations' settings by playing a key role on employee well-being and work satisfaction. The exploration of the topic for the assignment intrigued me to look into my own previous work experience, making me realize that I had also been a victim of this unfortunate social phenomenon and having suffered from an estrangement of my own previous work.

The most recent studies on employee well-being have unceasingly shown some clear indications of employee dissatisfaction or even alienation at Finnish work places. Even though the general discussions of work satisfaction are mainly concentrated on the negative aspects and problems at work, simultaneously employees are feeling joy, happiness and felicity at work, in addition to detecting pride in working fruitfully as a part of a team. (Hansen, 2011: 5-7,) Consequently, the theories of the concept of employee engagement were implemented to this case study, as they carry notable importance on finding the right track after being alienated from one's job and by helping to prevent the causes of alienation through engaging employees' to being healthy and efficient in their own work position and pleased members of a work team. Due to the theory's significance on employee well being in general, studies on work engagement have risen dramatically in the recent years.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The following two chapters of this thesis consist of literature review regarding the research subjects. The first part of this theoretical framework, chapter two, concentrates on the most well-known and applicable theories regarding concept of alienation at personal and organisational level. Having covered alienation theories, the chapter three focuses on the positive side of work well-being, employee engagement.

Chapter four explains the research methods used in this thesis. It shares an overview of the research conduction, validity, design, data collection and sampling. The methods used for gathering data are also augmented and described.

The fifth chapter analyses the collected data and found results. The survey findings are reflected through the theoretical framework. The research results are divided into different parts according the survey and also cross tabularised with different variables found in the implemented survey.

The sixth and final chapter of this thesis presents the conclusions and reflection providing improvements of this empirical study of work alienation and engagement. The answers to research questions are given and suggestions for future research based on this study are made.

2 WORK ALIENATION

2.1 Alienation

The term alienation, as itself, has many different use variations in several different fields or contexts. One example of alienation is "when a child expresses unjustified hatred or unreasonably strong dislike of one parent, making access by the rejected parent difficult or impossible", which is called parental alienation. (Warshak, 2003) Moreover, in performing art environments, alienation refers to "playing in such a way that the audience is hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. (Willet, 1964)

When turning our attention to human resource management, Kanungo (1992, 1982) emphasizes that, it is critical for management to realize that the alienation of organizational members is a form of sickness that can, and should, be avoided. "Work alienation as an experienced psychological state of the individual worker represents (a) a cognitive separation from one's job and other work related contexts; (b) a sense of frustration and the accompanying negative affect, resulting from the perceived failure to achieve one's objectives through job and organization related behaviours; and (c) a manifest behavioural state of apathy." (Kanungo 1982)

At individual level alienation can be linked with psychosomatic illness (Kornhauser, 1965), job dissatisfaction, job stress, anxiety, depression and other forms of psychosomatic illness. (Kanungo 1992). In comparison, at the organizational and societal levels, such human conditions are manifested in low productivity, low morale, high absenteeism and turnover, and various forms of social maladies such as increased crime rates, sabotage attempts, increased health care costs, depressed economy, as Kanungo (1992) points out.

2.2 Dimensions of work alienation

The first takes on alienation as a concept date back the 19th century, so it is fair to say the concept has a very long past. As Kanungo (1982) states in his book, George Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel and Karl Marx can be considered the 'founding fathers' of alienation.

Building upon Hegel and Marx, sociologists, psychologists and other social scientists have used the alienation concept in numerous studies. (Tummers and den Dulk, 2013) As a result, a number of different meanings have been attributed to the term, thus the Table 1 has been gathered up by Nair (2010) to summarize all the key definitions of alienation.

Table 1. Alienation definitions (Nair, 2010)

Source	Description/Definitions of Alienation
Fromm (1955)	Mode of experience in which a person experiences himself as alien or estranged from himself (p. 120)
Seeman (1959, 1975)	Described in terms of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation and self estrangement
Horowitz (1966)	Intense seperation first from the objects of the world, second from people, and third from ideas about the world held by other people (p. 231)
Schacht (1970)	Dissociative state of the individual in relation to some other element in his or her environment
Miller (1975)	Objective state of isolation from others (p. 260)
Kanungo (1979)	Generalized cognitive (or belief) state of psychological seperation from work insofar as work is perceived to lack the potentiality for satisfying one's salient needs and expectations (p. 131)
Hirschfeld & Feild (2000)	Represents the extent to which a person is disengaged from the world of work (p.790)

As the Table 1 illustrates, one of the earliest definitions of alienation refers to an estrangement from self. Correspondingly, Fromm (1955), Horowitz (1966) and Kanungo (1979) suggest that alienation indicates to sense of separation from work, whereas Hirschfeld & Field (2000) calls it disengagement from work. As Nair (2010) identifies it, "the most basic understanding of alienation involves a separation or estrangement and given the varying targets of this separation, work alienation is defined here as *estrangement or disconnect from work, the context or the self*." (Nair, 2010)

In attempt to make the concept clearer, Seeman (1959) suggested five major variants of alienation: ***powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement***. (Kanungo, 1982: 24)

Powerlessness in the most general and social sense refers to a perceived lack of control over important events that effect one's life, according to Kanungo (1982). This was also similar to Marx's view and main concern of work alienation.

Second variant of alienation, ***meaninglessness*** refers to the individual's sense of understanding of the events in which he or she is engaged, according to Seeman. (1959, p.786) Meaninglessness may occur "when workers are not able to understand the complex system of goals in the organization and its relationship to their own work". In conclusion, when workers are required to work with simple tasks, which do not involve any responsibility, it often leads to losing the sense of purpose for the workers, thus "the job becomes meaningless". (Kanungo, 1982: 26).

The third variant of alienation is derived from Durkheim's (1947) description of "anomie" and refers to a condition of ***normlessness*** (Seeman, 1959)

The fourth dimension of alienation is ***isolation***. Isolation is associated with people 'who assign low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society' (Seeman, 1959: 789).

Fifth and final dimension of alienation is **self-estrangement**, which, as the term suggests, refers to the sense of estrangement from self. Seeman (1959) defines self-estrangement as "the loss of intrinsic meaning or pride in work". (p. 790)

All the mentioned dimensions considered, alienation is a multidimensional concept, although placing key focus on powerlessness and meaninglessness. (Seeman, 1959) All the other dimensions represent a more social variety of alienation, which do not carry as much value, as it can be seen as a too philosophical approach for being alienated from the world of work in general.

2.3 Work alienation studies

One of the earliest modern-day study methods to examine work alienation was proposed by Blauner (1964) in a study where he studied industrial workers using the Roper Fortune Survey (Walden, 1996) questionnaire that examined the respondents' experiences of their work.

Mottaz (1981) studied alienation utilizing a 21 item-questionnaire, which included 7 questions for the three dimensions he found most significant; powerlessness, meaninglessness and self-estrangement. However, Mottaz established that powerlessness and meaninglessness are in fact the key causes of work alienation. While, Kanungo's (1982) approach to measuring work alienation is significant, on the other hand, it does not fully explain why employees feel alienated or estranged from work, as he blurs the line between work alienation and involvement.

One of the most recent studies on the subject was done by Hirschfeld and Field (2000), where they used a ten item measure of work alienation that covers items measuring meaninglessness, which in fact was used as a basis, with alterations by myself, in the study part for this thesis (chapter 5). It was mainly chosen as it represented more modern interpretation on alienation at a personal level rather than representing the concept as a generalized, unenthusiastic outlook toward the world of work that indicates a low level of engagement in the work role (Kobasa, Maddi & Kahn, 1982). In addition, the application of their slightly altered survey method offered potential for the research findings considering the set research objectives for this thesis.

2.4 Causes and prevention of work alienation

Alienated employees are described of being victims of the diverse dimensions of the concept, but obviously someone or something causes, and triggers these unfortunate symptoms. In a study done by Tonks and Nelson (2008) suggest several variables playing a key role in the increasing level of alienation at workplaces. Similarly to Tummers and den Dulk, (2013), Lakshmi (2013) came to realize, that when a company downsizes or implements a hiring freeze it has negative affect on employees' commitment to an organization, consequently causing work alienation. Other possible causes behind employee alienation are lack of stability due to organizational downsizing and restructuring, technological changes or increased pressure to focus primarily on performance. (Banai and Reisel, 2007; DiPietro and Pizam, 2008).

In some cases, applying cost-reducing technology can also generate lower levels of employee commitment triggering alienation. Sometimes, casual or part-time workers may feel inferior compared to full-time workers in both benefits and value, which in fact was a case in a research paper executed by Clark and her colleagues (2010). A lack of employee training and the increased use of outsourcing endorse alienation as well.

