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Workplace Inclusion and Exclusion in Finnish-based Small and Medium sized Enterprises

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Bachelor's thesis

May 2017

Degree Program in International Business

Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu

JAMK University of Applied Sciences

Author(s) Vesalainen, Veikka Eemeli	Type of publication Bachelor's thesis	Date May 2017 Language of publication: English
	Number of pages 48	Permission for web publication: Yes
Title of publication Workplace Inclusion and Exclusion in Finnish-based Small and Medium sized Enterprises		
Degree program: International Business		
Supervisor(s) Juha Saukkonen		
Assigned by -		
Abstract <p>The concept of workplace inclusion and exclusion can be considered as a clear reflection of the current state of the company in question from the point of Human Resource Management. An inclusive company presents sustainability, high workplace well-being and a working environment that promotes innovation, whereas exclusion at the workplace can have direct impacts on high turnover of employees, considerable costs of both time and money, as well as cases of workplace bullying.</p> <p>The phenomena were studied based on observations of the researcher of the working life and familiarizations of HRM- literature. The time of the study was from the Autumn of 2015 to Spring of 2017.</p> <p>The collection method of the data was based on semi-structured interviews to which 6 respondents from 4 different companies were approached with the aim of discovering how the phenomena occurred in the Small and Medium sized Finnish-based companies they worked in. The interviews were designed to ask the interviewees in regards of <i>their experiences</i> of such topics as Human Resource Management, Human Capital Management, Recruitment and Employee development, Corporate culture and Work-place well-being.</p> <p>According to the study, the companies that had succeeded in creating clear ways for communication and had set clear practices of managing their human capital through recruitment and employee development had better results sustainably: low turnover of employees leaving the company, as well as lesser cases of workplace-bullying or conflicts due to misunderstandings. The results are context-dependent, as the companies were all Finnish-based, as well as dependent on the element of the current situation at the time of the companies, when the interviews were conducted.</p>		
Keywords/tags (subjects) Workplace Well-being, Corporate Culture, Human Resource Management, Qualitative and Quantitative Research, Structured and Non-structured interviews, Human capital, Motivation, Recruiting, Workplace bullying, The Power of Inclusion.		
Miscellaneous		

Tekijä(t) Vesalainen, Veikka Eemeli	Julkaisun laji Opinnäytetyö	Päivämäärä Toukokuu 2017
	Sivumäärä: 48	Julkaisun kieli: Englanti Verkkojulkaisulupa myönnetty
Työn nimi Inklusio ja poissulkeminen työpaikalla pienissä ja keskisuurissa Suomi -peräisissä yhtiöissä.		
Koulutusohjelma: Degree Program in International Business		
Työn ohjaaja(t) SAUKKONEN, Juha		
Toimeksiantaja(t) -		
<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Inklusio (mukaan-ottaminen) ja poissulkeminen työpaikalla aiheena voidaan kuvailla selkeänä reflektiona minkä tahansa yhtiön tilasta henkilöstöjohtamisen kannalta. Sosiaalisesti mukaan-ottava työympäristön on huomattu parantavan kestävästä kehitystä, korkean työhyvinvointia ja innovointia työpaikalla, kuin taas sosiaalisesti poissulkevan ympäristön on huomattu olevan yhteydessä työntekijöiden korkeaan vaihtuvuuteen, työresurssien menetykseen (raha ja aika) sekä työpaikkakiusaamiseen.</p> <p>Kyseinen aihe valittiin tutkijan toimesta pohjautuen hänen tekemiinsä observaatioihin työelämässä, sekä niiden yhteyksiin henkilöstöjohtamisen kirjallisuuteen. Tutkimus tehtiin syksyn 2015 ja kevään 2017 välisenä aikana.</p> <p>Tutkimusta varten haastateltiin kuutta ammattihenkilöä kaupan alalta neljästä eri suomalaisesta pienestä- tai keskisuuresta yhtiöstä. Haastattelukysymykset oli suunnattu selvittämään mahdollisimman yksityiskohtaisesti tutkittavien haastateltavien omia kokemuksia aiheesta inklusio (mukaan-ottaminen) ja poissäätäminen työpaikalla. Haastattelukysymykset koskivat aiheita Henkilöstöjohtamiseen(HRM), ihmispääoman johtamiseen, rekrytointiin, henkilöstön kehittämiseen, työpaikkakulttuureihin sekä hyvinvointiin työpaikalla liittyen.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen mukaan yhtiöillä, jotka olivat onnistuneet turvaamaan selkeät kommunikatio-väylät työpaikalla ja joiden HRM-käytännöt olivat selkeimmin määritelty, oli vähemmän tapauksia työpaikkakiusaamisesta ja vähempi vaihtuvuus työntekijöiden suhteen.</p>		
Avainsanat (asiasanat): Hyvinvointi työpaikalla, Yrityskulttuuri, Henkilöstöjohtaminen(HRM), Kvalitatiivinen ja Kvantitatiivinen tutkimus, Strukturoitu ja Semi-Strukturoitu haastattelu, Ihmis pääoma(Human Capital), Motivatio, Rekrytointi, Työpaikkakiusaaminen, Inklusion voima.		
Muut tiedot		

