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**Well-being of the employees in a timber producing company**

Case study

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Karvonen, Hanna  
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## ABSTRACT

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This research report is being conducted as a final thesis for Bachelor Programme in Business Administration at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences.

The thesis first introduces the research questions, which are "how does the employees of the company perceive well-being at work?" and "how could well-being at work be supported by the management?". To answer these questions, a theoretical framework is first being introduced to the reader. It contains a short theory of employee well-being, using Marja-Liisa and Marjut Manka's frame on well-being, which looks at five aspects: the employee him/herself, the organisation, leadership and management, the work community and finally the job itself. In the theoretical framework, the reader is also introduced to some of the effects employee well-being has on the company.

Then the thesis report presents the methodology of the empirical research as well as discusses the reliability of the work. As an empirical research method, interviews are done to map the overall situation in the company. Out of 10 employees, 8 were interviewed and the data was collected.

After presenting the methodology, the findings from the data collection (interviews) are being presented. The original interviews had 13 questions and in the findings part they are divided into themes. The answers to the questions are presented and analysed and finally in this chapter, the main findings are being summarised. In short, the findings of the data shows that the employees in this case company are doing well, but there is one factor that could improve their well-being; investing to a new safety equipment, especially to new safety helmets for the employees.

After introducing the main findings, the thesis work is concluded with a conclusion chapter. This chapter aims to give answer, as clear as possible, to the research questions. Finally, a development proposal for the commissioning company is being presented. As a main development proposal, the need for a new safety equipment is presented.

Finally, the last chapter consists of discussion on the research work, including author's own evaluation of the research and discussion on what the author learned while conducting the research process as well as a suggestion for future topics of research for the commissioning company.

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Keywords:

Employee, well-being, human resources, health and safety, profitability, leadership, sick leaves.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative research is conducted as a final thesis for International Business studies in the Oulu University of Applied Sciences. The main content of this work consists of theory regarding well-being at work as well as a case study conducted to the commissioning company.

The research report is first going to introduce the research question to the reader, as well as brief introduction of the commissioning company and the main literature sources. The reader is then being introduced to the theoretical framework of the research, which mainly consists of one theory line regarding the topic area.

Following a short introduction on the theory, the methods of the empirical research are introduced. This includes presentation of the research methods and data collection as well as brief explanation on the reliability of the work, aiming to justify the choices made regarding qualitative research process. The reader is then introduced to the main findings on the empirical study. This part includes presentation on the findings, divided in themes as well as reflecting the findings to the theoretical framework.

When the main findings are presented, the research as a whole is being concluded with an answer to the research questions and presentation of the development proposal for the commissioning company.

Finally, the research report is completed with a discussion on the matter. This part includes evaluation of the research, suggestions for future research as well as author's own perceptions on what was learned from the project.

## 1.1 Research question

There are two main research questions for this thesis. The first one is "how do employees of the company perceive well-being at work?" and the second one is "how could well-being at work be supported by the management?".

The first question mentioned above contains aspects such as what are the factors that the employees attach to the topic of well-being and what is the current situation of well-being perceived by the employee. In the first question, the following topics are studied: the employee him/herself (such as their own health and physical condition), the organisation (the common goals, work environment), the management, the work community (communication, team effort, social skills) and finally, the work itself (learning, what kind of tasks are the employees performing, how do they perceive them).

The second question looks at improvement methods for the management to use, to support the employee well-being. These methods could be related to the following topics: communication, feedback, supportive leading, employee education and equal work division.

The purpose of the research is to address different areas of well-being at work in the commissioning company. The main aspects for the topic are the effects of well-being on the company's performance, the meaning of good communication and the impact of health and safety in relation to the employee well-being. The main research topics have been chosen partly because of the author's own involvement in the company. The author has been working part-time for the family business for years. Following along with the company's operations has raised interest in finding out about the well-being of employees as well as what could the management do to support it. The aim is to investigate both negative and positive views of the employees and then conduct a development suggestion for the management to use.

## **1.2 Commissioning company**

The commissioning company, also referred as a case company, is a timber producing company, a sawmill, located in Finland. The company was founded in the early 1970's. Starting with a timber purchasing and selling operations and having 5 employees, the company has evolved over the years to become a sawmill that currently offers employment for 10 people. (CEO 2020.)

During the first decades from founding the company, the growth was mostly steady. The few economic depressions had impact on the company's performances, but it still maintained its growth after the depressions. The family business went through a generational change in terms of leadership in 2005. That was when the son of the founder took over the family business. According to him (CEO 2020), while he has been leading the company, it has first had a steady growth

(excluding the impacts of the economic depression in 2008) and then during the years of 2017-2019 has had rapid growth in terms of business operations and turnover. At the moment, the company is maintaining steady growth. During the first decades the company exported timber products mainly to Norway in addition to selling it within Finland. At the moment, the company is operating timber export mainly to Egypt but also to all over the world. (CEO 2020.)

The changes in human resource management in the case company has evolved with the changes in the company's operations. Starting with 5 employees, it has been able to maintain as a loyal workplace to its employees. Despite the economical depressions, the company has never laid off employees temporarily. According to the current CEO (2020), in 2009 while the economic depression was affecting to the operations, the staff was doing shorter working weeks, but was happy to do it and settled to the new schedule very fast.

In terms of big changes in the human resource management, different quality standard systems that have been set to the industry and to the company (such as ISO-standard) have been affecting to the safety and health standards of the company. These standard systems have strict rules in regards of employee safety, which has made the company to observe and make changes. (CEO 2020.)

### **1.3 Research methods**

Two of the main methods for this research work used are interviews with the company's employees (the primary source) and the secondary source being literature regarding the topic. The sources also include interview with the CEO of the company.

To conduct the interview questions, Eriksson & Kovalainen's book *Qualitative Methods in Business Research* has been utilised. Following the guidelines given in the book, the interview questions have been formed to give an overview of the employee well-being in the case company.

In addition to Eriksson & Kovalainen's book, a study book for research methods *Tutki ja kehitä* by Hanna Vilkkä is used.

Another main literature source used to support and guide the research process is *Case Study Research— design and methods* by Robert K. Yin.



## **Background of the author**

As mentioned briefly before, the author has personal involvement with the case company. Being a family company, it has offered part-time job for the author for the past 7 years. The initial idea and the framework for this research is mainly formed as a result of working in the company for years and seeing it operate in different levels.

The authors own experiences and own perception is indeed affecting the work of this research, in terms of the background research being formed mostly on that experience. Putting aside own perceptions of the company's operations and its employees, secondary sources are used to ensure and support the trustworthiness and reliability of the research work. The reliability of the work will be further analysed in the chapter 3.2.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The following chapter introduces the main theoretical framework used in this research. It presents one theory with five main aspects as well as looks at some of the effects and impacts of the topic matter.

According to Manka (2016, 76) employee well-being is developed through the daily life in the workplace, regarding factors such as personnel, the work environment, the work community, the process of work and leadership. To ensure good employee well-being, the job must be safe, healthy and productive as well as meaningful and rewarding. It also must correspond to individual's own skills and be well managed and have aspects that support the overall management of employee's life.

Well-being at work is not only the employer's responsibility, but also the employee's responsibility. Both of the parties are developing and maintaining well-being of the employees in the company, together. (TTL 2020, cited 25.10.2020.)

### **2.1 The employee him/herself**

Our own attitude is the major factor affecting to our behavior. By our attitudes, we observe the environment and interpret what is happening around our environment. Because of this reason, everyone sees the workplace differently. Other factors affecting to the well-being in the work are psychological capital, personality, skills, health and physical condition of an individual. (Manka 2016, 76.)

Psychological capital consists of the individual's confidence/self-efficacy, realistic optimism, hopefulness and persistency. Psychological capital is a resource in human, that helps encountering difficult situations and prevent the negative feelings related to those situations. Despite the fact that some of the psychological capital is a result of genetics and upbringing as well as education level and wealthy it can be still affected to and made changes to. It is not completely a factor that humans are born with, but more of something that we can learn and develop. This is a factor that is very adjacently related to employee well-being as well. (Manka 2016, 159.)

As Manka (2016, 167) states in the book, one of the main factors on the employee's psychological capital is resiliency. It refers to the person's ability to "bounce back" and start again when facing difficulties and failures. This feature in human being can be developed by preparing to the possible obstacles in life or in the work, changing the attitude and interpretation when facing misfortunes, in addition to adopting a strategy which is directed towards one's asset. In the workplace, strengthening employees' resiliency can be done through developing trust, openness and transparency.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, one of the biggest factors in the employee's well-being is their own physical condition. With the psychological condition together, this affects to how the employee is perceiving their well-being. The major factors here are the level of strain, the possibilities to recover from the work, health condition, the quality of nutrition and the quantity of sleep. (Manka 2016, 187.)

Motivation of individual employees plays a big part in employee well-being. Armstrong (2010, 136) defines motivation as a force that directs and sustains our behaviour, while energising it. It is a reason to do something. It also affects to the concept of engagement by providing dynamic and personal elements to it. To achieve a high performance, requires well-motivated employees who are willing to perform with unrestricted effort.

Motivation of human beings can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The difference between these two are that whereas intrinsic motivation is provided by the job itself, the extrinsic motivation is formed by either punishments (e.g. criticism, withholding salary payment and disciplinary actions) or rewards (e.g. promotion, a pay rise and other incentives). (Armstrong 2010, 136.)