In addition, selection and training by managers are proposed to have particularly serious support in the fight against employee alienation, but it has to be bear in mind, that a diverse workforce requires individual and specific solutions to each problem. These solutions must be tracked down in order to preserve committed employees that produce high results. In other words, it is crucial for the managers to select individuals that claim to be compatible with organizational goals, to promote the organization's beliefs in orientation, and restructure individual commitment, in the combat against employee alienation (Lakshmi, 2013)

2.5   Consequences of work alienation

Work alienation can have some serious consequences on employees' attitudes towards work and is mostly negatively associated with job performance. (Clark, Halbesleben, Lester, & Heintz, 2010) The aforementioned study made by Hirschfeld and Field (2000) established a negative relation to passive performance at work, which can also be comprehended as organizational commitment. Work powerlessness and especially meaninglessness, have a significant negative influence on employees' organisational commitment. In other words, when an employee feels alienated it reflects harmfully on their work commitment. The same perception was found in a study of manager's role on employee alienation done by Laskhmi in 2013. Employee alienation also has been proven to have a negative influence on employees' careerism, partially through career dissatisfaction. (Chiaburu, De Vos, & Diaz, 2013)

Meaninglessness also revealed to have a negative influence on work to family enrichment. For instance, when employees feel their work to be meaningless and not worthwhile, they experience less spillover effect from work to their family life. It also has been exposed that if these two dimensions, powerlessness and meaningfulness, are present at work, it will do harm on employees' work effort. Especially in cases where employees feel that their work has no meaning, they are less inclined to put effort in their daily work. All things considered work meaninglessness in particular has a strong influence on organizational commitment, work effort and work-to-family enrichment. (Hirschfeld and Field, 2000) Due to these previous research findings, the study part for this thesis primarily focused on statements regarding meaninglessness excluding the other alienation dimensions, as mentioned in the chapter 2.4. of this thesis.

3 EMPLOYEE AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Engagement at work

Ever since, the term alienation was reopened in a modern sense (Blauner, 1964; Kanungo, 1982; 1992, Seeman, 1959), it has been linked or even combined with work engagement and work satisfaction by several researchers (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006, Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, Khan, 1990). In fact, in recent management studies, lack of engagement or disengagement (burnout) has received increased attention and has been argued to be the trigger to the concept of alienation. (Hirschfeld & Field, 2000, Du Plooy & Roodt 2010) Instead of the negative factors, e.g. burnout escalating to the afore reviewed state of work alienation, this chapter of the thesis will concentrate on the positive side of work well-being, employee and work engagement.

Employee engagement and work engagement are usually interchangeable when it comes to academic literature, however, they can sometimes lead to confusion, because work engagement is considered as the relationship between employee and their work, whereas, employee engagement is clearly seen as the relationship an employee shares with their organisation. (Schaufeli & Bakker 2008) The separation of these two is also recognized by Saks (2006), as he found a meaningful and clear difference between work and employee engagement.

In general, well-being in the lives of human beings involves physical, psychological and social factors. Social well-being can be described as a holistic model that contains the person's physical health, psychological state, social relationships, family and work balance, personal beliefs and physical environment, just to mention a few. (World Health Organization.) Whereas well-being at work, is commonly defined as engagement and burnout. Engaged workers sense conditions of enthusiasm and vigorousness at their work, while at the other end of the psychological scope burned-out workers are perceiving emotions of exhaustion and cynicism. (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004)

The concept of engagement is usually attributed to the American professor William Kahn's views, which saw the classification of the term as "harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles" (1990: p.694). Kahn proposed, that when engaged, employees apply and express themselves on physical-, cognitive- and emotional levels. In other words, employee becomes a part of his/her job description and he/she will be able to work with full potential.

Despite the strong affiliation with business settings, work engagement does not only appear on personal level, but can also be experienced as a collective sensation. An individual worker can have a positive effect on his or hers colleagues, if one is able to spread the energy and enthusiasm caused by work engagement, consequently creating communality, which in turn generates the feeling of work engagement. Work engagement works best in workplaces, or even in human relationships in general, where communication between parties is strong and constant. (Hakanen 2011: 132-133; Hakanen 2009: 37-38.) Obviously, engagement is not restricted to the individual employee, but groups of employees may differ in levels of engagement as well. (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2004). On a related note, Bakker and Schaufeli (2001) identified in their study which included 130 teams from different organizations, that the collective level of engagement of the team is associated with the individual level of engagement of the team members, hence the more engaged the team, the more engaged it's members.

3.2 Work engagement studies

Wilmar Schaufeli and Arnold Bakker (2004) are considered to have created the most globally well-validated and most applicable theory for work engagement. Even though Kahn initiated the concept of work engagement and presented a comprehensive theoretical Schaufeli and Bakker brought up model of psychological presence, the first proper studies of this phenomenon later on. Their theory and testing method have been created in Utrecht University, in the Netherlands, and has been validated in many countries, e.g. in Finland among many others. (Hakanen, 2009) Finnish work engagement studies are mainly

gathered and reviewed by Jari Hakanen, who imported the term "work engagement" into the Finnish professional work vocabulary, through mainly using Bakkers' and Schaufeli's studies as a core concerning his own revisions. Thereafter, he has built quite a reputation and has been well acknowledged abroad too. (see Hakanen, 2011; 2009)

According to their theory, work engagement stands for "the positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related well-being" (p. 187, Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008) and is referred as a positive equivalent of disengagement (burnout). Schaufeli and Bakker (2002) describe work engagement as a "persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour", instead of a momentary or specific state, where one dedicates itself completely to the job in hand and ignores and disregards everything else. This effect is known as "flow-state". (Hakanen, 2011)

Work and employee engagement are relevant measurement techniques for employees' mental health and therefore play a huge role in organizational behaviour studies in general. (Bakker et al., 2008) Employee engagement's origins are linked to positive psychology theories and have been found to have substantial effect on the individual's psychological strength building. (Maslach; Schaufeli; Leitner, 2001: 417) Positive psychology essentially stands for everything successful and well operating on human resource management level within an organization.

3.3   Work engagement dimensions

As one can see from the table 2., Bakker and Schaufeli define work engagement as a three-dimensional emotion describing the feelings employees are dealing in their work life. According to their theory, the three positive sensations are ***vigour, dedication and absorption***. (Bakker et al., 2002)

Table 2 The three dimensions of engagement (Bakker et. al. 2002)

First dimension **vigour** is defined as a state where employee experiences high energy levels and mental strength at work, is keen on devoting itself to the tasks and persistence when dealing with challenges and difficulties. (Schaufeli et al., 2002)

Dedication, as an engagement dimension, represents the employees' feel of significance, inspiration, pride, challenge and enthusiasm towards his/her work. As mentioned in the alienation section 2.1 Kanungo (1992) used the term involvement, instead of dedication, in his psychological studies. Schaufeli and Bakker (2002) describe dedication having more depth in quantitative and qualitative sense, as dedication is stronger than normal level of involvement.

The final dimension of engagement, **absorption,** is characterised by employees' full concentration and fixation in his/her work, where one finds difficulties detaching itself from work. Previously mentioned, "flow-state" has some resemblance with absorption, as it has been explained as "a state of optimal experience that is characterized by focused attention, clear mind, mind and body unison, effortless concentration, complete control, loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time, and intrinsic enjoyment" (Schaufeli et al., 2002). However, as mentioned earlier, flow-state is merely a temporary state, in contrary to engagement.

All things considered, Woods and Sofat note, that all of the three dimensions reflect to the Kahn's (1990) proposal of engagement elements: physical-, cognitive- and emotional levels. Physical level is corresponded by vigour,

absorption links with cognitive aspect, whereas dedication relates to the emotional aspect. (Woods & Sofat, 2013) Coffman and Gonzalez-Molina (2002) alternatively call attention to management possessing a remarkable responsibility of controlling these psychological conditions, in addition of asserting that employee engagement is variable and it does individually differ in every workplace.

3.4 Causes of work engagement

As Bakker and Schaufeli (2003) emphasized, the causes and consequences of engagement are based on assumptions rather than factual information, since only very few fundamental inferences can be made because the majority of studies is cross-sectional in nature.

Taking a look at family-worklife balance, tt appears that employee's who take the positive feelings from their work home or who – vice versa – take the positive experiences at home to their work exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to those where there is no positive cross-over between the two different domains (Montgomery et al., 2003). Finally, in a study among working couples it was shown that wives' levels of vigor and dedication uniquely contribute to husbands' levels of vigor and dedication, respectively, even when controlled for several work and home demands (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2003). The same obviously applies to husband's levels of engagement that are likewise influenced by their wives' levels of engagement. This means that engagement crosses over from one partner to the other, and vice versa. (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004)

3.5 Positive consequences of work engagement

Studies regarding work engagement have established a positive relationship between engagement and work attitudes and general work well-being (Mäkikangas, Feldt & Kinnunen, 2005, 70-72) The possible consequences of work engagement relate to positive attitudes towards work and the organization,

such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and low turnover intention (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker 2003, Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen, 2003), but also to positive organizational behaviour such as, personal initiative and learning motivation (Sonnentag, 2003, Hakanen, 2009), extra-role behaviour (Salanova, Agut & Peiró, 2003), and proactive behaviour (Salanova et al., 2003).

