



Psychosocial workload factors in mergers and acquisitions

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This thesis collects information on psychosocial factors and models that can mitigate these factors that have an effect during mergers and acquisitions. This thesis was commissioned by a medium-sized ICT company that operates in the Nordic countries. In recent years this company has grown partly by acquisitions and wishes to improve the integration of companies to its' operations.

This thesis aims to find out if Occupational Health and Safety Finland's questionnaire for Occupational Health and Safety inspectors could be used to plan and implement the integration phase of an ICT company to a larger company. Current questionnaire is worded in negative fashion but positive factors that improve wellbeing in work can be discovered with questionnaire.

The knowledge base of this thesis uses method to assess psychosocial workload factors for occupational health and safety inspectors. This questionnaire is tested to find both positive and negative factors. Factors that aren't found in this questionnaire are reflected to other models of psychosocial factors and these models are used to categorize different factors.

Method used in this thesis are interviews of employees who have worked in a similar company and have experienced a merger or an acquisition to a larger company. Interviewees were discovered by snowball sampling. Findings from these interviews were factored to OSHA Finland questionnaire factors. If corresponding factors were missing, other models were used.

The key results show that OSHA Finland questionnaire proves to be beneficial when used in planning and during of the integration phase of a merger and acquisition. Also using other models will benefit the work on mitigating or enabling the effects of psychosocial factors. However, this questionnaire is not sufficient alone to discover all factors that influence workload. Tool that is worded only in negative manner can make the positive psychosocial factors more difficult to find.

Keywords: Psychosocial workload factors, positive psychosocial factors, mergers and acquisitions

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1 Introduction

Modern day knowledge worker is the main resource and asset an ICT company has. As work has shifted from manual labour to knowledge work and products from tangible to intangible, companies need to maintain the resources, their people, that make modern ICT companies thrive. Largest part of company's assets – if not all - are its people. (Katramo, Lauriala, Matinlauri, Niemelä, Svennas & Wikman 2011, 449) Employer has certain responsibilities in relation to employees and safety of its employees in general. These general responsibilities are described in employment contracts act (55/2001). The occupational health and safety act describes more thoroughly employer's responsibilities concerning safety. One of these responsibilities is to assess the risks relevant to the work currently performed. Psychosocial workload factors make a group of risks that influences workers' health. On the other hand, work has also positive resource factors. These factors pull employees towards the company and attach them to their work.

Most of the companies that are in business have an intention to grow their operations. Growth can be pursued by buying other companies and merging these to the original company. Typical of the mergers and acquisitions process is that it is first prepared in secrecy. When it is time to come forward after the deal has been done, it can be a big surprise for people working in companies involved. There are often a great number of different tasks that need to be done and managed in an acquisition. Especially in cases where two companies are planned to continue their operations together and not as two separate entities. An acquisition is always a strategic move for the company making the acquisition. There are numerous reasons why an acquisition is made. This thesis will not go into detail of all the reasons behind a decision to acquire a company. Different phases of a merger and acquisition process are described in chapter four.

The questionnaire is the tool for safety inspectors to use when inspecting companies and looking for psychosocial workload factors. This is one example of different factors that have been discovered and included in OSHA Finland questionnaire. There are other models that bring knowledge of psychosocial factors with different factors and different levels of abstraction. These models can act as mediators for people responsible for managing psychosocial factors. Common aspect in all the models used in this thesis is

that they describe different factors from some point of view. There currently is no one description of all factors that can influence employees' wellbeing, both in negative and positive.

This thesis aims to find out if OSHA Finland questionnaire for Occupational Health and Safety inspectors could be used to plan and implement the integration phase of an ICT company to a larger company. The scope of this research are psychosocial factors, both positive and negative. The scope of this thesis is in a mid-sized ICT company X that has been acquired by a larger, international company. Increasing amount of research on work engagement and other positive affective well-being states is not surprising as the benefits of such affective states on both employees and organizations are widely acknowledged. Indeed, previous studies indicate that engaged employees perform better, are proactive and more committed to their jobs, have fewer sickness absences, and are more willing to continue their job (for a review, see Halbesleben, 2010). (Airila, 2015,16)

2 Theoretical background

The theoretical background for this thesis consists of different theoretical phenomena that are connected to improving the wellbeing of employees during and after mergers and acquisitions.

2.1 Psychosocial Workload

Psychosocial workload factors are one area that with other factors e.g. physical workload and physical factors influence worker's health and wellbeing. Often these factors aren't physical in the sense that one could measure the exact amount of harm caused by it. Noise is a good example of it. It is easy to measure the amount of noise in a location and then assess the harm it can cause to hearing. It is very difficult to measure how irritating the noise is and how does that affect the accumulation of work-related stress. This feature makes psychosocial workload factors harder to discover compared to physical workload factors. According to Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA Finland. 2019) psychosocial workload factors refer to factors relating to the nature of work and work arrangements as well as the social dynamics of the work community that can have a harmful impact on employees' health. Psychosocial workload can become an

issue if the aforementioned factors are off balance, poorly managed or dysfunctional. (OSHA Finland. 2024) This definition used in Finland concentrates to the negative effects of Psychosocial factors.