How the employee sees their job satisfaction is dependant on many variables. Some of the factors are as follows: gender, age, education, marital status, possible health problems, race, workhours, job security and income. (Gazioglu 2006, cited 15.11.2020.) Furthermore, job satisfaction has been linked with absenteeism, task performance, turnover, counterproductive work behaviour as well as with the profitability of the company. (Sessa & Bowling 2020, 9.)

## 2.2 Organisation

The organisation itself has a great impact on the well-being of its employees. To be goal-directed organisation, it must know its vision, strategy and values. As the name implicates, vision is something where the company is aiming for. Strategies on the other hand are actions and methods that are used to guide the company towards these visions. For every employee to work towards the common goals, they should be clearly indicated within the company. Lastly, the values of the company are rules that guide the common actions in the organisation. (Manka 2016, 80.)

It is stated in the book from Manka (2016, 87) that flexible structure in the company offers the best way to organise. Being strict and confined does not work in the changing environment, because the companies are then not capable of responding to the changing needs of the customer. To keep up with the changing environment, the company must have a culture, that mostly revolves around loyalty and flexible actions. In addition, it is important to note that usually there is a need for the company to have development discussions with the employees (Manka 2016, 92).

In addition to the factors stated above, the physical work environment has an impact on the well-being of the employees. Even the Occupational Safety and Health Act demands that the working spaces and tools must be in shape. (Finlex 2003, cited 15.11.2020.)

The physical environment includes different factors, but one that is important to note with a company where manual labor and machinery is being used is the impact of hearing sense. David A. Statt notes in his book *Psychology and the World of Work* (2004, 46) that we as a human largely rely on hearing and seeing, therefore our experience and ability to understand the world around us is shaped by these two senses. Therefore, there is no question on how important it is to remain two of our most important senses and in turn, the company must also provide appropriate safety equipment to prevent any damage to e.g. the employees hearing.

In a study by Abel et al (2002, cited 16.11.2020) it is noted that when the company requires the employees to use protective gear, it is important to pay special attention to the sizing and fitting of all protective gear.

In addition to the factors mentioned previously, to support and strengthen the team spirit and enhance the employee well-being, many companies aim to affect to its employees' well-being with

arranging common activities outside the workhours. As Perttula (2018, cited 14.11.2020) writes in her article to Tehy-magazine, it is very common to think that these recreation days are the solution to building a team spirit. In the article Antti Aro, an expert in the field says “..Well-functioning social connections are important, but the most important thing is the smoothness of the work”. Therefore, it is important for the company to maintain good working conditions for its employees.

### **2.3 Leadership and management**

The manager’s job is to get his/her employees motivated to reach the common goals. To help this, one of the major factors is communication: listening, encouraging and building trust. In the researches done on modern leadership, one of the major factors has been optimism in leading, meaning that if the manager is optimistic, it will also transfer to the employees. (Manka 2016, 133.)

Furthermore, it is stated that these days, leadership is changing towards more comprehensive. A good leadership is being connected with productivity, the performance of the company and finally, to the well-being of the employees. Developing a good leadership and reaching a state where the company has a good leader offers notable amount of benefits. The following list presents characteristics and attributes that are connected with a good, modern leader:

- Acting as an example and being trustworthy/reliable
- Organising the work fairly and with justice
- Offering psychological and emotional support as well as having emotional intelligence
- Underlining the positive atmosphere in the workplace
- Engouraging to reach goals and creativity
- Observing employees’ psychological and physical health

With these being noted, it is also important to mention that the role of a leader should not be a role of a superhuman, since the rest of the work force should compensate on where the leader lacks. The leadership therefore is not formed solely by the characteristics of the leader/manager, but rather is a combination of the team’s ability to function. (Manka 2016, 142.)

On the topic of verbal acknowledgements, the communications leader of the city of Tampere, Kirsi Koski, says that a good leader adds a lot of meaning to a small words and strong direction to big gestures. She also refers to the importance of starting the leadership with treating other people in

the work community. It is said that to gain a good leadership, one must treat others genuinely as well as having a respect to other people. She says to improve the interaction, there is a triangle basic element to a leadership which includes saying "good morning", "thank you" and "sorry". If these words are forgotten to use regularly, they can impact negatively on many aspects of leading. (Suomalainen johtaja 2010, 90.)

In regard to verbal acknowledgements, according to researches, having a work community that notices and encourages the employees, basing the leadership to interacting friendly, can form a significant competitive advantage to the company. When the employees feel they are appreciated and noted, it lays a base to a common loyalty in the work community, which in turn then has a positive impact on the ability to produce profits to the company. (Seppälä 2017, cited 22.11.2020.)

As Armstrong states in his book (2010, 330) three essential roles for leaders include task defining, task achieving and maintaining effective relationships. In more depth, effective relationships mean that they contribute to achieving tasks. These relationships are between themselves and all of the members in the work community, as well as between the people within the community.

When looking at the connection between a good leadership and well-being of the employees could be said that the relationship is imminent. As it is explained by a post from the University of Tampere (2020, cited 22.11.2020), in regards of the well-being of the employees, the leader has many different roles, including the builder of a good environment, influencer and interactor of the well-being, living example of the culture of well-being, an expert on well-being as well as a developer of employee well-being.

How the leader can act as a builder of a good environment is in close connection with being someone who the employee can turn to and tell what the factors are both straining and energising him/her in the daily work, accelerating to adjusting the work accordingly. In turn, to act as an influencer and interactor of employee well-being, it is most beneficial if the leader carries out their duties while being authentic and immersive leader who helps the employees to solve problems rightfully and in a timely manner. (University of Tampere 2020, cited 22.11.2020.)

For the leader to act as an example of the culture of well-being, one can most easily success by using words and actions. Some of the factors that makes the leader a good example on well-being employee concerns that the leader uses a positive tone while speaking about well-being, takes

developing well-being seriously, encourages the employees to detach from the work and also takes care of him/herself. While being an example of someone living in a culture of well-being, the leader has also the role of an expert on the topic. The leader should be familiar with the topic of employee well-being, as well as knowing how to distribute the information and educate the employees. (University of Tampere 2020, cited 22.11.2020.)

To develop the process of increasing employee well-being, the leader must work in close co-operation with the employees. As it will be discussed in more detail in the following contents, to support the well-being does not mean only bringing motivational speakers to the company or arranging activity days, but more developing the smoothness of daily work and the work methods. (University of Tampere 2020, cited 22.11.2020.)

In his book, David A. Statt (2004, 296) defines the differences between management and leadership and the relationship between them. However, in this study, these two terms are mixed, and both being used to describe the same managing and leading authority in the case company, since as often in the smaller companies, these two roles are combined and personified onto one individual.

## **2.4 The work community**

According to Manka (2012, 116-118), a good work community is equally as important as the other four factors in well-being. A good "team spirit" is consisted of respecting others' work, being open, being willing to help, succeeding and having loyalty/trust. To reach certain goals in profitability, the job can be further developed and planned as well as taking responsible of reaching the common goals (Manka 2012, 116-118). Having the experience of a well-being work community adds the motivation of employees, their commitment to the job and allows the employees to control their stress and health levels.

If the goal is to have efficient and productive work community, it means the following factors, amongst others:

- Common values and loyalty
- Fair and diverse
- Good atmosphere, "team spirit" and sense of community
- Genuine co-operation and attendance
- Clear leadership
- Clear common goals
- Healthy and safe work environment
- Harmony between the work and personal life on individual level

(Suonsivu 2011, 59-60.)

The communication in the work community also plays a big part. According to Kaija Suonsivu (2011, 51) it is important that every employee communicates in a language that everyone else understands. As important as it is to take part in conversations by speaking, listening is also a big part of communication. One should remember that a good listener is not doing anything else at the moment. Keeping an eye contact means that the listener is genuinely interested in what the other has to say and it is also a way to show approval. (Suonsivu 2011, 51.)

When talking about interaction and communication at work, it refers to a situation, where the aim is to get the recipient understand the meaning of the message, both by words and gestures and other silent ways. Having a good communication channel at work promotes genuine presence, empathy, support, listening and showing interest in co-operation. Some of the aspects that obstruct the communication channels and interaction can be rush, blaming, strong prejudices as well as a lack of interest. (TTK 2020, cited 22.11.2020.)

## **2.5 The job itself**

The fifth aspect of employee well-being is the job itself. The researchers in the field of psychology tells us that having healthy and hard-working employees is not enough, but the employees also must be excited and committed towards their job. For the employee to consider their job sensible requires also having a meaningful job, the possibility to utilise their skills and understanding how their task is related to the entirety. (Manka 2016, 107.)

The job also must offer external rewards such as the salary and possibilities to move forward in the job (promotions and such). Also, intangible rewards play a big part in employee well-being and the



feeling of control in the job. These can be verbal acknowledgements (such as giving thanks) and encouragements. Then on the other hand, as stated in the book by Manka (2016, 108) it must also be noted that against the assumption, the amount of salary is not the most important thing for the employees, but the experience and knowledge of succeeding in a job.

The job tasks in the case company mainly consists of manual labour, therefore a need for a certain physical condition is required by the employees. Overall, the field of agriculture and forestry is on the top of the list of the physically most straining fields in Finland.

There is a distinctive connection between having a physically straining job and increasing risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders. (TTL 2013, 145-146.)

Taking into account the straining side of the physicality of a job, it is important also to look at another point of view which explores the physicality being a source of motivation. One could argue that depending on the individual's references, there could be a connection between having a physical work and increased motivation or well-being. However, for this research, there were very few studies that could have been used as a reference base to the statement.