Additionally, some indications of engagement relating positively to health have been found, resulting in low levels of depression and distress (Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen, 2003) and psychological complaints (Demerouti et al., 2001). Ultimately, work engagement is positively related to job performance. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) Remarkably though, it has been noted that an employee experiencing work engagement does not let work take over their personal lives, but conversely achieves an ideal state of work-life balance with mutual enrichment. (Hakanen, 2009)

Other positive consequences of work engagement can be detected at different levels, for example at individual, work communal or organizational levels. Even though, the consequences of engagement can be separated, they all carry resemblance with one another. Work engagement can therefore have a positive outcome on all things factors at some level, depending on the individual employee and organisation. (Hakanen, 2009)

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main purpose for this thesis was to examine the extent of experienced alienation and engagement among the studied group of employees and their assessment towards their well-being at work, as well as, their knowledge and awareness of the certain alienation and engagement factors.

Statement of research objectives:

1. How much and how often employees are experiencing work alienation and engagement among the studied group?
2. What are factors of alienation and engagement among the studied group of employees?

4.1 Conducting the research

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the studied group was selected mainly due to the fact, that at the time when writing this final thesis, I was working in a marketing communication agency, and was highly impressed with a pleasant and motivated working environment. In addition, when interviewed for my trainee position, my supervisor acclaimed, that the staff's synergy is on a league of its own when it comes to team spirit, and stated that their office had been said to possess amazing energy among staff. Purely out of curiosity I wanted to put his words to the test by examining the employees' personal experiences towards their job.

4.2 Data collection and survey design

The survey was divided into three different sections. In the first part the interviewees were questioned with brief background information, including age, job role and field experience. The background information results were conducted to reveal some possible relation with alienation and engagement experiences by crosses tabulating the findings, as cross tabulation helps to understand how two different variables are related to each other. (Wyse, 2012) The second part of the survey consisted of questions regarding work alienation,

whereas the final section dealt with work engagement. I translated the survey part covering alienation from English to Finnish, while the engagement part was translated by Jari Hakanen (2009). The main target when translating is to ensure that the intended meaning of each survey item is maintained in the final language, in both the survey items and on the scales. (Harkness, Pennell, Schoua-Glusberg, 2004)

The study was implemented as a customised quantitative online questionnaire, which was partly based on a standardized survey (UWES) in order to achieve the best possible findings in regards to this final thesis' purpose. The questionnaire was created by using SurveyMonkey's platform, which was found to be the most suitable for this purpose due its simplicity and data output. Prior to initiating the survey to the staff, the survey was approved by my supervisor for its validity and credibility. Upon giving consent, the link for answering the survey was sent in an email to the entire organization's employees, operating in Helsinki and Turku, consisting of approximately 100 employees in total. Participants of the survey were informed that the survey was conducted anonymously for a bachelor's final thesis.

4.3 Sampling

The target group for this study consisted total of 97 employees working in Zeeland Family. The survey link was sent to every employee between the dates of 27.4. -30.4.2015. Despite the short time period for answering the survey, the response rate was remarkably high, since 62 persons answered the survey, the active response rate being 64.6 per cent. (Saunders, et al., 2012, p. 268) The survey link faced some difficulties in the very beginning of the launch and due to this suffered 9 persons of not completing the survey. Therefore some of the sections were analysed only with the 53 completed responses, weakening the response rate slightly.

4.3.1 Work alienation

For the study of work alienation, Hirschfeld's and Field's (2000) shortened survey was used, which originally concluded 10 items. For the purpose of this study, their original survey including the dimension of meaninglessness, was shortened, or more likely enhanced to only conclude the most valid statements to give out clearer results. To my mind, some of statements used in their study were too old-fashioned and suitable for modern use. It was chosen as it represented more modern interpretation on alienation at a personal level rather than representing the concept as a generalized, unenthusiastic outlook toward the world of work that indicates a low level of engagement in the work role (Kobasa, Maddi & Kahn, 1982), as mentioned in the chapter 2.1.4. In addition, the application of their slightly altered survey helped keeping the thesis research short and also offered potential for research findings, keeping the research objectives for this thesis in mind. All of the alienation statements in the survey measured to what extent do employees lack positive affect towards their work and examined the extent to which employees are not enthusiastic about their work, do not enjoy their work or consider their work to be meaningless. (Hirschfeld & Field, 2000) The chosen four statements were assessed with Likert's 4-point scale varying from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

4.3.2 Work engagement

The study on work engagement was based on the internationally acknowledged survey created by Wilmar Schaufeli and Arnold Bakker, called Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES, see chapter 3.1.1). The longer 17 -item survey is in fact used by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Työterveyslaitos). In purpose for this thesis, the shorter 9-item survey was chosen, due to the need for keeping it shorter in order to ensure a greater amount of valid answers. It also has been established, that the shorter version is as valid as the longer version. (Hakanen, 2009, Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006) The survey framework is built on three different dimensions of work engagement vigour, dedication and absorption. **Vigour** was assessed with statements that refer to

high levels of energy and resilience, the willingness to invest effort, not being easily fatigued, and persistence in the face of difficulties. **Dedication** was assessed with statements that refer to developing a sense of significance from one's work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about one's job, and feeling inspired and challenged by it. **Absorption** was measured with statements that refer to being totally and happily immersed in one's work and having difficulties detaching oneself from it so that time passes quickly and one forgets everything else that is around. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) Each dimension covered three statements, which were evaluated by using Likert's six-point scale varying from "never" (1) to "daily" (6).

4.4   Reliability, validity and generalization

Reliability of the research refers to the consistency of the findings produced by the selected data collection techniques and analytic procedures, in a case of repeating the research another time, or if the research was replicated by another researcher (Saunders et al, 2012, 192). As mentioned in the chapter 4.2., the survey was carried out in an anonymous manner in order to increase the response rate and reliability. Considering the revealing nature of survey results, it was fair to assume, that many of respondents would have not been willing to give out their honest opinions concerning the research questions. It has to taken into account, that there is a slight possibility some of the employees did not take part into this thesis survey, because they considered it to be useless and unnecessary in general, or did not want to share their critiques concerning their job well being. Therefore, participation of these employees might have reduced the overall outcome of the alienation and engagement survey, if they would have presented their negative opinions for the survey instead of opting out the survey altogether. This possible fact has to be bear in mind while reviewing the found research results. What it comes to the amount of responses for the survey, it is obvious that a bigger study group would provide more reliable results. As for the research the analysis, it was done manually based on the research results acquired through the used SurveyMonkey's platform. Hence, the possible mistakes made in the analysis

chapter are human errors, e.g. typos, and in order to minimize and prevent these mistakes, the results were critically calculated and proof read regularly.

Validity describes the extent to which the data analysing methods measure what they were intended to measure. (Saunders et al, 2012, p. 193) The validity of the survey was ensured with planning and extensive review of the literature of the researched concepts. The main objective for this thesis was to test how much employees are experiencing feelings of work alienation and engagement. The survey was carried out with keeping the objective in mind, in order to remain the validity. In addition, the survey was piloted on a peer international business student to verify the comprehensibility of the survey and scales.