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1 Introduction

1.1 The research motivations

What can make a company more unite than another? What kinds of things can contribute to a working community where all the pieces of the puzzle are being used to the full potential?

Generally speaking, a goal for any organization is to create an environment with efficient communication, healthy competition and the people embody the company principles by improving themselves every day, as well as, are willing to contribute to improving on the others. How is it possible that even in the same company, between different teams, there can be drastic differences between group dynamics and performance? The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons that affect the group dynamics and the characteristics that can either contribute or have a negative impact on the efficiency of a working community. The topic was developed based on the observations and the experiences of the researcher during studies and job experience.

Ideally speaking, a team, or a project group can be considered to be socially inclusive, when it can create a sustainable, creative and innovative environment for everyone. Whereas, if the group mentality is exclusive and selective, it's no longer a team that will create the basis for everyone to put their full effort for the common goal. In an exclusive environment, cases of workplace bullying, heavy changes to the organizational structure, misunderstandings & conflicts and people quitting are more likely to happen, and thus the organization cannot function sustainably on the long-term.

In order to reach the target of the study and to examine the characteristics of what might lead to an inclusive or exclusive organization. The emphasis, due to the extent of the topic, was on the characteristics of an inclusive or exclusive organization and the methods on how to act in either of the situations, be it either preventive or reactive actions.

As the subject of the study was decided by the author based on the familiarized HRM-literature regarding the topic and the observations made in the working life, therefore the topic was not assigned by any of the companies involved in the study, but they were approached to take part. HR-professionals, mid-level managers, a CEO and employees with 2-3 years of working experience all in all were interviewed with face-to-face semistructured interviews. The attendants were promised full anonymity since the beginning, due to the discrete nature of the topic, as it could provide classified information of the example companies, as well as in order to preserve the privacy of certain individuals.

The study was conducted with 6 representatives of from 4 different Finnish-based small and medium sized enterprises. The interview was firstly tested on a representative of health and security of a local business in order to define the length and the structure of the interview. The results of the test- interview were not included in the analysis. All the interviews used can be found in the APPENDICES section at the end of the study.

The people interviewed were Finnish employees from 4 fields different to each other, however in terms of diversity such factors as age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious or political beliefs were not studied, as the volume of the matter would have become too large for a bachelor's thesis.

1.2 The research problem and the research questions

The basis for any academic or business study, be it a bachelor's thesis or a doctoral dissertation, is the research problem. The research problem creates the very purpose of the research to which the follow up are the research questions. Together, these particles construct the core of the thesis (Kananen, 2008, 11).

The research problem - *What factors contribute to an inclusive or exclusive workplace?*

In the following chapters, the methodology chosen for the purpose of conducting a research on workplace inclusion and exclusion will be defined more thoroughly. Sources to use when defining and coming up with the research problem can be various; from academic journals to scientific publications, as well as pragmatic surroundings, such as work experiences, social media or from friends during leisure time (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 40). For the research motivations of this study, as stated above, the researcher developed the topic based on own observations in the working life as well as on the data familiarized during studies.

