**ARCADA**

# Dedicated and engaged employees! What does it take to sustain work engagement in the everyday work life?

A Qualitative study of a Finnish company

Johanna Oksanen

| DEGREE THESIS | |
|---|---|
| Arcada | |
| | |
| Degree Programme: | International Business |
| | |
| Identification number: | 20180 |
| Author: | Johanna Oksanen |
| Title: | Dedicated and engaged employees! What does it take to sustain work engagement in the everyday work life? |
| Supervisor (Arcada): | Minna Stenius |
| | |
| Commissioned by: | A Finnish company |
| | |

Abstract:

The aim of this inductive qualitative research is to investigate what work engagement means in the everyday, what it takes, and what may come in its way in the everyday struggles and challenges. By displaying the available knowledge in comparison with nine selected employees' opinions, this explorative research approach aims to identify the key job resources and job demands which work as indicators of work engagement in their daily job. The researcher applies a semi-structured interview analysis to retrieve rich data and capture the opinions of a small group of selected individuals that work for the company. The background knowledge and definitions of what work engagement exactly means are explained in detail as part of the theoretical framework. The history of the research of work engagement and the different definitions of it help to build a better understanding for the method, as well as the use of secondary data, which is extracted from peer-reviewed articles and scientific journals and other credible studies on the topic.

The results of the study suggest that work engagement increases by having a possibility for flexible work, mutual trust, social support, possibilities for personal development and by helping others. The hindering factors involve time pressure, distractions, negativity, and work-life imbalance. The study suggests that, once employees are able to make autonomous decisions, receive enough support, and have opportunities for personal development, they are more likely to reciprocate and perform their work with higher levels of engagement. The finding that job resources seem to nurture work engagement across time aligns well with theories that acknowledge job and personal resources or core self-evaluations as crucial determinants of employee well-being (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001). The empirical evidence of the negative relationship between the identified job demands and work engagement at hand is in line with those theories that job stress is caused by high job demands (e.g. work overload and time pressure) and low job control, i.e., the imbalance between job demands and control (Demerouti et. al, 2001).

| Keywords: | Work engagement, Qualitative research, Job Demands-Resources model. |
|---|---|
| Number of pages: | 55 |
| Language: | English |
| Date of acceptance: | 13.12.2019 |

| OPINNÄYTE | |
|---|---|
| Arcada | |
| | |
| Koulutusohjelma: | International Business |
| | |
| Tunnistenumero: | 20180 |
| Tekijä: | Johanna Oksanen |
| Työn nimi: | Dedicated and engaged employees! What does it take to sustain work engagement in the everyday work life? |
| Työn ohjaaja (Arcada): | Minna Stenius |
| | |
| Toimeksiantaja: | Suomalainen yritys |

Tiivistelmä:

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on syventää ymmärrystä työn imusta ja siihen vaikuttavista tekijöistä työn arjessa. Tutkimus pyrkii vastaamaan seuraavaan tutkimuskysymykseen: Mitkä asiat vaikuttavat työntekijöiden työn imuun työn arjessa? Tutkimuksen näkökulmana ovat haasteltavien omat kokemukset ja tätä tutkimusta varten haastateltiin yhdeksää toimeksiantajayrityksen työntekijää. Aihetta lähestytään kvalitatiivisesti ja haastattelut ovat teemahaastatteluja. Haastattelukysymykset pohjautuvat kirjallisuuskatsauksen JD-R teoriaan, joka on tutkimuksen pääteoria. Haastattelujen pohjalta rakentui kaksi kategoriaa: työn imuun positiivisesti vaikuttavat tekijät, sekä negatiivisesti vaikuttavat tekijät. Tutkimuksen tulosten mukaan työn voimavaroiksi voidaan luokitella työn joustavuus, työntekijöiden välinen luottamus, sosiaalinen tuki, henkilökohtaiset kehittymismahdollisuudet ja muiden auttaminen. Puolestaan työn imua laskeviksi tekijöiksi voidaan luokitella aikapaine, työn keskeytyminen, negatiivisuus ja työn ja vapaa-ajan epätasapaino. Kaikki nämä edellä mainitut löydökset saivat tukea useammalta haastateltavalta.

Työn imusta ja siihen vaikuttavista tekijöistä tehtyjen aiempien tutkimusten tulokset ovat linjassa tämän tutkimuksen löydösten kanssa, ja täten myös tukevat tämän tutkimuksen löydöksiä. Työn imu on tärkeä tutkimuksen aihe yrityksille, sillä se tuo esiin yrityksen työntekijöiden voimavaroja lisäävät ja laskevat tekijät. Aiempien tutkimusten mukaan työn imulla on yhteys yrityksen työntekijöiden työssä suoriutumiseen (Bakker and Bal 2010; Halsleben and Wheeler, 2008), asiakastyytyväisyyteen (Salanova, Agut and Peiro, 2005), ja tuottavuuteen (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, 2009). Toimeksiantajayritys voi halutessaan käyttää tämä tutkimuksen tuloksia henkilöstön kokonaisvaltaisen kehityksen edistämiseksi, sekä toteuttaa samanlaisen tutkimuksen koko organisaatiossa saadakseen selville koko yrityksen työntekijöiden mielipiteet työn imua nostavista ja laskevista tekijöistä. Vaikka työn imu koostuu useasta tekijästä, on sen tutkiminen tärkeää nykyajan organisaatioissa, sillä sen tutkimisella voidaan identifioida työn imua laskevia tekijöitä jo aikaisessa vaiheessa, ennen kuin organisaation ongelmat paisuvat liian suuriksi.

| Avainsanat: | Työnimu, laadullinen tutkimus, työn voimavarat. |
|---|---|
| | |
| Sivumäärä: | 55 |
| Kieli: | Englanti |
| Hyväksymispäivämäärä: | 13.12.2019 |

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT**

## Figures

## Tables

# 1 INTRODUCTION

*"Enthusiastic employees excel in their work because they maintain the balance between the energy they give and the energy they receive." -Prof. dr. Arnold B. Bakker*

Work engagement has been extensively studied internationally and in Finland over the past decade (e.g. Hakanen, Schaufeli and Ahola, 2008; Mauno et al., 2007; Taipale et al., 2011) and it continues to attract keen academic interest as highly potent construct of work well-being. This case study examines work engagement from the employee´s perspective in a Finnish company, and aims to provide an answer to the following question: How do employees explain changes in their everyday work engagement and reasons for these changes? The empirical analysis is based on nine semi-structured interviews. The main background theory for this research is the job demands-resources (JD-R) model that lies on the belief that job demands are related to the exhaustion component of burnout and that shortage of the necessary resources is related to disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001).

New ways of thinking and finding innovative approaches have become crucial for organizations to be able survive and to create sustainable growth and development. Alike with growing high demands on employees across all professions, the negative impact on workers` mental health issues is continuously increasing and chronic stress-related occupational diseases, especially burnout syndrome, are becoming a critical issue (Zhou, Jin and Ma, 2015). Bakker (2009) claims that work engagement has the power of making a significant difference on employee's wellbeing. Therefore, employees´ high work engagement can be a competitive advantage to organizations because of its positive simultaneous effects on employee well-being and performance at work. Hence, attention to work engagement is well justified in organizations as it has been argued that disengaged employees create costs due to lower productivity, higher turnover rates and negative attitudes and therefore it is important to have an engaged workforce (Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes, 2002; Little and Little, 2006; MacLeod and Clarke, 2009).

Several studies have claimed that work engagement has many positive effects. First, employee engagement is claimed to be a predictor of financial success among organisations

(Wefald and Downey, 2009). Second, employee engagement is also claimed to predict not only the effectiveness of the work (Rich, Lepine and Crawford, 2010), lower turnover intention (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004) but also the employee proactivity (Salanova and Schaufeli, 2008; Hakanen, Perhoniemi, and Toppinen-Tanner, 2008). These highly positive organizational and individual outcomes stress the importance to understand what predicts work engagement so that organizations can implement the necessary changes and can respond to the competitive pressure without putting employees´ health and well-being at risk.

## 1.1 Background

Over the past two decades, employees´ psychological connection with their work has gained vital importance worldwide, especially in the developed service and information economies. There is a rapidly growing literature on the effects of work engagement indicating that work engagement is connected to the bottom line outcomes such as job performance (Bakker and Bal, 2010; Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008), client satisfaction (Salanova, Agut and Peiro, 2005), and financial returns (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, 2009). Further evidence (Roper, Guzman, Sivertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen, 2013) also suggests that in today´s hectic and turbulent reality, it is sometimes difficult to keep up with the increasing competition on finding the best possible employees. Not only must companies search for the best performers, but they also need to engage and provide the possibility to grow for their existing employees so that they can apply their full potential to their daily work and continuously develop their skill set. Due to increased competition over the top talent, retaining the key employees has become more difficult.

There is growing support for the claim that it is critical for modern organizations to have employees who are psychologically attached to their work. Recruiters aim to find future employees, who are willing to invest themselves in their job roles and who are continuously proactive and committed to strive for the best possible results. Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that organizations need employees who are truly engaged with their work. (Bakker and Leiter, 2010)

Bakker (2009) argues that engaged employees are not only highly energetic but also self-efficacious individuals, who monitor the events that affect their lives. In addition, engaged employees are also often able to create their own positive feedback, in terms of appreciation, recognition, and successfulness, because of their positive attitude and high activity level. Although engaged employees do also feel exhausted and tired after a long day of challenging work, they often describe their exhaustion as a pleasant state because it is associated with several accomplishments. Most importantly, engaged employees appreciate other things outside work. Unlike workaholics, engaged employees do not work hard because of a strong and irresistible inner drive, but because for them working is fun (Gorgievski, Bakker and Schaufeli, 2010).

## 1.2 Research aim, questions, and relevance

There is abundant evidence that work engagement as an optimal state of well-being predicts performance, organizational commitment, and customer satisfaction (Bakker, 2010). Most studies to-date are, however, quantitative. The aim of this study is to investigate qualitatively what work engagement means in the everyday work life, what it takes, and what may act as hindrances.

This research is conducted inductively, i.e. allowing the data to lead to categorizations rather than searching for support to already existing theories. There are, naturally, theories about work engagement but in this research the goal is not to prove them right or wrong, but to understand how employees make sense of their work engagement.

The research question of this thesis is;

1) How do employees explain changes in their everyday work engagement and reasons for these changes?

## 1.3  Structure of the thesis

The report is structured into six chapters. Following the introductory chapter, the relevant academic literature for the purposes of this study is reviewed and an overview of the current literature on work engagement is presented. The third chapter presents the methodology of this research, including an explanation of the chosen research approach and the motivation for the selection of the sample. Moreover, the methods for data collection and analysis are presented. The chapter further assesses the research using criteria that are typically applied in evaluating qualitative studies.

