



ABSTRACT

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Name of thesis ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND ITS EFFECT ON EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING		
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<p>The aim with this thesis was to study the relationship between workplace changes and employee well-being and work engagement to find out in what way the organization and its management can support and contribute to their employee's well-being and work engagement in the change process. The research questions that I sought answer for were: In what way do organizational changes affect the employees' well-being and work engagement? In what way can the organisation and its management support the employees in the change process?</p> <p>Given the aim with the thesis and the research questions a qualitative research method was used, with interview as data collecting method and content analysis as data analysis method. A total of seven interviews were conducted. The literature in the theoretical framework circulated around topics such as organizational change and the impact of change on employee, as well as leadership and managing change.</p> <p>The results showed that the merger that Luna went through affected the employees' well-being and work engagement in that way that it caused stress, especially in the beginning when there were many new tasks for the employees to learn and there was also a language barrier that caused communication problems. The result also showed that no one at Luna had gone through a merger before and, therefore there was a lack of experience and that caused confusion and uncertainty among the personnel. The result showed that the leaders' role in a change process was to create a positive work climate, where the employees could feel that they were being listened to, freely could speak their mind, and felt that they got support from their leaders and management.</p>		
Key words Employee well-being, leadership, organizational change.		

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1 INTRODUCTION

In organizations today, change is more of a rule than an exception. Organizations must constantly keep up with new developments that are taking place in an accelerating pace. With organizational changes, the management wants to for example, improve and develop the organization in the direction that is considered necessary to be competitive and productive leading the organization forward. It is inevitable that the organizational changes affect the people working in the organization. The changes made could be small or large, but they still affect the employees in one way or another and can be experienced as exhausting, therefore it should be of great importance for the organisation and the management to support the employees in the changing process, so that the personnel well-being is preserved, and good employee performance is sustained. To have motivated and contented personnel is of great importance for an organisation's efficiency and economy.

Earlier research about how change effects the employees' well-being and the management's role in the change process has shown that depending on how the organizational plan, communicate and handle the change, the effects of the change on employee well-being varies. Giauque's (2014) study showed that social support from colleagues and organizational support such as to feel involved in the organization's activities and to be able to influence their own work situation had a positive impact on the employees' attitudes toward change. Fløvik, Knardahl and Christensen (2019) found in their study that leadership and social relations were crucial for the employees' well-being and productivity. The employees could handle change better if they felt that they could trust their leaders to be fair and competent. Linjuan, Cen and Yonghong (2020) also came to that conclusion that leaders that had the ability to communicate and connect with the employees helped them to cope with change and, also created organizational trust and openness to organizational change.

The aim with this thesis is to study the relationship between workplace changes and employee well-being and work engagement to find out in what way the organization and its management can support and contribute to their employees' well-being and work engagement in the change process. The research questions are as follows,

1. In what way do organizational changes affect the employees' well-being and work engagement?
2. In what way can the organisation and its management support the employees in the change process?

To find answers to my research questions I have chosen to conduct my research at a small Finnish organization that has merged with a bigger Finnish organization. I will use a qualitative research method, collecting data through interviews with some of the employees in the small Finnish organization and use content analysis as a data analyse method.

The personnel in the organization wished for both them and the organization to stay anonymous throughout the whole research process. I respected their wishes and therefore I gave the organization the fictitious name Luna and gave the participants in my research fictitious names when I cited them in the text. To facilitate the presentation of the research results and to also keep the organization that Luna merge with anonymous, I named that organization for Sun. The decision for Luna to go through a merger with a bigger organization was taken in 2017. The merger was considered, to be a necessity for Luna, to stay in business. They could continue with their practice at the same location and facilities as before the merger, though the Sun's head office is, located in another place in Finland. The merger was a big change process for Luna because it was all new to them. They hadn't gone through a merger before.

2 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Odor (2018, 59) writes that organizational change is conducted with the attempt to improve the organizational performance or prevent organizational crisis. The goal is to improve and create a better organization. Sveningsson and Sörgärde (2015, 11-16) emphasizes that organizational change is a complex phenomenon that encompasses a variety of issues and is seen as a natural element in the modern organization. Although organizational changes are, seen as necessities most agree that the process of change is difficult to accomplish and many attempts at change fail. Still there is a positive attitude towards change because it is expected of organizations today to be change-orientated. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016, 8) point out the fact that there are also expectations on leaders in organizations to plan, act and react upon environmental changes. Organizational changes often consume a lot of time and energy from both the leaders and employees.

2.1 Types of changes

According to Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016, 27) changes can be divided into two categories evolutionary and revolutionary change. This division is based on both scope and time. Sveningsson and Sjögarde (2015, 29-30) write that revolutionary change means that the changes are extensive, profound and affect the entire organization. These are large-scale changes where the organisation's strategy, structure, or culture changes. A cultural change could be about changing a rigid organizational culture where too much emphasis is placed on rank and titles. Structural changes on the other hand are for example, about the distribution of power and responsibilities and the relationship with costumers. When it comes to strategic changes, the relationship with other organizations is in focus and it can be anything from the launch of new products to mergers and acquisitions. These cultural, structural, and strategic changes affect each other to a great extent. They have often profound effects that are felt throughout the whole organisation.

Evolutionary changes are continuously minor organizational changes such as recruitment or going through a training programme. These changes are small-scale and do not challenge the existing structures, they often consolidate an already existing strategic orientation. It might be that the organization is growing and need to hire new people. Most changes in an organization are done to improve various existing systems and processes in the organization. (Sveningsson & Sjögarde 2015, 30-31.)

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016, 29-30 [Marshak 2009]) say that organizational change can be described with a metaphor that consists of four different ways of relating to change. They are, fix and preserve, build, and develop, moving and relocating, and liberating and innovating. Fix and preserve are about making small changes so that the organization is kept in good condition. The change is operational and easy to perform. Build and develop mean that you build upon or develop an already existing system. This may for example be about recruiting new skills that will complement the resources that already exist in the organization. Moving and relocating are about a more radical change for example, changing the organization's structure through a merger or an acquisition. This change needs to be well planned and take place at management level. Liberating and innovating are a total transformation where the entire organization is renewed. It is a very radical change that affects all parts of the organization.

2.2 The driving forces behind organizational change

Abrahamsson and Andersen (2005, 230) say that impulses for organizational change can come both from the environment and from the organization itself. Furthermore, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016, 23-24) points out that the external driving forces for organizational change can for example, be political decisions that affect international trade in goods and services. Globalization is another external factor that strongly affects organizations and places demands on how the organisations conduct their activities. The constant technical development is another external factor that makes organizations need to change their way of conducting their activities for example, the internet gives rise to new services you can for example perform many of your errands via a computer.

Sveningsson and Sjögarde (2015, 51-52) say that demographic factors are also external factors that may lead to organizational changes for example, increased levels of education. Other external driving forces are also economic and socio-cultural for example, changing cultural conditions within the organization. Organizations today are required to be both financially efficient and consider the environment, gender issues and ethics. Today's organizations also have a social responsibility.

According to Sveningsson and Sjögarde (2015, 52), internal driving forces may be that the organization has grown so much that the organizational structure simply needs to change. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016, 24) say that it may be that people in the organization come up with new ideas or that persons in key positions want to realize their personal interests. Abrahamsson and Anderssen (2005, 231) write that the internal impulses for change come from individuals when they see development opportunities or

threats to the organization. These signals are usually a mixture of external and internal impulses to which individuals in the organization respond. In order for these impulses to lead to change, they need to be presented and anchored at the management level.

2.3 Change management models

Forslund (2020, 347-348) writes that from the beginning of 1950 there were a lot of research about organizational change process. Kurt Lewin's *Three step model* is an early model from the 1950s that has been the basis for many other models. Sveningsson and Sörgärde (2015, 76) explain that Lewin considered that organizational change can only be achieved by focusing on group dynamics and norms of the group. He meant that people's behaviour is affected by the group's norms and logic. Bolman and Deal (2019, 430) describes *Kotter's 8 step model* as a model that has influenced leadership and change management a great deal. The model was developed by John Kotter in the 1990s. Kotter meant that the reason why change fails is because too much focus is put on analysing material and writing reports, forgetting to take into account the social factors that creates motivation and commitment.

2.3.1 Lewin's three step model

Sveningsson and Sjögarde (2015, 77-79) say that Lewin's *Three step model* consists of the following steps, *unfreeze*, *change*, and *refreeze*. Unfreeze is about preparing the employees for the change. In this first step it is important to clarify why there is a need for change and explain where the organization is today and where the organization want to be in the future this in order to awaken thoughts of how to go forward. It is also important to have an open atmosphere, that mistakes are allowed with no reprisals to motivate the employees to take action. In the second step change, the change process is started. New ways of thinking, acting and routines are formed. In this step communication is the key to go forward in the change process. When a willingness to change is established, it is important to start the change process at once for example through workshops and seminars. A lot of empowerment, support and communication from the change agents are of great importance in this step. In this step new ways of working and routines are tried and evaluated to find the right path in the future. In the third step refreeze, the results of the changes become visible and stabilized. The new routines and ways of doing work are established in the organization. In this step it is also important that the changes made do not stay at a drawing table they must be established in the minds of the employees and in the culture and norms in

the organization, otherwise the new changes and ways of working will be lost. It is also important that the employees feel safe and satisfied with the new routines and the possible new tasks.