The research problem and the questions for this study were defined in order to cover the topic within the limits of the scope of the research, as well as in accordance to the data available and what could be collected as the empirical material. *“An accurate definition of the research problem is one of the most important stages of the research process. If you cannot define the problem, it is impossible for you to find a solution to it”* (Kananen, 2009). Therefore, very high emphasis is put on the problem and the questions. The study is more likely to give unreliable data and misleading interpretations, if this phase is not well defined.

The research questions

After having defined the research problem itself, the *what*-question that presents the ultimate core of the study, the follow-up, are research questions that present the *how*, the *why* and the *How much?* (Kananen, 2011, 19).

*1. **How** do workplace inclusion and exclusion occur in an organization and how do they affect the work of the community?*

*2. **How** can inclusive and exclusive characteristics be detected? **How** can an organization act on them proactively or reactively?*

The design and the structure of the research questions have a great impact on the out-come of the study, as well as the nature of it. At this stage, the researcher can decide which elements of the topic he or she is to discover and transmit through the study. The research questions can follow the logic of common knowledge within the

field of the topic, or what is unknown about it. Or they can examine what kinds of arguments are given in favor or against any developments made by previous researchers, or what the researcher has found as surprising results regarding the topic (Erikson & Kovalainen, 2008, 40). In this study the how and how much questions were kept on a generic and pragmatic level, in order to explore the phenomenon based on the findings.

2 Methodology

This chapter will follow up on the methods used to support the research problem and the research questions. The chapter will explain the different ways of conducting a qualitative research and which type of data collection was chosen to uncover the topic.

2.1 Research approach and method of Data Collection

The baseline for a scientific research is the nature of the data. There are two types of researches that fall under this categorization: a qualitative study and a quantitative study. According to Kananen (2011), the qualitative knowledge consists of words and sentences, images, voices and movements recorded in various ways. Qualitative knowledge is detailed, rich and context-based. As the material collected for this study considering the topic of workplace and exclusion can be categorized according to the latter, in order to do a proper analysis on the subject, a traditional qualitative research was chosen as the method. A quantitative approach for the bachelor's thesis would have not covered the topics as thoroughly as needed nor given the right type of data.

For the researcher, when choosing the research design one needs to bear in mind that the process very rarely, nearly never follows a linear process. Although, the process of a qualitative study follows the pattern (theoretical reading – the methodological choices – the empirical data gathering – the writing process, Figure 1.) the nature

of conducting a thorough study is to revisit the topic, adjust the ideas, rephrase the research questions and so on (Eriksson & Laaksonen, 2008, 37).

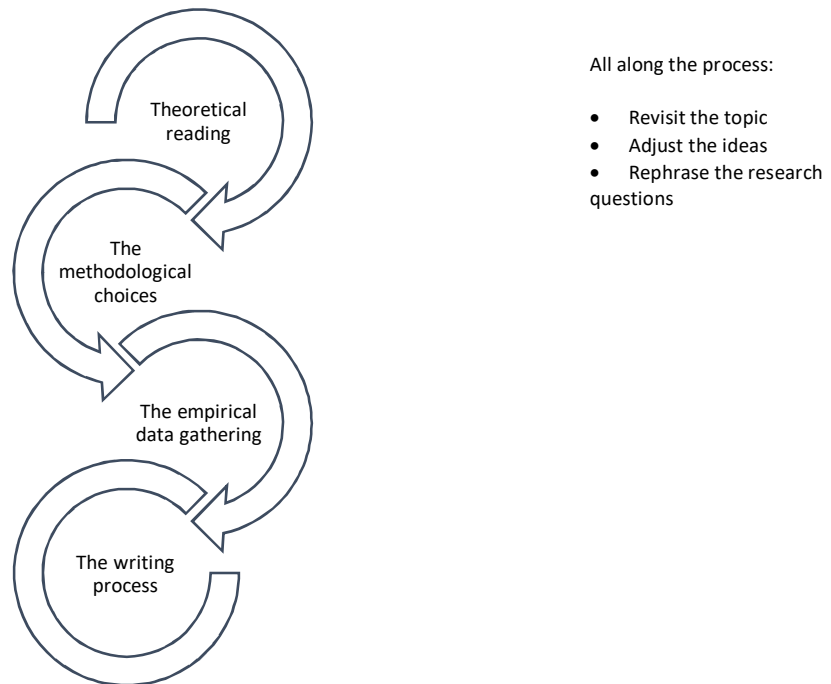


Figure 1. The qualitative research process (adapted from Eriksson & Laaksonen, 2008, 37)

A qualitative study can be applied when the researcher aims to explore either a new field of study or intends to investigate and theorize the new aspects of the phenomenon. Many qualitative methods are developed to have an in depth understanding of the matter by different means related to the context and their interpretation. The most common means for this are interviews and observation (Jamshed, 2014).