The results of the research are presented in the fourth chapter. In the fifth chapter, results are discussed, analyzed, and contrasted with prior research and presented. The thesis is concluded in the last chapter. A summary of the main findings, and their possible practical implications are discussed, as well as, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

## 1.4  Abbreviations

JD-R = Job-demands-resources theory
UWES = The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
OLBI = Oldenburg Burnout Inventory
SDT = Self-determination theory

## 2  LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1  Definition of work engagement

Over the past twenty years, work engagement has been defined in several ways by researchers. Dutch professors Wilmar Schaufeli and Arnold Bakker from the University of Utrecht (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003) define work engagement as "…a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". A few years later, researchers Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) define work engagement in their research as a persistent, positive, affective-emotional state of fulfilment in one's job and stated that work engagement an essential role in global competition. Further, Bakker

and Leiter (2010) argue that work engagement stands for the art of how employees experience their work. They also state that the characteristics of work engagement are that the work is at the same time stimulating, energetic and something to which employees really want to dedicate their time and effort (the vigor component); as an outstanding and consequential activity (dedication); and as engaging and something on which they are truly immersed in (absorption).

In the field of research of organisational behaviour and employee wellbeing, work engagement is a rather new subject of research. The polar opposite of work engagement, burnout, has however been studied since 1974 when Freudenberger introduced burnout in his study called "Staff burnout". Two years after that, in 1976, burnout syndrome was defined and introduced by Maslach and Jackson (1981) as a three-dimensional syndrome characterized by exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy, i.e. the opposite to engagement, that was at the time described as energy, involvement and efficacy. Burnout syndrome prevention has currently been discussed worldwide due to the economic burden of the absenteeism and its other negative consequences related to job satisfaction, work performance and employees´ mental health (Lastovkova, Carder, Rasmussen, Sjoberg, Groene, Sauni and Pelclova, 2017).

A study conducted by Harju, Hakanen, and Schaufeli (2014) studied the employee ill-being - job boredom. They suggested that there is correlation between job boredom and negative health- and work-related perceptions. The results of the study suggest that job boredom might be harmful to employee health and that it would benefit organizations to pay attention to redesigning work in a way that provides employees with challenging jobs and opportunities for development. The results suggest further that specific focus should be given to offering young employees with opportunities to use and develop their potential. Hence, they suggest that organizations could support the efforts of employees to vigorously influence the boundaries of their jobs themselves to alleviate boredom.

Although there has been little qualitative research on work engagement, previous qualitative research with a group of Dutch employees showed that engaged employees have high energy levels and self-efficacy. The results of this study suggest that this also helped the employees to exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Schaufeli et al.,

2001). The results of the study provide confirmatory evidence that because of the high activity levels and an optimistic attitude, engaged employees create their own positive feedback, in terms of esteem, acknowledgement, and success. Most of the interviewees further claimed that their positive attitude and high energy levels also appear after working hours, e.g. at home, in hobbies, at the gym, and voluntary work.

It is important to remember that engaged employees are no superheroes – they do feel exhausted after a long day of challenging work. However, engaged employees describe their fatigue as a gratifying state because it is associated with several positive achievements during working hours. It is important to point out that engaged employees are not addicted to their work. They do not constantly work overtime nor take their work with them home. Instead, they use their precious and valuable time on other things outside work. Whereas workaholics work hard because of an irresistible inner drive that pushes them forward, engaged employees work because from the working is fun and enjoyable. (Schaufeli et al., 2001)

## 2.2  Measuring work engagement

Work engagement is a complex phenomenon that can be measured in several ways. The most well-known scale in the field of research is The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The UWES scale is based on in-depth interviews and includes three dimensions and was introduced as a 17-item self-reported questionnaire (Schaufeli, Salanova, Bakker and Gonzales-Roma, 2002). It includes items for the assessment of the three engagement dimensions included in Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) definition: vigor, dedication and absorption. Once these three main dimensions are examined in depth and grouped into factors, more specific and detailed questions can be created. For this study, the UWES work engagement questionnaire is used as an orientating guidance to determine the type of questions, that are used in the empirical research.

The UWES has been validated by researchers in a large number of countries worldwide e.g. in China (Yi-Wen and Yi-Qun, 2005), Finland (Hakanen, 2002), Greece (Xanthopoulou et al.), South Africa (Storm and Rothmann, 2003), Spain (Schaufeli et al., 2002), and The Netherlands (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Bakker and

Demerouti (2008) have argued that the outcome of these confirmatory factor analyses confirmed that the fit of the hypothesized three-factor structure to the data was superior to that of any other alternative factor structures. However, there are some studies that failed to find the three-factor structure of work engagement (e.g. Sonnentag, 2003).

Schaufeli et al. (2006) has later created a shorter, nine-item version of the UWES, three items for each dimension, and provided proof for its cross-national validity. This showed that the three engagement dimensions are relatively strongly related. Two years ago, Schaufeli et al. (2017) further introduced an ultra-short, 3-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Schaufeli (2017) demonstrates that UWES-3 is a reliable and valid indicator of work engagement. He also argues that UWES-3 can be used as an alternative to the longer version, for instance in national and international epidemiological surveys on employee working conditions.

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) is an alternative method to assess work engagement. It was developed by Demerouti et al. in 2003. Even though the OLBI has originally been developed to evaluate and assess burnout, the method includes both positively and negatively phrased items. Therefore, it is claimed to be suitable to assess work engagement as well (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006). The thing which makes OLBI special is that researchers can recode the negatively framed items as well. The OLBI consists of two different dimensions: one ranging from exhaustion to vigor and a second ranging from cynicism to dedication. The validity of the OLBI has been confirmed by researchers in Germany (Demerouti et al., 2002; Demerouti et al., 2001), the US (Halbesleben and Demerouti, 2005), and Greece (Demerouti et al., 2003). According to Bakker and Demerouti (2008) the results of these studies showed that a two-factor structure with vigor and dedication (referred to as exhaustion and disengagement in these studies) as the underlying factors suited better to the data of many occupational groups than alternative factor structures.

## 2.3   Related constructs of motivation, flow, and joy of work

Motivation is one of the most commonly used concepts in research of employee engagement. Motivation pushes one forward to act and to make a vision the reality. To be able to sustain one´s motivation, the already set goals should be clear and consistent with basic human needs. In addition, to be able to maintain one´s motivation, the preferred action should lead to the desired result. It's also important to remember that the desired goal needs to be meaningful. (Kalimo and Lindström, 1988) This is the "creation process" of internal motivation. According to Juuti and Vuorela (2015) work is at its best when it feels like a hobby and it is at the same time both fun and joyful. They also claim that meaningful and joyful work is one of the main resources for employee engagement.

### 2.3.1   The concept of flow

Concisely, the state of flow reflects how an individual feels about him/herself and the environment at peak performance (Xanthopoulou, Baker, Heuven, Demerouti, and Schaufeli, 2008). Previous definitions of flow described it as an impermanent state in which the individual feels questioned, draws on his or her specific skills, enjoys the moment, and thereby stretches his or her capabilities. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1982) such a state generates a holistic experience. Along similar lines, Bakker (2005) and Demerouti (2006) identified three essential elements of flow: *absorption*, which refers to the total concentration and participation in the activity, *enjoyment*, which refers to the experience of enjoying the activities, and *intrinsic motivation*, which refers to the need to perform a certain activity because of the fascination of the activity. However, other characteristics of flow have also been stressed. These are the presence of complimentary, demands and immediate clarity with respect to what is, and what is not, the correct course of action (Engeser and Rheinberg, 2008; Rheinberg, Vollmeyer and Engeser, 2003).

Of equal importance, however, is the feeling that one has capacity, that is being optimally used and that the situation is under control. An individual's behavior emanates the flow and it is not determined by any external factors (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1999; Engeser and Rheinberg, 2008; Wesson and Boniwell, 2007). Lastly, with respect to the experience of flow, it is important that there is a feeling of being active (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

When compared to work engagement, flow bears closest resemblance to its dimension absorption.

### 2.3.2 The joy of work

Marques (2017, p.26) claims in her study that many of us have learned to "toss happiness on the heap of impossibilities" in our lives even though happiness is such a simple concept. She also stated that too many working people live their lives with the assumption that you cannot work and be happy at the same time. Is it really an impossible equation? Does working and doing what you love sound utopic? Marques (2017) states also that she believes the problem does not lie in the reasons stated above but more in the deep-rooted conviction that work simply cannot be fun because it is, well, work!

Several recent studies claim that work-life integration is an important buffer to burnout. A positive work-life climate is usually related with functional teamwork and safety as well as lower burnout rates. According to a recent study, the four main elements which support joy at work are physical and psychological safety, meaning and purpose, choice and autonomy, and camaraderie and teamwork (Schwartz et al. 2019). Joy of work is, however, a distinct construct from work engagement. We express a state of motivational fulfilment at work, which may or may not include joy.

## 2.4 Job demands-resources (JD-R) model

Wellbeing at work and work engagement studies have used the concept of job demands – resources model (JD-R) as a baseline theory for over a decade. The model suggests that job demands are related to the exhaustion component of burnout, and that job resources are related to engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Demerouti et al. (2001, p. 501) characterize job demands as follows: "physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs". Whereas job resources are defined as "those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development" (Demerouti et al. 2001).

The JD-R model suggests that working in demanding conditions where work tasks require constant physical and/or cognitive and emotional effort or skills generated by role vagueness or time pressure, may produce over consumption of energy. Therefore, these conditions can threaten employees' wellbeing, resulting in unfavorable outcomes, such as lower levels of performance and job dissatisfaction. However, this theory also suggests that job resources (physical, psychological, social, and organizational features of the work tasks) may reduce job demands. Earlier studies also claim that job demands contribute to achieving the set goals and by that way promotes individual´s personal growth. Supportive colleagues and friends, job control or team coherence are examples of job resources. (Hakanen, Schaufeli and Ahola, 2008; Demerouti and Bakker, 2007; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004)

Previous studies further suggest that work and emotional demands can interact with personal resources (e.g., learning, autonomy, support, feedback, and career opportunities) to predict positive attitude and behaviours (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Hakanen et al., 2005). Based on the JD-R theoretical model, researchers have noted that personal resources and job demand interact to predict engagement in service settings (Demerouti et al., 2017; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). In view of JD-R, the values of personal resources are most pronounced when employees deal with demanding service workload, since service-related stressors activate relevant capabilities of personal resources in the coping processes.