2.3.2 Kotter's 8 step model

Bolman and Deal (2019, 431) write that the eight steps in Kotter's model, are *create a sense of urgency*, *create a powerful coalition*, *build a vision for change*, *communicate the vision*, *strengthen the opportunities to act*, *build short term wins*, *hold on and drive the change forward*, and *anchor the changes in the organizational culture*.

The first step in the model is to *create a sense of urgency* because it is important that everybody understands the importance of the change to give them motivation to work for the change or changes to take place. In order to conduct and accomplish change everyone in the organization should be on board. It is not enough that one or a few individuals get the change to happen. Often the impulse to change comes from management and they are aware of the situation and why the change is necessary, but the other employees don't have the same information and therefore they might not see the importance with conducting change. They also might be satisfied with the situation as it is. (Kotter 2012, 37-40.)

The reasons why people don't see the importance of change are many, for example, there might be no clear and pronounced threat, low demands on what people must perform so almost everybody reaches their goals, management paints a too positive picture of the situation so the need for change doesn't shine through and some employees also ignore the problems because they don't want more work. In order to increase the understandings of the change and create urgency, it is necessary to give clear evidence that a change is required for example, selling of some properties, describe the situation as it is without beautifying it or open up for an honest discussion where errors and shortcomings are brought to the table. (Kotter 2012, 40-46.)

In the second step that is to *create a powerful coalition*, the idea is to create the right team for change management. It is essential to be able to conduct and complete the change because no one can manage the change process by themselves regardless of how good a leader is. There are four important characteristics that seem to be necessary to create the dream change team. The first characteristic is to have enough people on the team that have a positive attitude towards change so their impact in the change

process is bigger than the ones that are feeling negative towards the change. The second is having members with different expertise in the team so decisions made are thoroughly thought through and seen from different angles. The third is to have people with good reputation in the team so they will be taken seriously by the others in the organisation. Finally, it is important to have good leaders in the team. You need both management and leadership skills. There are though, two types of individuals that preferably should be avoided to be included in the team and they are individuals with big egos and individuals that create mistrust in the group. The key ingredients of creating a powerful coalition and great teamwork are trust and having a common goal. (Kotter 2012, 58-64.)

The third step is to *build a vision for change*. In a change process it is essential to build a vision for change in order to reach the goal with the change. It is important because it clarifies the direction of the change, motivates people to work in that direction and coordinates people. Having a vision for change is a guideline to keep the people and the organization on the right path, knowing which actions and projects that are aligned with the change and which actions and projects to decline. A good vision also gives the people affected by the change a meaning with the change that helps them to stay motivated and work towards the change because a good vision shows a better future for all involved even though they know that they might have to give up something on the way to reach the future goal. An effective vision has six key features. First the vision is imaginable and paints a picture of the future. Second it is desirable, it has something that everyone wants. Third it is realistic. Fourth the vision is clear. Fifth it is general and flexible and sixth it is easy to communicate the vision. (Kotter 2012, 71-74.)

The fourth step is, *communicate the vision*. Being able to communicate the vision effectively is of great importance to be able to go forward with the change process. There are a few things to think of when communicating the vision, the first is to keep the communication simple, leave out unnecessary information and tell it as it is. The second is, it is effective to use metaphors and examples when explaining the vision because people remember well told stories. It is also important to use many different forums when trying to reach everybody with one's message, for example group meetings, face-to-face communication, and posters. The chance of the message reaching the people it should reach is greater if it comes to them from different sources. (Kotter 2012, 91-95.)

To repeat the message is important because people get so much information about everything, so it is easy to forget if one doesn't repeat the message, in this case the vision. Another important part in effective communication of vision is the key players in the change process are very important, especially the leaders. It should be seen in their actions that they believe in the change because action speaks louder

than words. It is important that the employees see that the management also do their part in the change process that the decisions that are taken are the same for people on all levels in the organization, for example if the organization has decided to cut down in the employee benefits to save some money, then it should be done the same on management level. The communication must be two-way, not just coming one-way from the top. All employees need to feel that they are listened to and that their opinions matter. (Kotter 2012, 96-102.)

The fifth step is, *strengthen the opportunities to act*. It is about removing as many barriers as possible in order to make way for people to act and try to reach the goal with the change. There are some fairly, common barriers to remove, to keep the change process ongoing. There might be some structural barriers that cause problem for example, if the goal with the change is to produce more products faster the people working concretely with the products have ideas of how to make the process easier and faster, but they aren't listen to because they are just employees or there can be problems with the communication due to technical issues that could be easy to solve. Another barrier can sometimes be not enough training or the wrong kind of training that is not adequate for the new skills, behaviours and attitudes that are needed when the change is conducted. Technical and human resource systems can also sometimes be a barrier if they aren't adapted to the new way of acting and thinking. Supervisors and middle managers that don't themselves believe in the change can cause barriers as well in such way that they don't empower their subordinates to work towards the change and a bottleneck can be formed. It is therefore important to, recognizes the barriers and try to remove them so that the change process doesn't stagnate. (Kotter 2012, 106-117.)

The sixth step, *Build short-term wins*. It is important to keep up people's motivation and show some concrete results in the change process. People need to see that their efforts are not in vain. The characteristics of a good short-term win are, that it is visible, unmistakable and is distinctly related to the change achievement. The short-term win's role is to show that it is worth the hard job with conducting change, give positive feedback to the personnel for a job good done, show that the planned changes are in line with the vision and strategy, show the sceptics that change really are needed, provide top managers with evidence that the change is ongoing and turn those that are sceptical towards the change to get onboard. (Kotter 2012, 125-128.)

The seventh step is, *hold on and drive the change forward*. In this step the changes are almost finished but just almost, therefore people in the organizations should not start to relax because then it could lead to the change process stagnating. The resistance towards change in the organization might have been

less visible but that don't mean that it has disappeared it can easily show up again if the guard is let down. You can't be absolutely sure that the change will be a success until it is anchored into the organizational culture. In this stage focus should be put on going forward with the changes, more people should be brought in to help with keeping up the pace in the change process, top managers should keep steering the change process in the right direction, project management on the lower levels in the organization and reducing interdependencies. (Kotter 2012, 138-140, 150.)

The eight step is, *anchor the changes in the organizational culture*. To get the change to stick and not go back to its old forms you must anchor it in the organizational culture and that is not easy. The organizational culture is very powerful and can bring down attempts to make changes. Organizational culture is powerful because it can influence human behaviour and culture consisting of shared values and norms of behaviour can be difficult to change. Organizational culture is not easy to change because you have to change how the people in the organizations thinks, acts and behaves on all levels in the organization. Anchoring change in the organizational culture takes a lot of communication and it needs to be proven that the new way of thinking and behaving is working and gives results. Most cultural changes happen in the last step, but it makes the change process easier if one from the beginning understands the existing culture and its norms. (Kotter 2012, 156-159, 164-166.)

3 THE IMPACT OF CHANGE IN AN ORGANIZATION

Bolman and Deal (2019, 423) explain that change overturns the current well-known order at a workplace which might create confusion and suspicion. People start to feel unsure about what is expected of them and what they can expect from others. Angelöw (2010,17-18) points out that it is important to remember that change doesn't have to be negative, even if it is experienced as something negative. The change is seen as a threat because the people affected of the change do not know what the change will bring in the future. Change creates uncertainty, we know what we have but not what we will get. Kraus, Becker - Kolle and Fischer (2017, 225) emphasises one important thing to keep in mind, if the leader wants the planned change to be achieved and implemented the way that it is intended the change must make sense for the people involved.

3.1 The challenges with organizational change

There are many challenges with organizational change. Odell (2019, 26-30) says that one such challenge is choosing which changes to priorities. Many times, organizations have many change projects ongoing at the same time which makes it hard for the people involved to catch up with everything. It creates confusion and a feeling of not having enough time to finish all the projects in their daily work. There have been discussions about how many projects a person can handle at same time. It has been suggested that the highest amount, of projects that one can handle at the same time is seven, but some say that we can only handle up to four or less projects at the same time. One conclusion that can be drawn is that the fewer projects at the same time the better. Another challenge with managing change is to not underestimate the time required, degree of difficulty and the resources needed. The ones who are planning the change must respect the challenges with the implementation of the change and be realistic when it comes to time and resources.

Bolman and Deal (2019, 417-418) mention another challenge with change in an organization which is to get the entire personnel involved in the change process. If the planning and control of the change process is only done at management level and doesn't involve the rest of the personnel, there will probably be no successful change. Aljohani (2016) points out that understanding what the change that will

be implemented in the organization really covers and how it will affect the organisation is of great importance when planning a change. To be able to implement a change, all members in the organization must be willing to co-operate and accept the change for it to be a success.

Big organizational changes such as mergers put pressure on both on management and employees. According to Ikhwan Maulana Haeruddin (2017) mergers and acquisitions are common when companies and organizations want to achieve growth, diversity, and profitability. For a merger to be a success it takes meticulous planning and goals, vision and mission need to be clear, and the implementation needs to be well thought out. One of the most common failures in a merger is forgetting the people affected by it and mismanaging the impact that organizational change has on people. Employees need to be informed about the merger and which changes it will bring well in advance.