There is a study done on the motivation and physical activity and their relation to firefighter's enjoyment and their experienced on the state of health. According to the results of the research, there is no apparent connection between having a physical job and the enjoyment of the work. (Pakarainen 2017, cited 21.11.2020).

How the employee succeeds in the job is also dependent on how well the employee has been introduced to the new task/job. The meaning of orientation is to allow the new employee to learn about the company and its values as well as making him/her become familiar with their tasks and responsibilities. A good orientation is important because it creates consistency amongst the company. It also encourages the new employee to feel as a part of the team as well as acts as a key factor in terms of the employee's job satisfaction and their stress level. (Bloom 2019, cited 21.8.2020.)

The Occupational Health and Safety Act defines job orientation as something that the employer must provide to the new employee. The content should include giving information on the possible hazards in the workplace, introducing the job task itself, the environment, the methods and the equipment and machinery used in the job. As mentioned, the orientation should also include introduction to the possible work hazards and accidents but should also be trained on how to avoid

these said hazards from taking place. The employees should also be introduced and trained on how to perform maintenance and adjustment tasks to the work equipment and machinery. (Finlex 2003, cited 15.11.2020.)

This orientation process should not only be performed when a new employee starts their job, but also when an existing employee is being shifted to another job task or when new working methods are being taken into action. There might also be other situations, where orientation and introduction is needed, such as if there is a work-related accident or neglect on following the safety instructions. (Ahokas & Mäkeläinen 2013, cited 15.11.2020.)

To perform a good orientation process requires continuous development of the orientation plan as well as having an open conversation within the work community. The orientation process as a whole is not only the employer's task, but the employee should also take active part in it from the beginning. (Nykänen 2017, cited 15.11.2020.)

## **2.6 The effects of employee well-being**

According to the CEO of the company (2020) employee well-being plays a big part in company's results and profitability. A well-being employee is excited and motivated, therefore affects to the performance of the company's operations. It leads to staying in the schedule and being productive. Having well-being employees affect greatly to the company's performance. There are different aspects in the company's daily operations that can be affected by employee well-being and vice versa, meaning that with the daily operations the company is having, can be affect to employee's well-being. Then on the other hand, the employee can also affect to the outcome of daily performance of the company with their own well-being.

As stated in the book by Manka (2016, 92), creating and maintaining good working conditions leads to lower expenses and it allows for better employee well-being on personal level. It also has positive effects on the company's financials if the working community has minimal amount of conflicts.

## **Sick leaves**

Because the working force consist of human beings, it is obvious that there will be disruptions such as sick leaves. If the company is experiencing very little sick leaves, it also means that there are less expenses regarding employee sick leaves (such as sick pay and hiring a replacement worker) and vice versa. (Manka 2016, 92.)

In Finland, the average price for employee's sick day is around 300 euros. Obviously, the sum depends on the field we are in, but that is a general average cost. On average, a Finnish employee has twelve sick days in a year. (Hyppänen 2010, 277.) These sick days can be caused by a occupational injury/accident or by e.g. seasonal flu.

In the case company, sick leaves can affect on the company's operations in a way where the other employees must be flexible to cover and change tasks. According to the CEO of the company (2020), sick leaves do not have a major effect to the company's performance at the moment.

### **2.7 The impact of health and safety**

As mentioned before, there are quality standard systems that have been affecting to the safety and health standards of the company. The strict rules have led the company to assess and change some of the operation methods in regards of health and safety of the employees. In addition to the rules and regulations on the workplace, the employees attend to a first aid-course every two years. Currently, the company has strictly ruled that the employees must wear safety helmets in certain locations at work. Further, the company uses signs indicating certain safety rules and marks. (CEO 2020.)

In addition to these standards, the Occupational Safety and Health Act gives different companies guidelines on how to manage and ensure the safety of employees. The act given by Ministry of Social Affairs and Health aims to improve the working conditions to ensure and continue maintaining the working capacity of each employee, but also prevent occupational accidents. One of its goals is also to dispose of any possible hazards in the workplace as well as monitor the employees' health, both physical and mental. (Finlex 2003, cited 15.11.2020.)

In an article by McPherson (2008, cited 16.11.2020), the author discussed about the balance between personal protective equipment and comfort and fit. While the goal of protective clothing and accessories is to protect the wearer from occupational hazards taking place in the work, it also includes issues regarding comfort, fit, wearability as well as style. A study made on protective wear showed that three quarters of the surveyed workers said that the protective equipment should be more comfortable to wear.

In the book Human Resource Management (2009, 111) John Martin lists four factors or reasons, why health and safety at work should be taken seriously. The first one on the list is similar to what have already been discussed previously. There are costs related to employees' absence, such as sick pay and replacement labor costs as well a connection between absence and reduced productivity. Injuries or illnesses originating from accidents in the workplace could simply be avoided by investigating into the cause of these accidents and making changes.

The second factor on the list refers to financial compensations and claims that the company can face due to work-related injuries.

The third factor presents the possibility of gaining a poor reputation, if the company does not have efficient health and safety practices. It might lead to a high labor turnover, which in turns might force the company to face difficulties finding replacement human resources.

The final factor on Martin's list is considering the effects of negative publicity. Having poor reputation in regards of health and safety might lead to situations where the employees are considered to not be trustworthy, due to a lack of delivering high quality services. (Martin 2009, 111.)

### 3 METHODOLOGY

In the following text, the methodology of this research work is explained, as well as reliability of the work is being assessed. The chapter presents the process of data collection and briefly explains aspects of reliability in this research work.

As it was briefly discussed previously, the method of this research is qualitative. To describe qualitative research is rather complicated, but in the following it will be explained as it is discussed in the book by Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008, 4-5).

Whereas quantitative research focuses on more structure and standardised modes of collecting and analysing empirical data, qualitative research focuses on collecting and analysing the data to gain a holistic understanding on the topic. Qualitative study method is often used in a business research, because it aims to provide an understanding of the issues that might remain somewhat unclear while conducting the study as a quantitative research. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 4-5.)

To divide different researches, qualitative research can be broken down to four different categories. These categories are described based on their research interests as follows:

- interest in characteristics of language, such as symbolic interactionism and discourse analysis
- interest in discovery of regularities such as ethnography and critical research
- interest in discerning meaning such as case study and phenomenology
- interest in reflection such as heuristic research and reflection on phenomenology

Out of these four categories presented above, this research can be best described as a research focusing on discerning meaning, more detailed, case study. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 4-5.)

Regarding the sources of this study, as mentioned in the beginning of this paper, both primary and secondary sources were used for this research. Most of the secondary sources have already been introduced earlier in the paper, therefore this chapter describes the use of primary sources and data. The primary sources include interviews that were conducted with the employees of the company. Since the company only has around 10 employees, the initial plan included interviewing every employee in the company.

It was evident from the beginning of the work that interviews would be used as a form of data collection. As mentioned in Yin's book (1994, 80) interview is both insightful, provides unconventional inferences and is targeted, focusing directly on the topic of the case study. It is considered to be one of the most important sources when conducting a case study (Yin 1994, 84). For the interviews, the author prepared a list of questions with background information enquiries in the beginning. The questions were formed to support the theoretical framework of the research in addition to discover an answer to the initial research question.

The questions for the interview were neutral and open-ended, because it is proven that open-ended questions usually give the interviewee more of a control over what is being discussed as well as produces more detailed answers (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 84).

In addition to the questions being asked, the interviewees were also asked to describe some of the topic areas. There was also one question, where the interviewees were asked to place their job satisfaction on a scale. This question was formed mainly because it was considered to give a clear overview on the situation. The question was followed by with a secondary question, "what would be the goal number of the job satisfaction and how it could be reached". The list of questions can be seen in the Appendix- part of the report (see appendix 1).

### **3.1 Data collection**

The week prior to the interviews, the employees were notified that such interviews would be held. It was also discussed previously, that a thesis would be conducted regarding the topic. They were explained that the interviews would be a part of a research for a thesis. They were also given opportunity to choose their time and date for the interview.

It was previously agreed with the representative (CEO) of the company, that the interviews would be held during the employees' coffee breaks, in the company's conference room, hence the employees were notified of this as well. On the day of the first interviews, the conference room was prepared, and the interviewees were offered coffee and pastries. With their coffee breaks, the employees individually arrived into the conference room and was asked if it was ok for them that the interviews would be recorded. All of the employees agreed to this. The interviews were then held in a casual conversational manner. With 8 employees, the interviews were conducted in the same week.

The interview recordings were then transcribed according to Vilkkä's (2005, 116) instructions, where the final transcriptions would correlate exactly with the utterances and meanings of the interviewees.

To ease the process of comparing and analysing the answers, all of the individual transcriptions were added to a mutual spreadsheet. The transcriptions of the interviews are in author's possession.

### **3.2 Validity and reliability**

In his book *Doing Qualitative Research* David Silverman (2000, 175) describes validity as another word for truth. He says that there are cases where the reader may react with skepticism due to the reason that the researcher or author has made no attempt on dealing with contrary cases. Hence, it is important to introduce different sources of information on the research work.

With an attempt to gain deeper understanding on validity in qualitative research, Ghauri & Grønhaug have explained different types of validity in their book *Research Methods in Business Studies* (2005, 216-218).

They describe interpretative validity as the measure on quality of the interpretation whereas the descriptive validity is referring to a certain degree where the actual description remains true.

This research work's validity could be measured as interpretative validity, since the original interview recordings are being analysed in the chapter 4, some with having direct quotations from the interview data.

Whereas validity refers to be a synonym for the word "truth", reliability is referring "to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions" (Silverman 2000, 188).