The other side of psychosocial factors has been in discussion with the term work engagement. Science has recognized the positive influence that psychosocial factors can bring. According to Airila (2015,15) from the beginning of the millennium, the rise of positive psychology has prompted interest in positive aspects of well-being. This has brought more attention to factors that mitigate negative effect of workload. Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli (2001) found that the dimensions researched in their article, i.e. feedback, rewards, job control, participation, job security and supervision support all had positive correlation with work engagement. The centre of occupational safety in Finland has adopted the positive effects as a part of its' safety program. Work does not only cause harmful strain, but it also involves many positive features called resources factors. Identifying the resource factors of work reduces the effects of harmful workload factors. (TCOS, 2025)

Psychosocial factors have been tied together with several different models or heuristics. According to Vasquez, Pianezolla and Hutz (2018, 8), two prevailing theoretical models are Job demand–control (JDC) model and Effort-reward Imbalance (ERI) model. Feldt, Mauno and Mäkikangas (2017) also name Warr's Vitamin model and Mackey and Perrewé's AAA model as two other theoretical models. Job stress in the JDC is the result of constraints on decision latitude, which causes workers to modulate their action alternatives to meet labor demands. (Vasquez et al, 2018, 8) According to Feldt et al (2017) in the 1980's this model was expanded to include social support to employee. In the combination of high job demands and low decision-making power, the power of the individual that is not transformed into action can also be converted into negative outcomes for worker's mental health. (Vasquez et al, 2018) The ERI theory, therefore, proposes that work stress is caused by imbalance or little reciprocity between effort and rewards, placing the worker in a continuous state of arousal that can lead to outcomes detrimental to his or her health." (Vasquez et al, 2018, 8) Warr's vitamin model has 12 different dimensions: Personal control, Demanding supervision, Work diversity, Workload, Social contacts intensity, Development and evaluation, Supportive supervision, Sense of security in organization, Financial compensation, Significant social

position, Organizational ethics and Career prospects. Warr's model differs from other models in the sense that it assumes non-linear dependency. First six dimensions mentioned have negative effect if there is too much of them. Mackey and Perrewé's model has three A's. Appraisal, Attribution and Adaptation. These three represent the three phases in the model. Different to previous models AAA doesn't have a list of different dimensions to consider but dimensions rise from employee's appraisal. (Mackey & Perrewé, 2014) According to Feldt et al (2017) AAA is complicated and wide and hasn't been empirically tested. Therefore, AAA can be regarded as a heuristic framework, not a model.

2.2 Negative Psychosocial Workload factors

Previously occupational health and safety was looked through the lens of failure or illness. Visible deviation from healthy normal always came from something harmful. This has been the tradition in medicine for centuries. Traditionally, employee well-being has been viewed from a negative perspective, that is, as occupational stress, disease, mental illness, weakness, and symptoms. Thus, understanding the causes and consequences of ill-health was the main focus of occupational health studies throughout the decades. (Airila, 2015,15) Most of the research for occupational wellbeing and health is about sickness and illbeing. 92% of research uses wellbeing and health indicators that are negative. (Hakanen, 2004, 27)

Negative psychosocial factors are such that can have a harmful impact on employees' health. These effects are caused by different sources of psychosocial workload and different levels of exposure. According to Demerouti et al. (2004) job demands refer to those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs (e.g. exhaustion). Stress occurs when an individual assesses an interaction situation as exceeding their capabilities and jeopardizing their well-being. Thus, cognitive assessment, i.e., how an individual interprets and experiences the situation, plays a key role. (Feldt et al, 2017) It is impossible to determine limits of safe exposure as people think and perceive stressors in a different way.

2.3 Positive psychosocial factors

The other side of the coin, positive psychosocial factors, or Job resource factors, are ones that improve wellbeing and give people more energy and help to cope with pressures from negative psychosocial factors. The idea of positive psychology was not to replace traditional view of psychology focusing on ill-health and health problems, rather, it was to complement and enlarge the field. Therefore, current research on social psychological health studies tries to find a balance between positive and negative aspects of employee well-being, and aims to understand the entire range of well-being, not just the positive or negative side of it (Airila 2015,16) Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that either/or (1) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (2) are functional in achieving work goals; (3) stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Just like in sickness it is easier to pinpoint what pathogen causes a disease compared to numerous different things that improve health. Factors that have a positive effect on wellbeing have been researched much less than the negative factors. One of the terms that are widely used when discussing about the positive side of wellbeing is Work Engagement. "Work engagement is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004, 74) This term emerged at the same time as positive psychology at the beginning of this millennia. According to Sheldon and King (2001) positive psychology revisits "the average person," with an interest in finding out what works, what is right and what is improving. Hakanen (2004) addresses this topic: Job resources can also increase an employee's external motivation, as many work environments that provide many valued resources contribute to the development of the necessary skills required for the job and the employee's willingness to dedicate and invest in the job. In such, work is likely to be performed well, and the job objective is likely to be achieved. For example, a temporary teacher trainee who is new to the school will have a realistic chance of succeeding more likely and achieve the job objectives if he or she receives the support he or she needs from other teachers and the principal for support and feedback.

Practitioners who want to address job resources find models that work as guidance helpful. Demerouti et al (2004) presents job demands – resources model as a two-sided

model to represent factors that support wellbeing at work alongside workload factors that deter work health. Model is presented in Figure 1.