Aronsson, Hellgren, Isaksson, Johansson, Sverke and Torbiörn (2012, 318-319) says that often in organizational mergers there is one organization that is bigger than the other, therefore it is often the bigger organization that has more influence and sets the rules in the merger process. Prior research has shown that individuals that belongs to the smaller organization in the merger often experience uncertainty and reacts with resistance and aversion. One often used model for explaining the individuals' reaction in a merger is *social identity theory*. Social identity theory claims that parts of an individuals' identity is reflected in the work community, relationships at a workplace and in the organizational culture. When the merger then changes these constellations, the individuals might experience an identity crisis and feel that they lose their solid ground. This can trigger stress reactions that create resistance, and the individuals become defensive and feel unfairly treated.

3.2 The change process's different phases

According to Odell (2019, 48-49) people go through different phases when they are going through a change process. The model he describes is called "change curve" and was developed by Cynthia Scott and Dennis Jaffe. The model consists of four phases *reaction phase*, *resistance phase*, *exploration phase*, and *commitment phase*.

3.2.1 Reaction phase

Odell (2019, 49-50) writes that in the first phase, the reaction phase people generally believe that the change that will be implemented is something bad because it is rooted in fear and insecurity about what the impact of the change have on their daily work situation. The change is often seen as a threat and the employees are afraid that they will not be able to handle the change. People in this phase might deny that the change is going to happen by ignoring it and might not even want to discuss it. If they don't understand the purpose of the change, it is very important that the need for change is communicated thoroughly so that everyone understand why it is necessary and important. In this phase it is important that the employees get permission and space to vent their thoughts and worries. Everyone must get time to digest the news about the change and be listened to. It can be hard for leaders to receive negative feedback, but the resistance will become even greater if the employees can't speak their mind, because it is important that they feel involved and that they feel that they have influence over their situation. This phase consumes much time, but it is necessary to let it take its course.

3.2.2 Resistance phase

In the resistance phase many employees are not really opposed to change they just don't want to lose what they already have. They want to feel that they are in control, some on the other hand are afraid that they can't handle and cope with the change. In the resistance phase people are very critical and intend to see everything concerning the change as something negative. In this phase open resistance can be seen. It is then important to openly discuss and respond to the resistance. Open resistance is better than hidden resistance because you can't openly meet resistance when it is not directly outspoken. People in this phase are not so open to reasoning. Change managers who are too cheerful and positive about the change might notice that the resistance increases. (Odell 2019, 50-51.)

The employees must be allowed to go through the change phases. It is not profitable to push the change too hard through. If one notices that there are some employees that won't leave the resistance phase easily it might be good if the management has in advance seen to that there is somebody who the employee or employees can go and talk to, for example a psychologist. One important thing to remember for anyone in charge of leading a change process is that you are the one that brings "bad news" so you can't be the one that consoles the employees. (Odell 2019, 51-52.)

3.2.3 Exploration phase

In the exploration phase the employees usually start to see something positive with the change and start to think about the alternatives. The employees start to be curious of the change and what it will lead to. The employees are still pendulating between the old and the new ways, but they start to explore the new alternatives. Questions such as do I want to stay or should I leave may rise to the surface. In this phase it is good to encourage the employees, but also to start coaching and educating them. (Odell 2019, 52-53.)

3.2.4 Commitment phase

In the commitment phase most people are ready to make decisions and act upon them, but there might still be some individuals who are not entirely positive to the change, although they will have processed and accepted the change. If some employees have been very much against the change, they can still in this phase criticize and be a bit sceptical of the change and might for example come up with alternative suggestions about how to implement the change. Even in this phase where people will think positively about the change, they still might decide that they don't want to participate in the change. It might for example result in that the persons are leaving the organization and finding a new job. (Odell 2019, 53.)

3.3 Levels of change: The NLP “Logical levels” model

Daver (2010, 8, 14-19) explains that Neuro-Linguistic Programming, (NLP) was developed in the 1970s by Richard Bandler and John Grinder. NLP refers to the connection between the brain (neuro), the language (linguistic) and the behaviour (programming). NLP is a model that can complete our knowledge about human behaviour in many ways and within many different fields. NLP is an effective model for personal development, finding out where change is needed and understand people's behaviour. Engström-Eriksson (2012, 90) says that NLP is a good method to use in organizations and companies to create motivation, engagement and increase the organizations' success. Daver (2010, 79) describes the NLP logical levels as a good model to use to understand how change affects people and understand why change will not always succeed. Kraus et al. (2017, 189) write that change happens on different levels and every level is connected. The logical levels are often described in a hierarchical order where the lowest level is surroundings and environment, and the highest level is meaning. The logical levels are

surroundings and environment level, behaviour level, knowledge, abilities, and skills level, values, norms and believes level, identity level and meaning level.

3.3.1 Surroundings and environment level

The surroundings and environmental level is considered to be the easiest to conduct changes in and is often the starting point for change for example, changing the work processes or moving employees to different departments to be given other tasks. Unfortunately, it is believed that the change is complete when for example, the employee has been moved and given new tasks to figure out. Management might forget to consider that change also spread like ripples and affects the other higher levels as well. This might lead to, that important factors in the change process can be overlooked which might have a major impact whether, or not the change is successful. (Kraus et al. 2017,190-191.)

3.3.2 Behaviour level

The behaviour level concerns human behaviours for example, employees who have been given new tasks need to find his or her new role and possibly change their behaviour to cope with the job. It is not easy to change a behaviour even though the new position in the organization requires it. Sometimes the behaviour doesn't correlate with the individual's character or values, the individual's behaviour can then be perceived as false and it doesn't give a reliable impression for example, to a customer if the behaviour seems fake. (Kraus et al. 2017,191-192.)

3.3.3 Knowledge, abilities, and skills level

In the knowledge, abilities, and skills level it is common that when you change job roles and tasks that you don't have the skills needed in the new role. You can quite easily absorb the new knowledge required to be able to perform the tasks, but it is only through practice and experience that you acquire the skills in depth because there is a big difference between theory and practice. It takes time to learn new skills and master them, therefore change at this level must take the time needed. International mergers and acquisitions of companies and organizations is a good example of change at this level. When two companies with different cultures merge, there are often cultural clashes. It is one thing to read about different

cultures and how they function, and quite another to work directly in and with another culture. It takes time and experience to understand and work across cultural boundaries. (Kraus et al. 2017,192-193.)

3.3.4 Values, norms, and believes level

Change at the level values, norms, and believes requires time and insight. People are often unaware of their values because they rarely think about them. Our basic values are formed during the early childhood and are a process of socialization. These values don't have to be linked to any religion, but they are guidelines for how people behave and act in different situations in their everyday life. Changing one's values and norms requires self-reflection and doesn't change overnight. Within organizations change on this level is about profound and fundamental changes for example, the organization starting to test its products on animals. Animal testing can go against many employees' values and norms. If the employees' values and norms don't correspond to the organization's change, it usually leads to them resigning and looking for a new job where their values are in line with the organization. It is also important that the leaders and management know their organizations' values for example, so that they can hire the right people to come and work in the organization. (Kraus et al. 2017,193-195.)

3.3.5 Identity level

Changes at the identity level are almost impossible to do because the identity has been created for a long time since early childhood. It is extremely rare, only in extreme situations that someone must change their identity. Sometimes it might be that certain organizational changes have an impact on a person's identity and that can lead to an identity crisis. An identity crisis can for example, be that a high-ranking leader lost his or her position and become a regular employee. Such an identity crisis might lead to that the employee resigns and moves on. (Kraus et al. 2017,196.)

3.3.6 Meaning level

The meaning level is about the meaning of the organisation's activities and the work they are doing. At this level, existential issues are addressed. Such organizations could for example, be religious organizations that have a higher purpose with their work or an organization that rescues endangered animals. (Kraus et al. 2017,196-197.)

3.4 The impact of organizational change on employees' performance

According to Blomberg (2019, 327-329) it is very important that the employees thrive in their workplace. They should be satisfied with both the work environment and work situation. How the employees experience their work depends on many factors that interact with each other, both social such as relations to co-workers and management and physical factors such as work environment, physical exertion, and noise. Autonomy, competence, and belonging is seen as key competencies that are crucial for the employees to thrive and succeed in their workplace. Autonomy is connected to the ability for individuals to be able to affect and steer their situation. Competence is about to succeeding to do what one is supposed to do. Belonging is connected to being able to create and maintain relations with other individuals.

Alvehus and Jensen (2020, 39) explain that work is one of the most important things for most people. It is not just about getting a salary; work means so much more. Work gives a feeling of being useful and needed by the society. Work also gives status and opportunity for personal development as well as creating one's career. Aronsson et al. (2012,168, 315) write that one must take both physical work environment and the psychosocial work environment into consideration to get the whole picture of the employees' work situation and understand how it affects overall the employees' motivation, health, and well-being.