In research methodology, generalization means whether or not the results can be generalized; in other words, if the research findings can be utilized in similar conditions in another situation. (Saunders et al, 2007) In case of this thesis, the research findings represent individual organization's employees' self-assessment results and therefore the research findings cannot be generalized. If the survey applied for this thesis were to be repeated on a different sample group, the results would most likely differ significantly.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 Background information

The first part of the survey asked the background information of the employees, including age, experience in the field and job role. The age distribution of the group revealed that majority of the personnel are older than 31, since the percentage of employees between 31-40 years of age is almost 40%, and over 40 stands at nearly 42% of the total amount of employees.
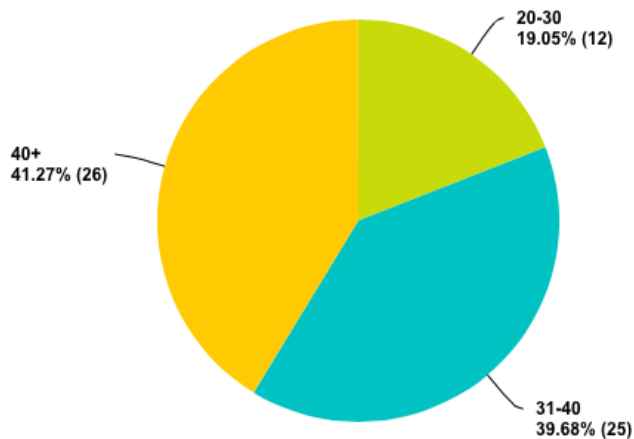

Figure 1 Age distribution

As the workforce represents the more mature side rather than graduates, it suggests that the employees have experience in working in the field. The result regarding experience showed that the staff's experience in the field divides quite equally between less than 5 years, 5-10 years and 11-20 years of experience. The majority of the staff has experience of 5-10 years in the field (32.26%) and the minority holds experience of more than 20 years (16.13%).
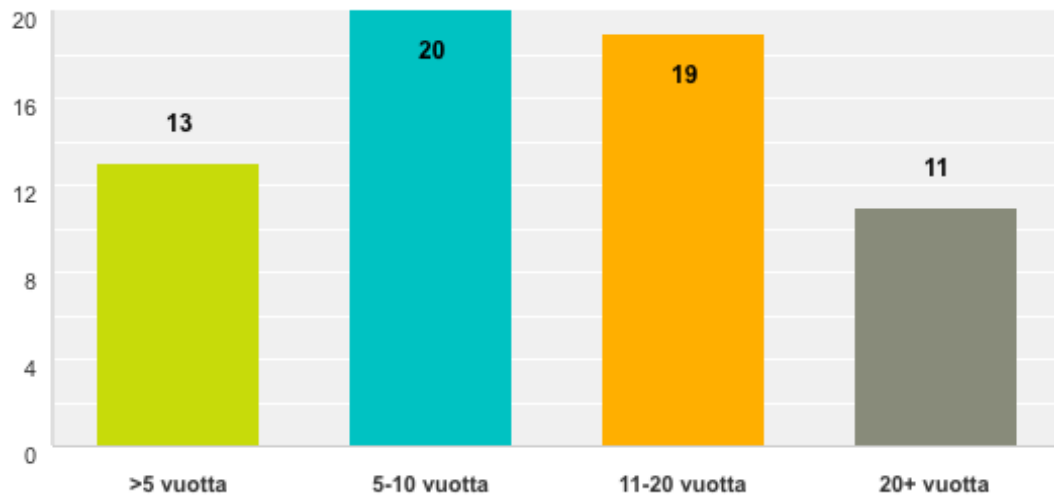
Figure 2 Experience in the field

Vastausvaihtoehdot ▾	Vastaukset ▾	
▾ >5 vuotta	20,97%	13
▾ 5-10 vuotta	32,26%	20
▾ 11-20 vuotta	30,65%	19
▾ 20+ vuotta	16,13%	10
Yhteensä		62

Figure 3 Experience in the field percentages

The third part of the background information questioned the work role. The staff body consists mostly of creative personnel (45.16%) and employees involved with project management (37.10%). Managerial roles represent 11.29% of the whole staff. While the survey was running, some of the respondents noted that the job role options lacked IT and training related job roles, so they were added later on to satisfy the requirements.

▾ Art Director / Copywriter / Luova	45,16%	28
▾ Projektinhallinta	37,10%	23
▾ Johto	11,29%	7
▾ Tekninen / Ohjelmointi	6,45%	4
▾ Koulutus	0,00%	0
Yhteensä		62

Figure 4 Job role

5.2 Work alienation

The second section of the survey measured the experienced alienation among the study group with assessment of four altered statements based on the ones suggested by Hirschfeld & Field (2000).

- ***I find it difficult to imagine enthusiasm concerning work.***
  Minun on vaikeaa löytää innokuutta työtäni kohtaan
- ***Most of my work is wasted in meaningless activity.***
  Työni on merkityksetöntä.
- ***No matter how hard I work it makes no difference.***
  Huolimatta työpanoksestani määrästä, sen arvostus ei muutu.
- ***I do not enjoy work; I just put in my time to get paid.***
  En nauti työstäni, ainut motivaationi on palkka.

Work alienation section received 53 completed answers in total. Since the survey was done by using Likert's four-point scale, the responses can be read in the following manner: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree. In other words, the smaller the number, the less the respondent/employee feels alienated from their work. On the contrary, if the respondent/employee assessed the given statement with a number closer to four, the more alienated they acknowledge themselves.

5.2.1 The work alienation statement results

I find it difficult to imagine enthusiasm concerning work.

Less than 18% of the respondents felt that they find it difficult to imagine enthusiasm towards work, hence the majority of the answers placed on the "disagree" (44.64%) or "strongly disagree" (37.50%) answer options. Thus, it is a fair assumption, that the employees are enthusiastic and find drive towards their job, as total of 82% of the employees disagree with the statement. (Thapisa, 1989) Especially, employees who have less than 5 years of experience in the field can be said to sense enthusiasm in their job as 8 out of

12 respondents (80%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. Younger employees with less experience tend to feel the "spark" in their daily duties, as the probable boreout has not kicked in yet, as it might have with employees with longer field experience. In addition, in today's vivid and contemporary business setting, presumably younger employees feel to need to express themselves more than the older personnel do.

Most of my work is wasted in meaningless activity.

The survey results of the statement regarding the *meaningfulness of the produced work* show clearly that majority of the employees find their work to be meaningful and only 5 respondents (9%) consider their work to be meaningless. These 5 respondents represented different variable backgrounds that were scattered quite equally. In other words, among all of the employees within all job roles and ages, the feeling of doing something meaningful and rewarding is present. According to my own experiences, this does not only appear on personal level, but as a collective phenomenon, as the work floor is frequently buzzing with great deal of excitement, which is taken into advantage and put into use when dealing with customer orders. To my mind, the sensation on doing something meaningful is created by the employees in house rather than being something external, as every customer is dealt with tremendous amount of effort and care that makes the whole transaction of service feel special and meaningful.

No matter how hard I work it makes no difference.

When it comes to value of work, the answers showed more even results. Approximately 70% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, but on the other hand a quite noticeable amount of employees, 12, agree that their work value does not change along with the effort. Out of these 12 employees 50% work in creative role (Art Director, Copywriter, Creative Planner etc.) with 5 to 10 years of experience in the job. While creatives try their best to tackle the enormous visual and editorial workload, it has to bear in mind, that the production is only of half of the whole of the big picture. The production work is

more straightforward and visible, for example doing a brochure for a client by following clear and detailed orders, where the process is more measurable and evident in the eyes of the project management. This is only a half of the job description though. Creatives, such as art directors and copywriters, may spend several hours or even days just to come up with the core idea and subsequently make plans how to execute it. This thinking process is not always necessarily appreciated and acknowledged, nor taken into account when evaluating employee performance, just as the results demonstrate.
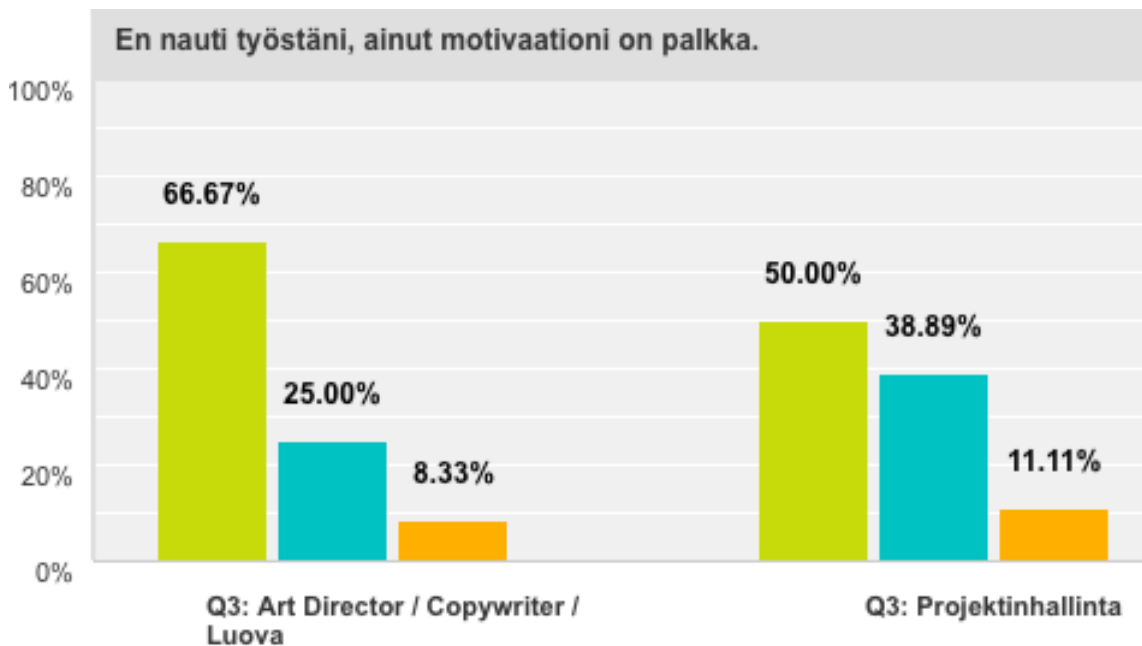

Figure 5 I do not enjoy work; I just put in my time to get paid": (Creatives vs. Project Management)

I do not enjoy work; I just put in my time to get paid.