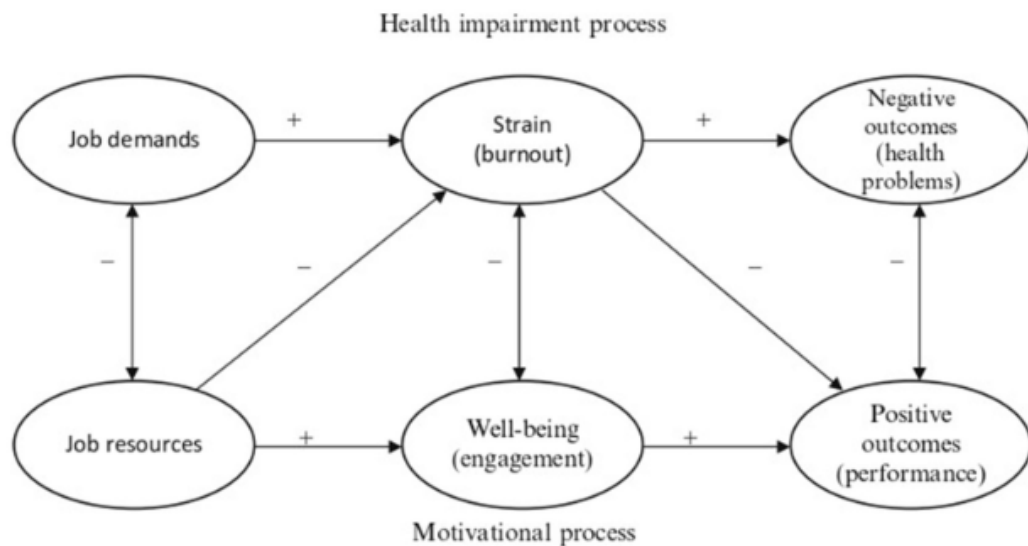


Figure 1: Job resources' positive effect on well-being and job outcomes (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014)

2.4 Occupational Health and Safety

Currently people do the large part of work in all organisations. The occupational safety is one of the employer's most important responsibilities. Responsibility for safety at work means that the employer and the manager representing the employer must ensure that the safety and health of the employee is not endangered at work. This means all hazards at work, whether physical or mental. (Skurnik-Järvinen 2013, 29)

The Occupational Safety and Health legislation in Finland is written from the negative starting point. This approach is understandable as results from harm are easier to see compared to the positive effects of work engagement. According to OSHA Finland (2023) The Occupational Safety and Health Act require employers to monitor the working environment on a constant basis and to identify the hazards and harms that are typically present in the environment. Section 10 of the Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Act requires that Employers shall, taking the nature of the work and activities into account, systematically and adequately analyse and identify the risk factors and hazards caused by the work, the working hours, the workspaces, other aspects of the working environment

and the working conditions and, if the risk factors and hazards cannot be eliminated, assess their consequences to the employees' safety and health. (738/2002) If the employer lacks the required expertise, the services of external experts must be used. The employer must study all accidents, health hazards and other incidents and prevent them. They must also monitor the impact of all actions performed on the health and safety of work and, if necessary, take additional measures. Furthermore, the employer must provide their employees with orientation training regarding the conditions and correct working methods of the workplace. The underlying assumption appears to be that lack of harm means that employees are doing well in the workplace.

Legislation doesn't require the use of certain tools when assessing risks. Only requirement is that tools used must be relevant to the risk measured. OSHA Finland gives examples of different risk assessment methods. Risks that are discovered in the assessment must be treated. In table 1 is presented the hierarchy of risk management.

Table 1: Hierarchy of risk management. OSHA Finland (2023).

Hazard needs to be prevented and bring the risk to zero
If a hazard can't be prevented, its effect needs to be eliminated
If a hazard can't be prevented or eliminated, risk form it needs to be reduced to an acceptable level
Personal Protective Equipment

2.5 Characteristics of a Mergers and Acquisition

When two companies join their forces or other assets together the aim is to make an entity that is stronger than either one previously. There are different names for this action.

Oancea and Kamau (2021) define it as follows: A merger or acquisition is a legal transaction in which one organization transfers or combines some or all of its operations to or with another organization. In an acquisition, one organization transfers operations "upwards" to another organization that becomes its legal "parent." In a merger, two organizations transfer "sideways" to a new organization that is the sum of its two parts, and they often rebrand the name of the organization with a new name, a hyphenated

name, or one of the two organizations' names. What comes to the reasons behind a merger or an acquisition, Katramo et al (2013, 24) describe it as follows. An acquisition is always a strategic decision, as it is often linked to the expansion of markets and/or product ranges. It is often linked to the identification of a threat or opportunity in the company's strategic environment. Therefore, acquisitions should support the business and improve profitability, overall efficiency and productivity. Hooke (2015, 32) lists ten motivations for buyers to start a merger&Acquisition process: Economies of scale, achieve oligopoly power, speed growth through diversification, vertical integration, buying technical expertise, avoid new product risk, capture natural resources, cut target's costs, enter new country, private equity.

Katramo et al (2013, 51) present an eight-stage model of the merger process. These stages are overlapping, but it is worth to notice that communications phase is towards the end of this model. This model is presented in Figure 2.