## 4 FINDINGS

In this chapter the results and the data of the interviews is being presented and analysed. Firstly, some of the practicalities regarding data collection is being discussed. Secondly, the findings from the empirical study is being presented and analysed in themes. Lastly, a short conclusion of the interview findings is being presented.

### 4.1 Interview results and analysis

The company currently has 10 employees and 8 of them were interviewed, due to some of the employees being absent on the time of the interviews. As mentioned before, the interviews took place in the company's properties, during the employees' working hours.

The interviews started with few background questions, regarding how long the employee has been working in the company, how long they have been in the working life generally as well as what are their daily tasks in the company. Answers to the question "how long have you been working in the company" varied between 1,5 years to 24 years. The answer to the second question had as much variation as to the first one. The answer to the last background question, "what are the daily tasks" included packing timber material, operating the production line, driving a wheel loader, receiving timber shipments and even office tasks and daily errands. In addition, to get a comprehensive overview, it is important to inform that all of the employees are doing the same workhours, from Monday to Friday, from 7-15.

Almost every question was started with a short description, such as "I have noticed that at the moment, there are some new safety regulations that has been adapted.." – and then the main question, in this example case ".describe the importance of health and safety for you".

After the main interview questions, the interviewees were asked whether they have anything they would like to add or to comment. No further questions or comments aroused within the interviewees.



#### 4.1.1 Skill leadership and development

When the employees of the case company were asked to describe the orientation process to the job when they first started, some of the employees could not recall how it was done at the time when they started working in the company. One of the employees described it followingly: "The orientation was more like here is the button, press this. Here the orientation is not something that has been put much effort into. I have been learning things by myself".

Based on the data gathered through the interviews, it is apparent that improvements could be made regarding the orientation process to the job.

The employees also were asked if the company has offered further training or do they feel the need for further training. All of the employees said, that they have enough skills to complete their job tasks. One of the employees had been offered a further training course, which they did some time ago. The response was: "I do not feel that there would be a need for further training at the moment. A while ago I had a course on stress system, but that was necessary then. I am sure that if the need ever arises, I could take a course".

The figure below shows the overall view of skill leadership and development in the company.



FIGURE 1. Skill leadership and development in the company

As it is stated in The Occupational Safety and Health Act, the employer is required to provide sufficient orientation or introduction to the job. It is also demanded by the said act, that if an employee changes job positions or if there is a change in working methods, adequate introduction should be taken place. The introduction, or orientation, should include familiarising the employee with ways to avoid occupational hazards and accidents as well as updating training whenever it is necessary. (Finlex 2003, cited 15.11.2020.)

For the employee to receive a good orientation, makes him/her quickly feel like they are a part of the work community. The company should together agree on who will be responsible for the orientation process. It is beneficial to have an orientation plan as well as having literal material to guide the process. To perform a good orientation process requires continuous development of the orientation plan as well as having an open conversation within the work community. The orientation process as a whole is not only the employer's task, but the employee should also take active part in it from the beginning. (Nykänen 2017, cited 15.11.2020.)

As it can be seen from the figure 1, the company has managed to reach the goal of orientation process, since all of its employees sees that their current skills are correlating with the needed skills. However, it is important to note that there could be improvements made regarding the process of conducting orientation and introduction for the reasons of making the new employee feel like a part of the community as well as gaining sufficient knowledge and skills.

#### **4.1.2 Motivation**

The employees were asked what motivates them to work in the company. Out of 8 employees, 3 could not name any specific motivating factors. The reply to the question varied greatly. One of the employees said, that one of the biggest motivators to work would be the physical aspect of the work. He said "I like having physical work, it motivates me a lot".

On the other end of the spectrum, one of the employees said that the CEO as a person motivates to work. He said: "I am here because he (the CEO of the company) is such a fine man. I do not think I would be here otherwise". As a background, this particular employee was asked to the position personally by the CEO of the company. The interviewee came back to this question while answering to another one later: "The kind of leadership that we have here is a good one. These

are the reasons why I work here. But it actually is greatly being personified to the CEO as a person why this is such a good workplace overall. He is such a flexible leader, as an example, if you need a vacation, he will give you days off whatever the situation is. He understands his employees in a way where a lot of the CEOs of bigger companies do not. He can put himself to the shoes of the employees”.

Based on the information gathered through the interviews, it can be concluded that many of the employees have different main motives to work. Could be said that all of the specific factors that came apparent in the research depend on each individual’s views and therefore could be challenging to be affected on the company’s behalf.

The figure below illustrates the main motivators for the employees to work in the company.

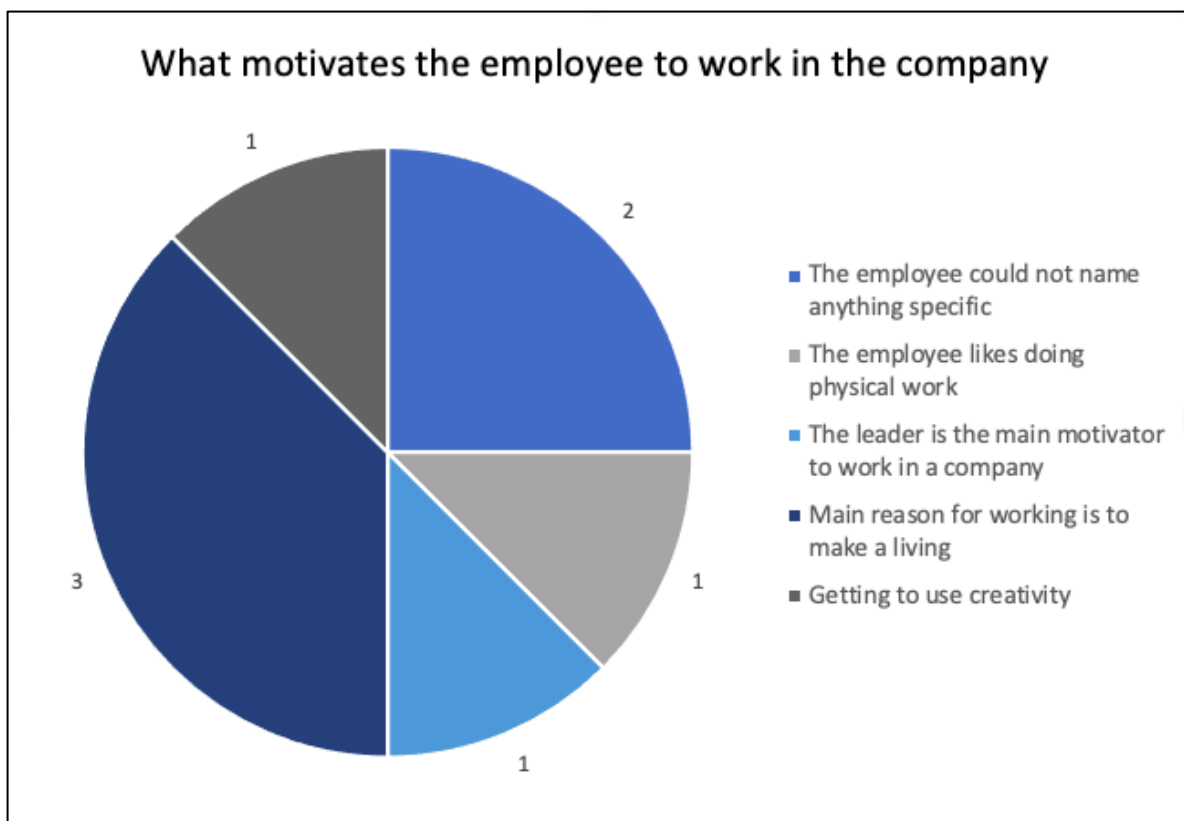


FIGURE 2. What motivates the employees to work.

As Armstrong (2010, 136) has defined the motivation to be something that works as a reason for people to do something, it is beneficial to study the employee’s sources of motivation. Motivation directs, energises and sustains the behavior of employees. Two different aspects of motivation can be identified: intrinsic and extrinsic. The work itself provides intrinsic motivation, whereas extrinsic

motivation refers to the actions that are performed for the people to motivate them, such as pay rise or promotion and on the other hand withholding salary payment or expressing criticism towards the employee.

While one of the employees mentioned that having a physical job motivates them to work, there are very few studies done on the topic to give a theoretical point of view. There is a study done on the motivation and physical activity and their relation to firefighter's enjoyment and their experienced on the state of health. According to the results of the research, there is no apparent connection between having a physical job and the enjoyment of the work. (Pakarainen 2017, cited 21.11.2020).

As it came apparent in the empirical study, and can also be seen in the figure 2, the sources of motivation amongst the employees in the case company varies. 3 out of all the interviewees said that the main reason for working is to make a living, therefore could be said that their main motivation is extrinsic. One of the employees mentioned that doing a physical job motivates them, which indicates to an intrinsic source of motivation.

In the end, what motivates the individual employee, depends also on their own values and characteristics. Therefore, the company can affect to the employee's motivation only to a certain extent.

#### **4.1.3 Overall satisfaction**

One of the interview questions asked the employees to place their overall satisfaction to the scale of 1-10. The follow-up question was that what would they like it to be and how the goal could be reached. Out of 8 interviewees, all of the employees were able to give an exact answer to the primary question. The average of the answers was 8,3. To the second question, only 3 people were able to envision what the goal number would be.

The chart below shows the employees' overall satisfaction to their job.