3.4.1 Stress and organizational change

Rubenowitz (2004, 225) says that stress occurs when we are faced with something that is important to us and we feel that we might not be able to handle it. Aronsson et al. (2012, 191-192) write that the impact of work-related stress on performance has been under research a long time. The reason for the

keen interest in this area is due to that work-related stress can in the long run lead to illness. Fløvik, Knardahl and Christensen (2019) point out that all organizational change both on individual level and work-unit level make the risk for mental distress higher for the employees. Repeated and multiple changes were more likely to affect the mental health of employees. How the employees experienced the change, positively or negatively also had an impact on mental distress. Angelöw (2010, 18-19) explains that change can be experienced as something positive or negative of the people affected by the change depending on the impact that the change has on the individual. If for example, the organizational change means that employees can lose their jobs, the change is perceived as negative. On the other hand, if the change brings more security and opportunity to develop, the change might be perceived as something possible.

Fløvik et al. (2019) write that research has shown that increased job demand, reduced social support and reduced job control are associated with stress and is very common in an organizational change process. Angelöw (2010, 28-31) writes that all changes create some form of anxiety and worry that can make the individual feel insecure. The challenge is to recreate the anxiety to excitement and to a driving force for change. Stress is another symptom of organizational change. The extent of the perceived stress depends on what the change is about. Stress reactions can be categorized in three different categories they are physical-, emotional- and organizational stress reactions. Physical stress reactions can be for example, headache, muscle tension, high blood pressure and stomach-ache. Emotional stress reactions can be sleeping disorders, irritation, concentration difficulties and burnout. Organizational stress reactions can diminish job satisfaction, increased sick leave, communications problems, and lack of creativity.

Often when unexpected things happen which are seen as threats, we become defensive. Our defence mechanisms are mostly unconscious and their function is to diminish the experience of danger. How strong the defence mechanisms are is dependent on the nature of the change. The most common defence mechanisms are denial, regression, projection, and aggressiveness. When a person is in denial, he or she denies that the change is happening. Regression is about behaving in for example, a childish way. Projection is to project one's own feelings and characteristics onto others and aggressiveness is to take an aggressive approach towards handling the change. Our interpretation of the situations causes different feelings and reactions. (Angelöw 2010, 31-33.)

Rubenowitz (2004, 228- 230) points out that there is difference between individuals in their stress resistance. It has been shown that individuals that feel in control and have knowledge in the work field handles stress better than others that feel that they lack control. Social support at work from colleagues

is also an important stress buffer. There are things that can be done at the workplace to diminish work related stress. Most important is to create a culture that gives the employees the opportunity to take control of their work situation. Other important factors are to give the employees the opportunity for supplementary training and to enable social interaction with co-workers.

3.4.2 Resistance towards organizational change

Lindkvist, Bakka and Fivelsdal (2014, 296) write that everybody that have been in a change process know that there is resistance towards change. Resistance can take many shapes, everything from silent frustration to people resigning from their jobs. All these forms of resistance are normal and can be understood as feelings of insecurity about how the change will affect the work and loss of control. Bolman and Deal (2019, 424) go so far as to say that conflicts often appear when change is conducted at a workplace. Usually, the conflicts are between those who is positive towards change and those who are negative towards change. Unfortunately, the conflicts often are ignored which often build up frustration and might lead to meltdown. Rubenowitz (2004, 237) also points out that disagreements about the organizational structure, goals, and who in the organization has the responsibility might be reasons why conflicts are ignored. Personality traits and attitudes are also contributing factors to conflicts. According to Forslund (2020, 361) resistance towards change can also be due to not feeling involved in the change process and having doubts about the management's statement about why change is needed.

Alvehus and Jensen (2020, 265-268) point out that it is important not to forget that resistance towards change can in many cases be fair because though change can seem as a good idea from the management perspective it doesn't necessarily mean that it is as effective as expected in an employee and production point of view. There are three general strategies people use when they want to exercise power and resistance, exit, voice, and loyalty. *Exit* is resigning and leaving the workplace. This act can be seen as a protest, but it doesn't necessarily get the management's attention. On the other hand, if many employees start to leave the organization it is a big disaster. *Voice* is a resistance and a protest that will be heard. These people are often those who care about the organization and really wants to solve the situation but are often seen by management as troublemakers because they interfere with the current order. *Loyalty* is to keep one's anger hidden and be quit. In the long run this can result in work not being done because there is no will work.

4 LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Alvesson (2015, 121) says that in order to understand the complexity of leadership one must take into consideration the environment where leadership is exercised. Leadership is a complex and dynamic social process and not a one-way street where leaders lead, and followers follow. The meaning of what is said and done in this complex social situation is crucial to understand what leadership is about. Kotter (2019, 4-10) distinguishes between managers and leaders, the same person can be both a manager and a leader, but the two roles have different tasks and skills. Managers are the ones that plan, make budgets, organizes, and solves problems, but leaders are those who decides in which direction to go and steer and motivates people to go in that direction. In a change process leadership is needed more than management because leaders activate and motivate people.

4.1 Leadership styles and effective leadership

Forslund (2020, 291) says that a lot of research has been done about leadership styles. There has especially been a lot of research about the part of leadership that relates to the leaders' behaviour. Bergengren (2013, 135-136) writes that although there have been many different leadership styles models created, no model can explain what leadership really is because it is a very complex phenomenon. Already in 1940, the researcher Kurt Lewin came up with a leadership style model. This model is, still discussed today. He described three leader behaviours the autocratic-, the democratic- and the laissez-faire leader. The autocratic leader gives orders and expect the followers to do as he or she says. The power stays with the leader. The subordinates' opinions are not appreciated. The democratic leader listens to his or her subordinates' thoughts, there is a two-way dialogue and trust between the leader and the subordinates. The laissez-fair leader is a passive leader that doesn't want to take responsibility or make decisions. The leader doesn't care about his or her subordinates and avoids conflict.

Another early leadership style was presented in the 1960s by researcher Douglas McGregor he came up with a model described as Theory X and Theory Y leadership style. He said that the leader's behaviour was due to the leader's view of human beings. Leaders with the Theory X view of human beings consider that doing work doesn't come natural to people. People are lazy and don't want to take responsibility, therefore they need to be giving orders to and be controlled by an authoritarian leader. Leaders with the Theory Z view of human beings thinks that people want to work and contribute to the society and feeling

proud of his or her work effort. Those leaders believe that people want to take responsibility. (Bergengren 2013, 136.)

Abrahamsson and Andersen (2005, 104) says that today the focus on leadership style is broader and lies on the interaction between different parts of leadership. Effective leadership is a combination of leaders' personality traits, behaviour, and environmental factors. Alvehus and Jensen (2020, 238) emphasizes that common findings in leadership research circulates around the relationship between leaders and followers and their interaction and mutual goals. Goleman (2019, 26-27) emphasizes that the difference between a good leader and a great leader is his or her emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence consists of five skills, self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, and social skills. We are all born with a set of these skills to varying degrees and we can develop these skills with training and feedback from our peers.

According to Drucker (2019, 84-85) effective leaders follow eight different rules. First, they ask, what needs to be done? It might be that it isn't the same as what the leaders would like to do, but it is the best and right thing to do in order to move forward. The second thing they do is to make an action plan. They consider what is best for the organization and what results should be achieved in a certain time span. The third is to act and follow the plan of action and let the people know who is responsible for what in the action plan. Fourth is to take responsibility for the decisions that have been made. Fifth is to communicate and share their plans with colleagues, superiors, and subordinates. Sixth is to focus on opportunities not so much on problems. Problems need to be solved, but the focus should be on looking at opportunities because that leads to results. Seventh is to have productive meetings and eight is to think "we" not "I", to get good results a leader always needs to put the organizations needs before his or her own needs.

4.2 Leaders' role in supporting their employees in the organizational change process

Bergengren (2013,140) says that in recent years leadership has changed from a more administrative role to a visionary one, following in the footsteps of our complex and changing society. The leaders' abilities to motivate, inspire and convey visions have become more important than just administrative abilities. In modern organizations being able to specify desirable goals and steer in the right direction is a necessity. Rubenowitz (2007, 125-126) writes that leaders play an important role in the employees' job performance, motivation, and job satisfaction. Research has shown that about a quarter of an organization's

or a company's profitability is due to the leadership. To keep up with the rapidly changing and developing organizational culture a leadership style that takes into consideration the employees' human capital such as knowledge, competence and ambition is needed.

According to Cepaite (2008, 55-58) building a good communication climate is essential when conducting organizational change. Building a good climate starts from the existing working climate in the organization. The working climate is not concrete it is an abstract thing consisting of the members attitudes, norms, feelings, and behaviours that are created and interpreted by the people in the organization. The working climate can be experienced as positive or negative depending on many different factors. A productive and favourable working climate is essential for succeeding with organizational change. Leadership plays a big role in creating that positive and favourable climate, especially the leaders' own attitudes towards the organizational change. Research has shown that if the leaders themselves are positive towards change, then the followers also are more positive towards change.

Leaders and followers create the climate together through their communication with each other, therefore an open and an allowing communication climate enables new ideas to flourish. One of the main reasons that the employees often feel doubtful towards change is the lack of communication between them and their leaders. Open communication leads to building trust between leaders and employees in the change process. When the employees feel that they freely can speak their mind about how they feel and experience the change process and, also feel that the leaders listen to them and that they can contribute with own input in the change process trust is built and that creates a positive working climate towards change. Even though the employees can give valuable information and feedback to the leaders about the change process, it seems that many leaders accept only the positive feedback about the planned change but, neglects the negative feedback that could help them avoid mistakes. (Cepaite 2008, 58-60.)