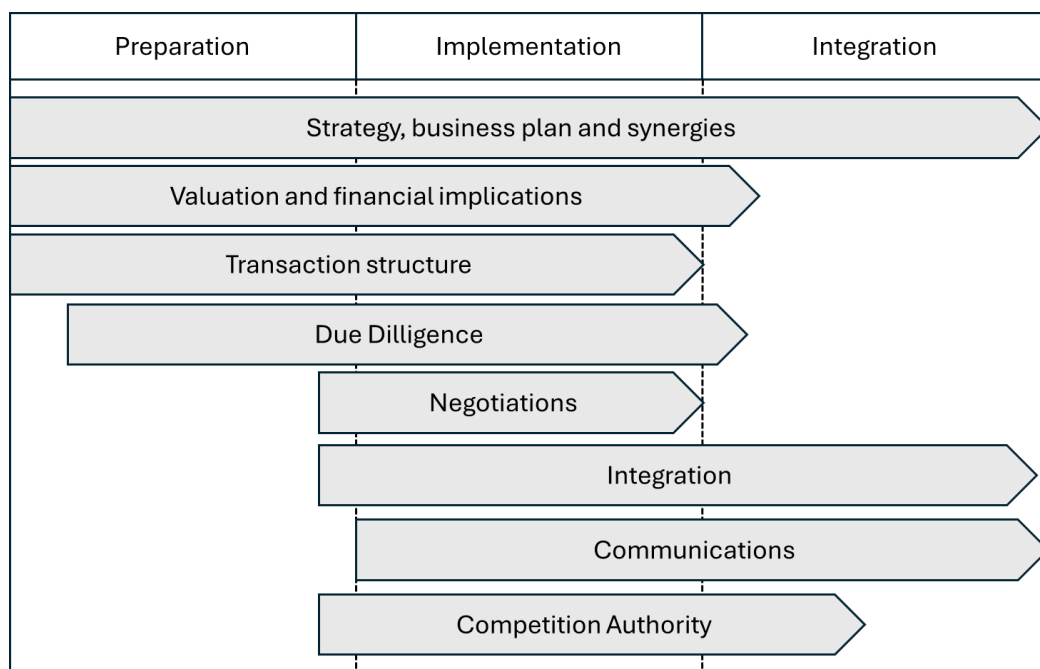


Figure 2: Stages of different activities in mergers process (Katramo et al 2013, 51)

First stage, strategy, is ongoing within company's normal strategy work. During this phase suitable companies for acquisition are screened. The reasons to start a process for acquiring a company Comes from the strategy. This work is not limited to a single acquisition but Is continuous. "These may relate to the target, its management, business

model, market position, customer and supplier structure, growth opportunities, or profitability. During the process, the understanding of the target becomes more precise, as the buyer often receives additional information at different stages: for example, limited information after signing a non-disclosure agreement, more extensive information after signing a letter of intent, and possibly the most sensitive information only after signing the final agreement.” (Katramo et al. 2013, 44)

Second stage is valuation and financial implications. In this phase estimated price range is determined and communicated to seller. If both parties find price range acceptable, discussions continue, and a letter of intent is delivered to seller.

Third stage is transaction structure. This means that buyer and seller agree on how the price will be paid. There are different possibilities how the price can be transferred from seller to buyer. One is cash on signing but there are numerous other ways also.

Fourth stage is due diligence phase, where the buyer gets access to financial information and liability information. “A successful acquisition requires in-depth and comprehensive knowledge of the target company and its business operations. Therefore, a preliminary review of the target is conducted prior to the transaction to lay the groundwork for a successful acquisition.” (Katramo et al. 2013, 50) “A successful acquisition requires in-depth and comprehensive knowledge of the target company and its business operations. Therefore, a preliminary review of the target is conducted prior to the transaction to lay the groundwork for a successful acquisition.” (Katramo et al. 2013, 51)

Fifth stage in the acquisition process is the negotiations stage. During this stage the final terms of the acquisition are negotiated, and the purchase agreement is executed.

All the stages mentioned above are very often veiled in secrecy. In a competitive environment information leak can make acquisitions much harder or much more expensive. One of the reasons companies acquire other companies is to have strategical benefits in their market. Other companies in the market will adjust their operations accordingly if this kind of information is leaked.

Sixth stage is the integration. The aim of the integration stage is to successfully integrate the acquired company to the company making the purchase. (Katramo et al 2013, 443) The first hundred days of integration are the time when essential decisions or changes

concerning staff, and the organisation have to be made. It is also a time that people endure uncertainty about their own future. As part of the acquisition process, these 100 days will largely determine the success of the integration. If integration gets off to a good start and the staff involved can be motivated, the result will be good. On the other hand, if integration does not get off to a good start (lots of changes, confusion over roles and responsibilities, resource problems, etc.), the chances of success are much lower. (Katramo et al 2013, 445) Integration stage starts with planning before the contract has been finalized and continues until operations have been integrated together.

The seventh stage, Communications, is only one part of the change process. Communications often starts when the merger contract has been signed. According to EU Regulation 596/2014 Information about mergers and acquisitions by publicly traded companies is considered as inside information that generally has to be made public latest when contracts have been signed.

Eight stage is acceptance for the merger or acquisition from competition authorities. This stage can stop the merger even after everything has been agreed between buyer and seller.

Stages six and seven are essential in creating psychosocial workload factors or protecting employees from these factors. Zagelmeyer, Sinkovics, Sinkovics, Kusstatscher, (2018) mention that a significant relationship between interactional justice perceptions and affective commitment emphasized the relevance of communication to manage employee expectations (and breaches thereof), which is ultimately associated with interpretations of the psychological contract. They continue that there is evidence that an immersive approach—that is, rich and continuous communication throughout the merger process—has a positive impact on employee commitment and organisational survival. Integration phase in mergers and acquisitions include changes to processes possibly in both companies but at least in the company that has been acquired when processes are being harmonized. This brings uncertainty to employees. A typical consequence of organisational change is that the experience of job insecurity increases, especially in change situations involving redundancies. However, the results also show that other types of changes, such as those related to organisational ownership, create job insecurity and that the employees' experience of job insecurity persists for several years after the change experienced years after the change. It seems that organisational change almost

inevitably contributes to job insecurity, which in turn undermines well-being and health. (Pahkin, K., Mattila-Holappa, P., Nielsen, K., Wiezer, N., Widerszal-Bazyl, M., de Jong, T. & Mockało, Z. 2011)