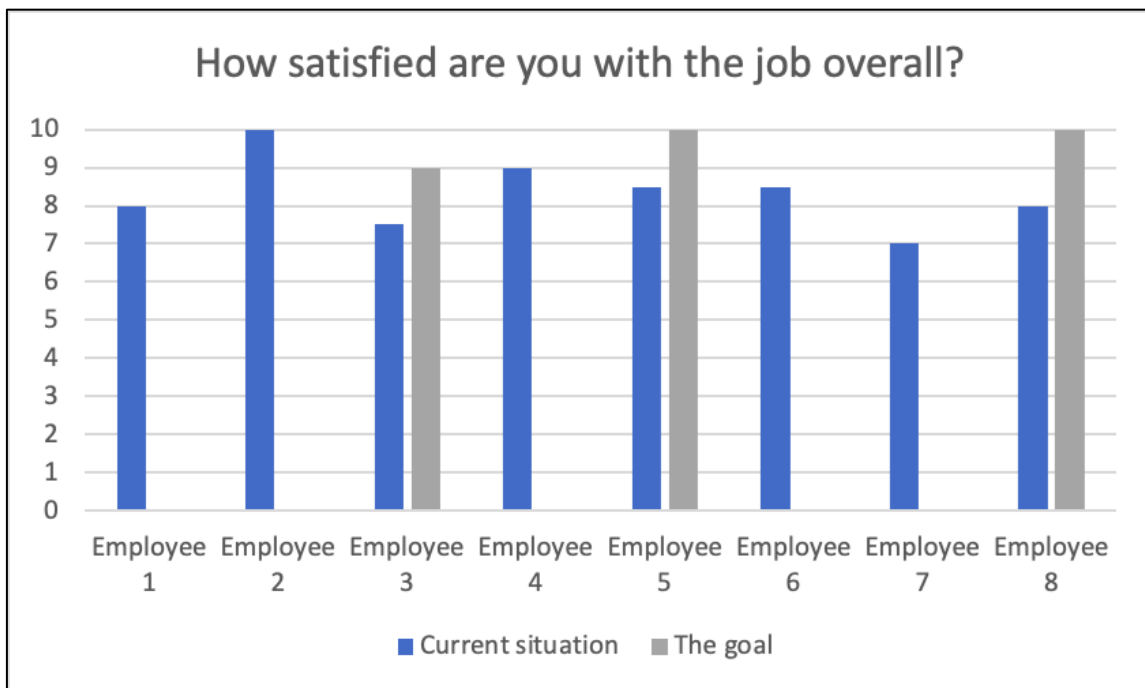


FIGURE 3. The overall satisfaction of the employees.

As an example, an employee who marked the overall job satisfaction as 9 said that "There is always room to improve things. But I am really happy with the situation. I think that no matter what, it (the overall job satisfaction) could not reach 10".

Another answer to the question was: "8. The goal would be 10. To reach the goal, I think a change of scenery would help instead of being in the same field for 8 hours a day. As an example, last week I was assigned to do a lifting job outside our premises, as a gig task, with our machinery. I would like to have more of that kind of tasks, because I lift the same logs of timber all day, it would do good to go somewhere else every now and then".

There are numerous studies done on the topic which the importance of job satisfaction has been demonstrated. The studies have found that there is a clear connection between job satisfaction and relevant behaviours on individual and organisational levels. A job satisfaction has been linked with absenteeism, task performance, turnover, counterproductive work behaviour as well as with the profitability of the company. (Sessa & Bowling 2020, 9.)

A study done on job satisfaction in Britain (Gazioglu 2006, cited 15.11.2020) shows that there are many different factors that affect to individual's job satisfaction. Some of the factors are as follows:

gender, age, education, marital status, possible health problems, race, workhours, job security and income. Because the factors vary between job characteristics and individual's personal characteristics, the data can be only interpreted to a certain extent.

To conclude the overall satisfaction of the employees in the case company, could be said that it is on a really good base in the company. Most of the employees are happy with the current situation and if there is something that lowers the job satisfaction and motivation, it can indeed be pinpointed and worked on, to increase the satisfaction of the employees (such as the situation with the safety helmets). As mentioned previously, not all of the employees were able to name a goal for the overall job satisfaction. This might indicate that they have not gone through a thought process regarding this or that they are not comfortable talking about it. However, hearing the overall satisfaction of each employee was really educative in terms of getting a comprehensive view of the situation.

#### **4.1.4 The physical requirements**

Some of the work tasks in the company involve heavy lifting at times, as well as being on one's feet all day. The employees were asked what they feel is their current state of physical health as well as do they feel it is enough compared to what is needed in the job.

As an overall view of the answers to this question, 100% of the employees answered that at the moment their physical condition is good, and it correlates well to what is needed in the job. One of the employees answered as follows: "I am in good condition. It correlates to what is needed out there in the field. While working, one stays fit" (referring to the fact that the physical job maintains the physical fitness).

It came clear that the employees feel that their physical health correlates well with what is needed in the job. Most of the employees think that the physical work maintains their fitness level, which is of course beneficial for everybody. Overall the impression was made that physical health of the employees is supporting their work, therefore supporting their well-being in the workplace.

The figure below illustrates the employees' current view on their physical state of health.

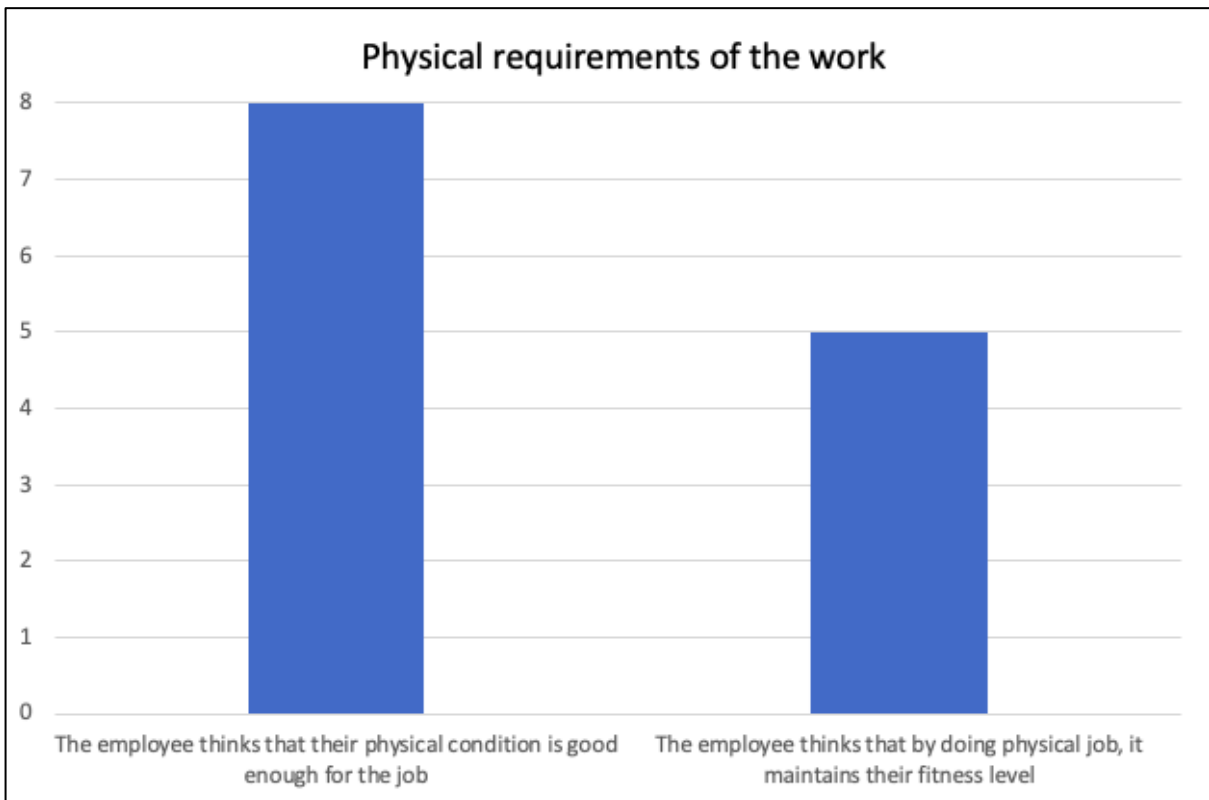


FIGURE 4. Physical requirements of the job.

The field of agriculture and forestry is on the top of the list of the physically most straining fields in Finland. There are of course other fields where a physical workload is major, such as in construction work, accommodation and food service operations. Having a physically straining job and difficult working positions as well as repetitive motions while working with hands increases the risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders. (TTL 2013, 145-146.) Due to this reason, it is important for the employees in the company to maintain a good physical condition. In regards of employee well-being, it is positive to see the data showing that all of the employees view their physical condition as adequate for the job, as can be seen from the figure 4.

#### 4.1.5 Health and safety

As mentioned before, the company has strict health and safety rules, appointed both by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and by some of the quality standard systems the company is accredited for. There are safety helmets that are required to be used in certain locations and tasks as well as safety gloves and proper working attire.

Out of all the interviewees, 4 mentioned the safety helmet. In most of the employees' opinion, the new safety helmets are not as high quality as they could/should be. One of the employees said: "One thing related to this, the earmuffs in the safety helmets are not as good as the normal earmuffs. It allows some sounds to come through the earmuffs. Other than that, it is easy to follow these safety regulations.

Another answer to this question was similar in nature: "I think wearing the safety helmet is not necessary. There has only been one injury directed to head during my time in the company (few years). The hits that could be directed to a person's head are so hard and powerful that I do not think a helmet can protect from that. The earmuffs in the helmet are not that good, the helmet also gives a pressure to the head, leading to having a headache in the evening when one goes home from work. We still have to wear them, but maybe should be considered where they (helmets) are actually necessary. As a thought it might seem that there are wood logs flying around, but it is not like that in the reality".