Bakker et al., (2010) suggest that according to the JD–R model, employees input concentrated attention and positive attitudes towards their jobs when job demands, and job resources are both high. Examples of this are immense workload and high emotional demands of service delivery. On the other hand, earlier studies also suggest that customer-caused stressors are not automatically negative, as they may result in emotional exhaustion when the employee does not have necessary resources to process the demands. Resources are not only necessary for coping with job demands, but they also have an intrinsic motivational role that advances employee's personal and professional growth, learning, and development or an extrinsic motivational role which is instrumental in achieving work goals. (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007)
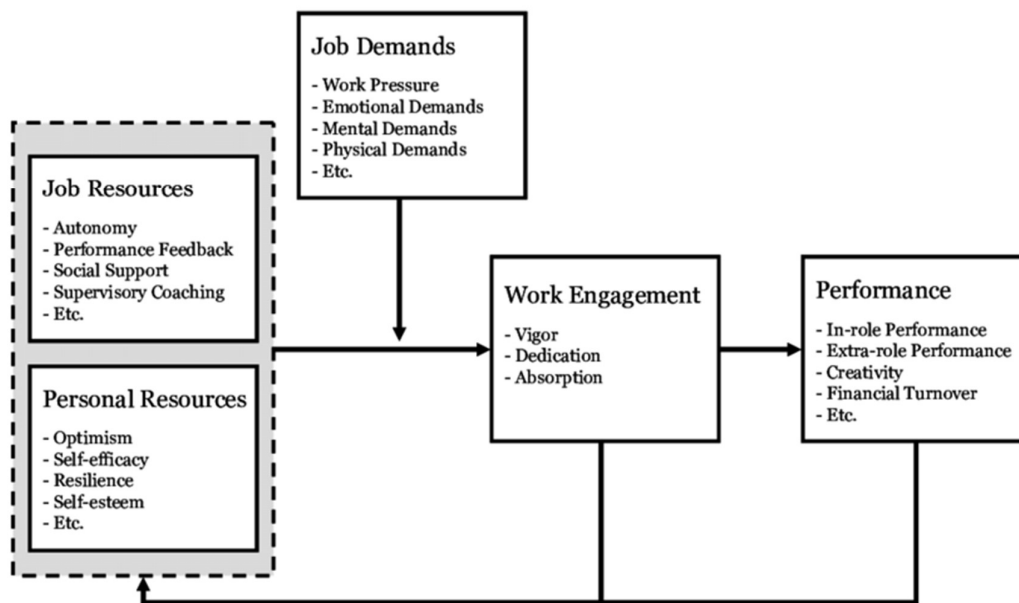
*Figure 1 : The JD-R Model of Work Engagement. Adapted from Bakker and Demerouti (2007).*

The key to great leadership is that leaders have clear expectations, are fair, and recognize satisfactory performance; such leadership has a positive influence on work engagement by generating a sense of attachment to the job (Kahn, 1990; Macey and Schneider, 2008). According to Maslach el al. (2001) supportive work community, including the closest management, has a positive connection to work engagement. Job control is related to a high level of work engagement (Salanova et al., 2005) and it also refers to the opportunity to make decisions regarding one's work (Karasek and Theorell, 1990) and having the opportunity and freedom to learn new skills in the workplace (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Time pressure can be seen at workplaces such as tight deadlines and a lack of time to accomplish work-related tasks. However, time pressure can also lead to positive out-comes such as work engagement, but the motivating effects of moderate-level time pressure hold only when the employees do not find the tasks and time pressure unreasonable (Schmitt et al., 2015). The topic of job insecurity relates to the concern of losing one's job and becoming jobless (De Witte, 1999). A study conducted by Bosman, Rothman and

16

Buitendach (2005) claims that job insecurity has been found to have a negative effect on work engagement. Constant time pressure is claimed be harmful to the overall well-being and health of employees (Nätti et al., 2015). Like other job demands, mental stress is claimed to have a negative connection to work engagement (Hakanen et al., 2006).

## 2.5  Broaden-and-build theory

Broaden-and-build theory is a framework that is based on the influence of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001). It suggests that positive emotions broaden an individual's thought-action repertory (broadening hypothesis), which in turn supports and helps building that individual's personal resources (building hypothesis). Particularly, "personal resources accrued during states of positive emotions are conceptualized as durable. They outlast the transient emotional states that led to their acquisition. These resources function as reserves that can be drawn on in subsequent moments and in different emotional states" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 220). Fredrickson states as well that, "positive emotions are vehicles for individual growth and social connection: By building people's personal and social resources, positive emotions transform people for the better, giving them better lives in the future" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 224).

This theory suggests that although, the impact of positive emotions is momentary, the positive feeling can be long-lasting (Fredrickson, 2001). According to Fredrickson (2004) specific positive emotions can broaden. He suggests that *joy* creates the urge to play, pushes the limits and increases creativity. Whereas *interest* creates the urge to explore, take in the latest information and experiences, and expand the self in the process. *Pride* creates the ability to conceive even greater achievements in the future. Researchers Hakanen, Perhoniemi and Toppinen-Tanner (2008) provided longitudinal evidence that work engagement fosters personal initiative, which in turn builds new resources. This aligns well with Broaden-and-build theory.
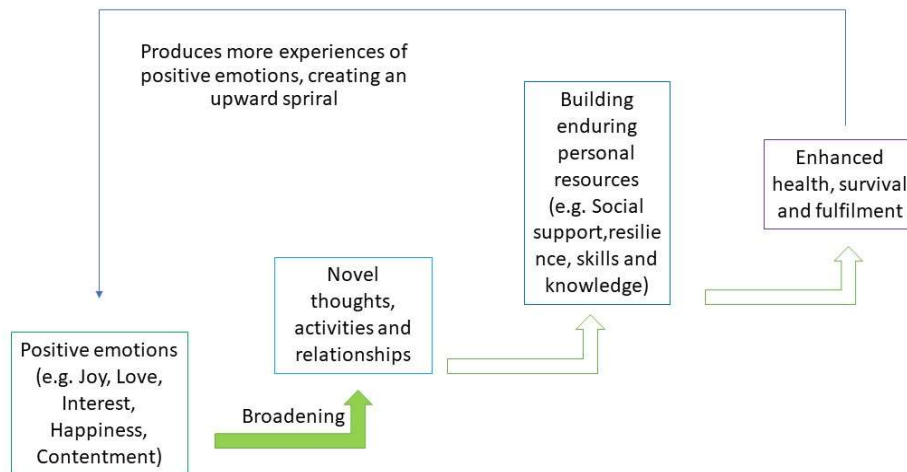
*Figure 2 The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. Adapted from Fredrickson and Cohn (2008).*

The broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions can help building individual's personal resources. These resources can be *cognitive*, like the capability to be mindfully present in the moment. Positive emotions can also support the *psychological* resources, like the ability to protect a sense of mastery over different environmental challenges across the lifespan, as well as *social* resources, which is the ability to give and receive emotional support. (Fredrickson et al., 2008). As stated earlier in this paper, work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind. Therefore, the broaden-and-build theory is another reasonable theory explaining the construct of work engagement.

## 2.6 Prior research in Finland

The awareness of the impact of job resources has increased once researchers have started to look at wellbeing from the perspective of positive organizational psychology. According to a research conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Hakanen, 2006), job resources were the key asset and support for teachers in stressful situations and supported their work engagement. As an example, the appreciation of the work experienced by the teachers, the support of the supervisor, and a good working atmosphere

supported the work engagement of teachers' work despite the stressful situation in the classroom.

The same study showed that the better opportunities the teachers had on influencing their own work, the higher was their work engagement. According to the respondents, supervisor´s support, positive atmosphere at workplace, culture of innovation and well-functioning communication were the key factors to boost work engagement at workplace.

Another Finnish researcher Mari Nislin (2016) studied work engagement among teachers (n=206), who work in early childhood education. The aim of the research was to study the teachers´ wellbeing at work, their stress regulation abilities, the quality of the pedagogical work and the links between all these items. The results showed that social support, especially from supervisor and colleagues was claimed to have a positive connection with the teachers stress regulatory capabilities, the quality of the pedagogical work and work engagement in general.

According to a research conducted by Bakker, Demerouti, Hakanen and Xanthopoulou (2007) Finnish primary, secondary and vocational schoolteachers (n=805) experienced their work engagement as stress-protective factor in stressful situations, for example, when teachers were in contact with poorly behaving students. The teachers also told that their excellent job resources supported their work engagement and therefore the poor behaviour of the students was not detrimental to the well-being of the teachers. According to the research, it was important for the teachers to get support and appreciation from their supervisor and colleagues as well as that the working environment is innovative and understanding.

## 2.7  Source criticism

"Source criticism in the historical humanistic sciences corresponds to experiment in physical research. Where the name "source criticism" appoints to discovery, examination, verification, evaluation, preservation, and interpretation of sources". (Heidegger 1977 pp. 4). Therefore, source criticism guides the writer when choosing the sources for the study. When choosing literature for a study, every academic researcher must know from where the information has been retrieved and if the information is truly reliable. The literature

review of this research is based entirely on peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals and books by renowned experts in the field.

# 3   METHODOLOGY

## 3.1  Qualitative research

This study aims to provide an answer to the following research question:

1.  How do employees explain changes in their everyday work engagement and reasons for these changes?

To-date, most of the studies about work engagement are quantitative, which is why the chosen data collection method in this study is qualitative. A qualitative method gives the possibility to capture respondents' subjective opinions, experiences, and reflections in detail. It also allows the respondents to give a thorough encounter of their own experiences of work engagement and what it truly means for them in their daily work.

Interviews give the possibility for the author to get a rich set of data from the respondents and allow the interviewer to ask clarifying questions when necessary. There are three features that are particularly noteworthy with qualitative methods; First, an inductive view, i.e. the theory is generated out of the research, unlike most natural scientific models. Second, interpretivist, which means that the focus is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. Finally, constructionist, i.e. the ontological position that suggests social properties are outcomes of social interaction and constructs (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

## 3.2  Research design and approach

The research design is primarily inductive by nature (Williams, 2011), as the research questions are emergent and under researched in the case company. Therefore, it is necessary for the research method to be open-ended and exploratory by its very nature. The aim of this research is to provide answers to the research questions, and it is worth noting

that it is impossible to generalize the results for the whole department within the limits of one study. Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted by the author. To obtain credibility, the research process must be both accurate and trustworthy. This might sometimes be a challenge when a project is based upon a semi-structured interview (Barriball and While, 1994). Semi-structured interviews were selected as the means of data collection due to two essential considerations. This structure is suitable for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sensitive issues and enables the interviewer to probe for more information and clarification of the given answers. Second, the various educational, occupational, and personal histories of the sample group inhibit the use of a standardized interview schedule (Barriball and While, 1994).

There are several benefits of using the personal interview as the method for data collection, as it has the potential to overcome the poor response rates of a questionnaire survey (Austin 1981) and it suits well to the exploration of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives (Richardson et al. 1965, Smith 1975). Personal interviews also provide the opportunity to evaluate the validity of the respondent's answers by observing non-verbal indicators, which is particularly useful when discussing sensitive issues like work engagement (Gordon 1975). Using personal interviews also guarantees that all questions are answered by each respondent and that the respondent is unable to ask opinions from other while giving a response to the question (Bailey 1987). The qualitative approach is chosen to ensure the in-depth analysis and extended understanding of the topic and its' current perception in the specific department in this company.  Therefore, a small sample group is inevitable, and the responses are provided by nine individuals.