The last statement of work alienation was the most distinctive of all four of the statements, since the results indicate that only 10% of the respondents say their only motivation to work is salary. Interestingly, three out of these five employees are older than 40 years of age. On a different note, figure 6 displays the standard deviation outcomes between creative and project management personnel. Creatives disagree strongly with the statement regarding motivation for working, whereas employees who are in involved with project management supplied more scattered responses between the two "disagree" options. This

makes total sense, as creatives are seen as artists of their own kind, who have, willingly wanted to create and express themselves, which they find rewarding itself. Creative job roles are usually filled with individuals with calling to show their talent and thoughts, whereas, employees working with project management, have in some cases just drifted into their job positions just to "do something" for living.

5.2.2 Work alienation overall results

The figure 8. displays the basic statistics for the four work alienation statements. The statistics include minimum and maximum, **median**, **mean** and **standard deviation** for each statement. The **median** figure indicates the answer option in the middle of all responses, meaning there are an equal number of responses above and below that answer option, whereas **mea**n stands for the average of all the responses. Most importantly, **standard deviation** reveals how much the data is scattered around the mean. A low standard deviation means that the responses are tightly clustered, whereas a high standard deviation means that they are widely scattered. (Dictionary, 2005, Hornik, 2014)

	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
Minun on vaikeaa löytää innokuutta työtäni kohtaan.	1.00	4.00	2.00	1.85	0.81
Työni on merkityksetöntä.	1.00	4.00	2.00	1.72	0.74
Huolimatta työpanoksestani määrästä, sen arvo ei muutu.	1.00	4.00	2.00	1.98	0.90
En nauti työstäni, ainut motivaationi on palkka.	1.00	4.00	1.00	1.49	0.72

Figure 6 Work Alienation – Basic Statistics

- *I find it difficult to imagine enthusiasm concerning work.*
- *Most of my work is wasted in meaningless activity.*
- *No matter how hard I work it makes no difference.*
- *I do not enjoy work; I just put in my time to get paid.*

Each answer option out of the four statements gathered at least one response as the minimum and maximum options showed on the scale, while the median answer was 2 (= disagree) in three out of four statements. Only statement that differed was *I do not enjoy work; I just put in my time to get paid*, which consequently received the most unanimous responses altogether with standard deviation of only 0.72 and mean of 1.49. Only notable fact that comes up concerning work roles is that employees affiliated with project management do not feel that strongly about the statements compared to creative personnel, since in all except the last statement, the majority of project management employees gave out the response "agree" rather than "strongly agree". To support this finding, the comparison of average means is 1.73 (creative employees) over 1.84. (project management employees).

Age did not have significant correlation with the alienation results, since the mean for employees aged 20-30 years was 1.9, while the same mean figure for the age group over 40 years was a slightly lower 1.7. All of the age groups presented related results with only minor differences in scattering. However, experience in the field disclosed some apparent findings, as the employees with less experience had a mean average of 2.0 (strongly disagree) with standard deviation of 0.92, while the employees whom had more than 20 years of experience assessed it with 1.42 (disagree) mean average and 0.62 standard deviation. Even though the less experienced gave more scattering answers, the overall result for both experience groups still fall between the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" options. All things considered, the overall grade of the four statements can be described rather evident, as the total mean was 1.76, which lies between "strongly disagree" and "disagree" on the scale. In addition, standard deviation being only 0.79 and thus resulting in relatively clustered responses, it is reasonable to say that the employees are not aware of the sensation of work alienation, or are more likely, feeling engaged into their work.
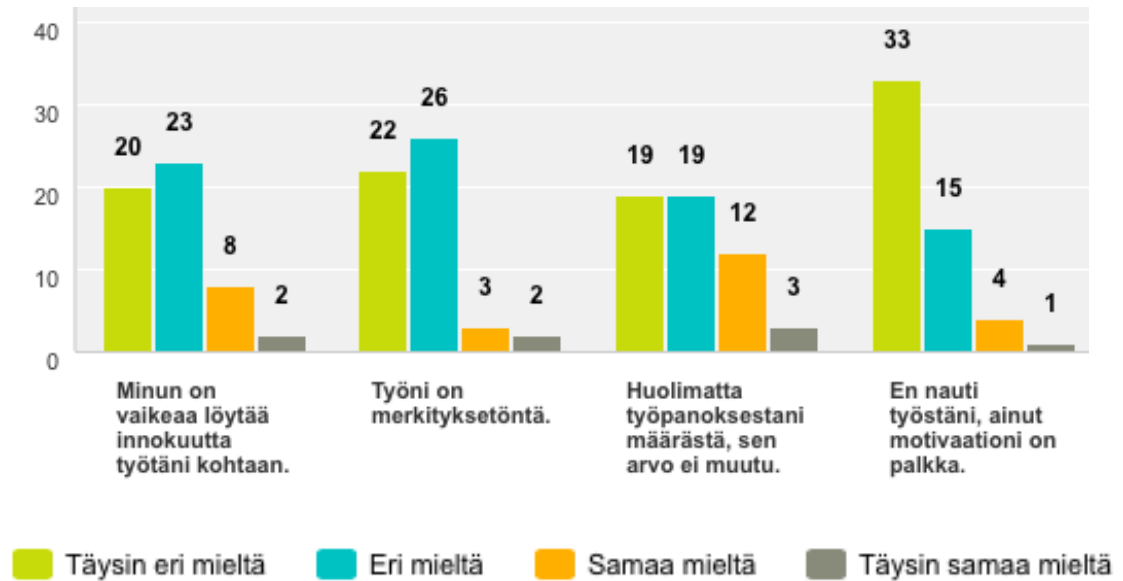
Figure 7 Work alienation tile chart

- *I find it difficult to imagine enthusiasm concerning work.*
- *Most of my work is wasted in meaningless activity.*
- *No matter how hard I work it makes no difference.*
- *I do not enjoy work; I just put in my time to get paid.*

5.3 Work engagement

The last section of the survey covered work engagement by using the aforementioned UWES 9-item survey, which was divided into three different work engagement dimensions; **vigour, dedication and absorption**. These nine items were valued using Likert's six-point scale varying from "never" (1) to "daily" (6). When filling in this survey, the respondents were to choose a number that best describes how frequently one feels this way. (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004, p. 48.) Essentially, the lower the number the less the employees feel or are aware of the sensation of engagement, inversely; the higher the number the more frequent and consistent the sensation is. It can be said, that in general the employees feel engagement once week, as the overall mean for the three dimensions is 5.20 (with standard deviation being 1.11).

The mean figure can be said to be extremely high as the average answer in the entire work engagement chart was between "once a week" or "daily" (mean

5.2). Remarkably, in every single one of the 9 statements, the majority identified to feel the stated sensation on a daily basis, since the 53% of the respondents gave out the answer 6 (daily). Among the three dimensions, the results are exceptionally similar and no considerable differences can be found between them, as the mean averages are: **vigour** 5.20, **dedication** 5.24 and **absorption** 5.15. In addition to similarity between the frequency of the dimensions, the standard deviation varying from 1.07 - 1.15 also suggests that all the responses were incredibly clustered.

Overall, the highest average response appeared regarding the statement *I am enthusiastic about my job* (5.32), whereas the lowest score was found concerning the statement *I get carried away when I'm working* (5.04). Both of the answers still fall into the "once a week" scale on the chart. As the difference between the lowest and highest was so slight, it confirms the likeness of the responses even further.

All the nine different statements and three different dimensions considered, there were three statements that gathered the strongest score with 32 maximum (6 = daily) answers:

Olen innostunut työstäni.	0.00% 0	3.77% 2	1.89% 1	13.21% 7	20.75% 11	60.38% 32	53	5.32

Figure 8 "I am enthusiastic about my job."

Työni inspiroi minua.	1.89% 1	1.89% 1	7.55% 4	11.32% 6	16.98% 9	60.38% 32	53	5.21

Figure 9 "My job inspires me."

Tunnen tyydytystä, kun olen syventynyt työhöni.	0.00% 0	3.77% 2	5.66% 3	9.43% 5	20.75% 11	60.38% 32	53	5.28

Figure 10 "I feel happy when I am working intensively."