In three models mentioned in chapter 2.1 uncertainty is mentioned in some way. Job demand-control model has control; Vitamin model has personal control and AAA model has Appraisal. All are impacted with secrecy that is considered mandatory in any acquisition before stage five until the final contract has been signed. De Witte discusses uncertainty in his article. According to de Witte, Van Vuuren describes three different dimensions for uncertainty (de Witte. 1998) Firstly it is a subjective experience or perception (Others can perceive the situation differently) Van Vuuren emphasizes that job insecurity has three components. First of all, it is a subjective experience or perception. The same situation might be perceived differently by different employees: Some will feel insecure when there is no objective reason to, while others may feel secure when their job is in fact threatened. Job insecurity also implies uncertainty about the future: For the person concerned it is uncertain whether he/she will be able to continue to work, or whether he/she will be made redundant. This situation is different from the certainty of being made redundant. In the latter case the future is clear, and the person can start preparing for redundancy and future (un)employment. Finally, doubts about the continuation of the job as such are central to job insecurity in Van Vuuren's definition. Hakanen (2004) expands Van Vuuren's research that Another option is to understand uncertainty in a multidimensional way, so that in addition to the threat of losing one's job, uncertainty can also be caused by, for example, unexpected threats of change in the content and tasks of the job, layoffs, or changes in weekly working hours. In any case, uncertainty arises from the fact that the employee is unable to anticipate or control the situation and is powerless in the face of the threat. All these writers discuss different dimensions of uncertainty and its' effect on employees' psychosocial wellbeing.

3 Research questions

The goal of this thesis is to find out if Occupational Health and Safety Finland's questionnaire for Occupational Health and Safety inspectors could be used to plan and implement the integration phase of an ICT company to a larger company.

Research questions:

1. Can the OSHA Finland psychosocial workload factor questionnaire find relevant factors that influence workers after a merger or an acquisition?
2. Can there be found factors that have a positive effect on workers after a merger or an acquisition?

The scope of this thesis is the psychosocial factors in implementation phase of an acquisition process. This is looked through the lens of a Finnish mid-sized ICT company that has been acquired by a larger, international company. Psychosocial factors are modelled with OSHA Finland questionnaire for OSHA inspectors. Factors outside this questionnaire are looked through Vitamin model and ERI model.

4 Methodology

The research question guides the choice on which methods and tools to use. This thesis aims to find out if Occupational Health and Safety Finland's questionnaire for Occupational Health and Safety inspectors could be used to plan and implement the integration phase of an ICT company to a larger company. Research material consists of semi-structured interviews. Interview questions are presented in Appendix 1. The data can be only partially classified to the classes used in OSHA questionnaire. Findings in interviews that did not thematically fit any of the classes were left separate in their own classes.

Generally in-depth information can be collected with qualitative methods, but that means poor generalization. If the aim is to gather information that needs to describe larger populations, then quantitative research methods provide useful information. The methodological field of humanities research cannot be divided into quantitative and qualitative methods. Instead, two ideal models for conducting research can be distinguished. On the one hand, there is the scientific experimental setup, and on the other, there is puzzle solving. (Alasuutari 2011, 32) Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Instead of collecting numerical data points or intervening or introducing treatments just like in quantitative research, qualitative research helps generate hypotheses to further

investigate and understand quantitative data. Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. It answers the hows and whys instead of how many or how much. (Tenny, Brannan & Brannan, 2017) Descriptive studies inquire about the what of a given phenomenon without attempting to explain why it happened. It is an attempt to find answers to the questions "What is happening?" and "What would the researcher like to know about clients, services, groups, communities, problems, or specific needs?" Therefore, research at the descriptive level has as its purpose the systematic description of the phenomenon and the factors that influence it. In order to speak of qualitative research, research in which transcribed interview material or other text or image material has been coded retrospectively into a form corresponding to a structured questionnaire, and in which statistical analysis is used as the sole method of analysis, must be excluded from this grey area of methods. (Alasuutari 2011,33) This thesis uses interview data to find factors that can be discovered when two companies join in merger or acquisition. This kind of new data cannot be analysed with statistic methods and therefore qualitative analysis needs to be used.

4.1 Gathering the data

To assess what are the psychosocial workload factors that are connected to mergers and Acquisitions, the data was gathered by interviewing personnel that have been a part of either a merger or an acquisition. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration questionnaire for HSE inspectors contains different factors that have an effect on psychosocial wellbeing. The tool has been developed and validated by researchers in the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. The validity of the technique was tested by examining the relevance of the questions from the perspective of the Regional State Administrative Agencies' enforcement policies and legal obligations and by comparing them against questions that have proven important in previous surveys. The answers were analysed statistically to establish the basic distribution, correlations between questions and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three question categories. The reliability of the survey was tested in respect of each of the three themes, and the internal consistency of the questions in each category was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. (OSHA Finland 2019. 26) The Occupational Safety and Health Administration in Finland has published the methodology manual for the psychosocial workload factors survey in 2019. In that manual different factors are taken into questionnaire. In total 22 different

factors were included in the form. These factors arise from research literature from different fields, but all have in common the psychosocial load that these factors have. Method seems to combine dimensions from several models that have been introduced earlier in this thesis. Questionnaire has dimensions that are not mentioned in models discussed previously but are independent sources of stress. Feldt et al (2017) notice that as (Psychosocial workload factors) taxonomies are important, they seem to lack theoretical base.

The questions in the original format are all formulated to find predetermined psychosocial workload factors. Information on positive factors supporting the workers and weakening the effect of negative workload factors is missing. As the aim of occupational safety and health enforcement is to identify problems and weaknesses in working conditions, the psychosocial workload factors survey only studies job demands with potentially negative effects. (OHSA Finland 2019, 5) This research tries to identify factors that are resources and help mitigate other workload factors. The questionnaire doesn't have questions directly on business decisions, like restructuring, even though they may cause stress in employees.

