

Work well-being –the effects of regular exercising to productivity and work performance

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Over the years work well-being has grown a bigger meaning in different work organisations. Multiple studies and researches prove that investing in well-being at work decreases the amount of sick leaves, increases overall well-being, improve work performance and builds strong and encouraging working communities.

In 2015 healthy lifestyle, mindfulness and keeping physically fit are carrying trends and selection of leisure activities is broad. Work well-being can be overviewed from the standpoints of an individual and a work community. More and more companies organize yearly recreational events to build a stronger, better cooperative work community. As it comes to individual employee's work well-being, there are multiple ways for companies to support or provide some sponsorship. The effects on investing to work well-being are beneficial for not only the employees but the company, too.

This bachelor thesis performs a qualitative research and focuses on an exercise group called TARMO which is formed by employees of Talentum. TARMO is a six month project that first launched in 2012. In 2015 the group exercised at a health and exercise club Elixia Salmisaari. The research methods that were used were an interview and a questionnaire. This particular group that took part on the questionnaire were participants of TARMO III in spring 2015.

The initial goal of this thesis was to find out how regular exercising affects employees' productivity, work performance and overall wellbeing and whether employer should or should not invest in supporting their employees' physical health. The thesis begins with an introduction to the subject and continues to theoretical framework to define what work well-being and productivity actually mean. The theoretical framework also explains the concept of exercising from its all dimensions.

The empirical part of the thesis begins with introducing the research methods and the actual case study. The information was gathered by implementing a questionnaire to the group participants and interviewing the Human Resource Manager of Talentum and the deputy manager of Elixia Salmisaari. The deputy manager was also the group training instructor for TARMO. The questionnaire was the primary method for research and therefore the study results puts the main focus to the answers of the questionnaires. The interviews were a secondary method and was used to build a comprehend perception about TARMO as a project and how it is implemented.

The thesis ends with the conclusions of study results as well as evaluation of the whole thesis process. It will also provide some suggestions for future topics to research the subject from different standpoint or approach. The final pages of the thesis are for appendices.

Keywords

Work well-being, exercising, productivity, support groups, efficiency, work performance

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1 Introduction

Today, more and more companies are aware of the numerous benefits of work well-being. There are multiple researches about work well-being and its effects to the performance of work communities and individual employees. This bachelor thesis evaluates the benefits of work well-being by putting the main focus on employee productivity and aim to find out if it is worth to invest in the physical activities of the personnel. Supporting sub-questions to be used are:

- What are the effects and benefits of exercising and keeping physically fit?
- Does it have an influence on productivity and work performance?
- Do employees perform better at work?
- Do they personally consider exercising as one of the key factors to good performance?

This particular subject for the thesis was chosen because of the author's personal interests towards exercising. The author thinks that exercising has an influence to perform better and work more efficiently. Having worked several years at a local gym in Helsinki, over time the author has seen the growing interest of different companies to organise yearly recreational activities for team building but also arrange exercise groups or otherwise support the physical activity of their employees.

This thesis begins with an introduction to work well-being and how it affects productivity and work performance. The theoretical framework continues with going through what does exercising actually mean and explaining the effects of exercising in physical, mental and social contexts. At the end of the theoretical framework there will be introduced examples of how three different companies have organized and programmed their employees' work well-being. The theoretical framework follows the empirical part which presents the results of the research. First there is an introduction of the case company and TARMO project and from there the empirical part continues to discuss about the research methods and research results. At the end of the empirical part some suggestions will be given for improvements and possible topics for future research.

Work well-being is a broad subject and can be analyzed from multiple standpoints. For this thesis, it was agreed with Talentum that the research analysis emphasizes to analyze the effects of regular exercising particularly in the light of productivity and work performance. The questionnaire was concluded only once and no further follow up concerning the research was agreed.

2 Managing work well-being

2.1 Definition of work well-being

Work well-being is the foundation to safe, healthy and productive work done by professional employees and work communities. In an organization that is well managed, the employees consider their work worthy and rewarding and the work supports their general control of life. (Työturva, 2011)

Work well-being as a concept is an extensive unity of goals and consequences. The development of work well-being started over a hundred years ago to improve safety at work and reduce sick leaves. The broader perspective to the concept has grown over the years from looking individuals' work well-being to comprehending the entire work community. (Tarkkonen, 2012)

Work well-being arises from the organizational structure, leadership, work atmosphere and individual perspective to work (Manka & al, 2012). It is often put in comparison with mental wellness however in reality it comprehends also physical and social aspects. In the book "Työhyvinvointi johtamistehtävänä" the author Juhani Tarkkonen (2012, 22) observes work well-being from two different standpoints:

1. Emotional level: Work well-being is a situation where a person gains strength (in other words, gets "energized") as a result of experiencing being respected, safe and healthy and that the work is motivating and controllable.
2. Level of action: Work well-being requires managing the personnel's work safety, working ability and having enough strength to work and mental well-being.

In everyday life work well-being considers the feeling of happiness to go to work, spend time working and then return back home knowing that the work will continue after particular break. The work feels pleasant and meaningful, has a clear purpose and a goal and while at work, no one has to fear inappropriate behaviour, sexual harassment or bullying. Also the actions of the employer are important to support work well-being. The problems at work place should be noted quickly and taken care of professionally and efficiently. The employer is a leading example, motivator and a contributor of team spirit. The employer should be acting fair and be equal towards all employees. (Tarkkonen, 2012, 23-24)

2.2 Managing work well-being

Management has an essential role in creating, maintaining and promoting work well-being. Employers and managers act as role models in their own areas of responsibility. (Tarkkonen, 2012, 75)

Manager's duty is to motivate, reward, inspire and naturally be the guiding and leading example. A good leader holds the responsibility of resources and leads the work towards the goals. Leadership requires a lot of being present and providing support and understanding. Predicting changes and being one step ahead towards the goals tells about good leadership. A good leader has the ability to understand employees' emotions, thoughts and needs as well as improving own strengths and weaknesses. (Työturva, 2011.)

Work well-being management includes some actions that are considered as basics. Everything begins with defining realities of work. The actions to be used are development discussions, work well-being questionnaires, risk evaluations and collecting data. These actions are used to stay up-to-date on what is really happening in the organization. It is also important to define what is important and what is not, in other words create meaning for work tasks. Words and actions should be in the same line and follow one another. Leading (and lack of leading) speaks for meanings and values of work well-being and all its areas. An organization with strong values performs well whereas organization who has not defined their values also carries work well-being and work safety randomly. (Tarkkonen, 2012, 77.)

The goal and purpose of the work should be clear to the employees. Management creates expectations with goals, aims and objectives but also principles, organizing and resources. Not having goals and aims leads to drifting. Without a plan and goal it is impossible to go forward. (Tarkkonen, 2012, 77.)

The plans should also be executed and followed up. Managing includes acting as an example and being actively a part of the work community and concretely lead the employees. The work organization and staff need guidance, support, help in solving problems, feedback and care. Once plans have been executed, follows an evaluation. Managing work well-being without evaluating the leading actions is poor. Evaluation is essential to correct mistakes, learning and development. (Tarkkonen, 2012, 77.)

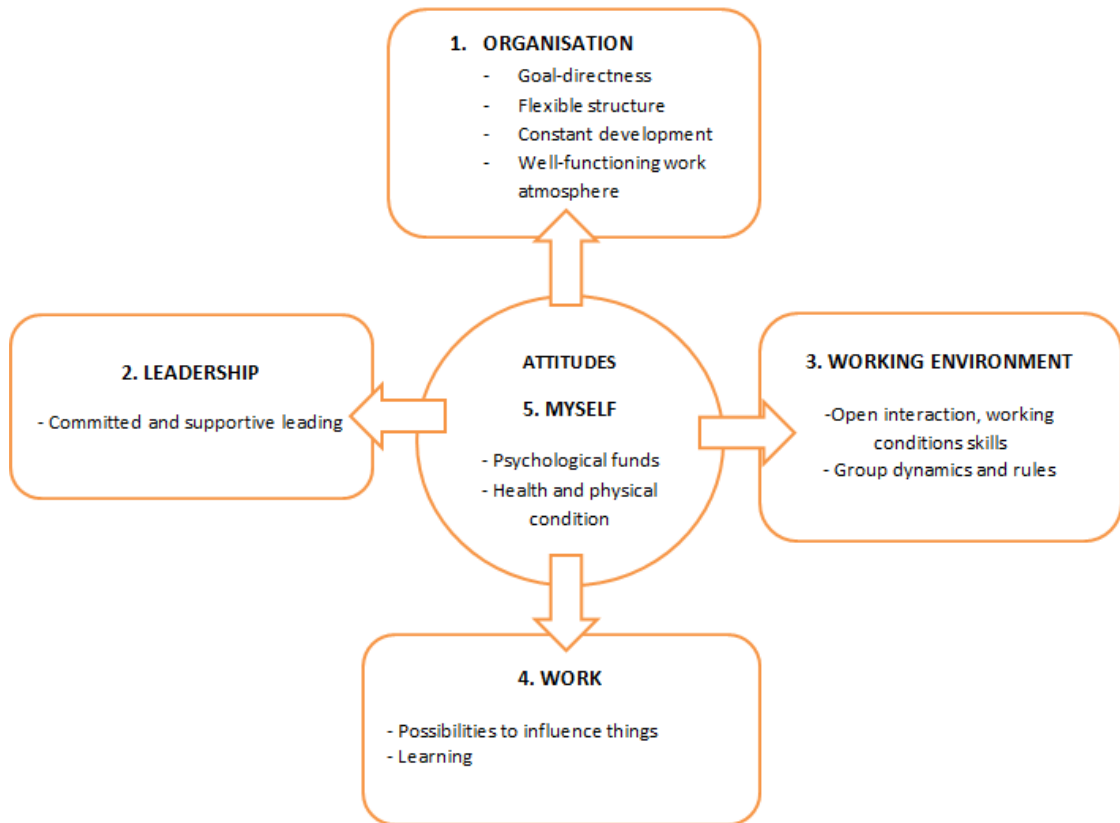
As we go deeper in detail with work well-being management, its operative actions can be divided to three main groups (presented below in Table 1). Preventive actions include actions prior to work, for example work safety standards, staff training and preparing them for work. Remedial actions include risk management and other situations where mental or physical well-being has been harmed. Indirect actions are highly related to different statistics, reports and actions that support and promote work well-being. (Tarkkonen, 2012, 127.)