## 3.3  Sample and data collection

The nine respondents all have the same job role but work in different teams. Neither age nor gender of the interviewees is revealed as it grants anonymity to the respondents, also aligning with what was agreed with the commissioning company. The management team of the department wanted to select employees from different teams so that the study displays more general results rather than results related to a specific team inside the department. This study subjected itself to a certain risk of bias when the decision was made to use interviewees that were selected by the management team of the selected department

instead of being randomly picked. The reason this specific department was chosen, was because there have not been any similar studies made in this section of the organization. The main goal of the interviews is to find out the answers to the research questions.

Although the thesis is written in English, the interviews were conducted in Finnish. This adds trustworthiness to the study because the mother tongue of the interviewees is Finnish. The translations of the interviews from Finnish to English were conducted by the author. Every interview started with demographical questions and continued with more specific ones. The nature of the interview was told to the respondents in advance. The structure of the interview questions was developed by first dividing the objectives of the interview into *theme categories* (Hirsjärvi and Hurme,1982) and then creating 2-13 questions concerning each area. The theme categories were chosen based on the elements of the JD-R theory: *engagement, and it is constituent parts: vigor, absorption,* and *dedication* as presented in table 1.

| Engagement | • How would you describe your engagement to your work? <br> • When have you felt disengaged at work? /when engaged? <br> • What affects your work engagement? <br> • Are you engaged at work, explain? | Dedication | • What does your work give to you? <br> • Is your work important to you? How is it important? When is it important? <br> • What makes you to come to work every day? <br> • What does your work demand from you? <br> • What are the challenges in your work? <br> • How do you find your work? <br> • What makes you feel proud of your work? <br> • When do you feel proud at work? <br> • What inspires you at work? <br> • Please, tell me about a good challenge at work <br> • Do you see your current work as a job, career, or calling and why? <br> • Definitions (Job [achieving financial & material rewards]; Career [achieving prestige, power, recognition, advancement, and personal growth]; Calling [working for the sake of the work itself]) <br> • How do you think you could increase the meaning of your own work? |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Vigor | • How do feel at work? <br> • How do you feel about your work tasks? <br> • What does it take for you to feel energetic at work? <br> • What do you do when things do not go well at work | | |
| Absorbtion | • How do you detach yourself from your work? <br><br> • Do you ever feel carried away at work (losing the sense of time)? Tell me about it. | | |

*Table 1: The interview questions in English*

Even though the interview questions were divided into different subcategories, they all have similarities with each other as they belong under the umbrella of work engagement. The interviews were conducted as in-person interviews at the company´s headquarters in August 2019. The interview questions were designed to get an extensive understanding on the personal perspectives and opinions of the respondents. The purpose of the study

was explained in detail to the respondents and they were all given an opportunity to ask questions from the researcher at any stage of the interview. The interviews lasted between 25 and 55 minutes. Participants were assured about confidentiality and an informed consent was signed by both parties. The interviewees were also informed that their answers are recorded and transcribed. All the documents, including recordings and transcribed content are accessible by the author only.

## 3.4  Data analysis

When qualitative data is examined, the approaches can typically be limited as being based on either deductive (from general to particular) or inductive (from particular to general) reasoning. Qualitative research is inductive in its prior stages where the researcher is trying to discover categories, patterns, themes and from the data (Patton 2002). As this research seeks to form an initial understanding of what work engagement means for the employees, inductive data analysis is a sensible choice from these two methods. However, it can be argued that inductive analysis in a qualitative context is always subjective by nature deriving from e.g. the research design, research methods and pre-existing attitudes (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002). According to researchers Eskola and Suoranta (1998), qualitative research is divided into three categories which are: empirical-based, theory-bound and theory-based. This study follows the logic of the theory-based method where the data is first gathered freely and later reflected on the underlying theories.
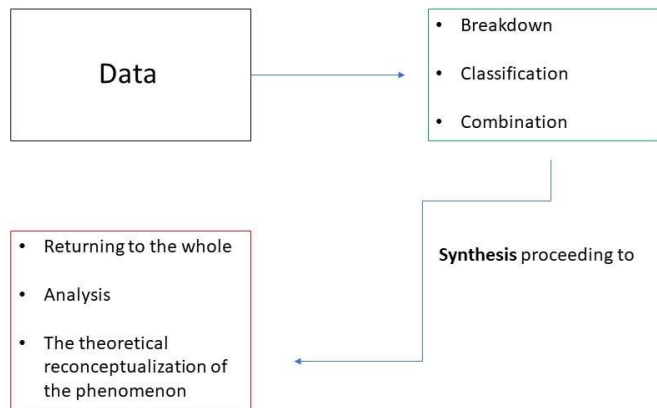
*Figure 3. Data analysis. Adapted from Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000).*

Figure 3 (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2000), provides an illustration of the same principle in which the data gathered is broken down, classified, and then combined into relevant categories. Citations from the transcribed material are presented in a simple and clear format. In the present study the author adopted the sententious approach at first, to capture the fundamental meaning of the data. After that, each sentence was studied to be able to determine what the respondent really wants to say. This is how the author tried to identify the central themes, as well as causal and intervening conditions (Roulston, 2010). The final stage then consists of analyzing the information, forming a holistic view on the matter, and finally re-conceptualizing the phenomenon. The primary analysis of the transcripts was conducted by color-coding the key the themes and forming categories (Appendix 3 and Figure 4).

## 3.5  Trustworthiness

The qualitative research method aims to examine the feelings and thoughts of the interviewees on a deeper level (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The author does not make any generalized conclusions based on the findings but rather inspects the feelings of the interviewees and aims to understand their background as well as wishes and expectations.

Research is assessed through measures of quality, trustworthiness, and generalizability (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). The trustworthiness of a qualitative study is often acquired by two fundamental concepts: reliability and validity (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2004). The quality of the selection of the interview candidates, data collection, and the interpretation of the findings measure the overall quality for this study. (Bergman and Coxon, 2005). The number of interviews of this study is limited to nine interviews. The number of the interviews meets the purposeful sampling criteria the researcher and her supervisor have determined that are necessary for the study.

The author aims to inspect the feelings of the respondents and attempts to understand their professional and personal background as well as their preferences and assumptions. As qualitative research method aims to examine the perceptions and thoughts of the interviewees on a deeper level. Before the interview started, the author encouraged the interviewees to reveal their honest opinions and views about the topics as broadly as possible. The Interviewees were informed that their anonymity is guaranteed. As some of the questions are quite personal, it cannot be assured that the respondents were truly honest and open with the answers. This might have had an impact on the results. During the interviews, the author could notice some excitement and tension in the respondents, especially during the first set of questions. The author avoided showing her own opinions and thoughts in the interview situation. However, there is always a risk that the respondents may give answers as they feel they are assumed to answer. There is always a possibility that the way the author set the questions or even a minor change in the tone of her voice may have had an impact on how the respondents answered.

### 3.5.1  Ethical concerns

When it comes to the nature of a qualitative study, the dialogue between a researcher and a participant can be ethically challenging for the researcher due to the personal involvement in various stages of the study. Therefore, formulation of detailed ethical guidelines in this respect is essential. The author has agreed to protect the anonymity of the respondents and the company. All parties have signed confidentiality agreements before completing this study. The company has given its permission for this research. Furthermore, there

is a risk that the researcher has a potential impact on the participants and vice versa (Sanjari, 2014). The nature of the study was informed to the participants beforehand and they were all given the same information before they gave their consent on participating. The researcher is the only person who listens to the recordings. To ensure that no misinterpretations are made, the transcript of the questionnaire is provided in the appendices.

## 4  FINDINGS

The findings of the empirical study are presented in this chapter. The structure is based on the thematic categorization method presented in the methodology –section of this paper.

## 4.1  Identified themes

During the interviews, the respondents were noticeably clear about what they perceive as influencing their work in their job role and about how their physical and mental work environment affects their coping at work. The respondents indicated clearly and deliberately the causes and effects of these influences. Afterwards, most of the separate influences and perceptions could be categorized as either demands or resources. The job demands could be categorized in four themes: (1) time pressure, (2) distraction, (3) negativity and (4) work-life imbalance. The job resources could be categorized in four themes: (1) flexibility and mutual trust, (2) social support, (3) personal development and (4) helping others.

## 4.2  Job demands

The interview questions that were discussed with the interview participants involved questions related to the subcategories: engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption. To be able to find out an answer to the research question, the author asked the respondents e.g. what the interviewees´ opinions are e.g. on the challenges of the work, which factors decrease their energy levels at work and when are they not proud about their work. As presented in the figure 5, the author identified four themes that affect negatively on work

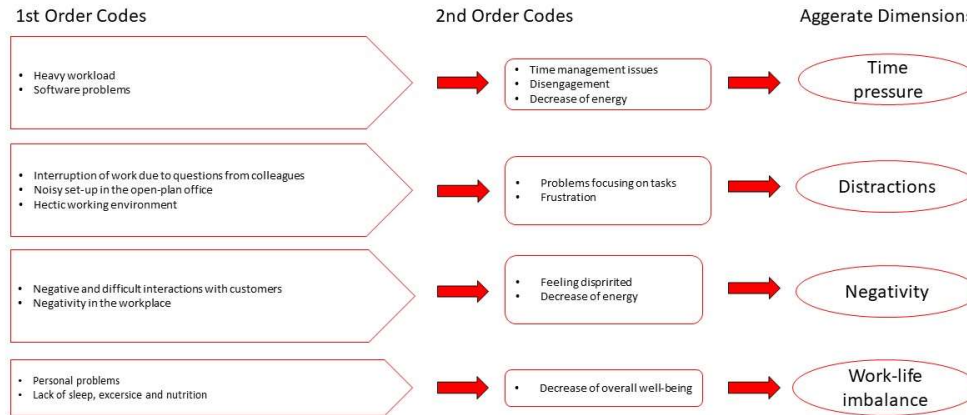engagement which are: (1) time pressure, (2) distraction, (3) negativity and (4) imbalance of well-being.



*Figure 4. Job demands categorized into four themes.*

## 4.2.1  Time pressure

Most respondents agreed that getting things done is a fundamental part of their work, especially at those times when it´s busy. Several interviewees stated that when their work tasks are interrupted by software problems, it causes disengagement, stress, and time management issues, as all work tasks are based on multiple computer programs. The interviewees stated the following:

> "I feel disengaged especially at those times when I am in the middle of something and the computer systems stop working. There you are, trying to get things done - but you can do nothing."

> "At the moment, the biggest challenge for me is the software problems. It stresses me out when I know I have many urgent things to do but can do nothing but wait."

> "When the systems are down, I don´t have any motivation to do my work as I know the tasks are piling up and I know that I won´t have time to complete them all before finishing my shift."

> "My energy levels decrease when the systems are not working as they are supposed to and I cannot do the work I should do and all the tasks are postponed to later."