In this thesis different factors were taken from their original negative state and formulated as open-ended questions in the interviews. The idea behind this neutral wording is to avoid the clustering of data to either positive or negative. Demerouti et al (2001) stated in their article that from a psychometric point of view, such one-sided scales are inferior to scales that include both positively and negatively worded items. One contributing factor for imbalance in positive and negative factors in data from interviews can be that negative feelings seem to be easier to retrieve. Williamson, Drago, Harciarek, Falchook, Wargovich, & Heilman (2019) Found that Negative memories also are particularly durable; individuals retrieve more remote sad memories than happy ones. In their research sad memories have twice as long age compared to happy memories.

Questionnaire was divided to two parts. First a question was presented probing the characteristics that have made work harder. When interviewee told an example of work demands and finished the reply, interviewer asked only what other examples You can tell. After the interviewee couldn't come up with new things the question was turned around and next question was about examples of things that make work easier or more fun. The intention was to probe factors that give resources to workers. After the interviewee

couldn't come up with new things, the interviewer went through the list of OSHA Finland psychological workload factors and asked if interviewee could tell examples on how they have an effect on his/hers work. Questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

The interviewees were sampled with snowball sampling to find individuals that had gone through a merger that had affected their work. Total number of five interviews were performed. Interviewees represent three different companies and all work in different departments within organisations. Snowball sampling was chosen as the sampling technique for the data collection in this thesis. Snowball sampling is a good way to find hidden interviewees as it is based on referrals from people already familiar with the target population. In this thesis the intention was to find interviewees who had already been a part of a merger or acquisition. Not all workers in the target companies had been. Therefore, it was important to find enough interviewees who had first-hand experience in the psychosocial workload factors in mergers and acquisitions. After the first responder was found, referrals were asked to find the next interviewee, and this was repeated until five interviews were finished.

Interviewees were between ages 30 to 63 and had experienced two mergers (Three interviewees) and one merger (two interviewees). Work experience varied from 5 to 35 years in industry. Two participants work at development, one works at sales and two work in supporting functions.

4.2 Analysis of data

After the interviews the recordings were transcribed into text. From the text the parts or stories that had information on psychosocial factors were classified to the classes used in OSHA Finland questionnaire.

Issues rising from the data were classified to these classes if they were a good match. All positive resource factors were also classified into questionnaire factors and extra class for factors that weren't included in the questionnaire. Issues that didn't fit to any of the OSHA questionnaire classes were classified as a one group outside these classes. This group was then further classified into different classes in Vitamin model and ERI model. Different factors in the OSHA questionnaire are presented in figure 3



Figure 3: Classification in the OSHA Finland psychosocial workload factor questionnaire. (OSHA Finland 2019)

5 Results

The model chosen for this thesis was the OSHA Finland workload factor survey. The data shows that several of the factors that are in the questionnaire can be recognized. The data shows some workload factors that weren't included in the questionnaire. Resource factors that weren't the positive version of questionnaire factors were also discovered.

To first research question, can OSHA Finland questionnaire find relevant factors. The data shows that factors can be found and they are coherent with both questionnaire and describe issues employees have faced during merger and acquisition implementation phases. Data is also coherent with the ways of working in small and medium-sized ICT company. Data shows that in small companies' supportive tasks can be done by people who are not specialists in the field. This fragmentation of tasks can take time from other tasks that are considered more interesting.

The data in this thesis supports second research question. There can be found factors that are stated as positive and help employees to cope with negative psychosocial factors during and after mergers and acquisitions implementation phase. The OSHA Finland questionnaire proves helpful when planning the integration phase. Data does show that OSHA Finland questionnaire factors can be made as positive factors that can improve worker's resources during and after mergers and acquisitions. As JD-R model states, factors that have positive effect on psychosocial factors can mitigate the effects of negative factors. Classification of different factors into OSHA Finland questionnaire are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Different factors found classified to OSHA Finland factors

Factor 1	Unclear job descriptions or responsibilities.
Negative example from data	Interviewee 3: "You have to make the calls on how to prioritize customers and that can contradict personal goals."
Factor 2	Unrealistic or unreasonable goals

Negative example from data	Interviewee 1: “there is a goal on how much work needs to be done, but often You can’t control it on Your own. Things take time because of someone else in some other country and You can only try to be in contact and ask.”
Factor 3	Excessive workload relative to working hours
Negative example from data	Interviewee 4: “They (Colleagues in UK) seem to forget our bank holidays. Big updates just before a long weekend and I know customers will be in contact.” Interviewee 5: “Hindering thing are all these meetings. There are a lot of meetings, stand-ups and like daily. Well, now I have been able to sneak out of those lately.”
Factor 4	Working outside regular working hours
Negative example from data	Interviewee 1: “Often meetings are scheduled after working hours in Finland to suite people in UK.” Interviewee 2: “I don’t have enough energy to attend an after-hours webinar. Discussions and others on extra time and I know others don’t participate either:”
Factor 6.	Disadvantages, faults or malfunctions related to equipment or the work environment