ACTIONS OF WORK WELL-BEING MANAGEMENT

Preventive actions	Remedial actions	Indirect actions
- Recruiting process	- Risk management	- Different statistics and reports that support work well-being
- Introduction to work	- Support	- Communication and announcements
- Workspace design	- Handling inappropriate behavior	- Staff training and development
- Procurement plan	- Accident investigation	- Commissioning technology that supports work well-being
- Work permits (i.e for dangerous work tasks)	- Reporting about dangerous situations	
- Commissioning examinations (i.e machines and equipment)	- First aid	
	- Maintenance examinations (i.e machines and equipment)	

Table 1. Actions of work well-being management (Tarkkonen, J, 2012)

What keeps people working is motivation and positive work community, according to Marjo Sinokki (2013), the work well-being manager of Turun Terveystalo. Vice versa, bad work atmosphere increases depression and a feeling of anxiety. The social intelligence, emotional skills and communication skills define a good leader who has the keys to long employment relationships. Sinokki also says that the role of the employer as a supporter is very important, even crucial. The usage of sleeping pills and antidepressants is likely higher if the employees lack social support and motivation from their employer and work community. (Sinokki, 2013.)



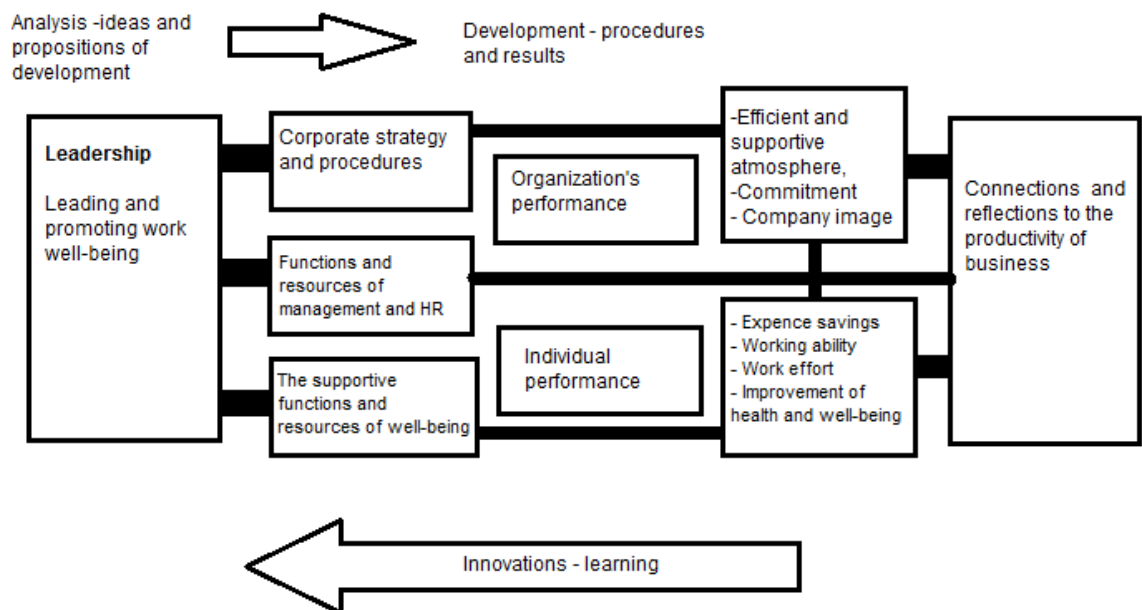
Picture 2. The key factors of work well-being (Manka 2009-2011)

The interaction between individual and work place, work, and positive support of employer and co-workers ultimately develop work well-being. The picture (2) shows the key factors to work well-being. In the middle of the figure is "myself" with psychological funds and physical and health condition. One's psychological funds and condition affect to the other factors of work well-being. A person whose health both mentally and physically is in bad condition has an influence to the working environment and group dynamics by making it worse. Also the work contribution is then lacking effort. Organization with a clear goal and practical functions, interactive and supportive working environment, committed and professional leadership, work that motivates as well as individual's personal qualities all affect to ideal work well-being. (Manka & al, 2012.)

2.3 Strategic well-being

Strategic well-being management aims to find the best ways to execute work well-being activities that ultimately leads to best results. The strategy aims to comprehend and understand the real state of work well-being and set standards to the quality of work well-being (work safety, working ability and mental well-being). (Tarkkonen, 2012, 79.)

The best way to implement strategic well-being is to have a work well-being plan. This includes a 12 month plan where different actions, procedures, processes and things related to resources are distributed to each month. (Tarkkonen, 2012, 79.)



Picture 3. Model of managing well-being (Hyppänen, 2010)

Over the years, work well-being has developed to be a strategic process and essential part of management that can (and should be) measured and evaluated regularly. The picture above (Picture 3) presents the strategic model of managing well-being at work. In companies, actions related to health and well-being are often in pieces and without responsibilities. The model puts them all into the same framework. (Aura, 2009)

Ossi Aura (2009), the scientific director of Excenta Oy (company that offers tools for developing and measuring strategic well-being) defines strategic well-being as following:

Strategic well-being is about considering the health and well-being of staff as a part of the goals of business activity and human resource management. The activities have strategic nature with defined goals, responsibilities and resources and they are followed with

regular measurement in both organizational and individual levels. Strategic well-being has a clear influence to employee productivity and from there profitability of business. (Aura, 2009.)

2.4 Employee proficiency

Employee proficiency compresses several factors. The foundation to proficiency comes from background knowledge and gained skills. Knowledge is something that an individual gains through lifetime in different contexts: at school, at work, by reading and listening. Skills are gained from concrete practice and following leading examples. Also experiences, networks and attitudes (goals, inner drive, open-mindedness) shapes our proficiency. (Ojala, 2003, 27.)

Improving skills and knowledge is constantly ongoing and happens while working and therefore supports business activities. Having a strategy and frequency in organizing staff training is highly recommended. The training events do not only strengthen the competitiveness of the company but also motivates the employees. Training maintains the skills and proficiency of the employees but it also strengthens working ability and motivation. (Yritys-Suomi, 2015.)

Traditionally, training is organized by the employer however the employees also have a responsibility to maintain and improve their skills. Training is often organized for one day for a few hours but it can also be a course. (Yritys-Suomi, 2015.)

HOW TO IMPROVE PROFICIENCY

Individual activities	Work community activities
- Individual learning plan	- Company/Department/Team goals
- Learning goals	- Work partner
- Improving interaction skills	- Mentoring and coaching
- Switching work tasks	- Learning Cafés and brainstorming
- Extending work tasks	- Meetings and projects
	- Rewards from gaining proficiency

Table 4. How to improve proficiency (Ojala, L. 2003, 31)

In the Table 6 above, there are listed some other learning activities from individual's and work community's viewpoint that can be implemented at work place. Individual can do a lot with personal learning and set learning goals to go alongside with the goals of actual work. Switching work tasks and extending them with new activities also promote proficiency. Inside a work community, the activities are more based on group work or working with a partner. Mentoring and coaching are excellent ways to learn from a professional. It is also important to reward from successful learning. (Ojala, 2003, 31.)

3 Productivity and motivators to work

Work well-being and productivity in an organizational level are strongly linked to each other. Productivity and work contribution evolves from motivation, physical health and overall well-being of the employees. In a long run work well-being, work safety and productivity connect to each other. Bad working environment, lack of support in work community and bad management can bring down a work performance of an employee, who would otherwise be skilled and productive, to close to none. (Tarkkonen, 2012, 66.)

Besides well-being, a productive work performance also requires expertise and commitment (Manka & al, 2012). Work tasks that motivate and a psychosocial atmosphere that enables work, are two factors that together improve work well-being (Okko, 2013).

A work that motivates and involves multi-tasking and combining multiple skills leads to productivity and success stories at work. Also flatter hierarchies, emphasis on team working and more joint problem solving associate with better health and higher levels of job satisfaction. (Bevan, 2012.)

Evaluating productivity is difficult because information based on productivity of staff, employers and tracking systems is different and even conflicting from time to time. However, despite the difficulties in research, good leadership skills, overall well-being and having the experience of productivity go all hand in hand.