As the total amount of completed responses was 53, the 32 responses with the choice "daily (6) totalled in 60.38% of responses altogether. In other words as much as over a half of the employees experience engagement on a daily basis. As a interesting fact, the respondents who answered "daily" (6) for the *I am enthusiastic about my job* (Figure 10.) statement, over 90% of them also gave

out the maximum answer option for the ***My job inspires me*** (Figure 11.) statement.

5.3.1 Vigour

Those who scored high on vigour usually have much energy, zest and stamina when working, whereas those who score low on vigour have less energy, zest and stamina as far as their work is concerned. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
Tunnen olevani täynnä energiaa kun teen työtäni.	2.00	6.00	5.00	5.15	1.04
Tunnen itseni vahvaksi ja tarmokkaaksi työssäni.	2.00	6.00	5.00	5.17	0.99
Aamulla herättyäni minusta tuntuu hyvältä lähteä töihin.	1.00	6.00	6.00	5.28	1.17

Figure 11 Vigour basic statistics

- ***At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy.***

- ***At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.***

- ***When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.***

As mentioned in the chapter 5.3., the average mean for the statements reviewing vigour was 5.2 with a standard deviation of 1.06. In all of the three statements the majority of responses fell into the "daily" (6) option as for the first two statements measuring energy and vigour gained 47.20% of the total answers. The last statement questioning the feelings towards going to work in the morning received the best results, as the majority, 58.50%, feel good going to work on a daily basis. Surprisingly, the statement in question also had the most scattered answers with standard deviation of 1.17, since one employee stated to never feel like going to work and three employees only feel like going to work once a year. Although keeping in mind, that the four employees only

represent less than 8% of the total study group. All in all, the results represent a group of workers who have a great extent of energy, zest and stamina when they are working. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

	En koskaan (1)	Muutaman kerran vuodessa (2)	Kerran kuussa (3)	Muutaman kerran kuussa (4)	Kerran viikossa (5)	Päivittäin (6)	Total	Weighted Average
Tunnen olevani täynnä energiaa kun teen työtäni.	0.00% 0	3.77% 2	3.77% 2	13.21% 7	32.08% 17	47.17% 25	53	5.15
Tunnen itseni vahvaksi ja tarmokkaaksi työssäni.	0.00% 0	1.89% 1	5.66% 3	13.21% 7	32.08% 17	47.17% 25	53	5.17
Aamulla herättyäni minusta tuntuu hyvältä lähteä töihin.	1.89% 1	5.66% 3	0.00% 0	5.66% 3	28.30% 15	58.49% 31	53	5.28

Figure 12 Vigour Percentages

- ***At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy.***

- ***At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.***

- ***When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.***

5.3.2 Dedication

Those who scored high on dedication strongly identify with their work because it is experienced as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging. Besides, they usually feel enthusiastic and proud about their work. Those who scored low do not identify with their work because they do not experience it to be meaningful, inspiring, or challenging; moreover, they feel neither enthusiastic nor proud about their work. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

Olen innostunut työstäni.	2.00	6.00	6.00	5.32	1.02
Työni inspiroi minua.	1.00	6.00	6.00	5.21	1.20
Olen ylpeä työstäni.	1.00	6.00	6.00	5.21	1.11

Figure 13 Dedication basic statistics

- ***I am enthusiastic about my job.***
- ***My job inspires me.***
- ***I am proud of the work that I do.***

Out of the three different engagement dimensions, dedication resulted in the best average score, as figure 15. demonstrates. The mean average of 5.24 wins the contest between the other two dimensions, however only faintly. The first statement measuring enthusiasm towards one's job received the best mean average of 5.32 and was in fact the highest score across all of the nine statements, as mentioned in the chapter 5.3. None of the respondents stated to never feel enthusiasm about their job, which obviously resulted in better mean average.

The second and third statement examining inspiration and pride towards one's work gained identical mean averages of 5.21, with somewhat parallel standard deviation points. Similarly as compared to vigour statement, the dedication part of the survey collected majority of the responses to "daily" (6) option, as 57.23% of respondents offered the maximum answer option. As a matter of fact, 60.63% of the respondents stated to experience the first two statements daily. In conclusion, regarding all of the three dedication statements, the majority experiences enthusiasm and bride towards their job daily, and strongly identify with their work because it is experienced as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging. Furthermore, bearing in mind the high score, it fair to assume that studied personnel feel enthusiastic and proud about their work. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

5.3.3 Absorption

Those who scored high on absorption feel that they usually are happily engrossed in their work, they feel immersed by their work and have difficulties detaching from it because it carries them away. As a consequence, everything else around is forgotten and time seems to fly. Those who scored low on absorption do not feel engrossed or immersed in their work, they do neither have difficulties detaching from it, nor do they forget everything around them, including time. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

Tunnen tyydytystä, kun olen syventynyt työhöni.	2.00	6.00	6.00	5.28	1.09
Olen täysin uppoutunut työhöni.	1.00	6.00	5.00	5.13	1.10
Kun työskentelen, työ vie minut mukanaan.	1.00	6.00	5.00	5.04	1.26

Figure 14 Absorption basic statistics

- ***I feel happy when I am working intensely.***
- ***I am immersed in my work.***
- ***I get carried away when I'm working.***

The third dimension of absorption collected the lowest score out of the three dimension with mean average of 5.15 (standard deviation 1.15). As the difference to the highest dimension, dedication at 5.24 is only that minimal, the result can be therefore defined amazingly levelled. The first statement ***I feel happy when I am working intensely*** gathered the highest mean of 5.28 with 1.09 standard deviation. Although the mean reveals employees experiencing happiness when working intensely once a week, the majority of the respondents stated to feel the stated sensation daily, as 60.38% of the total of 53 employees gave out the maximum (6) answer option.

The last two statements ***I am immersed in my work*** and ***I get carried away when I'm working*** gathered the lowest mean average of all the nine engagement statements. The lowest average score falling on absorption is not that unpredicted, because e.g. according to study made by Hakanen (2009), the statements measuring absorption also received the lowest results. This might be due to the layout of the statements that can be seen in a negative light thus resulting in lower grades. For instance, the last statement can be experienced as a negative sensation where the work takes control of the employee, rather than other way around. Statements in the other two dimensions did not leave that much room for ambiguous considerations as absorption. In conclusion, considering yet another high score, the studied group of employees can be recognized to feel happily engrossed in their work, to feel immersed by their

work and have difficulties detaching from it because it carries them away. As a consequence, everything else around is forgotten and time seems to fly. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

5.4   Work Engagement results between the variables

The respondents were also asked with brief background information, as mentioned in the chapter 5.1. The first part of the thesis survey inquired the age, experience and job role of the employees, in order to apply some cross tabulation into the research analysis. Cross tabulation is a quantitative research method appropriate for analysing the relationship between two or more variables, providing a way of analysing and comparing the results for one or more variables with the results of another. (Wyse, 2012) For the purpose of this research, cross tabulation offered potential for finding differences within the studied group.

Taking the job role into consideration, the most noteworthy fact in results was between project managers and creative personnel. The mean average of the three dimensions for creative personnel was 5.19 with standard deviation of 1.06, whereas the same mean average for the project personnel was 5.24 with 0.86 standard deviation. Regardless of the similarity of the average mean answer of "once a week" (5), the scattering was different between the two mentioned job roles. Creative personnel, such as copywriters and art directors, seem to differ individually more than employees involved with project management. For example, the most scattered results were found concerning the statement *I am immersed in my work* (absorption), where the standard deviation difference of 0.51 between the job roles reflects clearly on the tile chart in the figure 16. Similarly to the alienation, this can be explained with characteristic differences among the creative personnel, who can be distinguished as sort of artists of their own kind rather than stable parts of a machine. In addition, some creatives may feel like they have been put to a task, which concerns more plain production based duties, rather than creative

thinking and innovating, which has serious consequences on one's absorption level.
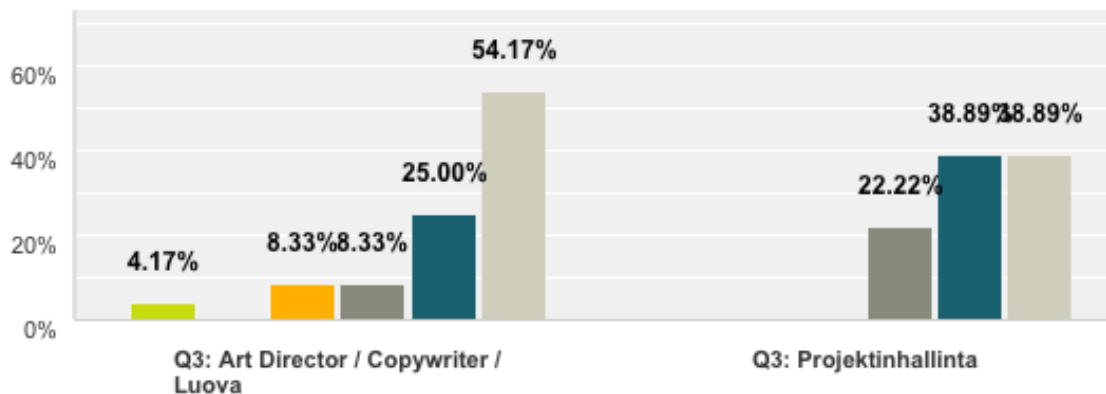