The overall view gathered through the interview answers gives an impression that there is a reason to make improvements. The main issue is unfitting safety helmets, which could easily be replaced with another model of helmets. Other than that, seems like most of the employees understand the need for the safety regulations, but some education could be useful. Explaining to the employees thoroughly why some of the rules are the way they are might increase the will to obey the new rules.

The following chart shows the employees' view on health and safety at the company.



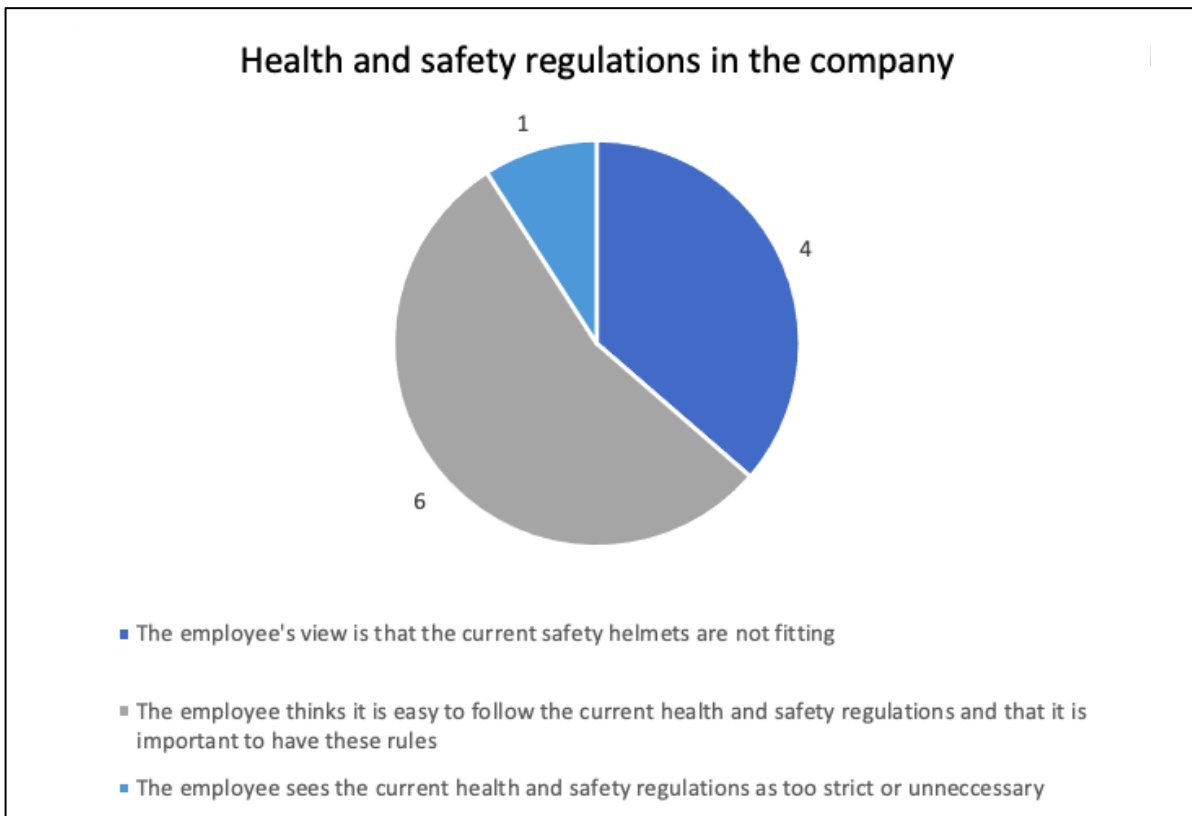


FIGURE 5. Health and safety regulations in the company. NOTE: one employee may have more than one opinion presented in the chart.

The health and safety are currently on a good level, but for comfort reasons, there is an improvement to be made regarding the safety equipment of the employees, as discussed. As mentioned by McPherson (2008, cited 16.11.2020), there should be a balance between protective equipment and comfort and fit.

In a study by Abel et al (2002, cited 16.11.2020) it is noted that when the company requires the employees to use protective gear, it is important to pay special attention to the sizing and fitting of all protective gear. When hearing protective muffs and a helmet is combined, should be acknowledged that to optimise the fit for one of the other, the other one's fit may preclude.

However, the product development of earmuffs and helmet combinations have been developed since the study, therefore there is a possibility to find a combination where both of the equipment's features are maximised.

It is important to note that there is a reason for the use of protective wear, as Manka (2016, 90) declares in the book, the physical environment has an effect to the employee's well-being, therefore it is important to make sure that every employee is safe while conducting their work.

#### **4.1.6 Importance of teamwork**

In the commissioning company, almost all of the tasks in the "field" (referring to the physical tasks that regards as most of the work done in the company) are to be done either with a pair or in a team of people. There are very rare tasks that can be done individually.

When the employees were asked to describe the current state of teamwork and its importance, one of the employees said: "Teamwork is going well here. The team spirit is good. Some of the employees are of course slower to do some tasks and the others are faster, but I think everyone must do the best they can, in their own space. I hope that the management also understands that not everyone is as fast and efficient as the others".

Another employee described the state of teamwork followingly: "Our team is 10 on a scale from 1-10! "

The chart below describes the current state of teamwork as well as describes how much the employees value a good team.

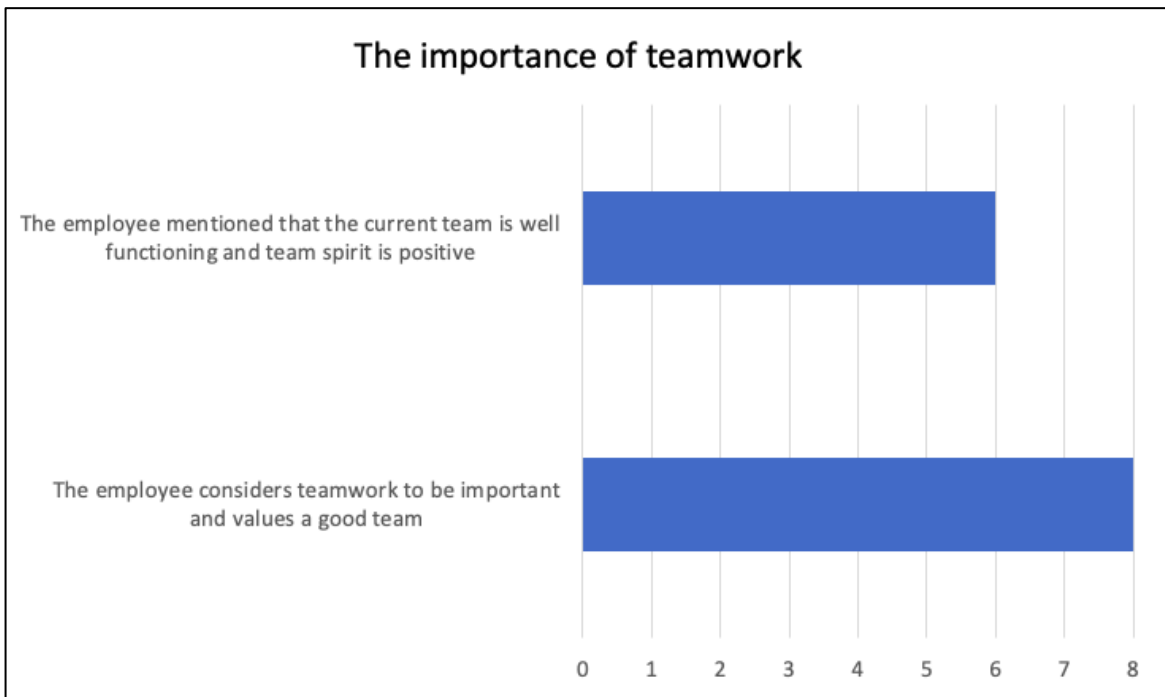


FIGURE 6. *The importance of teamwork.*

As the figure 6 declares, the interview answers together give an impression that everyone in the company values a good teamwork and think that a good team is beneficial to have and maintain. Since the work is usually done in pairs or in a group, to have a good team supports the well-being of the employees. Something to take into consideration is employee's different levels of skills and abilities. As it has come apparent, there are employees, who are able to succeed in some tasks faster than others. In cases like this, it is beneficial if the tasks are divided accordingly.

As it was stated in Manka's book (2016, 97) it is clear that well-functioning team has an effect on the well-being of the employees. Having a good atmosphere in the workplace leads to an increase in employees' motivation as well as provides less stress and on the other hand, for the company as an employer, it increases the productivity. As it came apparent in the research, with this company and its employees, the team "spirit" is currently supporting the good well-being of its employees.

To support and strengthen the team spirit and enhance the employee well-being, the company has held recreation or "team bonding" days for its employees, generally once a year. As Perttula (2018, cited 14.11.2020) writes in her article to Tehy-magazine, it is very common to think that these recreation days are the solution to building a team spirit. In the article Antti Aro, an expert in the field says "These are nice things, but all of the attempts to strengthen the team spirit, without

connection to the everyday work, will leave to be ineffective and sometimes even make people annoyed. Well-functioning social connections are important, but the most important thing is the smoothness of the work”. (Perttula 2018, cited 14.11.2020.) However, while this statement holds true, arranging activities outside the workhours supports the overall well-being of the employees.