Immediate financial effect	Indirect financial effect	Ultimate financial effect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficient worktime - Sick leave and accident costs - Rehabilitation costs - Individual's productivity - Functionality of work process - Development activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Productivity - Work quality - Innovativeness and regeneration - Customer satisfaction - Sufficiency of work force - Employer reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Successfulness - Ability to serve - Reputation - Organization reputation

Table 5. Financial effects of work well-being (Manka & al. 2012; Ojala-Ahonen, 2003)

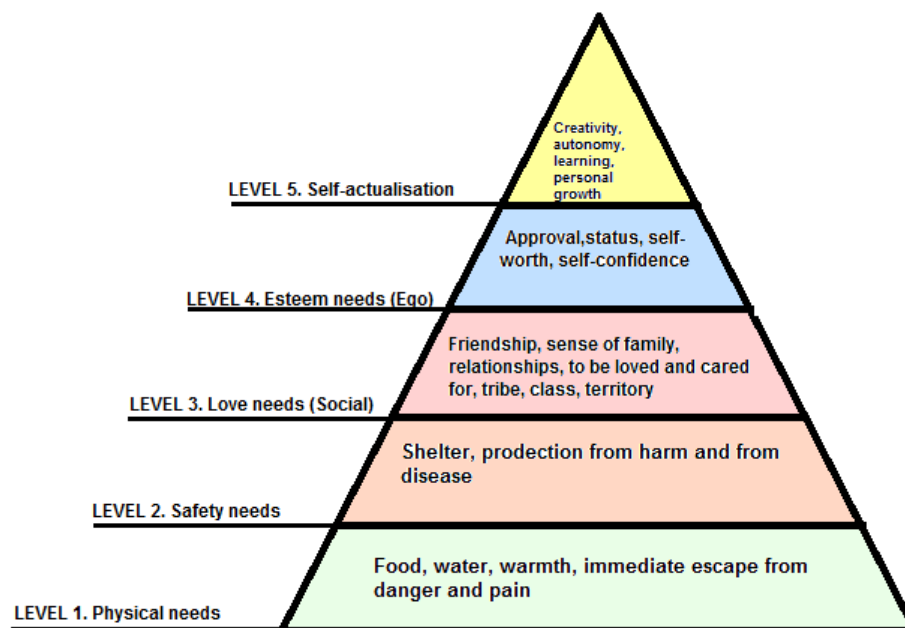
Some of the financial impacts of work well-being are immediate and some can be seen much later in the future. The table (5) above categorizes the financial effects of work well-being to immediate, indirect and ultimate effects. Financially, when company invests in work well-being, the employer gains more efficient worktime from employees as well as save in sick leave and accident costs. The indirect effects are all related to motivation that can be supported through work well-being. (Manka & al. 2012; Ojala-Ahonen, 2003)

A motivated employee is more productive and performs with a better quality and therefore also affecting to customer satisfaction. The ultimate financial effects of work well-being will show in a long run. A work community that is feeling well, is more successful and prepared to serve with quality. The atmosphere can be sensed by customers as well and reputation (either positive or negative) will spread quickly through word of mouth. (Manka & al. 2012, Ojala-Ahonen, 2003)

3.1 Needs and work well-being

Need is an equivocal concept that has been approached by different theories. Perhaps the most popular theory about human needs is Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The theory puts needs in five categories (as shown in the figure 5 below) and in a hierarchical order, meaning that lower levels (needs) must be fulfilled before higher levels can come true.

Despite the hierarchical order, a specific need can be over or under emphasized. Humans are complex and from time to time singular needs may destabilize the whole pyramid, causing stress and complicate work well-being.



Picture 6. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943)

Each level of need also appear in work life and in work well-being. Physical needs are the most primitive needs that create the base to all other needs. The fulfilment of physical needs is crucial before other levels can be reached. The foundation of all needs is physiological needs such as hunger, thirst, fatigue and other physical needs. When we evaluate our well-being physically, we can ask questions such as:

Is one sleeping enough? Are there enough breaks during work day? Is one taking care of their physical condition and healthy nutrition? (Tribe, 2015.)

The second level, safety needs, often relate to uncertainties. Having a steady or continuous job, knowing that the salary is enough to cover living expenses and working in a safe environment without threats impact positively on fulfilling safety needs at work. Also conquering fears and having the need of variety in work tasks are part of safety needs and emphasis in them depends on individual. (Tribe, 2015.)

Social needs (third level) depend on individual. While one may enjoy working alone, another one has a higher need to work in groups. Social needs can be evaluated with the following helping questions: Will the work fulfil social needs? Are tasks equally divided inside the working team? Is the employer/team provide enough support? Are the team goals in line together? (Tribe, 2015.)

Fourth level is esteem and ego-related needs. Appreciating work, considering the work itself meaningful and personal contribution is important. Feedback is important. Also Liukkonen, Jaakkola and Suvanto (2012) agree that people who work need feedback and most importantly, *positive* feedback. (Liukkonen & al., 2012.) A person who feels like their work is not meaningful is likely to become exhausted. Bad leadership and inequality at work destroy work well-being and work performance. (Tribe, 2015)

The top level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is self-actualisation. If the work does not provide the chance to face challenges and improve, the needs will be fulfilled outside the work environment. On the other hand, if other needs in lower levels are not fulfilling, too demanding challenges can cause stress. (Tribe, 2015.)

3.2 What motivates us to work

Motivation is a difficult concept which does not have any theory to explain its appearance in different contexts. However, motivation can be roughly divided to external and internal motivation. It is a common thought that in work life motivation rises from external factors such as salaries, personnel funds, bonuses, options, gifts and treats. In time it has been noticed that these external motivators are not enough to have employees to make a commitment to the company and experience well-being in their working environment. Internal motivation arises from experiences of being respected and valuable employees to the company. The work feels valuable, the work community is strong and the work itself is satisfying. Internal factors have a bigger meaning especially when external factors are not meeting the expectations (employee is not paid enough salary) or when an employee have to choose between job positions. (Liukkonen & al., 2002, 5-8.)

Rubanovitsch (2011, 38-41) elaborates motivation to work and says that approximately less than one third of the personnel is fully committed to their work and for a half the work is "just a job". The remaining people are often unsatisfied with their work and often make it clear to everyone at work place. Young people stepping into the work life have a different mindset than older generations. Work does not deserve as much sacrifices as it used to and whereas careers used to be several decades it is now more common to work for several employers during lifetime. (Rubanovitsch, 2011.)

It is obvious that a new work position often is a motivator itself to many. However, the level of commitment tends to decrease already after first six months and only 38% feels being committed to their work. After three years the number has decreased to 22%. (Rubanovitsch, 2011.)

What is commitment, then? According to Rubanovitsch it is systematic goal setting and committing to work towards them, controlling one's energy and focusing on what is really important. If one is lacking energy to work, the motivation suffers as well. Also, motivation to work arises also when the personal life is in balance. If personal life is causing stress, it gets harder to focus and commit to work. Rubanovitsch also mentions the physical fitness as a source of motivation. Physically fit employee has a better ability and more capacity to work than one who is not physically fit. (Rubanovitsch, 2011.)

3.3 Rewarding employees

Rewarding is an important part of leadership. Through rewarding the management can motivate their employees to carry out tasks that are important and necessary to the company. Equally, rewarding must satisfy the needs of an employee. Rewarding affects to motivation to work and once it is done correctly and at a right moment, it leads both the employee and the organization towards the right direction.

The foundation of rewarding is to show gratitude and appreciation to the employee for doing a good work and to encourage them to keep up with great work performance. Strategic rewarding aims to engage the employees to the organization long-term. From the employee's standpoint, an appropriate reward maintains and increases motivation. (Fondia, 2015)

Salary is not considered as a reward. As Viitala writes: "It is the corporate's duty to pay an appropriate compensation for work contribution. Salary is mostly the price of work, not really rewarding or motivational tool." (Viitala, 2007, 140.)

Rewarding can be divided in two categories; tangible and intangible rewarding. Intangible rewarding are social and career gratuities where the employee gains the reward at work, inside the work community. Career gratuity is an acknowledgement of career development. The work is a reward itself and motivates the employee to improve and develop. Social gratuity stands for positive feedback and thanking, acknowledgement, creating strong social network, different status symbols and public honor (titles, decoration etc.) (Kauhanen, 2010.)

Tangible rewarding includes monetary rewards but also a variety of fringe benefits. In Finland, fringe benefits are monitored by law and collective agreements. Fringe benefits are for example providing employees insurances (life/health), automobile, apartment, telephone, meals (lunch) and sponsorship to leisure activities (exercise/cultural vouchers, gym at work/sponsoring gym membership). (Kauhanen, 2010.)

4 What is exercising?

“Exercise is a subset of physical activity that is planned, structured, and repetitive and has as a final or an intermediate objective the improvement or maintenance of physical fitness.” (Caspersen, Christenson, Powell 1985)

Exercising is conscious muscle activity run by nervous system that maintains and improves health and leads to physical fitness when practiced regularly. The benefits of exercising broad and can be overviewed from physical, mental and social point of view. (Huttunen, J., 2012)

In terminology, being physically active and exercising does not mean the same thing. Caspersen & al. (Table 7, 1985) define the difference between exercising and physical activity by the structure of both activities. Physical activity is a natural, sometimes even subconscious, activity that includes every movement we do with our bodies. Exercising is knowingly planned activity with an intention to improve or maintain physical fitness components. (Caspersen, Christenson, Powell, 1985.)