Positive example from data	Interviewee 5: “Bigger company with more resources made possible to get more powerful computers and that way made work easier.”
Factor 7	Factors interfering with concentration at work (e.g.noise)
Negative example from data	Interviewee 3: “After the merger we moved to new offices that are open space. Some of our guys are quite loud on the phone and that is disturbing at times”
Factor 8	Lack of variation, monotony
Positive example from data	Interviewee 4: “A wider product range makes working more interesting and I can serve customers better.”
Factor 9	Working with unclear instructions or expectations
Negative example from data	<p>Interviewee 3: “And they did send requests on short notice. These different reports that they needed as they were important for the current fiscal year. Reports were different from what I was used to, so I needed to do a lot of work to get the numbers right.”</p> <p>Interviewee 2: “If You don’t know the right people, it’s difficult to find information about new products. If processes haven’t been honed or they don’t exist, then it’s more difficult to get things forward.”</p>

	Interviewee 1: “information gets lost in the translation. We get a lot of surprises when there are mistakes in internal processes.”
Factor 10	Information overload or uncontrolled information flow
Negative example from data	Interviewee 5: “There is a lot of information available, but you can’t tell what latest information is.” Interviewee 3: “There is a lot of information, but You can’t tell is there all You need or is something missing”
Factor 18	Lack of support from colleagues in performing the work
Negative example from data	Interviewee 5: “quite a few customers wish to have the materials in their native language, but of course. I can see that deep knowledge in every language is hard to get.”
Positive example from data	Interviewee 3: “we got more colleagues who have a similar background. It’s a nice thing. People who aren’t just financial people but also specialists in same domain.” Interviewee 2: “New colleagues were great. We were such small bunch that new people and different ages were great.”
Factor 19	Problems related to cooperation and interaction with the supervisor

Negative example from data	<p>Interviewee 1: “I am native in English language as my second language, but my manager’s accent was very difficult to comprehend, especially in the beginning.”</p> <p>Interviewee 4: “When I first had a meeting with my supervisor, It was difficult. The dialect they used was not a common one, at least to me”</p>
Factor 20	Lack of support from the supervisor in performing work
Negative example from data	<p>Interviewee 1: “... They had no idea on the specifics about Finnish work act. They mixed different terms together and weren’t coherent with terms. There were some differences between the contract we had signed, and internal regulations HR gave us.”</p> <p>Interviewee 3: “But now the new supervisor didn’t know anything about my projects I was working with, what do I do? So, he can’t help me in any way with the project.”</p>
Positive example from data	Interviewee 3: “My local manager understands the problems we have and supports me as much as she can.”

Out of the 22 factors in OSHA Finland questionnaire negative examples were placed under ten different factors. Positive examples were placed under four different factors. Not all factors in the OSHA Finland questionnaire got any examples in the interviews. The factors reflect the work that employees in an ICT company do. Factors also represent the phases

of merger/Acquisitions presented in chapter four. One example of a missing factor that represents the type of work that is missing from companies that the interviewees work is factor 5: irregular working hours, shift work or night work. It is commonly known that in IT production it is possible to have night shifts. During crises or unintended service breaks working hours can be longer than normal. But this is seldomly normal situation.

Data included 17 negative examples on ten factors and five positive mentions on four factors from OSHA Finland questionnaire. This is similar finding to Williamson et al (2019) where sad memories that in this research correspond to negative factors are easier to retrieve from memory.

Some factors were found that were outside of OSHA Finland questionnaire. These factors were divided into new factors and given a title that represents the factor in question. All factors outside OSHA Finland questionnaire were positive. These factors can be found in table 3.

Table 3: Factors outside OSHA Finland questionnaire.

Example from data	Warr's Vitamin model	ERI model
Interviewee 3: "After merger we got a wider offering. Now we can serve our clients even better."	NIL	making one's work more interesting
Interviewee 2: "Getting international experience. Seeing how people other countries work, that is interesting"	Career prospects	personal growth
Interviewee 2: "We got more colleagues to office and there were more form my agegroup."	Social contacts intensity	personal growth

Interviewee 4: “When we got bigger, there were specialists to take care of my dull tasks and I could concentrate on tasks that I felt were very interesting.”	Workload	making one’s work more interesting
Interviewee 5: “Now we can clock our commuting time if we do work during commute. That wasn’t possible earlier.”	Personal control	work-life balance

When these factors outside OSHA Finland questionnaire are placed to ERI model, they are quite clearly a change towards positive things for employee. All these factors either remove effort from work or add reward. Therefore, they fit into ERI model.

Out of the 12 different factors in Warr’s Vitamin model these correspond four different factors. This means that Warr’s model has relevance in working with psychosocial factors in ICT mergers and acquisitions.

6 Conclusions

This thesis aims to find out if Occupational Health and Safety Finland’s questionnaire for Occupational Health and Safety inspectors could be used to plan and implement the integration phase of an ICT company to a larger company. The main result is that the questionnaire does help in the integration phase as the questionnaire finds relevant factors that can then be mitigated. Other factors can also be discovered with help from other models presented in chapter two.

This thesis presented additional insights into psychosocial factors that influence workers during mergers and acquisitions integration phase. Factors can cause workload but can also bring resources to workers. It is important to mitigate the effects of workload factors to enable workers’ performance to maintain the level employer needs. Equally beneficial

to employer is to enable and promote resource factors to help workers' performance to improve. The data in this thesis shows that factors in the OSHA Finland questionnaire have relevance in mergers and acquisitions. Questionnaire can be used as guidance when planning the integration phase of a merger or acquisition. Compared to some models presented in chapter two, questionnaire is more practical to be used in operative planning and execution of integration.