Figure 15 "I am immersed in my work." (Creatives vs. Management)

Other prime example of this phenomenon occurred measuring dedication with statement *I am proud of the work that I do* (figure 17), where standard deviation also varied significantly. All of the employees working with project management stated to experience pride in their work at least "a few times a month", but majority of 55.56% indicated to feel it daily. In comparison, once again the group of creatives presented more scattered answers, majority of them landing on the "once a week" (5) option. (see figure 17). Here again, the creatives representing more wide spectrum of personalities results in more scattered responses. In all fairness, this does not mean that employees involved in project management lack character, instead their tasks are more straightforward and exact, and therefore more measurable.
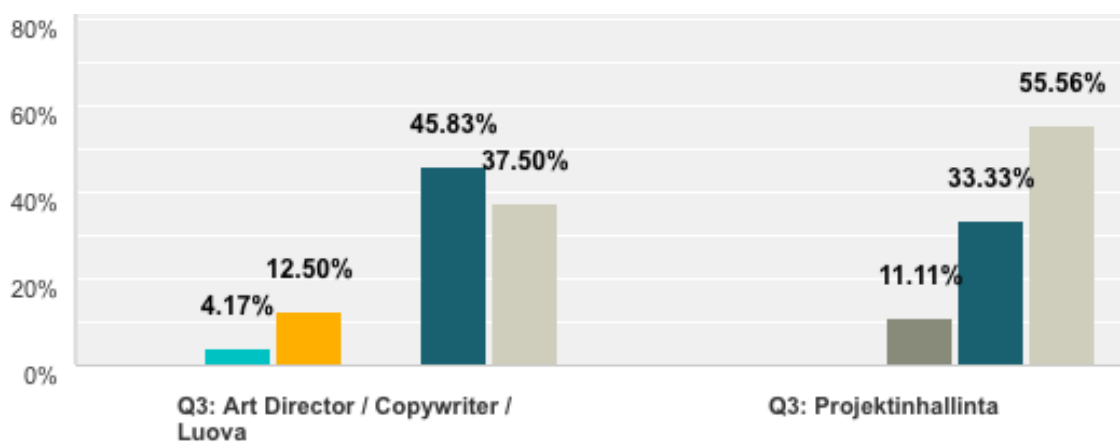

Figure 16 "I am proud of the work I do." (Creatives vs. Management)

Excluding these two samples, any other notable differences in job roles were not found among the three different dimensions, as all mean figures varied between 5.11 – 5.33 (once a week). All the nine statements considered, the highest mean for creative personnel was with statement **When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work** (5.38), while majority of 62.50% responded with the maximum answer option "daily". The lowest score among creatives was concerning the statement **I am proud of the work that I do**, mean still being impressively high at 5.0 (once a week).

Interestingly, the employees involved with project management offered the highest mean of 5.44 in the same statement measuring pride in own work. While, the lowest for project employees was regarding the statement **I get carried away when I'm working**, with mean 4.89, which in fact was the only statement out of the nine under five among all of the job roles. According my own experiences and empirical research, this is most likely due to the more official part of the job task, of which the project management employees are responsible for. For instance, in case of providing a customer's order, while the creative minds gets carried away in creating the new and ground-breaking concepts and ideas, project management may find it difficult to get lost in the job when dealing more straightforward and ordinary tasks, such as client contact and overall project management. That being said, one can never underestimate the value of project managers, as they carry high significance in keeping the creative minds in check.

The variations among different age groups seem to be more evident compared to job roles, since in all of the dimensions even down to every statement; the age group of over 40 years established the highest results. The mean figures for the three engagement dimensions among employees over 40 years are: **vigour** 5.46 (standard deviation 0.77), **dedication** 5.50 (0.78) and **absorption** 5.32 (0.99).

All of the dimensions combined the mean stands at 5.42. This can be seen as a huge surprise, as usually when dealing with work satisfaction surveys, the younger body of the personnel show the highest amount of job drive and

motivation in general. In this case, it's just the opposite, as the more experienced workers are on the top of the charts. Presumable, among the studied group of workers, the employees over 40 years of age have found "their place" and confidence and can effectively put their assets to use in the best possible way. Meanwhile, the younger and less experienced employees are still trying to figure out how to brand themselves and how to utilise their strengths. In other words, the older age group have tackled the side effects of age crisis, and can therefore put their full effort and focus on their work, which simultaneously pulls them in and creates engagement.

The lowest result overall and dimension-wise were among the age group 20-40 years. The mean for the age group 20-30 was 4.7 (same mean in every dimension), which however establishes the same mean answer "once a week" as it does with employees over 40 years of age. However the standard deviation of 1.44 was higher compared to older personnel's' 0.84, which results in more scattered answer palette, which for instance can be seen in figure 19. measuring dedication with a statement *I am proud of the work that I do.*
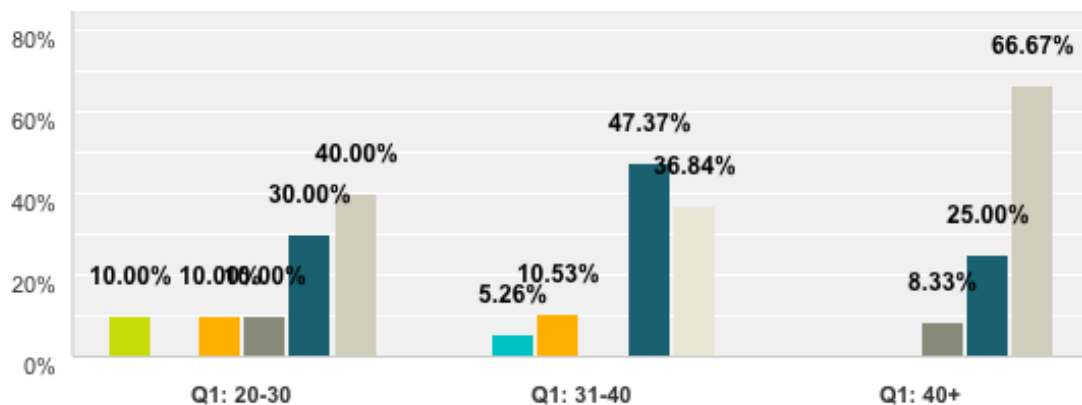

Figure 17 "I am proud of the work I do." (Age group deviation)

It has to mentioned, that despite the slight variations in response scattering, the majority among all three age groups answered the nine statements with either "once a week" (5) or "daily" (6). Correlation with age was discovered as the research findings revealed that the older the respondent, the higher the experienced work engagement. Out of the three engagement dimensions, dedication gained the highest results among the age group over 40 years, suggesting that the more mature employees identify with their work and

experience it as meaningful, inspiring and challenging. A fair assumption based on the results is that the employees over 40 years they feel enthusiastic and proud about their work, although keeping in mind the other two dimensions gathered almost equally impressive scores.

The studied group was also queried about their experience in the field with four different answer options in the first part of the survey. Biggest variations were clearly with extremity groups (<5 vs. 20+), the other two groups placing right in the middle. The groups with less than 5 years and over 20 years of experience were also appropriate to compare, as they both presented the opinions of approximately the same amount of employees.

The correlation between experience in the field and engagement dimensions appear to have expected resemblance with the results, as it did with age. In other words the more experienced the employee is, the more frequent the experienced engagement is. To support the statement, the research findings exposed a trend for this endeavour, as astonishingly in each one of the three dimensions, the mean increased in relation to experience. Mean average for employees who hold experience less than 5 years was 4.72 (once a week), while mean average for employees with 20+ experience was 5.71 (daily). In addition the standard deviations for the two experience groups was radically unalike, with almost 1 point difference overall, hence resulting in wide answer scattering among age group less than five years of experience. Statement ***I feel happy when I am working intensely*** measuring absorption (see figure 20) works as a prime example of the scattering just to mention one, as all of the other eight statements received similar results.