Many respondents said that the software problems increase their already heavy workload. The amount of work was also told to be too much. This causes time management issues as there are also new tasks to be done all the time. The respondents noted the following:

> "Also, to get your tasks done on time and generally time management is challenging. We have so many channels to handle and also our own tasks that you need to finish on time and also tasks that are divided daily between the team members. Sometimes it´s very challenging to finish tasks on time and you quite don´t know what to start with when you are so blue with tasks."

> "You have a million things to do during the day. Many times, it´s hard to remember everything and it also effects your mental state. Sometimes my head is stuck very badly."

## 4.2.2  Distractions

The second notion that was given importance involved distractions. The majority of the respondents stated that the open-plan office is challenging in many ways. The underlying argument that was put forward suggested that the constant noise in the open-plan office makes you feel tired and you start feeling a sense of sensory overload, which makes you less productive. Colleagues asking questions was also mentioned as a negative factor as it disturbs work and by that way decreases the productivity. The respondents noted the following:

> "The open-plan office is a negative factor. My colleagues ask me a lot of questions that disturbs me, and I cannot focus on my own tasks. I´m more productive when I work from home"

> "The open-plan office makes me feel tired due to the horrendous noise. Also, some colleagues ask questions which interrupts my work. When I work from home it´s easier to get in the work mode and I´m also more productive."

> "My energy levels decrease due to the noise of the open-plan office. Also, the flow of work breaks off when colleagues ask questions even though I´ve changed my status on skype as "do not disturb."

> "In general, the hectic and noisy atmosphere at the open-plan office annoys me. I would like to focus on one task at a time, but I guess multitasking is the new normal."

> "When there is no one who disturbs me during my work, I am much more productive"

> "What makes me feel unwell is the disturbing noises at the office. We are 50 people sitting in the same space and some of us have an extremely loud voice. I get tired of the noises."

## 4.2.3  Negativity

Many interviewees emphasized that dealing with negative cases and feedback makes them feel themselves discouraged, uncomfortable and they start having negative thoughts. One respondent noted that negativity is as contagious as a virus.

"If you need to deal with several negative cases one after another and also get a negative phone call at the same time. That really makes me feel exhausted and decreases my general mood. Luckily, I have great colleagues who I can turn to after a difficult phone call."

"I feel discouraged when I´m handling a case with a customer who is very negative and cannot behave well. Negativity is highly contagious, it´s like a virus."

Also, colleagues who are negative, spread their negativity around themselves. Just a few negative colleagues can have a harmful impact on the entire team, and the more negativity spreads the more damage it can cause.

"Sometime, few of my colleagues express their opinions in a very negative way which is not nice for anyone and also feels sometimes even frustrating as the negativity spreads among the team members."

Several interviewees highlighted that dealing with difficult customers, especially one after each other is very emotionally exhausting.

"I´m a that kind of person who cannot deal with negativity. Whether it is the negativity of my colleagues or customers. If there is a colleague who is constantly negative, that especially makes me feel uncomfortable."

### 4.2.4 Work-life imbalance

The interview participants declared that issues in regard to their personal lives often have a direct impact on their work engagement and productivity. Two respondents noted the following:

"When you have challenges in your personal life and you actually would like to be somewhere else than at work".

"If you have personal issues it´s sometimes also nice to go to work but it also affects your concentration and motivation when your mind is not quite there with you"

The respondents further noted that their job requires a good balance between work and free time. Several respondents noted that if you don´t exercise, sleep or eat enough, you will see in in your performance and energy levels at work. The interviewees noted the following:

"This job requires a good balance between work and free time. You must eat, sleep and exercise well. If your free time is not in balance, you´ll see it in your performance at work"

"Well-being begins with you. You must exercise, sleep and eat well and also otherwise have a healthy lifestyle to be able maintain your energy levels at work. You can notice it immediately at work if you have not slept well last night"

"If you are tired, it is very difficult to focus on your work."

## 4.3  Job resources

The interview questions that were discussed with the interview participants involved questions related to the subcategories: engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption. To be able to find out an answer to the research question, the author asked the respondents e.g. what the interviewees´ opinions are e.g. what inspires them at work, which factors increase their energy levels at work and when they are proud about their work. As presented in the figure 6, the author identified four themes that affect positively on work engagement which are: (1) flexibility and mutual trust, (2) social support, (3) personal development and (4) helping others.
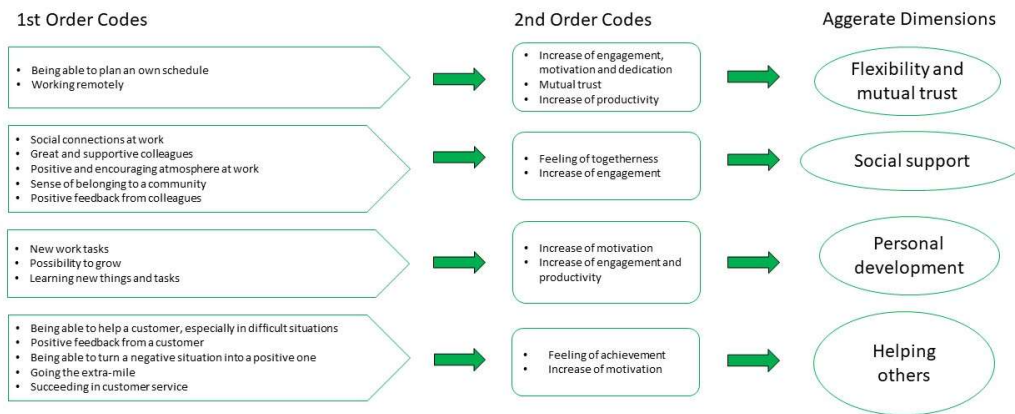


*Figure 5. Job resources categorized into four themes.*

### 4.3.1  Flexibility and mutual trust

Regarding flexibility, several respondents told that they prefer working remotely from home as they feel they are more productive and can focus better on their tasks. Also being able to craft your own workday was told to be engaging. Many respondents highlighted the importance of trust and stated that they feel they can trust their fellow team members. Being trusted to work remotely was claimed to increase the respondent´s work motivation and dedication. The respondents noted the following:

> "For me, the flexibility of this work suits well as it makes other things in my life possible. I feel trusted because I have the possibility to work remotely from home."

"It increases my motivation when I can work from home and have a manager who trusts us."

"I am much more productive when I work remotely from home."

"If you work from home, getting into "work mode" is much easier and I am way more productive when I work remotely."

"I feel engaged and trusted because I can decide myself what I do during the day despite some obligatory tasks"

"You have certain responsibilities and you´re expected to do the tasks that have been assigned to you. We all have an own role and we all trust each other. By that way I feel dedicated to my work because I know that the others are dedicated to their work as well."

## 4.3.2 Social support

A common topic of discussion that arose during the interview process was the essential importance of social support. Several interviewees stated that a supportive and positive work community and work atmosphere are vital indicators of engagement at a workplace. The interview participants declared that their colleagues are e.g. "genuinely nice" and "always ready to help each other". The respondents stated the following:

"The best thing here is that I have genuinely nice and supportive colleagues. If there is a case that makes me feel down or sad, I can always talk to someone to get support and advice."

"My lovely colleagues spark a lot of joy during the workdays. Sometimes it feels like we are a small family."

"I have nice colleagues. It´s great to talk to each other and there is a atmosphere good at the office. My colleagues often encourage me to trust myself."

"Our working atmosphere is the best thing here. You can always ask for help and everyone is willing to help you."

"I like my job and our work community more than a lot. This is like my second family."

"It is always nice to come to work because I have kind colleagues and we have a supporting work community that is very important for me."

The colleagues were also claimed to be sources of inspiration. Two respondents told that when they see their colleagues succeeding their work, it pushes them to become better at their work. The two interviewees noted:

"When I see my colleagues succeeding in their work, I also want to succeed in my work."

"My colleagues inspire me a lot. When I see that they are engaged and dedicated to their work I automatically start acting like them."

### 4.3.3 Personal development

The third notion that was given importance involved personal development. The majority of the respondents stated that learning new skills at work increases their satisfaction with their work, work engagement and motivation. Learning new skills was also told to be beneficial and important for an individual's own career development. The respondents noted the following:

"Learning new skills and helping customers increase my engagement and motivation. Learning new things is interesting, beneficial and important for my career development."

"We are encouraged to become multi-talents and I find it engaging to be able to develop my skills and learn new things. It´s so much more satisfying to work when you learn new and better ways of doing things. You are also more productive when you continuously develop your skillset."

Having a possibility to learn and develop new skills at work were also told to increase the meaningfulness of the work. Two respondents stated the following:

"To have a possibility to learn new things increases the meaningfulness of the work"

"I have several extra tasks on top of my basic work tasks and it increases the meaningfulness of my work. It is great that we are encouraged to become multi-talents and offered several extra tasks"

### 4.3.4 Helping others

The interviewees also told that being able to help a customer increases their engagement to their work. The respondents stated that they are proud of their work especially in situations where customers´ expectations are exceeded or when they are able to solve a difficult problem for the benefit of the customer. Receiving positive customer feedback was stated to be one the key factors that increase the respondents´ work engagement. The interviewees stated the following:

"I love the feeling when I am able to exceed customers` expectations on our service. It is such a rewarding feeling when you can turn a negative case into a positive one."

"My colleagues, learning new things and helping customers increase my engagement to my work. Being able to help a customer in a difficult situation is one of the best parts of this job."

"I enjoy my work because our main task it to help people and solve problems that are sometimes very difficult. Once you are able to solve a problem for the benefit of the customer, that is the best thing about this job."

"When a customer is thankful for good service, especially in situations where you´ve been dealing with the same case for a long time and finally the case can be closed – and especially if the customer has been unsatisfied for a long time and then you finally can turn the situation into a positive one. That is very rewarding for me."

"Especially, when you´ve done a lot of work to solve a case and finally are able to solve it for the customer´s benefit. That feels really good."

# 5   DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The aim of this study was to find out how employees explain changes in their everyday work engagement and what are the reasons for these changes. Based on the interviews, the author was able to identify both positive and negative changes that affect the work engagement of the interviewees. The findings could be categorized into job demands and job resources aligning well with the JD-R theory (Demerouti et al. 2001). The identified job demands could be categorized in four themes: (1) time pressure, (2) distraction, (3) negativity and (4) work-life imbalance. The identified job resources could be categorized in four themes: (1) flexibility and mutual trust, (2) social support, (3) personal development and (4) helping others.

## 5.1   Theoretical reflections of the identified job demands

### 5.1.1   Time pressure

Although some of the respondents mentioned that they feel like time flies when they have several things to do at work, there were more comments on experiences in which time pressure turned out to be a factor that causes stress and negativity. The respondents stated that working under time pressure did not motivate them to do their job, as the situation decreased the energy levels of the employees. This is in line with, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), who have categorized time pressure and work overload as job demands.