ELEMENTS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE

Physical Activity	Exercise
1. Bodily movement via skeletal muscles	1. Bodily movement via skeletal muscles
2. Results in energy expenditure	2. Results in energy expenditure
3. Energy expenditure (kilocalories) varies continuously from low to high	3. Energy expenditure (kilocalories) varies continuously from low to high
4. Positively correlated with physical fitness	4. Very positively correlated with physical fitness
	5. Planned, structured and repetitive bodily movement
	6. An objective is to improve or maintain physical fitness component(s)

Table 7 Elements of physical activity and exercise (Caspersen, Christenson, Powell 1985)

“Activity requiring physical effort, carried out especially to sustain or improve health and fitness.” (Oxford dictionaries, 2015)

Also World Health Organization (later in this report presented as WHO) has similar definitions to physical activity and exercise. Exercising is a planned sports session or beneficial exercising (transportation, i.e. walking or cycling) – something that is scheduled. Being physically active includes leisure time physical activity (walking, dancing, hiking and other active hobbies), household chores, work and all other physical activities in the context of daily, family and community activities. (WHO, 2015)

“Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it.” (Plato, 350 BC)

4.1 Physical effects of regular exercising

Exercising is probably the most efficient way to improve health and maintain the ability to live a daily life without physical limitations. Exercising affects the whole body and can be also used for curing purposes. (Huttunen, 2012.) Health is the foundation of human well-being and forms from physical well-being, mental well-being and social well-being. WHO defines “health” as following: *“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”*

According to the recommendations by WHO, in order to improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, reduce the risk of NCDs and depression, adults aged 18-64 years should do “at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity.” Aerobic activity is recommended to perform in bouts of minimum 10 minutes per session. Muscle training activities (to strengthen muscles) should be done twice or more per week, including major muscle groups. (WHO, 2015.)

Exercising is known to enable movement and to improve the immunity system (and therefore becoming more resistant to different diseases) However, the physical effects are much more than that. Here are listed some more of the physical effects and benefits of regular exercising:

- Reduces the excess body fat
- Lower blood pressure, positive influence to fats in blood and congealing problems

- Stronger bones and muscles
- Better posture and physical condition
- Reduces constipation
- Relaxes, better mood
- Improves one's knowledge about their body
- More energy to daily life
- Better sleep
- Maintains performance

(Suomen Sydänliitto ry 2015.)

In addition to that, according to WHO, people who are physically active have lower rates of all-cause mortality, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, colon and breast cancer, and depression. They are likely to have less risk of a hip or vertebral fracture and exhibit a higher level of cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness. Lastly, physically active people are more likely to achieve weight maintenance, have a healthier body mass and composition. (WHO, 2015)

4.2 Mental effects of regular exercising

”Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” (WHO, 2015.)

Besides having multiple physical benefits, exercising also affects to one's well-being mentally in numerous ways. Exercising has an overall reaction to body. Person who exercises regularly likely improves their physical performance, which influences mental well-being. Exercising has a reducing effect to depression and anxiety and increases self-confidence, stress control, vitality and intellectual performance. The positive effect of exercising is immediate but also there in a long run. (Ojanen, M.,2009.)

Improved physical health strengthens the feeling of having control and the trust that the body will follow the orders that brains tell it to do. Also improved ability to sleep, physical fitness and lost weight along with reaching goals gives one feeling of having control and motivates to keep going. Exercising can also be an emotional experience that bring strong feelings at present for example during a very challenging and tough workout or when achieving a goal with a group. (Ojanen, M., 2009.)

SOME PROPOSED PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Increases	Decreases
• Academic performance	• Absenteeism at work
• Assertiveness	• Alcohol abuse
• Confidence	• Anger
• Emotional stability	• Anxiety
• Independence	• Confusion
• Intellectual functioning	• Depression
• Internal locus of control	• Dysmenorrhea
• Memory	• Headache
• Mood	• Hostility
• Perception	• Phobias
• Popularity	• Psychotic behavior
• Positive body image	• Stress response
• Self-control	• Tension
• Sexual satisfaction	• Type A-behavior
• Well-being	• Work errors
• Work efficiency	

Table 8. Psychological benefits of exercising (Taylor, Sallis, Needle, 1985)

Taylor & al. have listed several psychological benefits of regular exercising (Table 8). Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) point out several similar benefits. Exercising feels good, relaxes body and mind. It is also a distraction from daily worries. "Studies show that it (exercising) is very effective at reducing fatigue, improving alertness and concentration, and at enhancing overall cognitive function." (ADAA, 2015) Exercising and other physical activities release endorphins. Endorphins are chemicals in the brain that act like natural painkillers. They also improve the ability to sleep which in turn will reduce stress. (ADAA, 2015.)

Also, based on the author's personal experience as a regular exerciser, exercising is a great stress reliever and a way to cope with different emotions. Exercising puts the excess energy to use and distracts from daily worries. The feeling after a workout is relaxed and calm and tangled thoughts seem clearer.

4.3 Social effects of regular exercising

The foundation to social well-being is relationships. This comprehends relationships to family, friends and co-workers. Different networks, communities and occupational organizations are important too. Especially skills in cooperation and interaction as well as tolerance and open-mindedness are important factors in the building process of social well-being. (Ojala, 2003, 22.) Many sports involve social contacts and ultimately it can create a sense of community among the group of exercisers. The feeling of being a part of a community appears in both team and individual sports. (Ojanen, 2009.)

Exercising and starting new hobbies are most commonly social face-to-face events where there is a great possibility to make new friends and practice social skills. Meeting new friends is not easy for someone who suffers from anxiety and low self-esteem but since exercising has a positive influence on these symptoms, in time it also makes social contacts easier. (Ojanen, M. 2009.)

In 2015, we are living a good amount of daily hours in social media. The small and big events of our lives are shared to our social networks and therefore also exercising has become a social event to be shared. Spending time in different social networks (competing athletes, regular exercisers, non-exercisers) the author has noticed that exercising habits and physical appearance also influence the social status of a person and how he or she is perceived by others.

Some popular applications and social medias for posting about exercising and other events of personal life in 2015 are for example Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Youtube and Twitter. (Schupak, A., CBS News, 2015)

5 Work well-being services

When it comes to exercising activities in work well-being, the activities involve everything that supports and improves employee's physical activity at work and during free time.

These activities are often seen as separate and individual activities. (Kylänpää, 2015.)

Exercise vouchers appear to be a popular choice but also different wellness services and organized group training at gyms are gaining popularity. There is a big variety of leisure and exercise activities. Organizations such as Groupon and Sportsetter provide discount coupons and free trials to their customers which enables the access to try out new sports.

5.1 Occupational health

Occupational health care is a part of health care and is a right of everyone in working life. The goal of occupational health care is to maintain and promote the health and ability to work of employees. According to Occupational Health Act, employers are required to arrange professional-level occupational health services for their employees to prevent work-related health risks. This is done at their (employers) own expense. There are over 1,000 health care organizations around Finland. The employers can choose to purchase the occupational health services either from municipal health center or private medical center. Also self-employed persons providing occupational health services are an option. (Kela, 2013.)

The duties of occupational health care are the following:

- Evaluation of dangers and burdening factors that might affect one's health
- Promoting occupational health care
- Evaluate and support working ability and performance
- Stating profession-related diseases and illnesses caused by work, preventing acts and follow-up
- Preventing occupational accidents
- Cure sicknesses
- Supporting returning back to work
- Guidance to rehabilitation
- Sharing information and counseling, (Työterveyslaitos, 2015.)

The benefits of occupational health care are big. It is an investment to productivity and work well-being. Preventing the safety problems at work and investing to occupational health care pays the invested euro three to five times back.

(Työterveyslaitos, 2015)

5.2 Exercise vouchers and sponsorship

Nowadays exercise vouchers and cards are a popular choice for employers to purchase since they can be shared to employees. Exercise vouchers are used for motivating and rewarding and it is tax-exempt (to up to 400€) for the employer. (Edenred, 2015) In Finland there are hundreds of companies giving exercise vouchers or electronic-cards to their employees to support their physical activity. The most popular service providers selling exercise vouchers to employers are

- Smartum (Smartum, value 4€ or 5€ per voucher)
- Edenred (Virikeseteli, value 5€ per voucher)
- RJ-Kuntoilusetelit Oy (Tyky-kuntoseteli, value 2€ or 4€ per voucher)

Since the benefit is tax-exempt, the employer must be the provider of the benefit and therefore make an agreement with the service provider. Also, the employee using the benefit must be able to be recognized as an active member of the company. (KELA, 2008)

There are thousands of sport places and gyms that accept exercise vouchers and cards. This gives the employees freedom to choose an activity that motivates them the best. The vouchers can be used for single visits or the pay up membership (i.e. gyms). Only Edenred has 5200 sport and cultural places in their network and Smartum has 6394. (Edenred, 2015; Smartum, 2015)

5.3 Exercise groups

Other than exercise vouchers, employers can also organize exercise groups and projects where employees exercise together. In Finland, big gym chains such as Sats Elixia and Fressi provide work well-being services and group training for companies to purchase.

The main goal and priority of the classes is to energize the whole staff through exercise and be a natural part of preventive and promotional work well-being. During the classes we aim to involve the entire personnel of the company from active exercisers to beginners. (Fressi, 2015.)