Cepaite (2008, 71-72) says that another important part in the change process is that the employees feel that they are involved in the change process. People want to feel that they can control their own situation especially when the decision for conducting change come from others and not themselves. Leaders should encourage the employees to speak their mind, take responsibility and be involved in the change process. Eklund (2016, 122) says that research has shown that solutions that have been created and developed through participation of employees together with the management creates higher levels of well-being and work engagement. Working this way also means that the quality of the solutions is higher because many people with different skills have put all their knowledge and experience together resulting in solutions with fewer side effects accruing.

According to Odell (2019, 102-103) it is important that the employees feel involved in the change process. Being involved in the change process means that in these circumstances that the employees are listened to, feel that they are a part of the change process, and that they have the ability to influence their work situation and not only being a tool in the process it maintains work engagement and motivation. Aronsson et al (2012, 220-221) says that work engagement mirrors the employees' positive feelings and experiences about their job. Work engagement makes employees feel dedicated the work. The concept is considered to consist of three parts. First there is vigour, when the employee feels motivated, full of energy and is willing to make a great effort to keep on working even in adversity. Second is dedication, feeling proud of one's work and feeling that one is contributing to the organization. Third is absorption, feeling concentrated and rapt of one's work so that time flies by. Work engagement can be seen as a buffer for burnout.

Odell (2019, 103-105) says that one important thing for leaders to remember when informing the employees about the up-coming change is to motivate the change for the employees and not the other way around. It is important that the employees can see the benefits that the change brings to them. The leaders are the ones that communicate and concretize the vision and plan for change, but how the change should be realized should be up to the employees themselves without too much involvement from the management. In the beginning of the change process plenty of time should be reserved for discussion to let the employees come forward with their thoughts, being listened to and getting feedback.

When it comes to motivation Odell (2019, 98-100) writes that there is a difference between being inspired and being motivated. People can be inspired by other people and get new ideas, for example, leaders can inspire their employees to feel that the planned change is a good idea but, that is not the same as motivation. Motivation always comes from within and, we are responsible for our own motivation. Leaders can be inspiring but, it is the employees that decides what they want to do. Inner motivation consists of three key elements, mastery, autonomy, and relatedness. The meaning of the term *mastery* in this context is to master the things one is working with. When employees feel competent and that they are mastering their work tasks they are more motivated. Employees also get motivated when they feel that they learn new things and improve their performance at their work. On the other hand, if there is a lot of struggling and not seeing any improvements the employees' motivation usually sinks. If leaders want their employees to stay motivated, they should create a climate where the change is seen as a possibility to improve and learn new things because if employees experience that the change affects their skills and competence negatively, they might feel reluctant to the change because nobody wants to feel incompetent.

The second key element for motivation is *autonomy*. This means that the employees feel that they have some influence over their work situation. This doesn't mean that the employees need to be involved in every decision at the workplace, it is about the feeling of having control over one's everyday life and that sustains motivation. *Relatedness* is the last key element and it is about feeling that you belong with the other people at a workplace and have a connection, feeling that you are one of the groups. Autonomy and relatedness are closely linked to each other for example if leaders often take decisions over the employees it can take away the employees' motivation because they might feel that their opinion don't count, on the other hand if the employees feel that they have enough autonomy then their motivation are higher. Factors that increase and sustain employee motivation in a change process are, understanding the purpose with the change, being able to influence the change process, feeling that one has the skills and competence to handle the change, and feeling that one belongs in the organization. (Odell 2019, 100-102, 105.)

5 PLANNING THE CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this thesis is to study the relationship between workplace changes and employee well-being and work engagement, and to find out in what way the organization and its management can support and contribute to their employees' well-being in a change process. In the earlier chapters in this thesis, I have written about what previous research and other relevant literature say about the topic of this master thesis. I will in this chapter describe what kind of research methods I have used in my search for answers to my research questions.

5.1 Research approach

Larsen (2018, 29-31) explains that usually when conducting research, the researcher must think about how he or she will approach the research problem. The most common research approaches are induction and deduction. The difference between these two approaches, is that working inductively the researcher doesn't start from a specific method. The researcher is on the path of discovery and tries to formulate a theory based on the information and the collected empirical data. The research problem is often expressed as a question or a topic. Having a deductive approach means that the researcher is starting from an existing theory and have a limited research problem. Theories are used to explain the studied subject and the research problems are often hypothesis and questions. There is also a third approach that is called abduction which means that the researcher alternates between empiricism and theory.

Bell and Waters (2016, 20) writes that there are different research traditions that use different research methods to gather information. The two main methods are the qualitative method and the quantitative method. Neither method is better or worse, they both have advantages and disadvantages. The choice of method depends on what the researcher wants to get out of his or her research. Quantitatively orientated research collects and studies relationships between different sets of facts and mainly uses numerical data that can give quantifiable and generalizable conclusions. In qualitative research, one is often interested in understanding how people experience the world, how people feel and think. Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017) emphasise that the qualitative researcher should be interested in studying and describes an event in its natural environment and explains the behaviour of the studied phenomenon. The researcher tries to find a theory that explains the studied behaviour.

Given the purpose with the study and the research questions I will choose to use an inductive approach and qualitative research method. I want to understand the employees' feelings, behaviours, and attitudes towards change. That is why a qualitative research method is considered to be most suitable for this study, that handles such a complex phenomenon as the impact of change processes in an organization because a qualitative research approach lets the researcher go deeper into the subject and gain a more comprehensive holistic view of the phenomenon.

5.2 Research strategy

There are different research strategies to choose from when conducting research, for example action research, ethnography, and case study. The choice of the research strategy depends on what kind of data one intends to collect. The aim of this thesis is to study the relationship between workplace changes and employee well-being and get a deeper understanding about how change at a workplace affects the employees' well-being and what kind of support that can be given from the organization and its management therefore a case study was considered, to be the most appropriate strategy for this study. Denscombe (2009, 59-62) writes that case studies don't just scratch at the surface they go deep into a phenomenon and by examining the particular, the general is highlighted. Case studies focus on studying behaviours, processes, and relationships in its natural environment in order to come up with an explanation of the studied phenomenon. Another good thing with case studies is that many sources and data collecting methods can be used in a case study such as interviews, observations and collecting documents that are important for the studied case.

Bell and Waters (2016, 22-23) write that case studies are well suited for researchers that work alone because it allows them to really explore and study, in depth a specific case. A case can for example be just studying one person or the whole organisation and can be chosen for many different reasons, for example, studying a change in organization. The researcher is interested in identifying and understanding the interactions that occur in the organization and the individuals' behaviour in order to find out how they affect the implementation of different changes. According to Denscombe (2009, 63-65) the case to be studied in a case study is chosen carefully and should be associated with the research question formulation. The reasons for choosing a particular case can be many, but the most common is that the case is chosen based on the fact, that it is similar to other cases that could have been chosen and therefore the result can be applied to the whole group.

The purpose of this thesis is to see how the change has affected the employees' well-being and work engagement, and how the management has performed and dealt with the change. This is a phenomenon that can be studied in many organizations and there are many organizations to choose from. The chosen organization to be studied in this thesis is an organization that I am familiar with and that has gone through a merger. The personnel in the organization wished for both them and the organization to stay anonymous throughout the whole research process. I respected their wishes and therefore I gave the organization the fictitious name Luna and didn't mention the personnel's names anywhere in the thesis.

5.3 Data collecting method

Larsen (2018, 135) says when doing qualitative research, the most common data collecting methods are interviews, observation and documents connected to the studied subject. Observations and interviews are the two main data collecting methods in a qualitative research. Hallin and Helin (2018, 10- 13) explains that interviews provide opportunity to find out how people think, feel, and perceive things and situations in their environment. By talking to people, you get a good idea how they reason about a phenomenon. The difference between an everyday conversation between people and an interview has a purpose. The interviewer needs to be a good listener and interested in what the interviewee says.

Denscombe (2009, 251) points out that choosing people to be interviewed in an interview-based study based on what exactly they can add to the study and are therefore not chosen randomly. Alvesson (2011, 59-61) says that the choice of the informants is connected, with the purpose of the study, for example if the researcher is searching for something that is representative for a particular thing or to find something extreme or something more typical. It is important that the choice of the informants gives diversity and that they have information that are relevant for the study. Eriksson-Zetterquist and Ahrne (2015, 42) says that the number of interviewees need to be large enough to provide reliable material. One or two is not enough, six to eight interviewees are to be recommended. Bell and Waters (2016, 190) emphasises that it is important not to forget to get the informants' consent to the interviews.

Larsen (2018, 138-139) explains that interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. In structured interviews the researcher has written down all the interview questions and the interviewees answer all the questions in the same order and no follow-up questions are asked. In a semi-structured interview some questions are written down, but the researcher can ask follow-up questions which allows a more flexible and open dialogue. In an unstructured interview on the other hand the interviewer has an

open interview guide containing only themes or single words. The idea is that the interviewee should speak as freely as possible about the interview topic and the interviewer should not control the interview too much.