On days that were too hectic and there were too many things to do or the systems wouldn´t work, it was harder for the employees to leave from work as they could not finish all the

given tasks on time. Bakker (2010) has categorized time pressure, deadlines and quantitative and mental overload as challenge demands. According to previous studies job demands are not always automatically negative but they may become job stressors when meeting the required demands entails significant effort to sustain an expected performance level, thereby provoking negative reactions such as chronic fatigue and even burnout. The evidence in the present study is in line with the claim that time pressure decreases work engagement.

### 5.1.2 Distractions

The majority of the respondents stated that distractions such as interruption of work, noisy set-up in the open-plan office and a hectic working environment cause frustration and makes it more difficult to focus on the given tasks. According to Beal, Weiss, Barros and MacDermid (2005), individuals perform better when they are fully able to concentrate on the task at hand. They also claim that resource allocation to the task is crucial for successful performance. If employees cannot allocate all of their resources to the current task, for example because they are constantly interrupted by questions or telephone calls, they cannot perform optimally. Thus, replenishing and conserving (self-regulatory) resources is critical for successful performance during performance episodes and during a day (Beal et al., 2005).

Another claim that was put forward by Beal et al. (2005) that suggest that tasks which are attractive to employees make it easier for them to effectively control their attention toward the task, while ignoring potential distractions. Bakker (2004) states that several balance models of job stress, such as the demands-control model (DCM) by Karasek back in 1979 and the JD-R model suggest that job stress is caused by high job demands (e.g. work overload and time pressure) and low job control, i.e., the imbalance between job demands and control. Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2006) argue that several models in the stress literature are based on the idea that stress is the result of the disturbance of the equilibrium between the demands that employees are exposed to, and the resources they have at their disposal. Hence, the findings of previous studies support the claim that distractions have a negative influence in work engagement.

### 5.1.3 Negativity

Emotional demands of client work are categorized as job demands (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Several interviewees emphasized that dealing with negative cases and receiving feedback from customers makes them feel themselves discouraged, uncomfortable and they start having negative thoughts themselves. According to Bell, Mengüç, and Stefani (2004) customer contact staff can become "sandwiched" between the expectations of management and the expectations of customers as they are often in the unpleasant position of delivering unwelcome news to customers. Bell et al. (2004) argue this is a major source of role conflict, which has a demoralizing effect and customer complaints decrease the commitment of the employees to customer service. Bell and Luddington (2006) put also forward the claim that customer complaints have a negative impact on service personnel commitment to customer service.

Negative feedback also tends to cause negative moods in the receiver (Kluger and DeNisi 1996), which inhibits cognitive elasticity and therefore reduces performance in complicated and innovative tasks (Murray, Edward, Hirt and Mita 1990). There is plenty of scientific evidence supporting the notion that there is a negative relationship between negative employee feedback and performance. Kohli and Jaworski (1994) claimed that negative behavioral feedback from colleagues had a negative effect on employee performance. Equivalent findings have been shown between negative feedback and job attitudes. Pearce and Porter (1986) found that low performance ratings prompted a major decrease in attitudes toward the organization, specifically organizational commitment.

### 5.1.4 Work-life imbalance

According to previous studies, work-life balance issues can be a source of negative attitudes towards the management of the company, costly to organizations and relates not only to job turnover and genuine sick leave, but also to absence from work due to faked illness. (Fischlmayr and Kollinger, 2010). Several interview participants stated that issues in regard to their personal lives often have a direct impact on their work engagement and productivity and that their job requires a good balance between work and free time. The respondents stated that if you don´t exercise, sleep or eat enough, you will see in in your performance and energy levels at work.

Thus, the findings of this study support the views expressed in several previous studies. First, Fisher (2001) developed the term called work-life imbalance, in which the word "imbalance" refers to an occupational stressor based on lost resources of time (e.g. amount of time spent at work compared to time spent in non-work activities), energy (e.g. not having energy available to pursue non-work activities after a full-day's work), and feelings towards work and personal life. Second, Aziz and Cunningham (2008) claimed that work stress and work-life imbalance correlate with workaholism, regardless of gender. Third, Sonnentag (2003) and, Fritz and Sonnentag (2005, 2006) claimed that people are able to build resources, such as energy or vigor, that have been worn-out during the work day, by being careful about how they spend their time outside of work on evenings, weekends, and vacations. They claim that recovery of energy levels comes from non-work activities that are relaxing and allow individuals to be both physically and cognitively detached from work and provide the opportunity to reflect on work. The findings are in line with reports that link work-life imbalance, energy levels and work engagement support the claim that this is certainly an area of importance for organizations and managers.

## 5.2  Theoretical reflections of the identified job resources

### 5.2.1  Flexibility and mutual trust

Regarding flexibility, many respondents stated that they prefer working remotely from home as they feel they are more productive and can focus better on their tasks. Also being able to craft your own workday was claimed to be engaging. Many respondents also highlighted the importance of trust and stated that they feel they can trust their fellow team members. As well, being trusted to work remotely was claimed to increase the respondent´s work motivation and dedication. Supporting these findings, flexible working has claimed to increase both productivity (Belanger, 1999; Eaton, 2003; Konrad and Mangel, 2000) and greater employee loyalty and commitment (Grover and Crooker, 1995; Roehling et al., 2001).

There are several other studies that also support the results of this study. Work teams that are characterized by mutual trust and high social support are claimed be more cohesive and goal directed, and, in turn, these qualities may lead to favorable employee morale and job-related wellbeing (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). A study conducted by Breevart et al. (2014) claims that self-management correlates positively with work engagement. Several other researchers have discovered a variety of outcomes of flexible working for employees (Hill et al., 1998; Hyman and Summers, 2004; Igbaria and Guimaraes, 1999). According to their studies, when employees are able to influence in their working patterns, it has a positive influence on job satisfaction. Yet, the results are more varied, when we look at remote working. There are some studies that have found higher levels of job satisfaction (Baruch, 2000) and increased autonomy (Kelliher and Anderson, 2008).

### 5.2.2 Social support

Earlier studies have consistently shown that job resources such as social support from colleagues and supervisors is positively associated with work engagement (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007). A popular topic of discussion that arose during the interview process was the essential importance of social support. Several interviewees stated that a supportive and positive work community and work atmosphere are vital indicators of engagement at a workplace. The respondents declared that their colleagues are e.g. "genuinely nice" and "always ready to help each other" and that when they see their colleagues succeeding their work, it pushes them to become better at their work. In other words, social context of work engagement underlines the concept´s importance, as it has relevance for the primary relationships of employees. According to studies Bakker and Demerouti (2009) and Bakker, Van Emmerik, and Euwema (2006) collegial relationships hold the potential for social contagion in which employees respond similarly to their shared work environment and influence one another´s experience of engagement at work.

There are also other previous studies that support the findings of this research. For instance, Bakker et al. (2010) claimed that social support satisfies the need for autonomy and the need to belong. This aligns well with Self-Determination, a macro theory of human motivation, and tie rich empirical evidence that it relies on, suggesting that basic

psychological need satisfaction is critical for optimal human functioning (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Bakker and his colleagues (2005) have also claimed that colleagues are also potential resources - as sources of emotional support–which affects to the engagement experience. They have also stated that developing individuals at all levels of the organization, to be able to give effective social support, can generate a buffer against job demands and thus burnout. Similarly, cross-sectional studies by Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli (2006), Saks (2006) and Xanthopoulou et al., (2007) have shown that several job resources like autonomy, social support, supervisory coaching, performance feedback, and opportunities for professional development related positively to work engagement which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

### 5.2.3  Personal development

Several interviewees stated that learning new skills at work increases their satisfaction with their work, work engagement and motivation. The findings of a study conducted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) support the findings of this study. They claimed that job resources may have both intrinsic motivational potential by facilitating learning or personal development and extrinsic motivational potential by providing instrumental help or specific information for goal achievement. According to the interviews, respondents told that learning new skills is beneficial and important for an individual's own career development and that having a possibility to learn and develop new skills at work were also told to increase the meaningfulness of the work. Further, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2007) claim that in relation to the motivational process of the JD-R model, they state that job resources, such as opportunities for professional development might evoke a sense of significance to employees. Thus, employees with sufficient job resources can feel themselves successful, important to the organization, optimistic about their future as well as stay engaged in their work.

### 5.2.4  Helping others

According to Bakker (2005), employees who are willing to make sacrifices for the good of society will be able to deal better with organizational stressors because they know that

dealing with those stressors serves the higher goal of helping others. These type of employees will not be upset by daily hassles because they find their work important and meaningful.

The interviewees stated that being able to help a customer increases their engagement to their work. The respondents stated that they are proud of their work especially in situations where customers´ expectations are exceeded or when they are able to solve a difficult problem for the benefit of the customer. Receiving positive customer feedback was stated to be one the key factors that increase the respondents´ work engagement. Helping others results in positive psychological experiences (e.g., happiness), and this may help employees deal with organizational pressure. Thus, prosocial behavior might also function as a moderator, by buffering the impact of organizational pressure on commitment (Bakker, 2005).

## 5.3  Summary of discussion

The findings of this study replicate the results of previous studies (Hakanen et al., 2006; Mauno et al., 2007; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004) on the role of job resources as main correlates of work engagement. The results show that employees who experience flexibility at work, have supportive colleagues and work community, have opportunities for professional development and can help others (e.g. customers), are motivated to achieve their work goals, more dedicated to their work and experience higher energy levels at work. Thus, this study supports that engaged employees are absorbed, dedicated and vigorous and in their work tasks over the course of time (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

Therefore, once employees are able to make autonomous decisions, receive enough support, and have opportunities for personal development, they are likely to reciprocate and perform their work with higher levels of engagement. The empirical evidence of the positive relationship between the identified job resources and work engagement across time supports those theories that acknowledge personal resources or core self-evaluations as crucial determinants of employee well-being (Judge et al., 2005). Whereas the empirical evidence of the negative relationship between the identified job demands and work engagement support those theories that job stress is caused by high job demands (e.g. work

overload and time pressure) and low job control, i.e., the imbalance between job demands and control (Karasek 1979).

## 6  CONCLUSION

Work engagement in an essential theme in every organization, expressed as employees´ dedication, vigor, and absorption. The purpose of this thesis was to explore work engagement, and more precisely, to examine the causes of the changes in work engagement. Formally, the intent was to answer the following research question: How do employees explain changes in their everyday work engagement and reasons for these changes? In addition to exploring the key characteristics of work engagement, this thesis provided a qualitative approach of work engagement that can be used as a basis for future empirical research. The findings indicate that work engagement increases by having a possibility for flexible work, mutual trust, social support, possibilities for personal development and by helping others, whereas the hindering factors involve time pressure, distractions, negativity, and work-life imbalance. These align astonishingly well with prior research and theorization on the subject. Hence, the author argues that the research objectives have been met and that the research question has been answered. The presented results are a useful contribution to the emerging work engagement field and its existing body of literature, as it provides a qualitative foundation that can be applied and adapted in future studies.