None of the interviewees had anything negative to say about these activities outside of the work. On the contrary, one of the employees said: “They do have meaning in regards of grouping the team together. There (in the recreation days) the quieter people also get the courage to be more talkative. They indeed are important events”.

Another employee said that “They do have significance. I think there should be more of those, they have a positive impact”.

The chart illustrates employees’ opinion on the company arranging activities outside the workhours.

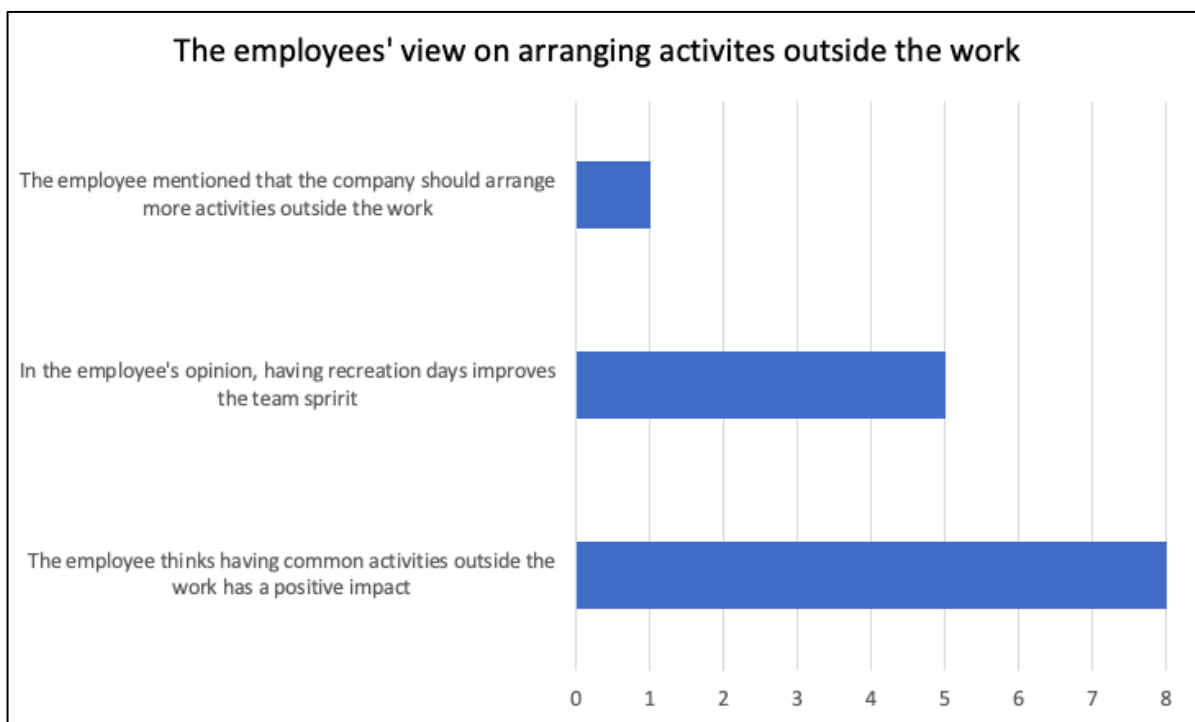


FIGURE 7. Activities outside the work.

It seems that the company has succeeded and has been able to utilise the meaning of having recreation days amongst the employees, but it would not be a bad idea to have them more often. They have improved and supported the team spirit, as well as worked as a way for some employees to express themselves (as mentioned in one of the answers, the quieter people get braver).

#### 4.1.7 Leadership

During the interviews with the employees, they were asked to describe a good leader as well as asked their view on what the importance is of having a good leader.

Due to some of the interviews being casual conversations, this question was placed or asked alongside some other question, depending on the situation. Therefore, some of the interviewees answered to the first part of the question, whereas others replied to the second part of this question.

One of the employees said that a good leadership means well performed task divisions, whereas another employee mentioned that a good leader shows how something is done, rather than describing how it should be done and doing it differently themselves. The reply went like this: "I think overall, leadership here is good. I think a good leadership is that the leaders listen to the employees and show with an example, how things should happen and be done instead of telling how to do them and doing the completely opposite themselves".

The employee's views on leadership is illustrated in the chart below.



FIGURE 8. Leadership in the company.

From the data gathered through the interviews, the overall impression was that the current leadership is beneficial for the both parties in this company. Maybe there could be a need to listen to the employees' suggestions and ideas more carefully. As one of the interviewees mentioned the lack of verbal "thank you", it can be said that to improve the interaction, there is a triangle basic

element to a leadership which includes saying "good morning", "thank you" and "sorry". If these words are forgotten to use regularly, they can impact negatively on many aspects of leading. (Suomalainen johtaja 2010, 90.)

Furthermore, when the employees feel they are appreciated and noted such a giving verbal acknowledgement, it lays a base to a common loyalty in the work community, which in turn then has a positive impact on the ability to produce profits to the company. (Seppälä 2017, cited 22.11.2020.)

As it is discussed in the theory chapter of this research, a good leadership is in close connection with employee well-being. The employee has different roles on supporting and developing the well-being of the employees. It is important for the leader to act as an example of the culture of well-being, and one can most easily success by using words and actions. While being an example of someone living in a culture of well-being, the leader has also the role of an expert on the topic. The leader should be familiar with the topic of employee well-being, as well as knowing how to distribute the information and educate the employees. Finally, developing the process of increasing employee well-being is also a vital task, where the leader must work in close co-operation with the employees. (University of Tampere 2020, cited 22.11.2020.)

#### **4.1.8 Communication**

The daily processes in the case company involves a lot of physical work and machinery to be used. These machines then cause some noise, making the work environment noisy. To protect the employees hearing and health, earmuffs are being used almost in every location. This in turn causes situation where the employees have to either louder their voices or take off the earmuffs to hear what the other employees are saying. During the past years, the company has installed radiotelephones around the facilities, to help with the communication and information sharing. These radiotelephones are located in convenient places, allowing the important information to flow successfully.

Here is an example case of the daily communication process:

*The person operating the sawmill needs to get an information across to the people in the production line. This person has a radiotelephone, as well as there is one located near the production line. A communication channel is opened, and they can all then communicate through the*

*radiotelephones, without leaving the site and stopping the operations. In addition, the people in different production locations and e.g. in the wheel loaders have radiotelephones.*

(Author's own observation while visiting the case company, 2020.)

As mentioned, the environment allows everyone to communicate to whomever they need to. When the employees were asked to describe the communication in the company, it came apparent, that most of the employees value good communication. One of the employees said: "The communication is going well. If it is not, we can even stop the machines and deliver the message personally, if it is something important. The message usually gets across really well".

Similarly, another employee said: "I think it works really well and it is one of the most important factors that the communication works. Information sharing is working well and at least I know what is going on. It is important, that everybody is on the same page, no matter where they are, information gets across".

Another employee described the current communication from a different perspective: "I think there is a room for improvement here. Especially if there is a change (e.g. in working methods) it would be communicated to everybody, in a clear way. When there is a new change, there should be clear instructions on what we are doing and what is the quality expected".

In the chart below, the employees' experience on the communication and information sharing is illustrated.

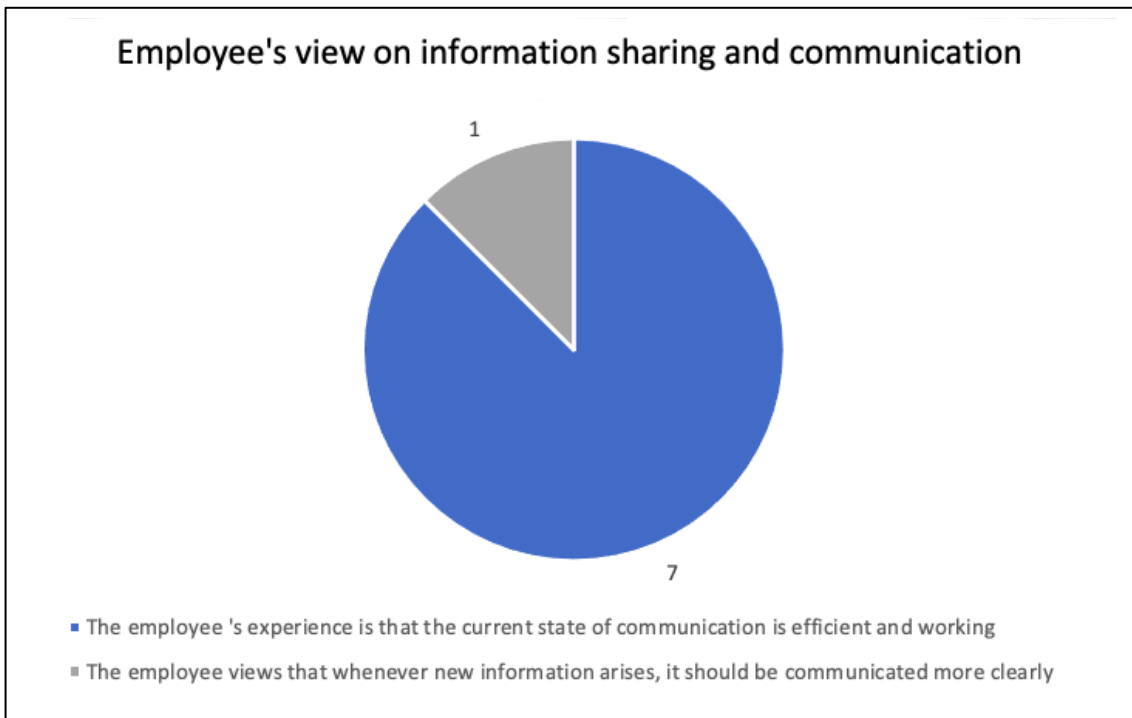


FIGURE 9. Employee's view on information sharing and communication.