Denscombe (2009, 255) emphasises that it is very important to get the interviewees' consent if you intend to record the interview. It is worth asking the interviewees once again before you start the interview, if it is okay that the interviews get recorded and assure the interviewees that what they say will be treated confidentially. To build up trust is important when conducting an interview. Bell and Waters (2016, 201) writes that it is important to choose a place for the interview where you know that you won't be disturbed during the interview. The interviewer also needs to inform the informants where the interview will take place and how much time the interview approximately will take. According to Denscombe (2009, 259) a good way to document an interview is to record it because the interviewer can always go back and listen to what has been said. The disadvantage of recording an interview is that you can only hear the spoken word but not see the non-verbal communication.

I chose interviews as data collecting method for this study to seek answers to my research questions. I wanted to get a broader and deeper picture of how the employees feel and think about how the merger affected them and what kind of support they have been given from their leaders at their workplace. I wanted to get a comprehensive overview of the case, therefore I wanted to do as many interviews as I felt, that I had enough time and capacity to conduct. In total there were seven interviews. Before I did the interviews, I asked the selected candidates for the interviews, if they wanted to take part in an interview. All the seven candidates for the interviews gave their consent. I chose to do semi-structured interviews with open questions because I want to get multifaceted, rich, and deep information from the interviewees. I informed the interviewees where the interviews would be conducted and how long the interviews would take. With the permission of the interviewees, I recorded the interviews to be able in detail to write down what has been said during the interviews.

5.4 Data analysis method

Hallin and Helin (2018, 71-72) points out that after the interviews are done, they should be transcribed to get written material to work with. Listening to the interviews and writing down what is said is a good way to really get into the research because it allows the researcher to recall the interview situation and sort out his or her thoughts. How thoroughly the interviews shall be transcribed is up to the researcher.

It is often enough to do a simpler transcription leaving out for example, humming and repetitions. Bell and Waters (2016, 156) emphasises that the work of transcribing the interviews takes a long time because it must be done carefully and accurately. The researcher must determine how much time can be devoted to the work with collecting the data for example, transcribing interviews of 10 people that have lasted 30 min/interview can result in about 50 pages of text and can consume many hours of work, but in that case the material collected would be a good and extensive data collection that might contribute to high validity.

Content analysis is according to Larsen (2018, 160-161) the most common way of analysing qualitative data. In content analysis the interest lies in finding patterns in the text to find relevant information and get answers to the research problem. It can sometimes be hard for the researcher to sort out the relevant information from the texts therefore it is important to read through the text material several times to get to know the material. Bell and Waters (2016, 145-146) says a good starting point for the text analysis is a research question or a research problem breaking down the text and start coding the text. Examples of codes can be anything from words and sentences to entire pieces of text. After finding them Larsen (2018, 163) explains that the codes are categorized, and the categories should reflect the central terms in the study and be related to the research problem. Using paper and pens in different colours works very well for coding if you do not have access to a computer program that can do the coding for you.

Larsen (2018, 173-174) explains that after the coding is done the next step is to start searching for patterns, find the connections and interpret the findings. In the interpretation phase the aim is to create meaning from the patterns and connections that have been discovered in the text analysis. The interpretation should be, embed in both the theory connected to the topic and to the data that has been analysed. A balance between one's own interpretations and what the people that have been interviewed have said. Just describing the information given from the interviewees without one's own interpretations would not add the little extra interesting dimension to the research. Trost (2005, 109) points out that if you are going to use quotes when reporting your results, you should think about those you are quoting so that you don't make them feel for example embarrassed using unfavourable quotes. You should preferably freshen up the quotes without changing the real meaning of the quotes. You should of course state in your text that the quotes have been changed if that is the case. Dalen (2008, 106) says that it is important if the researcher is using quotes that he or she find quotes that brings forward the essence of the theme that is being highlighted. The quote should be of such a character that it catches the essential meaning and gives the reader a unique insight in the concept that the researcher wants to highlight.

I transcribed the recorded interviews and used content analysis to analyse the written text. I used quotes to highlight and clarify my findings.

5.5 Reliability and validity

Larsen (2018, 129) writes that credibility is important to both reliability and validity. Validity in a qualitative study means that the researcher examines what he or she is supposed to examine or as Bell and Waters (2016, 133) says that a question describes what one wants it to describe. Larsen (2018, 129-130) emphasise that it is important to keep the validity high. It is important that the researcher can verify that the data that have been collected is enough and relevant to draw conclusions from it and that the researcher's interpretation is reliable. The findings and result should preferably also be transferable to other groups and not just fit the ones that have participated in the research. Therefore, it is important for the researcher throughout the whole process to be transparent and critical to his or her own work.

Larsen (2018, 131-132) tells that reliability means that the research should be thoroughly and precisely made, and the result should be the same every time it is measured. It is not always easy to assure the reliability in a qualitative research for example, in an interview situation there are external factors that can affect how the interviewee respond and behave during the interview such as nervousness. To keep the reliability high, it is important that the whole process with data collecting methods and analyses is conducted thoroughly and precisely. The questions in the data collection should be clear and apprehensible and that the researcher should transcribe and code the material meticulously.

To try to get the reliability as high as possible for this research I used a semi-structured interview. The questions were the same for every interviewee, but I considered that the interviewees were actively participating in the interview. I had some randomly selected people and my supervisor to read through the interview questions and give me feedback on whether my interview questions measured what they should measure. In that way I tried to make the validity high. To give credibility to my research and uphold the validity and reliability I will attach my interview guide to the study and critically review my entire research process and results.

5.6 Ethical aspects

Larsen (2018, 16) expresses that when conducting a research where people are involved it is of great importance that the researcher follows ethical guidelines and principles in how the information and material given by the people participating in the study are collected and treated. It affects the whole process from the first contact with the participants to the published research. When it comes to participants in interviews Hallin and Helin (2018, 48-49) state the people that are to be interviewed must give their consent to being interviewed and to be able to do that the interviewees need to be informed about the study's aim and that the information they give will be treated confidentially. It means that the researcher speaks and writes in such a way that the ones that have been interviewed can't be recognized in the finished research report. To keep the interviewed participants' identity unknown the researcher can give them fictitious names or numbers. It is important for the researcher to remember that the material that has been collected in the research can only be used for the purpose that has been agreed upon. The material cannot be used for another study.

I informed the people that were to be interviewed about the aim of the study and why I wanted to conduct this study. I also asked for their consent to participate in the interview. To be able to keep their identities unknown I left out information that could reveal their identity. The respondents wanted to be sure that they could stay anonymous, so when I used quotes, I carefully considered what quotes to use, so that the identity of the interviewees would not be revealed.

6 RESULTS

In this chapter, I will describe and evaluate the results obtained from my research, as well as evaluate the methods that I have used in the research. When I have compiled the results, I have proceeded from the aim with this master thesis and my two research questions. I have clarified the results using quotes since the interviews were conducted in Swedish which is the interviewees' mother tongue and then translated the quotes into English. To keep the identities of the interviewees anonymous I have given them fictitious names.

6.1 The organizational merger

The interviewees all agreed that the merger was a necessity for their small organisation Luna to survive and to be able to continue in their daily operations. Discussions concerning a merger were held with several bigger organizations. When it came to choosing the organization to merge with, the decisive factor was that the organization had to have the same values as Luna. The interviewees' thoughts and feelings about the merger were a bit mixed.

You know what you have, but not what you get. (Interviewee 4)

They looked forward to being a part of a bigger organization and to the benefits that it could give them, but the majority of the interviewees were at the same time a bit worried about how it would affect their daily work situation. The benefits of the merger that the interviewees saw as positive were being able to use the resources that Sun could offer in order for Luna to maintain and develop their daily work, as well as being able to exchange knowledge, experiences and ideas were seen as positive for both Lunas daily operations and the interviewees themselves.

It is very nice to be in a bigger organization so that we have got more muscles and we have access to much knowledge through our organization, which we benefit from and there are different departments that works with different things, and it would be tough for a small organization to do all the development work that need to be done by just a few employees. (Interviewee 5)

I feel that it is very inspiring to have colleagues that work in other operating points with similar tasks, but in other environments. In that way it is very enriching. (Interviewee 1)

Although the interviewees felt that they were welcomed by Sun the majority of the interviewees found the merger process a bit unstructured and haphazardly arranged. They thought that it was mostly due to that no one at Luna had experienced a merger before. It was also a new experience for the management at Luna.

Nothing was really, comfortable, and familiar, but everything was new. (Interviewee 4)

There were a lot of new information for the interviewees to absorb and understand, and it took time to learn how to orient oneself in the organization Sun, for example who to contact to get the right information and how Sun was structured and functioned. Some of the interviewees were also a bit worried about having to partially work in another language because the main language used at Sun was different from the main language used at Luna. They thought that the usage of different languages could make the integration process more difficult.

It took a while before you came into the organization and got to know the people there and understand how everything were connected. (Interviewee 7)

Today the majority of the interviewees' experiences that they are in the middle of the merger process, but they also think that they never really will see the end of it because both organizations are bound to always develop in order to keep up with the changes within our society.

We are somewhere in the middle or more in the end, I experience that there might be no end, it is development all the time. (Interviewee 3)

We are not now in the begin any more, but perhaps we haven't landed in it yet. (Interviewee 4)

Some of the interviewees said that they are in different phases of the integration process and that some have come further in the integration process than others, much depending on how frequent they have had contact with the management and their colleagues at Sun. The interviewees that had contact with someone at Sun on an almost a daily basis felt more integrated. Speaking a different language than the language spoken in Sun also slowed the integration process.