Finnish companies Lifted and HeiaHeia are good examples of service providers selling online coaching and courses for companies who seek to improve their personnel's work well-being and physical health. Both Lifted and HeiaHeia highlight the flexibility and easiness of online coaching and how it has a stress free approach to including physical activity to daily living.

HeiaHeia is popularly known as a social media platform where people can keep track on their weekly exercises and cheer their friend's physical activity. However, they also provide services for companies who seek to improve their employee's physical fitness and work well-being. (HeiaHeia, 2015.)

Lifted provides online coaching for individuals and companies. Programs come in different lengths from 5 to 8 weeks. They also organizes recreational events for companies. The online coaching includes online lectures (nutrition etc.) and exercise videos and the consultation of the coach. The courses and content are tailored according to the wishes of the company. (Lifted, 2015.)

5.4 A pioneer #1: Pekkaniska (FIN)

Pekkaniska is a leading company renting cranes, forklifts and access platforms in Finland, Sweden, Russia and Ukraine. The company was founded in the 1960's when Finnish entrepreneur Pekka Niska started his company. (Grönstrand, 2015.)

The company supports financially the sport activities of their employees by offering a bonus program which encourages to healthy lifestyle. The bonus system enables all of the company's employees to have a remarkable add to their salary. (Pekkaniska, 2015)

In an interview Pekka Niska has said: *"These bonuses have probably cost us hundreds of euros but we have earned it back and multiplied that amount in productivity, decreased sick leaves and nonexistent changes in staff"* (Niska, 2008)

The bonuses:

- No smoking: 170 EUR/year
- No alcohol: 170 EUR/year
- Completing one of the sport competitions listed below: 170 EUR
 - orienteering 25 km,
 - marathon 42 km,
 - rowing 50 km,
 - cross-country skiing 60 km,

- cycling 120 km
- triathlon 1500m/40km/10km
- Pulling more chin ups than the managing director of Pekkaniska: 170 EUR
- Jogging (min 5 km): 1 EUR/km
- Commuter cycling (min 5 km/one way): 0,25 EUR/km
- No sick leaves: 510 EUR/vuosi
- Quitting smoking: 1.000 EUR , (Pekkaniska, 2015)

Some rules apply to the bonuses. Endurance sports bonus is paid by one event per year and chin up bonus is paid for the first win only. Jogging must be done in groups of two or more employees at lunch hour or after work and it will start at work place. Commuter cycling is paid according to the shortest distance between home and work place.

The biggest bonus is earned from quitting smoking. The employee will be paid the bonus if she/he will stay non-smoking a full year (Pekkaniska, 2015.)

5.5 A pioneer #2: Google (USA)

Google was founded in 1998 by Larry Page and Sergey Brin. With a mission of "to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful", Google is the world's popular web search engine. In 2015, Google has multiple other products going alongside with their popular search engine. (Google, 2015.)

In total there are nine different categories that are for example web (Google Chrome – a web browser), geo (Google Maps and Earth), specialized search functions (Scholar and custom search), home and office (Gmail, Google Drive, Calendar, Google Docs, Translate) and social (Google+, Blogger, Groups)
(Google, 2015)

Career site Glassdoor's annual list of 50 Best Places to Work chose Google as the top company to work for in 2015. Google has been on the list since 2009 (Fox News, 2014) Alongside with health insurance, retirement benefits and according to their website, "anything you can expect from a large company", Google also provide the following perks and benefits to their employees:

- Extended maternity and paternity leave + employee's stock continues to vest
- Free on-site day care
- Free gourmet meals and snacks
- Access to Google products that haven't been announced to public yet
- Pets are allowed at work

- Free fitness classes and gyms (+encouragement to participate organized intramural sports)
- The 80/20 rule (80% for primary job, 20% for passion projects that will help the company) (Google, 2015)

In an online question-answer platform, Quora, any former/current employees have commented the positive consequences of the perks and benefits at work.

“ We are surrounded by smart, driven people who provide the best environment for learning I've ever experienced.” (Former Googler, 2012)

“ The Goog even gives us a bonus, called 'baby bonding bucks' shortly after our baby is born to help with expenses like diapers, takeout, and formula during our leave.” (Software engineer at Google, 2013)

“ It will sound a bit cheesy, but in my opinion to best employee perk is the people you work with. I've worked in several other .coms and have never been more challenged and energized professionally from my colleagues than at Google. People are generally happy to work here, they come from diverse backgrounds and almost always have an interesting story to share.

The 2nd best non-monetary perk is the 20% time concept. I think it makes Google one of the coolest places to work for...” (Product Designer at Google, 2013)

(Quora, 2012-2013)

5.6 A pioneer #3: Youi (OZ)

In 2015, Australia rewarded the country's top HR professionals at the annual Australian HR awards. The winner of the year is an Australian insurance company called Youi who launched “YourLife” program. The company sells insurances for home and vehicles, watercraft and business liability. (Youi, 2015.)

“YourLife” is run by the manager and coordinator of the company and the program focuses on four main areas: health, well-being, wealth and benefits. During the program, the employees are offered a variety of activities in sports including personal training, ice skating, team sports sponsorship, running clubs and walking groups. The CEO of the company also leads the group for a weekly jog near Youi's Queensland office. (Youi, 2015.)

The well-being component of the program digs deeper into the health of the employees and offers them a chance to take part on yoga and meditation sessions as well as onsite health assessments: health tests, surveys, nutritional assistance and weight watchers that go alongside with the physical activities they choose. Also mental health has been taken into account and the company provides a lot of support in dealing with stress, depression and getting a better sleep. The information is also put available to the company's online tools. (Youi, 2015.)

In wealth aspect the company offers lectures lead by experts of finances, saving plans and mortgage comparisons. The employees are also offered assistance in any questions about pension funds and plans for retirement. (Youi, 2015.)

The benefits program includes 60 organisations that offer discounts in entertainment, retail, accommodation, health providers, dining, banking and so on. Youi also rewards the employees for participation to health, well-being and wealth activities. (Youi, 2015.)

"We are moving down the path of gamifying the experience, so people can see where they rank versus their colleagues, and we also give out random prizes for participating." says Ivan Pierce, the head of human capital of Youi. (Taylor, C., 2015)

6 Research project

Chapter 6 focuses on the research project and its empirical part. First there is an introduction about the case company and about TARMO project which is the case study of this thesis. As earlier presented in the introduction, the aim was to find out how regular exercising affects productivity and whether companies should invest in the physical activities of their personnel. The sub-questions were:

- What are the effects and benefits of exercising and keeping physically fit?
- Does it have an influence on productivity and work performance?
- Do employees perform better at work?
- Do they personally consider exercising as one of the key factors to good performance?

The research results and observations will be analyzed in Study results (Chapter 7).

The research has been executed in qualitative research methods. Qualitative research emphasizes in understanding the responses of research participants. Whereas quantitative research is more result oriented, precise and analytic, has the qualitative research more holistic approach that is based on interpretation. (Räsänen, 2015) Qualitative research involves a lot of different approaches. This particular thesis is a case study. Punch (1998) defines "case study" as following:

"The basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there may be a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible." (Punch, 1998, 150)

Popular methods to collect material for qualitative research are interviews, questionnaires, observation and information that is based on documents. These methods can be used either as options or combining two or more methods together for a particular research. The idea of an interview and a questionnaire is simple: when we want to know what people are thinking or why they choose to act as they do, the easiest way to find out is to ask directly from them. It is recommended that the interviewee is given a possibility to become familiar with the questions before the interview. (Tuomi, Sarajärvi, 2002.)

According to Tuomi & al. (2002), the benefit of an interview is without a doubt its flexibility. The interviewer has the possibility to repeat the question, correct misunderstandings, clarify unclear statements and have an actual conversation with the interviewee. (Tuomi,

Sarajärvi, 2002) Silverman supports this thought by talking about the “lived experience” of a qualitative research. “The pursuit of “lived experience” means that many qualitative researchers favour the open-ended interview” which leaves space for more in-depth analysis.(Silverman, 2005.)

6.1 Research methods and implementation

For this thesis there were two different research methods used; an interview and a questionnaire. The interview was chosen as one of the methods because it was the best way to collect information in detail about the exercise group from its organizers. The interview gave the interviewer the possibility to ask clarifying questions. Also the interviewee had the chance to explain, clarify and elaborate their answers. The research also began with the interviews by first interviewing the Human Resource manager of Talentum. During the interview the author asked questions and made notes. For the interview with Elixia Salmisaari’s deputy manager, the author used a recording device. The interviews were used to collect material about the TARMO project and how it is implemented.

The study results are mainly based on the results of the questionnaire and therefore it is the primary method of the research. The questionnaire was chosen because it is a fast and easy way to collect data and information from a big group of people. Also, performing a questionnaire was suitable to the author, who is still new to doing qualitative research. According to dr. Henrik Räsänen from HAMK, the challenge in interviewing often is the limits with time and funding the research as well as having an interviewer who is experienced enough. (Räsänen, 2015.)

The questionnaires were given to the group participants of TARMO at the premises of Elixia Salmisaari. Filling the questionnaire was optional and happily 50% (15/30) of the group participants returned the filled questionnaire. Alternatively the author could have used an interview as primary or an only research method but due to time limits she chose to implement a questionnaire instead.