OSHA Finland tool looks only into negative workload factors. This makes sense for historical reasons. Questionnaire was designed to be used by OSHA Finland inspectors when they were doing an OHS inspection to a company to find negative things. A tool like a questionnaire has guidance power and can guide its users to only look for and fix factors that are mentioned. If OSHA Finland factors were described in a neutral way resource factors would be more easily recognised. This would help to see possibilities that have effect on wellbeing and are perhaps more convenient to take into action as effective means to mitigate negative factors.

Even though OSHA Finland questionnaire does work as a relevant model to mitigate psychosocial factors in ICT companies, safety work shouldn't be limited to only these factors. Factors outside questionnaire can provide effective means of mitigation to counter the effect of psychosocial factors. OSHA Finland model brings together several different factors that have been found to cause psychosocial workload but doesn't try to be exhaustive list of all possible factors. This kind of method gives good guidance to people working with issues that can cause

Data in this thesis also shows that there are other factors that aren't included in the OSHA Finland questionnaire and have relevance in mergers and acquisitions. Warr's vitamin model and ERI model showed to be useful in finding these factors. Specifically, vitamin model is closer to OSHA Finland questionnaire as its' level of abstraction is closer. When the success of an integration is determined after the first hundred days, time is scarce. A more concrete check list type model may prove to be more useful than a list of different heuristics that are situated in a high level of abstraction like in AAA model.

One part of evaluating a thesis is the reliability and validity. All models used in this thesis have been validated in respective research projects. All models are reliable in their ways to describe psychosocial factors. All models have gone through peer review, and their

reliability is good enough for this thesis. Wording in OSHA Finland is negative and in this manner it represents only psychosocial workload factors. Examples in data have a good relationship with normal operations in the companies where interviewees work. This means that data represents the reality where interviewees live and the experiences they have gone through are valid. What brings down reliability in this thesis is the interpretation of data through the lenses of the models. Writing this thesis all data has been factored in a class that best describes what interviewee has described. All interviews were recorded with consent. This removes the unambiguity of notes taking when collecting data. All these combined this thesis is sufficiently valid for use in planning integration phase in mergers and acquisitions.

In the interviews for this thesis neutral questions worked well. The data gathered did follow what Williams et al (2022) wrote about the recollection of negative memories. The fact that in the part where OSHA Finland factors were asked about, mostly negative factors were discussed. The interviews took longer time as thinking pauses took a considerable time of interviews. This tells that interviewees were actively thinking about the issues in hand and trying to remember what kind of examples they had encountered in mergers and acquisitions. During research phase factoring the data to predetermined factors required some knowledge of the work researched. Models guided the factoring process. Some of the findings were harder to place into factors than others. Only one piece of data was left out of factoring to at least two of the models in this thesis. Using models that have gone through research earlier makes this kind of thesis work possible. The work needed to develop a new model and validate it is beyond scope.

7 Recommendations

One aim of this thesis was to produce recommendations to customer to improve their integration process to take better into account different psychosocial factors.

The research literature agrees that psychosocial factors have an effect on integrations of two merging companies. It is beneficial to take these factors into account during planning and execution of integration stage. Psychological factors have positive effects on the execution of integration stage in mergers and acquisitions. Using these positive effects of resource factors would mitigate the effect of negative workload factors.

The OSHA Finland questionnaire includes most of the things that can be found in the most relevant models concerning psychosocial factors. Relevant issues in a neutralized manner from the OSHA Finland model would make a good list to decide which factors would be beneficial to take into account when planning the integration phase.

Different models on psychological workload are either high level or represent certain factors decided by the research group behind the model. It is beneficial to monitor psychosocial factors during the implementation phase of a merger or acquisition. This will improve the possibility to either restrict the effect of negative psychosocial factors or accelerate the effect of positive psychosocial factors. Effective way to monitor these factors is a survey to employees.

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Appendix 1: Interview questionnaire

Introduction:

The aim of this study is to find psychosocial workload factors that occur when two companies are merged. In this interview I hope to probe into Your work and discuss about what kind of things have an effect on the work You do. All the information will be kept anonymous and no-one participating into these interviews will be named. In the thesis report, employers are referred to as company X.

Have you been involved in a merger during Your career?

What kind of things You found made your work more difficult? Can You describe them, please?

After a factor is discussed, ask what else?

When no more workload factors come into interviewees mind, ask:

What kind of things You found made Your work more easy or pleasant?

After a factor is discussed, ask what else?

When no more resource factors come into interviewees mind. Go through OSHA Finland list of factors and ask if these items bring anything in mind, workload or resource:

Workload factors relating to the way in which work is organized:

1. Unclear job descriptions or responsibilities
2. Unrealistic or unreasonable goals
3. Excessive workload relative to working hours
4. Working outside regular working hours
5. Irregular working hours, shift work or night work
6. Disadvantages, faults or malfunctions related to equipment or the work environment
7. Factors interfering with concentration at work (e.g.noise)
8. Lack of variation, monotony

Workload factors relating to the content of the work:

9. Working with unclear instructions or expectations
10. Information overload or uncontrolled information flow
11. Performing several tasks simultaneously
12. Constant interruptions while working

13. High responsibility related to the work

14. Challenging or difficult work tasks

15. Challenging or difficult situations with customers

16. Threat of violence related to the job

Workload factors relating to the social functionality in the work community

17. Problems related to mutual cooperation and interaction between colleagues

18. Lack of support from colleagues in performing the work

19. Problems related to cooperation and interaction with the supervisor

20. Lack of support from the supervisor in performing the work

21. Harassment or other recurring inappropriate treatment occurring in my work community

22. Discrimination based on age, state of health, origin, opinion or another reason related to the employee's person

After interviewee talks about one of the factors, ask what else until no more factors come out.

Thank the interviewee for participation.