6.2 The effects of the organizational merger process

The effects of the merger on the interviewees' daily work situation differed a bit depending on what kind of work tasks they had. The interviewees that worked more with administrative work tasks didn't feel like their work tasks and job description changed very much when merging with Sun, however some felt that the amount of work increased a bit. The interviewees that worked more practically felt that the merger shifted focus on what they should work with and how they should work. More elements of administrative work tasks such as documentation in a new data program and participating in meetings were blended in their daily work and took up more time. That made it a bit harder for them to decide which of their daily work tasks they should prioritize.

Now I do not do anything else than sitting and working at the computer all the time and I can feel the effects of that, my head sometimes feel completely stuffed. (Interviewee 6)

All interviewees experienced that the language barrier had been a tough nut to crack. Trying to overcome that barrier had for the majority of them taken lots of energy and had often created feelings of frustration because they had not really felt understood in many situations and felt that they hadn't been able to genuinely express themselves.

And that language then, it is an extra burden, and then you don't really know if we going to understand each other. (Interviewee 2)

The majority of the interviewees felt more stressed due to the new and for some increased work tasks and experienced a lack of guidance and consistency in the merger process. Especially in the beginning of the merger process when they got new information almost weekly. Having to learn new things in a fast pace, also made many of them feel stressed. Many of the interviewees that experienced stress had symptoms of headache, back and neck problems and sleeping disorders.

I always feel that I am a little bit behind and that I never really master things because new things to learn come all the time, so I don't have time to learn the first thing. (Interviewee 4)

The interviewees that felt that they had some influence on their daily work didn't feel so stressed. Overall, the possibility for the interviewees to have some influence in the merger process have been small. All the interviewees say that they have been able to influence some things in the merger process that

concern Luna's daily operation, though a few of the interviewees also have had some influence in some higher-level decisions at Sun connected to Luna.

Perhaps been able to influence some small things, like the decisions that we can make concerning Luna, but not in the big decisions. (Interviewee 2)

I can't say how much I have succeeded to exercise influence in the long run, but at least have been listened to. (Interviewee 3)

The majority of the interviewees felt that they had not been very engaged or motivated in the merger process, they had simply adjusted to the situation and continued to do their job, much due to that there had been so many new things to learn, that they hadn't had time to reflect over the situation. The interviewees that had a higher possibility to influence their daily work felt more motivated and engaged.

To feel engaged or happy that we have change organization, it has like not been any gaps or time or thought for it. (Interviewee 4)

I myself, have taken the role of being involved in the process. (Interviewee 1)

All the interviewees had sometimes during the merger process felt a bit of resistance. The feeling of resistance often occurred in situations when they needed to learn new things and felt that they lacked knowledge and guidance about how and why they should learn the new things or tasks. In these situations, the language barrier was obvious and became an obstacle. The biggest challenges in the merger process have been the language issue, workload, learning new documentation techniques and learning how Sun functions.

The challenge has been to learn everything. (Interviewee 5)

It has been this language issue! (Interviewee 3)

6.3 The importance of a positive work climate in the organizational merger process

The interviewees described a positive work climate in a change process as open and clear communication, feeling that you can speak your mind freely, honestly and without fear. They all thought that the

best communication in a change process was an open and straight forward dialogue. The communication should go both ways.

Create a dialogue because otherwise it is not communication, it is then a monolog and it should not be like that. (Interviewee 7)

All the interviewees felt that the communication with Sun had functioned relatively well. The head office of Sun is located in another place, so the face-to-face communication is not that regular, but they are just a phone call away. The information flow between Luna and Sun is relatively good and Luna gets the important and necessary information that they need. Especially information concerning Luna's daily operations. The information from Sun is mostly in their main language which is different from Luna's main language and that is often experienced by the majority of, the interviewees as a spanner in the works.

Overall good, it has been clear which channels to use. (Interviewee 1)

When it came to how the interviewees experienced the communication with their closest leader their opinions differed from each other. The interviewees did not have one and the same leader and some of the interviewees had changed leaders under the ongoing integration process, so their opinions of the communication with their closest leader were coloured by their experiences of the leaders they have now and the leaders they have had. The majority of the interviewees felt that they were given much information, but still experienced a lack of communication and dialogue. The other interviewees on the other hand felt that their communication with their closest leader functioned as it should.

I think it varies, I do feel that they inform us about things, but sometimes I might not know what I should do with that information. (Interviewee 2)

Now it is working very well, I get answers to the things that I need to get answers to. (Interviewee 1)

The majority of the interviewees also pointed out that it is important in a positive work climate that you feel safe at the workplace and feel that you can be yourselves and, therefore all personnel should treat and talk with each other with respect. Humour was also described as an important ingredient in creating a positive work climate.

It needs to be open and honest and that it is fun, that you like your workplace and free from frustration so to say. You should have a common experience of that the work you do is meaningful. (Interviewee 1)

To have fun and that you can discuss things with each other and get along with each other or although you don't agree you still get along with each other. (Interviewee 2)

6.4 The leader's role in the organizational merger process

The interviewees thought that the leaders play an important role in helping to create a positive work climate and the best way for leaders to do that according to the interviewees were to take charge directly and solve problems in the group, preferable before there is a conflict. Leaders should also be an active member of the group, listen and support their colleagues and take responsibility for the group. In that way they can create trust which is a very important ingredient in a positive work climate.

It is their (the leaders) responsibility to ensure that there is trust and that one feels a part of the group. (Interviewee 4)

The leader should give space, listen to the employees, and work together with the employees, but still hold up the structure and the systematics, take responsibility. If you see a problem and someone gives information about a problem, you as a leader should take action and not be afraid. (Interviewee 1)

All the interviewees felt that they have gotten support from Sun. The support has come from different levels and from different people at Sun. The support given by Sun has been to actively try to include Luna in their organization, for example to give the information that Luna's personnel needs, and the personnel have been invited to different teams and groups doing work together. The majority of the interviewees said that they have gotten the most support from their colleagues that often have the same position at Sun as the interviewees have at Luna.

Clearly the support has been about how things functions and how we should do things, it has not been like a mental psychological support like, how are you feeling. (Interviewee 2)

I have had a good colleague that I have had contact with continuously and I have always known that I can contact her if there is something I'm wondering about. (Interviewee 1)

All the interviewees felt that the support given by their closest leader has been more informative and knowledge based to its nature than psychologically. The majority of the interviewees thought that this

could be due to lack of knowledge of how to conduct a merger and therefore more support and information about what impact a merger really has on all involved in the process. Such support and information should have been good to have gotten from, for example Sun a bigger and more experienced organization because no one really understood how the merger process would affect all those involved.

I don't feel like we have got support in that way that, how you should manage like concretely, but if there is something I don't know how works than I have got answers. (Interviewee 2)

6.5 Evaluation of results and used methods

With my research I wanted to find out how employees experience a change process and how it affects them. I also wanted to see what the management can do to support the employees in the change process. Svenningsson and Sjögarde (2014, 51-52) point out that both external and internal driving forces for example, economic, social-cultural factors and growth of the organization can be behind organizational changes. The result showed that an organizational merger was necessary for Luna to continue with their daily operations and to be able to keep up with the developments in their line of work and the changes in the society overall. Those were the key driving forces behind the merger. Based on the findings the interviewees feel that the merger process is still on-going and some of the interviewees felt that they are in different phases in the merger process. Odell (2019, 48-53) emphasises that change process can be divided into four phases, *reaction phase*, *resistance phase*, *exploration phase* and *commitment phase* and people can be in different phases. The most important thing is that people in every phase of the change process are to be given plenty of time to process what they experience and feel.

Findings showed that going through a merger was a new experience for everybody involved in it even for the management. At first the merger created feelings of confusion and uncertainty among the personnel because it was an extensive and revolutionary process that broke up known structures and changed the organizational culture. Svenningsson and Sjögarde (2014, 20-31) says that revolutionary changes are large scale changes that affect the whole organization, and all involved in the change processes. Now a few years in the merger process the interviewees feel that they have become more accustomed with the situation. They think that they are more in the middle and in end of the merger process than in the beginning, though they think that the merger process might not come to an end because their organization is always developing to keep up with the changes in the society and facing new challenges. The positive

effects of the merger process were according to the findings that Luna got more resources to develop their daily work, as well as being able to exchange ideas and knowledge with personnel at Sun a big and experienced organization and that were considered positive and developing for Luna's future.

Findings also showed that having to learn almost repeatedly new things such as a new data program, new documentation techniques and new ways to work stressed many of interviewees a lot because they didn't know which of the tasks to prioritise first. Fløvik, Knardahl and Christensen (2019) write that organizational change may cause stress and that repeatedly and multiple changes created a greater risk for stress. Many of the interviewees felt that the stress created physical symptoms such as head ache, muscle tension and sleeping disorders. Angelöw (2010, 28-31) writes that stress can cause physical symptoms such as head ache and muscle tension, as well as emotional stress that causes sleeping disorders and concentration difficulties. Organizational change can also cause organizational stress symptoms such as diminish job satisfaction and communication problems. The interviewees felt that they hadn't got neither knowledge nor time to learn everything they needed to learn, as well as feeling that they didn't have control and not having so many opportunities to exert their influence in the merger process and that negatively affected, their motivation and work engagement in the merger process. Rubenowitz (2004, 228-230) points out that people that feel in control over their situation handle stress better than people that don't feel in control.