Analysing the research results has been done with content analysis. Guidelines to the content analysis are presented by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002). The four steps of content analysis include collecting the corner stones of the material (1) and separating them and the excess material from each other (2). Once that is done, the material that is being examined will be either categorized or put in themes (3). The final part of the content analysis is to write down a summary that is based on the findings of the results. (Tuomi, Sarajärvi, 2002) The content analysis will be implemented in Chapter 7.

6.2 Talentum

Talentum is a Nordic company that focuses on versatile media publications. Talentum Oyj's history carries all the way to the 1930's, when Finnish financial journal Talouselämä was established in 1938. Officially Talentum Oyj was founded in 1990 when Insinöö-rilehdet Oy and Talouselämä Oy merged. In 2015, the company's location in Finland is in Ruoholahti, Helsinki. (Talentum, 2015.)

In 2015, the current CEO of Talentum Oyj is Aarne Aktan. He has been working in the position since 2011. Currently Talentum employs approximately 800 people in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, the Baltics and Russia. In Finland, the biggest competitors of Talentum are Sanoma and Alma Media (in publishing magazines) and Edita (book publishing). (Talentum, 2015.)

The vision of the company is *"to be the professional's first choice for insight and information."* The company holds three values: "respect of our customers", "collaboration is strength" and "competitiveness". The values guide the employees when working with customers, partners and colleagues. (Talentum, 2015.)

The key products of Talentum are books, magazines, online services, events and training. The company's business functions are divided to six departments:

1. Magazine Business Finland

- Publishes print and online magazines to professionals. In Finland Talentum's magazines are: Talouselämä, Tekniikka&Talous, Arvopaperi, Tivi, Mikrobitti, Fakta, Mediauutiset, Markkinointi&Mainonta, Metallitekniikka, Tekniikan Historia, CIO, Arvoasunto and Uratie. Subjects of the magazines are related to economics, finance, media, technology and careers.

2. Magazine Business Sweden

- Similar activities to Finland. In Sweden Talentum's magazines are: Ny Teknik, Affärsvärlden, Lag&Avtal, Dagens Media, Arbetarskydd, Teknikhistoria, Digital Teknik, Next and Ingenjörskarriär. Subjects in the magazines are related to economics, law, finance, media, technology and careers.

3. Talentum Events

- Organizes events and training. B2B media platform for executives, management and other professionals.

4. Books and legal training

- Legal and professional literature, online services, training in law, financial management, taxation and supervisory work.

5. Direct marketing

- Operation in telemarketing business.

6. Other activities

- Comprises company's group operations and Russian associated company, Consec Press.

(Talentum, 2015.)

6.3 TARMO

TARMO was founded in 2013 and it is a well-being and exercise project organized for Talentum's personnel. The responsible organizer of TARMO is a Finnish company called Trainer's House. Each season of TARMO lasts six months. In order to join the project, an employee must apply and be accepted to the group by the Human Resource Manager of the company. The reasons why TARMO was originally formed are based on the ideology of the company management. The managers are living a healthy lifestyle themselves, and believe in the correlation between physical and mental well-being.

In total, in the group of TARMO have 30 spots available for interested employees. According to Talentum's HR Manager, Oona Silén, usually twenty people out of thirty are joining the project for the first time and the remaining ten have participated before, reapplied and gotten accepted. Majority of the participants are women. Even though the project has a clear six month plan, the company does not want the rules to be too strict and tight and therefore it is also possible to join an ongoing project if there are places available.

The application process takes about two to three weeks. An employee is asked to fill a form that is published on the intranet of the company. One should be able to elaborate the reasons why they should be chosen to the group. According to Silén, who chooses the group members, the priority are the ones who would benefit from being then group the most. The reasons to apply vary among employees. Some have a concrete goal, such as losing a certain number of bodyweight, and some wish to improve their overall well-being.

There has also been a member in the group who has overcome the overuse of alcohol with the help of the project.

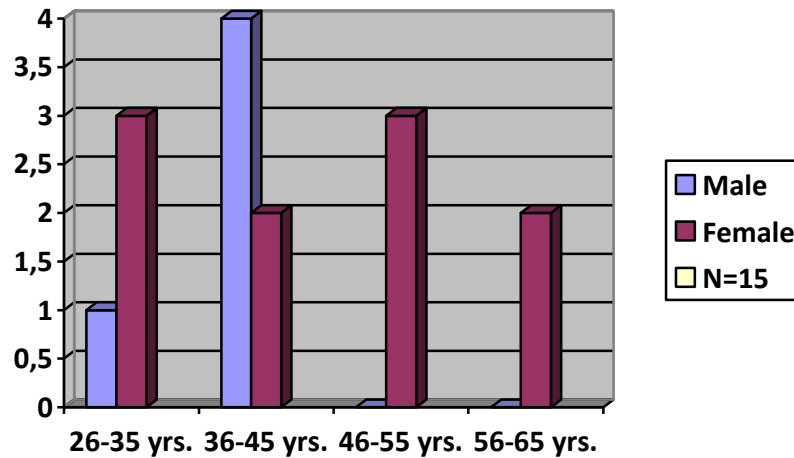
Each TARMO project begins with a kick off. During the kick off the group participants go through body composition test and a Firstbeat test. Firstbeat measures the physical capacity of an individual. The participants are given heart rate monitors by Suunto and special insoles for workout shoes. The workout results can be easily downloaded to Movescount, an online platform to keep track with process. Alternatively, the group participants use HeiaHeia.

During the interview with Oona Silén, the author asked whether the company has expectations or wishes with the results and improvement of group members. Silén replied that the company sees TARMO as a possibility they want to provide to their personnel. Even though the company is curious about what motivates people to apply to the group, the goals are up to an individual and therefore the group members do not hold any responsibility to perform improvements to the company. Also the data that is collected during the project (test results) are for members themselves only. Then again, when talking about the challenges of group, Silén mentions lack of commitment and occasional slips.

6.4 TARMO III, 2015

The third edition of TARMO started in 25th of February, 2015. As before, again 30 employees were accepted as participants. Below there will be presented some demographics of the group participants and describe how the TARMO III was implemented.

Based on the attendance list the author was given, 66% of the group participants are female and 44% are male. In the following picture (9) is presented the age distribution between male and female applicants of TARMO III who took part on the questionnaire. 15 people (50%) of the total amount of group participants answered to the questionnaire out of which 33% were male and 66% female. The picture (9) shows, that the most popular age group in men are 36-45 years whereas the differences in age groups of women are not as dramatic.



Picture 9. The age distribution of questionnaire participants

The questionnaire also asked about the educational background of the employees. Most of the respondents have either studied in a university or in a vocational school. The amount of replies was the same. Secondly most replies had a degree from University of Applied Sciences. Two respondents have Matriculation Examination diploma without further education.

73% of the respondents evaluated their current health status as “Good” which stands for being physically fit and seldom falling sick. 4 respondents (26%) evaluated their health status as “Quite good”, involving occasional sickness. The questionnaire was implemented in late May when the group had already been exercising for three months actively. Comparing the results of the physical test and replies to the questionnaire, it can be assumed that the improved physical fitness has an influence to the answers about the health status and exercise habits.

The group training was organized at Elixia Salmisaari. Elixia Salmisaari is a part of recently merged Sats Finland Oy and Oy Elixia Finland Ab (from 2016 onwards, only Sats Finland Oy) which is a leading provider of exercise and wellness services in the Nordic area. There are currently 23 Sats and Elixia gyms in Finland. (SatsElixia, 2015.)

The gym had scheduled three days each week when the group exercises together with an instructor. The gym also organized the physical condition tests each month as a part of the project. In spring 2015 the contact person for TARMO at Elixia Salmisaari was Viivi Piironen who at the time was the deputy manager of club. TARMO members were also offered optional health and well-being lectures by mental coach Jarmo Riski.

The group exercised at Elixia Salmisaari on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. According to Viivi Piironen, the contact person from Trainer's House sent a monthly plan of themes for each week's workouts. The themes were: (1) cardio and mobility, (2) strength and mobility and (3) core and stretching. Piironen planned the content of the workouts accordingly. Each workout lasts for 45 minutes and the classes are products of Sats Elixia.

At the beginning of the project the sessions put the main focus in learning the right techniques of different movements and introduce the group to different classes. This ensured that beginning to exercise regularly feels good and it is fun to do. In time, in the same pace with the continuously improving physical condition, the workouts get more intense. The exercises vary from indoor cycling to working with kettlebells or dumbbells or with own bodyweight. There are also instructed stretching and pilates.

The project also included a physical test that measures the physical condition of a person. The first test was implemented in early March at Elixia Salmisaari and from there was repeated monthly. The test is always the same and includes the following movements:

7 x push-up (chest to ground and with hand release)

7x sit-up (feet on ground with bended knees, hands straight up front, no swinging movements)

7x squat (hands on hips, thighs and shins should make a 90 degrees angle)

7x kettlebell swing

The time cap for the workout was 15 minutes and within that time one must perform as many rounds as possible. Doing all four movements counts as one round. Push-ups, sit-ups and squats are done without additional weights. The weight of the kettlebell varied from 8kg to 16kg. In June, before the summer break, one male participant performed the test with a 32kg kettlebell, scoring 19 full rounds. The results of the physical test will be evaluated in further detail in Chapter 7, Study results.

According to Piironen and based on the attendance lists, the participation of members was very active. Piironen says, that the participants became friends who cheer for each other and after training stay at the gym café enjoying breakfast together. In other words, the team spirit is really good.