### 6.1  Practical implications

The author´s findings highlight the fact that the identification of job resources and job demands are vital for organizational development.  Though, the main goal of organizations should still be the avoidance of overwhelming job demands, since these are the main predictors of exhaustion and decrease work engagement. Furthermore, the empowerment of employees' personal development and resources may also be beneficial. According to Seligman (1991), people who learn how to react to adverse situations with optimism have greater diligence, which is a requirement for successful adaptation. To conclude, the present study emphasizes the job resources that increase work engagement and promote the development of a blooming and healthy work environment.

## 6.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The trustworthiness of this qualitative content analysis is based on credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability, and authenticity (Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K. and Kyngäs, H. 2014). This study subjected itself to a certain risk of bias when the decision was made to use interviewees that were selected by the management team of the selected department instead of randomly picked participants. Even though it can safely be assumed that the interviewees were motivated to give their honest opinions, the results should still be interpreted bearing in mind that the respondents were chosen by the managers.

Work engagement is a complex phenomenon that requires long-term empirical studies, in order to be able to understand what particular factors, both individual and organizational, have an impact on work engagement. The findings of this research stem from an inductive study of group of nine people. The inductive approach was suitable for the exploratory nature of this study but could not by its nature offer any concrete quantifiable data. As this research was an empirical experiment, the proposed results are conditional by nature. It is not possible to generalize the answers to the whole department or organization as it requires further empirical validation. Longitudinal study designs should therefore be conducted, to examine the views of whole department and organization, ideally several organizations. Studying work engagement using a larger sample and over a longer period of time would provide a more comprehensive view and understanding of the topic.

Thus, the next logical step would be to pick a narrow enough scope from within the rather wide approach of this paper and explore the one specific area of work engagement. Proposed areas could be for example doing a quantitative study on dedication or a qualitative study only on the factors that affect negatively on work engagement. Another interesting related study would be to examine how new technical innovations e.g. "big data," predictive analytics, and artificial intelligence will monitor and foster the work engagement of employees. Also, a comparative study between the millennials and older workers would be necessary to predict the future trends of work engagement and to see which trends are fading away.

# REFERENCES

Almer, E.D., Kaplan, S.E. (2002) The effects of flexible working arrangements on stressors, burnout, and behavior job outcomes in public accounting. Behavioral Research in Accounting 14: 1–34.

Austin, E. K. (1981). Guidelines for the development of continuing education offerings for nurses. Appleton-Century-Crofts and Fleschner Publishing Company.

Aziz, S., Cunningham, J. (2008). Workaholism, work stress, work-life imbalance: exploring gender's role. Gender in Management: An International Journal, 23(8), 553-566.

Bailey, K.D. (1987) Methods of Social Research 3rd edition. The Free Press, New York.

Bakker, A. B. (2005). Flow among music teachers and their students: The crossover of peak experiences. Journal of vocational behavior, 66(1), 26-44.

Bakker, A. B. (2015). A job demands–resources approach to public service motivation. Public Administration Review, 75(5), 723-732.

Bakker, A. B., & Bal, M. P. (2010). Weekly work engagement and performance: A study among starting teachers. Journal of occupational and organizational psychology, 83(1), 189-206.

Bakker, A. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2010). Work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research. Psychology press.

Bakker, A. B., & Xanthopoulou, D. (2009). The crossover of daily work engagement: Test of an actor–partner interdependence model. Journal of Applied Psychology, 94(6), 1562.

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Euwema, M. C. (2005). Job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout. Journal of occupational health psychology, 10(2), 170.

Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2005). The crossover of burnout and work engagement among working couples. Human relations, 58(5), 661-689.

Bakker, A.B. (2009). Building engagement in the workplace. In R. J. Burke& C.L. Cooper (Eds.), The peak performing organization (pp. 50-72). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Bakker, A.B., Albrecht, S., & Leiter, M.P. (2011). Key questions regarding work engagement. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology.

Bakker, A. B., Albrecht, S. L., & Leiter, M. P. (2011). Work engagement: Further reflections on the state of play. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 20(1), 74-88.

Barriball, K. L., & While, A. (1994). Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: a discussion paper. Journal of Advanced Nursing-Institutional Subscription, 19(2), 328-335.

Beal, D. J., Weiss, H. M., Barros, E., & MacDermid, S. M. (2005). An episodic process model of affective influences on performance. Journal of Applied psychology, 90(6), 1054.

Belanger, F. (1999) Propensity to telecommute: An empirical study. Information and Management 35: 139–53.

Bell, S. J., Luddington, J. A. (2006). Coping with customer complaints. Journal of service research, 8(3), 221-233.

Bell, S. J., Bülent, M. (2002), "The Employee-Organization Relationship, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, and Superior Service Quality," Journal of Retailing, 78 (Summer), 131-46.

Bell, S. J., Mengüç, B., & Stefani, S. L. (2004). When customers disappoint: A model of relational internal marketing and customer complaints. Journal of the Academy of marketing science, 32(2), 112-126.

Breevaart, K., Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2014). Daily self-management and employee work engagement. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 84(1), 31-38.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2011) Business Research Methods, 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

Cooper CD, Kurland NB (2002) Telecommuting, professional isolation and employeedevelopment in public and private sector organizations. Journal of Organizational Behavior 23: 511–32.

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. Journal of management, 31(6), 874-900.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1982). Toward a psychology of optimal experience. In L. Wheeler, (Ed.). Review of personality and social psychology.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. New York: Harper & Row.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). If we are so rich, why aren't we happy?. American psychologist, 54(10), 821.

De Witte, H. (1999), "Job insecurity and psychological well-being: review of the literature and exploration of some unresolved issues", European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 155-177.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). The general causality orientations scale: Self-determination in personality. Journal of research in personality, 19(2), 109-134.

Deci, E.L. and Ryan, R.M. (2000), "Target article: the 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: human needs and the self-determination of behavior", Psychological Inquiry, Vol. 11 No. 4.

Demerouti, E. (2006). Job characteristics, flow, and performance: The moderating role of conscientiousness. Journal of occupational health psychology, 11(3), 266.

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Vardakou, I., & Kantas, A. (2003). The convergent validity of two burnout instruments: A multitrait-multimethod analysis. European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 19(1), 12.

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. Journal of Applied psychology, 86(3), 499.

Eaton, S.C. (2003) If you can use them: Flexibility policies, organizational commitment, and perceived performance. Industrial Relations 42: 145–67.

Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244014522633

Engeser, S., & Rheinberg, F. (2008). Flow, performance and moderators of challenge-skill balance. Motivation and Emotion, 32(3), 158-172.

Eskola, Jari & Suoranta, Juha 1998. Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Fischlmayr, I. C., & Kollinger, I. (2010). Work-life balance–a neglected issue among Austrian female expatriates. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 21(4), 455-487.

Fisher, G.G. (2001), Work/Personal Life Balance: A Construct Development Study, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH (unpublished doctoral dissertation).

Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. Journal of personality and social psychology, 95(5), 1045.

Fredrickson, B.L. (2001), "The role of positive emotions in positive psychology", American Psychologist, Vol. 56 No. 3, pp. 218-226.

Fredrickson, B.L. (2004), "Gratitude, like other positive emotions, broadens and builds", in Emmons, R.A. and McCullough, M.E. (Eds), The Psychology of Gratitude, University Press, New York, NY, pp. 145-166.

González-Romá, V., Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Lloret, S. (2006). Burnout and work engagement: Independent factors or opposite poles?. Journal of vocational behavior, 68(1), 165-174.

Gordon R.L. (1975) Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques and Tactics. Dorsey Press, Illinois.

Gorgievski, M. J., Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2010). Work engagement and workaholism: Comparing the self-employed and salaried employees. The Journal of Positive Psychology.

Greenhaus, J.H., Collins, K.M. and Shaw, J.D. (2003), "The relation between work-family and quality of life", Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 63, pp. 510-31.

Grover, S.L., Crooker, K.J. (1995) Who appreciates family-responsive human resources policies: The impact of family-friendly policies on the organizational attachment of parents and non-parents. Personnel Psychology 48: 271–88.

Hakanen, J., Bakker, A.B. and Schaufeli, W.B. (2006), "Burnout and work engagement among teachers", Journal of School Psychology, Vol. 43 No. 6, pp. 495-513.

Hakanen, J.J., Perhoniemi, R. and Toppinen-Tanner, S. (2008), "Positive gain spirals at work: from job resources to work engagement, personal initiative and work-unit innovativeness", Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 73, pp. 78-91.

Hakanen, J.J., Schaufeli, W.B. and Ahola, K. (2008), "The job demands-resources model: a three- year cross-lagged study of burnout, depression, commitment, and work engagement", Work & Stress: A Special Issue on Work Engagement, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 224-241.

Halbesleben, J. R. B., & Wheeler, A. R. (2008). The relative roles of engagement and embeddedness in predicting job performance and intention to leave. Work & Stress.

Hallberg, U.E. and Schaufeli, W.B. (2006), "Same same but different? Can work engagement be discriminated from job involvement and organizational commitment?", European Psychologist, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 119-127.

Harju, L., Hakanen, J.J. and Schaufeli, W.B., 2014. Job boredom and its correlates in 87 Finnish organizations. Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 56(9), pp.911-918.

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. Journal of applied psychology, 87(2), 268.

Hartikainen, A., Anttila, T., Oinas, T. and Nätti, J. (2010), "Is Finland different? Quality of work among Finnish and European employees", Research on Finnish Society, Vol. 3, pp. 29-41.

Hill, E.J., Miller, B.C., Weiner, S.P., and Colihan, J. (1998) Influences of the virtual office on aspects of work and work/life balance. Personnel Psychology 51: 683–67

Hirsjärvi, Sirkka ja Hurme Helena 1982. Teemahaastattelu. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Hirsjärvi, Sirkka ja Hurme, Helena 2000. Tutkimushaastattelu. Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.

Hyman, J., Summers, J., (2004) Lacking balance? Work-life employment practices in the modern economy. Personnel Review 33: 418–29.

Igbaria, M., Guimeraes, T. (1999) Exploring differences in employee turnover intentions and its determinants among telecommuters and non-telecommuters. Journal of Management Information Systems 16: 147–64.

Ilies, R., Judge, T., & Wagner, D. (2006). Making sense of motivational leadership: The trail from transformational leaders to motivated followers. Journal of leadership & organizational studies, 13(1), 1-22.

Marques, J. F. (2017). Oh, what happiness! Finding joy and purpose through work. Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal, 31(3), 1-3.

Joppe, M. (2000). The Research Process. Retrieved February 25, 1998, Available at: http://www.ryerson.ca/~mjoppe/rp.htm

Kahn, W.A. (1990), "Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 33 No. 4, pp. 692-724.

Karasek Jr, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. Administrative science quarterly, 285-308.

Karasek, R. and Theorell, T. (1990), Healthy Work: Stress, Productivity, and the Reconstruction of Working Life, Basic Books, New York, NY.