The findings also showed that the interviewees had felt resistance in the change process from time to time. The resistance often occurred when the interviewees felt that they had too many things on their table and not enough time to learn them, as well as not being able to genuinely express themselves and being understood because of the usage of different languages in the two organizations. The usage of different languages caused communication problems and was seen in many cases as a barrier that slowed down the merger and integration process. Kraus, et al. (2017, 192-193) say that when two different cultures merge it is common that cultural clashes occur because it takes time and experience to learn how to work across cultural boundaries. According to Ikhwan Maulana Haeruddin (2017) mergers are common when organizations want to grow and achieve profitability and the most common failures in a merger process is forgetting the people involved in the merger process and how it affects them.

Based on the results obtained a positive work climate in the merger process was considered important for the employees' well-being and engagement. A positive work climate was described as the personnel being able to openly say what is on their minds, to have leaders that listens and support their employees, and to feel safe at one's workplace. According to the interviewees, the leaders play a big role in creating

a positive work climate. Cepaite (2008, 58-60) says that open communication allowing people to freely speak their mind about how they feel in the change process, help to build trust between leaders and followers. Leaders can, according to the interviewees build a positive work climate by taking charge in the change process and preventing conflicts through honest and open communication, as well as solve problems in an early stage. Odell (2019, 103-105) says that it is the leader's responsibility to concretize and communicate the vision for the change to the personnel. It is especially important in the beginning of a change process for leaders to reserve time for discussion. Letting the employees share their thoughts and being listened to.

The interviewees think that they have got support from their colleagues and leaders when they needed it to solve problems, but that everybody working at Luna also should have gotten overall more support in how to handle a merger process. Blomberg (2019, 327-329) points out that how the personnel experience their work depends on many different factors, both social factors such as relations to colleagues and leaders and physical factors like work environment.

I chose to do a qualitative study because I thought it best suited my aim with this thesis and my research questions. To get answers to my research questions I wanted to interview people that had gone through organizational changes and that is why I chose the organization Luna because I knew that they had gone through a merger and that is a big change for an organization to go through. I wanted to get data that was comprehensive and rich of information, therefore I chose to do as many interviews as I felt I had time and resources to conduct. Eriksson-Zetterquist and Ahrne (2015, 42) says that it is important to get reliable material to work with, therefore one or two interviews are not enough, it should be about six to eight interviews. I did seven interviews for this study.

From an ethical point of view, it is very important that the persons that you are planning to interview give their consent to the interview. I therefore asked all my candidates for the interviews if they want to participate and if it is okay for them that I record the interviews. All seven candidates gave their consent. The interviews were conducted in quiet and private rooms at Luna and the interviews took about 30 – 50 minutes. I recorded the interviews and then I transcribed them. The interviews were semi-structured. I used an interview guide with different themes consisting of a few questions because I wanted to create an open dialogue and be able to follow up the interviewees' answers with supplementary questions if that was needed.

The organization and the participants in the research wished to be anonymous throughout the whole process. I respected their wishes and promised to keep them anonymous throughout the process, therefore I gave the organization a fictitious name that was Luna and all seven participants were named and numbered from interviewee 1 to interviewee 7. Hallin and Helin (2018, 48-49) emphasises that the information given by the interviewees need to be treated confidentially. That means that the researcher writes in such a way that the interviewees can't be recognized in the finished research report. To be able to do that the researcher can give them fingered names.

The interviews were conducted in Swedish because that were the interviewees mother tongue. I thought that I would get deeper and richer information form the interviewees if they were able to speak their mother tongue. I recorded the interviews and transcribed them thoroughly. I read through the transcribed material many times and started to categorize and code the material searching for patterns. When I compiled the research results, I had to see to not to reveal such details that could expose Luna's and the interviewees' identities and that was a bit challenging. I also gave the organization that Luna merged with a fictitious name so that they would stay anonymous and it also became easier when I presented my research result. When I presented my research results, I used quotes to clarify my findings. I carefully considered which quotes I would use so that I didn't reveal their identities. According to me, I succeeded to keep their identities anonymous. Trost (2005, 109) writes that it is good to freshen up the text in the quotes if you are using quotes, but without changing the meaning in them. I translated the quotes that I used from Swedish to English because I write this master thesis in English. When I translated the quotes, I tried to be as thorough as possible so that the essence of the quotes would remain intact.

To keep the validity high, I had some randomly selected people and my supervisor to read through my interview questions and give me feedback. In that way I ensured that my questions measured what they were supposed to measure. I used semi-structured interviews, using the same interview guide in every interview and I was the only one conducting the interviews. In that way I kept the reliability high.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The aim with this thesis was to study the relationship between workplace changes and employee well-being and work engagement to find out in what way the organization and its management can support and contribute to their employees' well-being and work engagement in the change process. The research questions that I sought answers for were: *In what way do organizational changes affect the employees' well-being and work engagement? What way can the organisation and its management support the employees in the change process?*

The results obtained in this study showed that organizational changes affect the employees' well-being and work engagement. Even though the merger that Luna went through was seen necessary by all involved, there is no doubt that the merger process affected the employees at Luna. The merger was extensive and revolutionary, therefore especially in the beginning of the merger process, feelings of insecurity and confusion came up to the surface. Further into the merger process the more accustomed the personnel became to managing change, the feelings of confusion and insecurity diminished. They now feel that they are closer to the end of the merger than the beginning, but don't think they ever will see the end of the change process as their organization is constantly evolving to stay up to date with the development in their line of work.

The results also showed that a combination of several factors made many employees feel stressed. The factors that created the stress were, feelings of insecurity, getting heavier workload, having to learn new skills in a rapid pace, lacking time for reflection, not feeling in control over their work situation, and communication barriers due to the different languages spoken in the two merging organizations. Many of these factors were also reasons why the employees from time to time felt resistance in the merger process, as well as lack of motivation and work engagement. The stress also caused physical symptoms such as headache, back and neck pain and sleeping disorders.

The findings also showed that the best support that can be given by the management and the leaders, in the organization is to listen to the employees and letting them freely speak their minds about how they experience the merger process, feeling that then communication are two-ways. It is also important that the management and leaders create together with the employees a positive work climate so that everyone can feel safe. No one at Luna had gone through a merger before not even the management and therefore Luna's personnel were not prepared for what was required of everyone in the merger. More guidance in

how to best lead a merger, what to expect of a merger and more support would have been good for both the employees and the management at Luna to have gotten. The positive aspects of the merger were according to the obtained result, that the personnel got access to more resources that will help them to develop their daily operations and their organization, as well as to be able to share knowledge, ideas and experience with colleagues working at Sun.

How change affects the employee well-being has been widely researched. It was easy to find articles and books written about this subject, of course from different angles but still in the same topic, therefore it is hard to determine what could be suggested for further research in this topic. One suggestion though for further research would be to research what the impact of Covid-19 has had on employee well-being at their workplaces so far and especially what the impact has been on the social relations at workplaces when people for example have worked from their homes and keeping contact with colleagues mostly through online meetings, as well as being urged to keep distance to each other.

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Interview guide:

Research question 1: *In what way do organizational changes affect the employees' well-being and work engagement?*

Theme 1: Organizational change process

Questions:

1. What was your reaction and feelings the first time you heard about the planned changes?
2. How would you describe the organizational changes that you have experienced?
3. In your opinion what are the driving forces behind the change process?
4. In your opinion where in the organizational change process are you today, in the beginning, middle or the end? (Why?)
5. What is your opinion about the changes being made this far in the change process?

Theme 2: The effects of the organizational change

Questions:

1. In your opinion what kind of impact has the organizational change had on your daily work situation?
2. Has the organizational change affected your well-being? If so in what way?
3. What benefits can you see that the organizational changes bring to you?
4. What challenges can you see that the organizational changes give you?
5. Have you felt resistance towards the change? If so, how come?

Research question 2: *In what way can the organisation and its management support the employees in the change process?*

Theme 1: Communication in the change process

Questions:

1. What does good communication mean to you?
2. How have you experienced the communication with your closest leader concerning the organizational change?
3. How have you experienced the communication with the head organization Seurakuntaopisto concerning the organizational change?
4. Have you had opinions about the changes being conducted at your workplace? If so, have you been heard?

Theme 2: Support in the change process

Questions:

1. In your opinion, in what way can the leaders support their employees in the change process?
2. Have you received support from your closest leader in the change process? If so, what kind of support have you got?
3. Have you received support from the top of the organization in the change process? If so, what kind of support have you got?

Theme 3: The work climate in the change process

Questions:

1. In your opinion what characterizes a good work climate in a change process?
2. In your opinion, how can the management create a good work climate for change?
3. Have you felt involved in the change process? If so in what way?
4. Have you felt that you have been able to influence the changes that have been conducted? If so in what way?
5. Have you felt motivated to participate in the change process? If so, how come?
6. If you would describe the whole organizational change process from the beginning to today in three sentences, what would they be?