7 Study results

This case study aimed to find out how regular exercising affects productivity. The questionnaire that was made for TARMO participants included questions about the exercise habits, reasons to apply to the group and the personal experiences about the effects of regular exercising. The participants answered to the questionnaire anonymously. This chapter will go through the answers and present the results in detail.

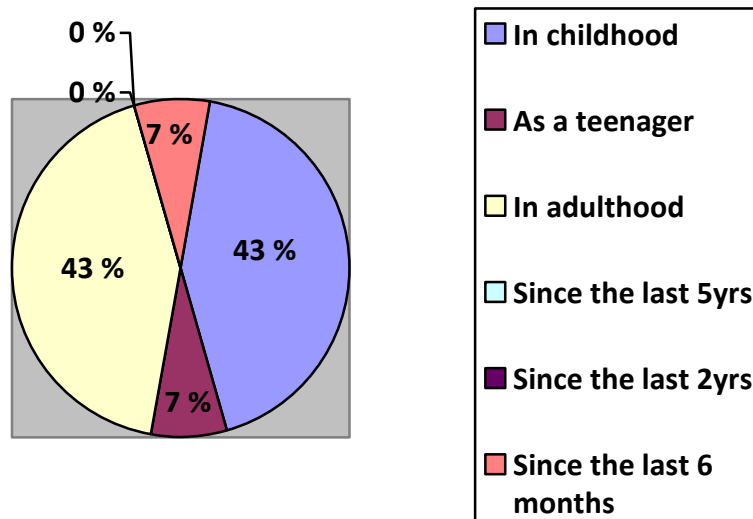
As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the primary research method for this study was the questionnaire. With the questionnaire the author collected data and opinions about the participants' own personal experiences about their possibly improved productivity. The four steps of content analysis include collecting the corner stones of the material (1) and separating them and the excess material from each other (2). Once that is done, the material that is being examined will be either categorized or put in themes (3). The final part of the content analysis is to write down a summary that is based on the findings of the results.

For the study results, a content analysis was performed as presented by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002). The structure of the content analysis was explained in the previous chapter. The first step was to find the corner stones of the material. In my questionnaire the corner stones are the demographics of the participants, their exercise habits and their experiences and opinions about the TARMO group. Once the excess material was taken off, the chosen questions were categorized and separated to three main themes that are essential for the research questions. Due to this categorization the study results will not focus on each questions of the questionnaire but summarize the results in the light of the chosen themes.

The themes are:

- personal goals and reasons to apply to the group
- thoughts about the positive effects of exercising
- changes in test results

The questionnaire presents a question about the years of experience of exercising and the responses can be seen next page in picture 10. There was not a big variety in answers; majority (both 43% each group) have either begun exercising in childhood or in adulthood. One respondent had begun as a teenager and one just lately, in the last six months. None of the respondents had begun their exercising in recent years, either 2 or 5. One respondent had not answered to the question at all.



Picture 10 The years of exercising experience (n=15)

All the 15 respondents have different personal goals and reasons to apply that, however, fall in to similar subject areas. Many are missing regularity and variety in their exercise routines. Group pressure was also mentioned as a positive motivator. Third of the respondents mentioned training in a group as one of the reasons to apply as they consider team spirit and cheering for one another as important factors to keep on going.

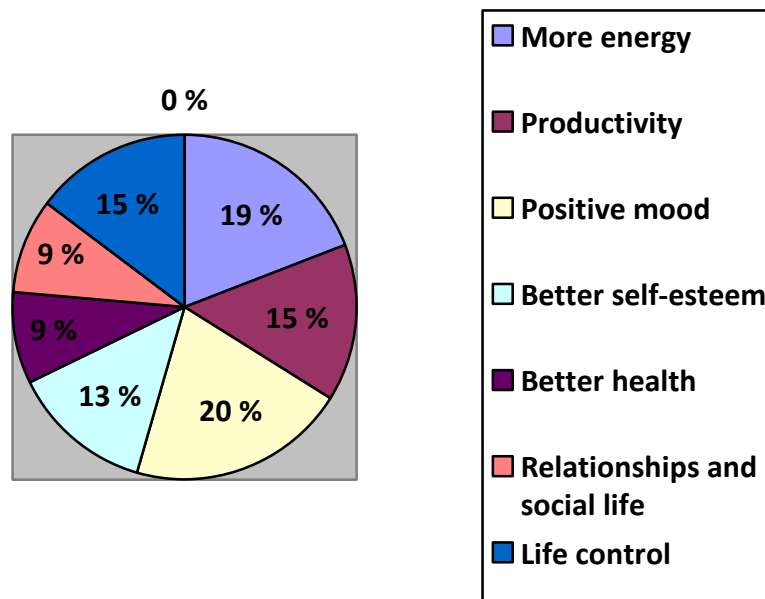
‘I would not exercise by myself. Group training and the positive group pressure fits for me.’ (Female respondent, second time in TARMO)

Over a half of the questionnaire participants wrote down that they wish to improve their physical fitness and other comments related to the subject was weight loss and finding the inspiration and fun in exercising and making it a weekly activity. Some were curious to see if exercise gives them more energy to daily life and for work.

Some of the answers were more personal than others and went deeper into the detail. One respondent was recommended to join the group by occupational health care due to mood swings, lack of energy and overweight. Also wanting to get rid of problems in the back and shoulder region were reasons to join the group.

‘TARMO is the best and a crucial solution for the well-being of my back. Without being a part of TARMO, I could not work without painkillers. Even my (back) surgeon is satisfied since I got to join the group soon after my surgery in 2013. TARMO provides the best and most versatile help and professionally instructed training. I am very thankful for TARMO!’ (Female respondent, third time in TARMO.)

The second theme in content analysis was thoughts about the positive effects of exercising. In the questionnaire, the question about the positive effects of exercising was a multiple choice question and the responses are presented below, in picture 11. The options of the positive effects were the following: (a) more energy to work, (b) work productivity, (c) general mood, (d) self-esteem, (e), decreased sickness, (f) relationships and social life, (g) life control.



Picture 11. The positive effects of exercising (n=15)

The most popular answer was better mood (20%) where 14 out of 15 respondents have considered it is due to exercising. Better productivity and having more energy were second and third most popular answers. Also life control and better self-esteem as well as decreased sickness were considered as positive effects of exercising. Four out of 15 respondents ticked all options as positive effects and all respondents had chosen more than only one positive effect. With this we can tell that the positive effects of exercising are multi-dimensional and even go hand in hand.

The final theme is changes in test results. 80% of the respondents replied that their test results (body composition and/or physical test) had either improved a little or significantly improved. Unfortunately there was no access to view and compare the body composition results but comparing the physical test results from different times shows significant improvement.

TARMO III exercised in spring during weeks 9-24, following a summer break on weeks 25-33. The fall season lasted weeks 34-44. The first physical condition test was done in 4th of March, 2015 and final test in week 44, on 28th of October, 2015.

Date	Amount of test takers	Performance: Group average (amount of rounds)	Best performance (women)	Best performance (men)
4.3.2015	25	10,92= ~11 rounds	18 rounds	11 rounds
3.6.2015 (before summer break)	12	15,41= ~15 rounds	19 rounds	19 rounds
28.10.2015	17	16,52= ~17 rounds	22 rounds	16 rounds

Table 12. Summary of physical test results of TARMO III

Throughout the whole project, the group members maintained a high percentage in attendance which also shows in test results (as presented in the table 12 above). During the first physical test the group average in performance was nearly 11 full rounds. As the chart shows, there is a significance development in performance already in the middle of the project. The last physical test was done in week 44 in October which concluded to over 16 full rounds as an average group performance. Throughout the project women improved their performance by 18% and men by 31%. Comparing the first and final physical test results the whole group improved their average performance in 54 % which as a result is amazing.

8 Discussion

8.1 Conclusions about study results

This bachelor thesis had an aim to find out the reasons why organizations should invest in their employees' physical activities and how regular exercising affects to productivity. The supporting sub-questions were:

- What are the effects and benefits of exercising and keeping physically fit?
- Does it have an influence on productivity?
- Do employees perform better at work?
- Do they personally consider exercising as one of the key factors to good performance?

The conclusions are reflecting the findings in presented theory, research problem and sub-questions.

Multiple references in the theoretical framework of my thesis as well as the answers in the questionnaires speak for the multiple effects and benefits of exercising. The effects are multi-dimensional and affect in physical, mental and social levels.

In the questionnaire there was a question about the positive effects of exercising (Picture 11, Chapter 7) and the results show that the respondents also consider the positive effects of exercising as diverse. "Positive mood" was the most popular answer to the question, followed by "More Energy" (19%) and "Productivity" (15%). Regular exercising improves physical fitness and working capacity and gives more energy to the day. Some of the physical and mental effects are a continuum of each other. Motivation and positive attitude towards exercising and other areas of life likely increase when one can see the improvement of their physical fitness.

The social effects tend to be more subjective and dependant on individual personalities. As earlier discussed in the theoretical part about the social effects, with social media exercising has grown to be a social event that is shared through different social media channels to those who are not present with the exerciser. Exercising habits and physical appearance also create certain social status. During the analysis of the questionnaire, the author noticed how exercising in a group was considered as a positive experience among group members. In other words, exercising in TARMO group was considered as a social experience as well.