Kelliher, C., Anderson, D. (2008) For better or for worse? An analysis of how flexible working practices influence employees' perceptions of job quality. International Journal of Human Resource Management 19: 419–31.

Kirchmeyer, C. (2000), "Work-life initiatives: greed or benevolence regarding workers' time", in Cooper, C.L. and Rousseau, D.M. (Eds), Trends in Organizational Behavior, Wiley, Chichester.

Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. Psychological bulletin, 119(2), 254.

Kohli, A. K., & Jaworski, B. J. (1994). The influence of coworker feedback on salespeople. Journal of Marketing, 58(4), 82-94.

Konrad, A., Mangel, R. (2000) The impact of work-life programs on firm productivity. Strategic Management Journal 21: 1225–37.

Lastovkova, A., Carder, M., Rasmussen, H. M., Sjoberg, L., de GROENE, G. J., Sauni, R., & Varga, M. (2018). Burnout syndrome as an occupational disease in the European Union: an exploratory study. Industrial health, 56(2), 160-165.

Little, B., & Little, P. (2006). Employee engagement: Conceptual issues. Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict, 10(1), 111-120.

Macey, W. and Schneider, B. (2008), "The meaning of employee engagement", Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 3-30.

MacLeod, D., & Clarke, N. (2009). Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement: a report to government. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Marks, S.R. and MacDermid, S.M. (1996), "Multiple roles and the self: a theory of role balance". Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 58, pp. 417-32.

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. Journal of organizational behavior, 2(2), 99-113.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W.B. and Leiter, M.P. (2001), "Job burnout", Annual Review of Psychology, Vol. 52, pp. 211-219.

Mauno, S., Kinnunen, U. and Ruokolainen, M. (2007), "Job demands and resources as antecedents of work engagement: a longitudinal study", Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 70 No. 1, pp. 149-171.

Murray, N., Edward R. Hirt, H. S., & Mita S. (1990), "The Influence of Mood on Categorization: A Cognitive Flexibility Interpretation," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59 (September), 411-25.

Patton, M.Q. 2002. Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. New York: Sage Publications.

Pearce, J. L., & Porter, L. W. (1986). Employee responses to formal performance appraisal feedback. Journal of applied psychology, 71(2), 211.

Raghuram, S., Wiesenfeld, B. (2004) Work-nonwork conflict and job stress among virtual workers. Human Resource Management 43: 259–78.

Rheinberg, F., Vollmeyer, R., & Engeser, S. (2003). Die erfassung des flow-erlebens.

Rich, B.L., Lepine, J.A. & Crawford, E.R. (2010), "Job engagement: antecedents and effects on job performance", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 53 No. 3, pp. 617-635.

Richardson SA., Dohrenwend B.S. & Klein D. (1965) Interviewing. Basic Books, New York

Roehling, P.V., Roehling, M.V., & Moen, P. (2001) The relationship between work-life policies and practices and employment loyalty: A life course perspective. Journal of Family and Economic Issues 22: 141–70.

Roper, S., de Carvalho, L.V., Guzman, F., Sivertzen, A.M., Nilsen, E.R. and Olafsen, A.H., 2013. Employer branding: employer attractiveness and the use of social media. Journal of Product & Brand Management.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. American psychologist, 55(1), 68.

Salanova, M., Agut, S., & Peiró, J. M. (2005). Linking organizational resources and work engagement to employee performance and customer loyalty: the mediation of service climate. Journal of applied Psychology, 90(6), 1217.

Sanjari, M., Bahramnezhad, F., Fomani, F. K., Shoghi, M., & Cheraghi, M. A. (2014). Ethical challenges of researchers in qualitative studies: The necessity to develop a specific guideline. Journal of medical ethics and history of medicine, 7.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). Research Methods for Business Students, 4th edition., Pearson Education Limited, 614 pages. SEC. 2013, Securities and Exchange Commission.

Schaufeli W.B. & Salanova M. (2007) Work engagement and vigor at work: psychological and physiological aspects. 130, 178.

Schaufeli, W., & Salanova, M. (2007). Work engagement. Managing social and ethical issues in organizations, 135, 177.

Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. Journal of Happiness studies, 3(1), 71-92.

Schmitt, A., Ohly, S. and Kleespies, N. (2015), "Time pressure promotes work engagement. Test of illegitimate tasks as boundary condition", Journal of Personnel Psychology, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 28-36.

Schwartz, S. P., Adair, K. C., Bae, J., Rehder, K. J., Shanafelt, T. D., Profit, J., & Sexton, J. B. (2019). Work-life balance behaviours cluster in work settings and relate to burnout and safety culture: a cross-sectional survey analysis. BMJ Qual Saf, 28(2), 142-150.

Smith H.W. (1975) Strategies of Social Research: methodological imagination. Prentice Hall International, London.

Taipale, S., Selander, K., Anttila, T. and Nätti, J. (2011), "Work engagement in eight European countries", International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 31 Nos 7/8, pp. 486-504.

Taipale, S., Selander, K., Anttila, T., & Nätti, J. (2011). Work engagement in eight European countries: The role of job demands, autonomy, and social support. International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 31(7/8), 486-504.

Thomas, L. T., & Ganster, D. C. (1995). Impact of family-supportive work variables on work-family conflict and strain: A control perspective. Journal of applied psychology, 80(1), 6.

Tietze, S., Musson, G. (2003) The times and temporalities of home-based telework. Personnel Review 32: 438–55.

Tuomi, J., & Sarajärvi, A. (2004). Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi. Jyväskylä: Gummerus Kirjapaino. Päättötutoriaalin onnistuminen.

Wesson, K., & Boniwell, I. (2007). Flow theory: Its applications to coaching. International Coaching Psychology Review. Available at: https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2007-19807-005

Xanthopoulou, D., Baker, A. B., Heuven, E., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2008). Working in the sky: A diary study on work engagement among flight attendants. Journal of occupational health psychology, 13(4), 345.

Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2009). Work engagement and financial returns: A diary study on the role of job and personal resources. Journal of occupational and organizational psychology, 82(1), 183-200.

Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2007). The role of personal resources in the job demands-resources model. International journal of stress management, 14(2), 121.

Zhou, H., Jin, M., Ma, Q. (2015) Remedy for work stress: Impact on mechanism of the ethical leadership. Central European Journal of Public Health. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26851431

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### <u>Consent for Participation in Interview Research</u>

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Johanna Oksanen from Arcada University of Applied Sciences. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about academic work for the conduction of a research project.

1. My participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, there will be no consequences.

2. I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question in the discussion or to end the interview immediately.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by Johanna Oksanen from Arcada University of Applied Sciences. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I do not want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this research will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

5. Faculty and administrators from Arcada University of Applied sciences will not be present at the interview but will have access to raw notes or transcripts if needed. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____

My signature                                    Date


_____ _____
My printed name                              Signature of the investigator


For further information, please contact Johanna Oksanen

oksanjoh@arcada.fi


**Appendix 2**


# INTERVIEW GUIDE

Age, Gender, Education, For how long you have been working for company?

What is your current job role?

## ENGAGEMENT

How would you describe your engagement to your work?

When have you felt disengaged at work? /when engaged?

What affects your work engagement?

Are you engaged at work, explain?

## VIGOR

How do feel at work?

How do you feel about your work tasks?

What does it take for you to feel energetic at work?

What do you do when things do not go well at work?

## DEDICATION

What does your work give to you?

Is your work important to you? How is it important? When is it important?

What makes you to come to work every day?

What does your work demand from you?

What are the challenges in your work?

How do you find your work?

What makes you feel proud of your work?

When do you feel proud at work?

What inspires you at work?

Please, tell me about a good challenge at work

Do you see your current work as a job, career, or calling and why?

Definitions (Job [achieving financial & material rewards]; Career [achieving prestige, power, recognition, advancement, and personal growth]; Calling [working for the sake of the work itself])

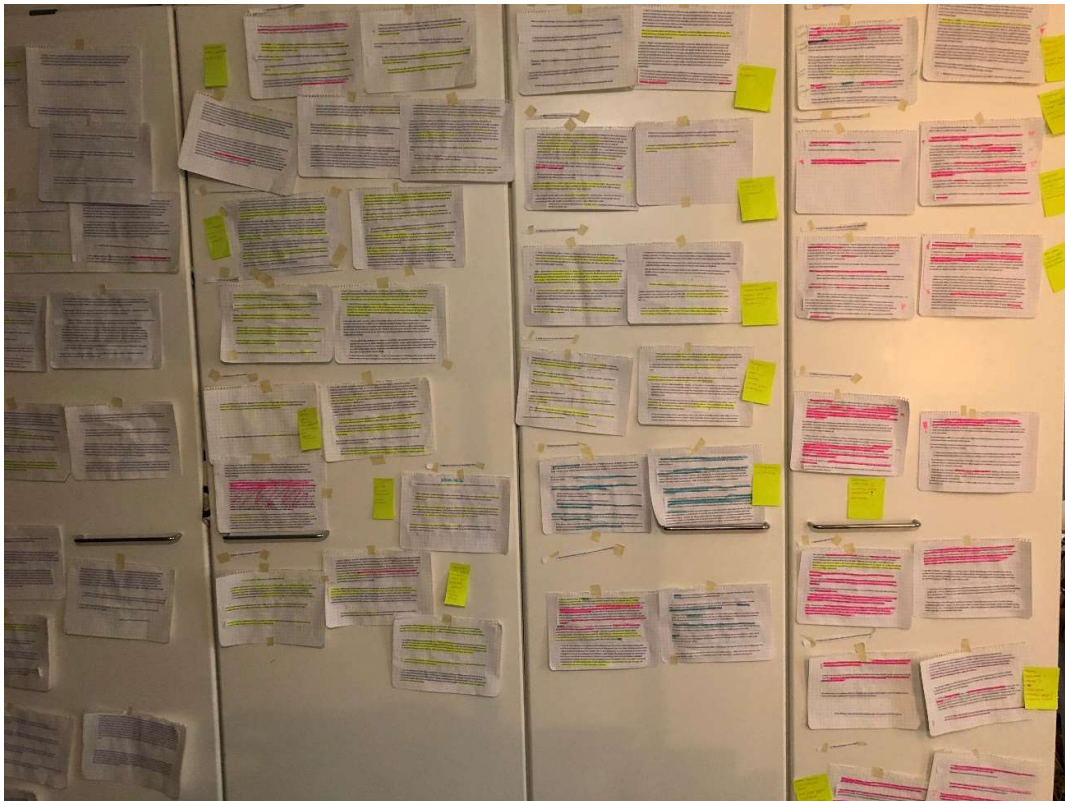How do you think you could increase the meaning of your own work?

**ABSORBTION**

How do you detach yourself from your work?

Do you ever feel carried away at work (losing the sense of time)? Tell me about it.

Thank you for participating in this research. Is there anything you would like to add to the subject or anything you still would like to define better?

## Appendix 3



*Appendix 3 Creating color-coded themes from the interviews.*