Figure 18 "I feel happy when I am working intensely." (>5 years vs. 20+ experience)

Surprisingly even bigger standard deviation was found in the same dimension, absorption, where the statement *I am immersed in my work* gathered wildly scattered responses from the two experience groups. Employees with less than five years of experienced totalled with 1.67 standard, compared to remarkably low 0.46 point of the employees with more than 20 years of experience. In conclusion, the 80% majority of the more employees with more experience acknowledge sensations of engagement in their work on a daily basis or at least weekly, whereas the majority of the personnel with less experience recognise engagement once a week, in some cases even rarely and according to some statements, never. This was the case in all of the three measured dimensions.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

According the research analysis, some clear conclusions of the experienced work alienation and engagement among the studied group of employees can be made, and consequently are introduced in this final chapter of the thesis. The analysed research findings related to the research questions are concluded. As a reminder, the initial purpose for this thesis was to examine the extent of experienced alienation and engagement among employees and their assessment towards their well being at work, as well as, their knowledge and awareness of the certain alienation and engagement factors. This final chapter will also offer suggestions for future research and propose some improvement recommendations in regards to this thesis.

6.1 Discussion

Originally when coming up with the topic and concepts for this thesis, I was certain that I wanted to include the concept of work alienation, as I was somewhat familiar with the basics beforehand. In addition to wishing to look more into the work alienation concept, later on I realized I wanted to implement some positive ring to the rather negative conception of alienation as well. Consequently, the concept of employee engagement was implemented to this case study, as it carried potential on finding the right track after being alienated from one's job and by helping to prevent the causes of alienation through engaging employees' to being healthy and efficient in their own work position and pleased members of a work team.

I have to admit I made a mistake with the survey, since I failed to include the powerlessness dimension of alienation, as it would have helped in gaining more diverse research results. In addition, I was afraid the analysis part would get out of hand. Though, Seeman (1967) and Mottaz (1981) emphasized powerlessness and meaninglessness being the most important dimensions, powerlessness was left out from the research part due to its general definition of a lack of control on the job, which made me overlook its potential for this study. Leaving it out unfortunately ended up being a mistake, as later on I realized it to

have great value on measuring alienation. The use of the other dimensions, especially powerlessness would supposedly generate more widespread outcome, as it did in a study of Den Dulk and Tummers (2012). Also, the correlation with alienation, and for instance organizational commitment could be utilized for future purposes.

Furthermore, I came to realize, that adding engagement into the thesis, unintentionally expanded the topic to an unreasonable extent. Thus, I should have only concentrated only on either one of the concepts in a more profound manner, and for instance includes the job resources and demands (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2004) to achieve more through findings of engagement. To be honest, as I looked more into the theories of engagement while reviewing the literature, it came out on top as a research topic for it contemporary take on positive work psychology. Due to the concept's significance on employee well being in general, it is no wonder, that the studies on work engagement have risen dramatically in the recent years.

Due to the limitations of bachelor's thesis, this research provides quite a constricted insight and analysis of the two concepts. Thus, suggestions for future research regarding the concepts of work alienation and engagement can be made. In order to receive a clearer understanding these two separate and distinct concepts, it would preferable to measure them independently. Correspondingly to findings of Bakker and Schaufeli, (2004) the fact that alienation and engagement are assessed by the same questionnaire had at least two important negative consequences. It is not reasonable to expect that both concepts would be perfectly negatively correlated. That is, when an employee is not alienated, doesn't necessarily mean that he or she is engaged in his or her work. Reversibly, when an employee is low on engagement, this does not mean that he or she is alienated.

Essentially, the relationship between them cannot be empirically studied when they are measured with the same survey. Hence, both concepts cannot be included simultaneously in one model in order to study their simultaneous validity. Although, in every work place there can be alienation and engagement

at the same time. Or as Hakanen put it, "even a single person can simultaneously experience both positive well-being and the feeling of being strained". (Hakanen 2007: 20-21, 27.)

6.2 Conclusions of the research results

The research findings concluded that among the studied group of marketing and advertising professionals, the level of alienation is low, or in other words, there even is a lack of it, whereas inversely; the work engagement level is extremely high. For example, in contrast, study made among 16 000 Finnish workers by Hakanen (2009) established an average engagement score of 4.4, while in this study the same figure was 5.2. The following paragraphs will divide these two concepts in order to give a more comprehensible readout of the research findings.

The overall results measuring work alienation revealed that the employees are not experiencing signs of almost any alienation towards their work, since the research analysis displayed that the overall grade can be described rather evident, as the vast majority of the employees disagreed with the alienation statements. Age did not have any significant correlation with the alienation results, as all of the age groups presented exceptionally related results with only minor differences in scattering. Only noteworthy fact that came up concerning work roles was that employees affiliated with project management did not feel that strongly about the lack of alienation in their work compared to creative personnel, although the average answer scales still remained approximately the same. Considering the relation between experience in the field and work alienation, it did not either indicate any clear sign of variation, although the employees with less experience gave more scattering answers.

All things considered, the work alienation results disclosed that the studied employees are not aware of the sensation of work alienation, or are more likely in this case, feeling particularly engaged into their work. The employees can be said to easily find enthusiasm towards to their meaningful work, with a great deal of enjoyment and motivation. Majority of the employees also feel that their

work is being valued and appreciated, which evidently reflects positively on the results.

After the extensive analysis in the chapter four of this thesis, the analysis combining all the employee engagement dimensions: vigour, dedication and absorption, concluded tremendous results as well. Among the three dimensions, the results are exceptionally similar and no considerable differences can be found between them, as the mean averages were incredibly levelled. In addition to similarity between the frequencies of the dimensions, all the responses were incredibly clustered. Taking the variables into consideration, the most noteworthy fact in results was between job roles, especially between project managers and creative personnel. Creative personnel, such as copywriters and art directors, seem to differ individually more than employees involved with project management. A clear correlation with age was also discovered as the research findings revealed that the older the respondent, the higher the experienced work engagement. Out of the three engagement dimensions, dedication gained the highest results among the age group over 40 years, suggesting that the more mature employees identify with their work and experience it as meaningful, inspiring and challenging. The correlation between experience in the field and engagement dimensions appeared to have expected resemblance with the results, as it did with age. In other words the more experienced the employee is, the more frequent the experienced engagement is.

In conclusion, the complete outcome of the research represented a group of workers who have a great extent of energy, zest and stamina when they are working. In regards to all of the three dedication statements, the majority experiences enthusiasm and bride towards their job daily, and strongly identify with their work since it is experienced as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging. Furthermore, bearing in mind the high score altogether, it fair to state that studied personnel feel enthusiastic and proud about their work. In addition, considering yet another high score for the last dimension, absorption, the studied group of employees can be recognized to feel happily engrossed in their

work on a daily basis, to feel immersed by their work and have difficulties detaching from it because it carries them away. As a consequence, everything else around is forgotten and time seems to fly. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

All in all, this thesis study concluded that work well being among employees is much more than lack of alienation, as in this case, it occurs as high levels of engagement instead.

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Employee alienation and engagement

Perustiedot

* 1. Ikä?

○ 20-30

○ 31-40

○ 40+

* 2. Työkokemus alalta?

○ >5 vuotta

○ 5-10 vuotta

○ 11-20 vuotta

○ 20+ vuotta

* 3. Työnkuva?

○ Art Director / Copywriter / Luova

○ Projektinhallinta

○ Johto

○ Tekninen / Ohjelmointi

○ Koulutus

Työstä vieraantuminen / Alienation

* 4. Työstä vieraantuminen / Alienation

	Täysin eri mieltä	Eri mieltä	Samaa mieltä	Täysin samaa mieltä
Minun on vaikeaa löytää innokuutta työtäni kohtaan.	○	○	○	○
Työni on merkityksetöntä.	○	○	○	○
Huolimatta työpanoksestani määrästä, sen arvo ei muutu.	○	○	○	○
En nauti työstäni, ainut motivaationi on palkka.	○	○	○	○

Työn imu / Engagement

✱ 5. Tarmokkuus / Vigour

	En koskaan	Muutaman kerran vuodessa	Kerran kuussa	Muutaman kerran kuussa	Kerran viikossa	Päivittäin
Tunnen olevani täynnä energiaa kun teen työtäni.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tunnen itseni vahvaksi ja tarmokkaaksi työssäni.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Aamulla herättyäni minusta tuntuu hyvältä lähteä töihin.	○	○	○	○	○	○

✱ 6. Omistautuneisuus / Dedication

	En koskaan	Muutaman kerran vuodessa	Kerran kuussa	Muutaman kerran kuussa	Kerran viikossa	Päivittäin
Olen innostunut työstäni.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Työni inspiroi minua.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Olen ylpeä työstäni.	○	○	○	○	○	○

✱ 7. Uppoutuminen / Absorption

	En koskaan	Muutaman kerran vuodessa	Kerran kuussa	Muutaman kerran kuussa	Kerran viikossa	Päivittäin
Tunnen tyydytystä, kun olen syventynyt työhöni.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Olen täysin uppoutunut työhöni.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Kun työskentelen, työ vie minut mukanaan.	○	○	○	○	○	○