In comments, a few respondents wrote about a positive team spirit, cheering for one another and making new friends in the group. Some participants also mentioned group pressure as a positive motivator that keeps the going.

As summarized earlier, a bigger percentage of participants considered themselves being more productive and having more energy to work. However, what remained unanswered in this thesis is whether the employees *actually* perform better at work. Also, even though majority of the respondents replied that increased energy levels is a positive effect of exercising, “a good performance” remains a subjective concept.

The final question in the questionnaire asked the respondents to describe their experiences as participants of TARMO. 100% of the answers were positive which in one way speaks for the cost-effectiveness of the project. A group that exercises together also became friends and acquaintances at work place, even if they work in different departments.

The main purpose of this thesis research was to find out the reasons why organizations should invest in their employees' physical activities. The research results has given an insight that, according to the responses of the questionnaire, employees who exercise together build a stronger work community and as individuals are stronger and healthier employees to the company. The personnel who are feeling well, motivated and committed to the work are also more productive. Also the theoretical framework of this thesis presents numerous reasons why everyone should exercise regularly and how it affects to productivity. As a conclusion, the author states that companies definitely should invest in supporting the physical activities of the personnel as it result more productive and happier work community as well as monetary benefits by reduced costs.

8.2 Reliability of the research and propositions for future research

When evaluating the research process and its successfulness, a few important thoughts arise. The research conclusions are mainly based on the questionnaire results and theoretical framework. The interviews for research were mainly used to build up background information and learn about the structure of TARMO group. The questionnaire puts quite a lot of emphasis to exercise habits and the positive effects of regular exercising in general matter. However, there could have been more questions that directly targets to opinions about work productivity.

The validity of the questionnaire suffers a bit as it struggles to keep to main focus on productivity. Also, before implementing the questionnaire, the author did not know about

the current level of TARMO participants' productivity. Therefore the sub-question about employees performing better and opinions about good performance remain unanswered or somewhat unanswered. The conclusions about the productivity are based on the theoretical framework and questionnaire results and the author has established a more general opinion rather than particularly focusing on TARMO group's productivity.

When it comes to research methods and content analysis, in this case interviewing and questionnaires were the right methods to serve the purpose. Some observation was done as well, but in this thesis the results are majorly based on the material from the interviews and questionnaires. An interview was not implemented with any of the exercisers of TARMO group but with the organizers. This could be done for further research but in this particular research I doubt their answers during interviews would not be different. Implementing the questionnaire was successful as there was a high percentage (50%) of participants to the research. The participants were also eager to answer to the open ended questions and share their opinions about exercising and being a part of TARMO.

The questionnaire answers are reliable as it was supervised that only TARMO participants were allowed to take part to the questionnaire. The results might have been different if the regular members of the gym had an access to the questionnaire. However, some of the questions are particularly about being a part of the exercise group TARMO to which an outsider could not have answered to.

All information in the theoretical part as well as data in test results and group attendance correlates with the responds in questionnaires which strengthens the reliability of the results. The demographic profiles and backgrounds of respondents were different which creates diversity among respondents. They had different exercise histories and exercise habits prior to joining the group. There was also enough diversity in age groups among respondents.

Majority of the respondents were women, however a third of the respondents (5/15) were men. The particular questions that were used for the content analysis had a lot of similar answers among respondents. The diversity of group members (and especially in their demographics) and yet closely unanimous opinions puts the conclusions to an even stronger ground.

For future research there is great opportunity to study the same subject further in detail and put more emphasis to understanding productivity. Interviewing the employees who are participating in work well-being projects will likely give out more detailed information

and can provide a different perspective and put more depth to study results. Nowadays there are ways to measure work productivity but the concept of performance and “good performance” are highly based on opinions and expectations.

Also, work well-being and exercise groups at work are growing trends in Finland. As there obviously are more companies to use as great examples, the subject could be broadened to compare the structures of well-being and work well-being in Scandinavian area.

8.3 Evaluation of the thesis process

This thesis project started in early spring 2015 with the author’s participation to the thesis seminar course. The topic for the thesis was not immediately in mind but the author knew she wanted to write something about work well-being and healthy lifestyle. Having the background of working in the health and exercise industry for several years, sports have always been an important part of her lifestyle. At the same time the author was introduced to the exercise group, TARMO, at her work place and she got interested about their project as it seemed unique and very well structured. The author also became curious whether physical activities are often included to companies’ work well-being programs and wanted to learn more about the benefits of it.

By April 2015 the author had a clear idea in mind about the thesis and she wanted to focus on TARMO and research how their project and especially regular exercising affects to their work well-being. Once she interviewed the HR manager of Talentum, together they agreed that the author will put the main focus to how exercising has affected to the productivity of the employees.

The questionnaire was implemented right before the summer break and 50% of the group participants answered to it. The author was very satisfied with the activity of the group and to see their commitment to the project. During the summer months (June and July) the thesis project was frozen as the author did not quite know how she should begin to write the theoretical framework. The first meeting with the thesis supervisor was agreed to happen in August 2015 which officially begun the writing process.

The struggles the author faced were mainly about finding valid and up to date sources for the theoretical framework. The process was slow as majority of the material she was able find was in Finnish and therefore it needed to be translated. During this time the author learnt how much work well-being has been researched in Finland and not as much in other countries. In total, writing the theoretical frame work took approximately three full months as alongside with writing she has been working full time.

The empirical part felt a lot easier and more motivating to write about as it was all about diving in to the answers of the questionnaire and interview answers. The author was very satisfied with the amount of answers and how nearly all participants had taken the time to reply to the open ended questions of the questionnaire.

Sadly, the author also got to learn through the hard way how important taking care of basic needs and personal well-being truly is. In September the author fell sick and was not able to go to work or continue writing the thesis in over a week. Her sickness was due to working too much and as a stress reaction it appeared as an aggressive stomach pain. Soon after the incident the author learnt to pace her work and writing as well as schedule time for rest. The author also exercised regularly throughout the whole process and felt it had a great influence to energy levels, happier mood, motivation and productivity.

Overall, the thesis project was a positive experience as the chosen topic was sincerely interesting. The author learned a lot about the current situation of Finland's work well-being and how it is managed as well as how to perform a qualitative research. Work well-being is a well-studied topic in Finland and the benefits of exercising are well understood.

If this thesis project was done again, the author would change her preparation process. The study results are satisfying but having a clearer structure and an action plan that begins with a theoretical framework, would make the process a bit easier. The research would be done differently as well. The author would have interviewed also the group participants of TARMO and change the content of the questionnaire to emphasize even more the productivity as of now the conclusions about productivity greatly lean on theory and not as much to research results.

The following feedback from a TARMO participant ends this thesis:

"I am very happy with my decision to participate to TARMO. Now there is three days in a week that I look forward to. My mood has gotten better since joining the group. Of course, I am also happy about the fact that I fit to my old size of pants again. The mysterious pain in my knee is gone. I can go for a run again without the next day's stinging pain." (Male, first time in TARMO)

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Appendices

Questionnaire for TARMO- Group 25.5.2015

Hello! My name is Nora Tawast and I work as a head of reception at ELIXIA Salmisaari. I am graduating from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in December 2015. My thesis is a research about work well-being and how regular exercising positively impacts on efficiency and work performance. Ultimately I aim to find an answer to the question, whether employer should or should not invest and support employees' physical activities.

Demographics

I am	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-25	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 26-35	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 36-45	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 46-55	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 56-65	
Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary school	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Matriculation examination	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational school	
	<input type="checkbox"/> University of Applied Sciences	
	<input type="checkbox"/> University	
	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ Other, please specify	
Marital status	<input type="checkbox"/> Single	
	<input type="checkbox"/> In a relationship/Married	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Widowed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not want to answer	

My current status of health is

- Good (Physically fit, seldom sick)
- Quite good (occasionally sick)
- Quite bad (often sick)
- Bad (on going medical treatment)

Exercise habits

I have been exercising since

- I was a child
- I was a teenager
- Adulthood
- the last 5 years
- the last 2 years
- the last 6 months

Describe with your own words the sports you have done

I am currently exercising (min. 30min)

- Not at all
- Once a week
- 2-3 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- Once a day
- More than once a day

I personally think that the amount I exercise is enough

___ Yes

___ No

I consider myself as

___ A competitive athlete

___ Exercising for keeping fit

___ Exercising to improve my health

___ Exercising only because natural causes (e.g. cycling to work instead of driving, taking stairs instead of an elevator etc.)

___ Exercising only every now and then

_____ Other, please specify

TARMO Group

Is this your first time participating to Tarmo?

___ Yes

___ No

What were the reasons to apply to the group?

In order to reach my personal goals, being part of Tarmo group is

___ Very important

___ Somehow important

___ Very little important

___ Not really important

___ Meaningless

My test results(inbody and/or physical test) have changed during my time in the group

___ Significantly improved

___ Improved a little

___ Worsen a little bit

___ Signfically gotten worse

___ No changes in results

My exercise habits have changed since joining the group

___ Significantly

___ Some matter

___ No changes

In case you have noticed some changes to your exercise habits, please describe them shortly

Exercising affects positively to

___ More energy to work

___ Work productivity

___ General mood

___ Self esteem

___ Decreased sickness

___ Relationships and social life

___ Life control

Describe your experiences as a member of Tarmo group

Thank you for participation!