As it can be seen from the chart above, overall observation on the communication in this organisation indicates that despite communication being good, there might be a reason to improve some of its elements. The daily communication is on a good level, but if there are any new information that needs to get across to everyone, the delivery process of that message could be more efficient.

Having a good communication channel at work promotes genuine presence, empathy, support, listening and showing interest in co-operation. Some of the aspects that obstruct the communication channels and interaction can be rush, blaming, strong prejudices as well as a lack of interest. (TTK 2020, cited 22.11.2020.)

#### 4.2 Conclusion of the interview data

From the data gathered through the interviews, it can be said that the overall employee well-being in the company is on a good level.

One particular factor to advance in regards of the employee well-being would be to improve the quality of safety helmets used in the company. As it came clear during the interviews, 4 of the 8



interviewed employees see it as an issue at the moment, in some level. Some of the employees said that it decreases the motivation and for others, it decreases the comfortability of the job.

Another recurring finding of the interviews was that at the moment, the activities outside the working hours arranged by the company (recreation days), are a good thing. Most of the employees see these activity days as a way to improve the atmosphere amongst the employees. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the company to continue having these activities regularly.

Other major finding was the possible need for improvement in the orientation process. At the moment, the company does not seem to have a consistent plan or practices regarding the orientation process of new employees.

## 5 CONCLUSION

At first, the following chapter aims to conclude the research work by revising the research question and providing the best possible answer to it. Finally, based on the findings of the research, the author will provide a development proposal for the commissioning company to use.

As mentioned in the end of the last chapter, the most important finding gathered from the data would be the demand to improve the quality of safety helmets used in the company. The author will acknowledge this finding in the development proposal given to the commissioning company.

### 5.1 Answer to the research questions

Going back to revisit the research questions “how do the employees of the company perceive well-being at work?” and the second one “how could well-being at work be supported by the management?”. Based on the research data gathered, there are some answers to these questions, but none that would undoubtedly and definitely answer to the questions.

The first research question recognises how the employees of the company are perceiving the well-being at work. Based on the data gathered, would be said that the employees consider it being on a good state. There are no apparent signs or reasons for the well-being to decrease in the future either.

The second research question focuses on studying if there are actions that could be adopted by the management, to support the well-being at work. The empirical research shows that there are at least two main topics to explore in terms of supporting the well-being of employees.

The first one, the most significant, would be to focus on acquiring new safety helmets for the employees to use. At the moment, most of the employees are required to wear a safety helmet during their workday. Based on the data, the current helmets used are not comfortable and efficient enough, therefore investing in new safety equipment would support and increase the well-being of the employees.

Another way to support the well-being of the employees would be to maintain arranging activities outside the workhours. It was clear based on the data that arranging joint activities supports the well-being of the employees.

The author speculates whether there are “yes or no” answers to these research questions, since the data varies greatly, and human resources management is much more than numbers and statistics.

## **5.2 Development proposal**

Based on the results gained through this research work the main development proposal for the company would be to invest in new safety equipment, mainly to the helmets. About 40% of the interviewees mentioned the current model of helmet as a factor that affects to their well-being or to their motivation. Therefore, this simple, yet effective way to improve the well-being of the employees should be taken into consideration when conducting the future operations in the company.

Another development idea that came apparent during the interviews would be to improve the orientation process of the company. The data gathered through the interviews showed that the company does not have a consistent orientation process or procedures in active. Having a solid orientation plan and using it with every new employee would increase the job satisfaction and well-being.

Lastly, another development proposal for the commissioning company, albeit it was not thoroughly discussed in the research process, would be to have development discussions with the employees, regularly. As stated in Manka's book (2016, 92) it is beneficial for both, the employer and for the employee to conduct these development discussions.

## 6 DISCUSSION

In this final chapter of the research report the author evaluates the research work by stating some of the strengths and weaknesses of the research, as well as reviews the research process and discusses the validity and reliability of the findings. Then the author presents what was learned from the project of conducting a research and finally advises on future research areas for the company to study.

### 6.1 Evaluation of the research

In the following content, the research process as a whole will be evaluated by the author.

Some of the weaknesses of this research would be the author's own personal involvement with the company. Having personal experience from working in the company can have an affect e.g. when mapping out the interview questions for the empirical study. Even when the interview questions do have a theoretical framework as a backup and are formed to have a neutral approach, the author's own experiences can still lead the questions towards certain topic areas.

On the other hand, the author's personal involvement with the company can be seen as a strength, since being familiar with the company beforehand brings a lot of insights and different perspectives.

Another factor that can be seen as a weakness is the lack of internet sources. The theoretical background is predominantly based on a literature sources and that naturally means that the sources are not most up to date. With internet sources, one could have information that has been updated at the day of the referencing. That being said, when comparing the information on the books and in some of the internet sources, some of the topics in human resources have not been changed over the past few years, although this may be true then some other topics have changed greatly within few years, because of globalisation and the current technological updates and inventions. The main reason why this research work is based greatly on literature sources rather than internet articles as a source is that the author faced difficulties finding comprehensive, reliable internet sources.

Similar issue regarding the sources is the fact that a lot of the literature references in the theoretical framework is from the same pair of authors, specifically from Marja-Liisa and Marjut Manka. This

can also be seen as a strength, since using the same reference base provides consistency and clarity in the work, but then lacks in the diversity and trustworthiness. However, there are a lot of other sources used in the theoretical framework, but there is always space for more diverse reference list.

In terms of the interviews conducted, there were elements, that in hindsight could have been made differently. One of the questions that could have been formed and asked differently was the last question, Q12: Is there something you are expecting from the management to do regarding well-being? Should there be more/less something, should something change? After gathering and analysing the interview data, it came apparent that this question should have been asked e.g. in a group, where every employee would have been present. The reason for this being that there is a change that this question would have been answered differently, if there were many people sharing ideas and inspiring from other employees' viewpoints, and as a result there could have been suggestions developed together by the employees. With the style of interview that was used, the last question did not have much content from the answers.

## **6.2 Author's own progress**

While conducting this thesis, the author was challenged with a great variety of new aspects in researching this topic matter. During the process, the amount of new information the author faced both regarding the topic and conducting a research, was tremendous. Needless to say, that the process taught a lot.

During the process of writing a first academical research report, the author has gained a knowledge and understanding that will be beneficial in the future studies or work life. Choosing a topic that has been an interest of the author for years, helped to motivate even in times when there was a lack of passion in the writing and researching. Since the topic of human resource management is undoubtedly broad in size, this research could be considered as a scratch of a surface. Researching for thesis aroused even more enthusiasm and interest towards the topic.

In regards of the practical process of conducting the research, having such a dedicated expert as a supervisor from Oulu University of Applied Sciences certainly helped with the process. I, as the author, feel like I had enough of guidance but still a lot of freedom in the process of conducting the research. Having a supervisor as well as a peer-evaluator who I could always turn to if there were

any issues or questions gave certainty to continue to work on something that I have never done before.

### **6.3 The future**

As it has been stated by the famous Aristotle, “the more you know the more you know you don’t know”. This reflects an image that a research often exposes new questions and problems to be studied. With the case company, there are evidently topics that could be researched along the lines of business in the field of timber producing. In relation to this research, some follow-up studies could be conducted. Some of the topics for a sequence research could involve research concerning employee management or job satisfaction as a deep, comprehensive topics.

Other topic areas for conducting researches could include some of the following topics:

- Customer satisfaction
- Issues regarding globalisation
- Marketing plan
- Digital marketing plan
- Digitalisation of the rest of the administrative tasks
- Data protection

More on regarding the topic of human resource management, some of the topics to study could be leadership, employee engagement and the work culture, performance management, team building and employee loyalty. For now, the company seems to be on a good level of operating, but if there ever will be resources and interest to do research, these would be options of the topics to explore.

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**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Background information of the interviewee:

- How long have you been working in the company?
- What is your job description?
- How many jobs have you had prior to this? / How long have you been in the working life?

**Q1:** How would you describe the orientation process to the job when you first started?

**Q2:** What motivates you to work?

**Q3:** What do you consider as the biggest factors regarding well-being?

- How can you affect to them and how can the company affect to them?

**Q4:** From 1-10, what is your job satisfaction, why?

- What would you like it to be? And how it could reach that point?

**Q5:** What do you feel like is your current state of health? (Physical condition)

- What is your opinion on whether it correlates with the work you do?

**Q6:** Describe what is the importance/meaning of health and safety for you?

- What is your opinion on some of the health and safety rules in the workplace? Is it easy for you to follow these regulations?

**Q7:** What is the importance of teamwork for you? Describe.

**Q8:** What is the importance of good leadership for you?

- How could you describe a good leader?
- How would you describe leadership in this company?

**Q9:** What are the biggest challenges in your job?

**Q10:** Describe the communication in the organisation.

**Q11:** Describe how are your professional skills correlating with your job tasks?

- Has there been opportunities for further-education in the workplace?
- Do you feel that there is a need for further education?

**Q12:** The company has organized some activities outside the work (*virkistyspäivä*). What is your opinion on those?

- What kind of effect they have?
- Do you think it is important to have those?

**Q13:** Is there something you are expecting from the management to do in regards of well-being? / What would you like the management to do? Having something more/less/changing etc.