For other methods of qualitative research Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) name the 10 ways of research below.

- Case study research,
- Ethnographic research,
- Action research,
- Focus group research,
- Narrative research,
- Discourse theoretical research,
- Critical research,
- Feminist research

- Visual research or
- Grounded theory

Because of the given time-frame and the resources, the method of observation was not chosen as a tool for the study, therefore the study was conducted solely on interviews (chapter 3.3.). For the future purposes on the studies of this subject, adding the element of observations and group interviews would provide other angles to build from. As stated, in the study all in all 6 people were interviewed on a face-to-face, semi-structured interview based on the theoretical framework (Chapter 4) of workplace exclusion and inclusion.

2.2 The Respondent pool

Due to the nature and the aim of the topic, the research was very likely to present discrete information regarding the participants and could put them in a situation where they were asked to give out classified company information. Therefore, as stated above, all of the people who took part were guaranteed 100% anonymity.

When choosing the candidates and briefing them about the topic, they were directly informed, that the purpose of the interviews was to explore the theories and compare them to their experiences. The idea was *not* to find flaws in the companies and fix them, for example, but to solely use their views for the analysis when combining their empirical data with the already studied research.

The interviewees came from different fields of business and they all had been working in the companies different amounts of time. Also, the respondents had different positions to each other, and therefore deal with different challenges on a daily basis. Therefore the representative group of people can be described as relatively scattered. The face-to-face focused interviews were conducted on 6 people from 4 different companies:

- A CEO with 7 years of experience in the current company
- A HR – Manager 5 years of experience in the current company
- A HR – Manager 8 years of experience in the current company

- an Operations manager 9 years of experience in the current company
- A newly started team lead of customer service, previously 7 years of experience in the company
- A sales representative 2 years of experience in the company

The companies involved are profiled as *example cases*, the interviewees as *interviewees* and some of the answers were modified to preserve the identity of the companies, but still in order to present correctly what they responded.

2.3 Data collection and analysis

The plan for analyzing and interpreting the research materials needs to go hand in hand with the method choices the researcher and the research design of the study in general (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 33).

The data was gathered for the study in order to combine the theoretical framework with the empirical data. Those people were approached who were most likely to have experience regarding workplace inclusion exclusion (CEO, HR Manager, health and security representative e.g.), or who could have been in close contact with the phenomenon.

For most of the business studies, in order to gain empirical data, the most useful sources are different organizations, corporations and companies. The more vital material for the purpose of the study is indeed the collected data when conducting a qualitative research versus quantitative (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 33). Fortunately for the purposes of this study, the people who took part all had experience related to the topic of workplace inclusion and exclusion, and had been in the working life long enough to have their views on the matter.

The pool of interviewees consisted of people from 4 different Finnish based small and medium sized companies and the original interview was tested on a representative of health and security representative of a local business.

The interview consisted of open-ended questions that dealt with the topics of the literature review and the theoretical frame- section. The length of the interview varied from 25 to 45 minutes, depending on the answers of the respondents.

One of the main points of focus when designing the questions and conducting the actual interview was to make it on point and explicit to the interviewee, in order to avoid it being only clear to the interviewer (Kananen 2011).

Another challenge when designing the interview, is the role of the researcher, and how not to let their own assumptions and experiences affect the final result of the interviews. In a qualitative study, the researcher has the power and the tools to try to bend the results of the surveys to match their own hypothesis. This biased way of affecting the result could've proposed a problem.

Lastly, when creating the interviews, the amount needed to be kept it within the frames of the study purposes and to keep the study compact.

In order to avoid these pitfalls, two drafts of the interviews were made: one to test the interview on a health and security representative of a local business. The second draft was then designed based on that for the people, who later on were used for the final analysis. Therefore the first draft was not the final one, and progressed alongside with the same pace as the researcher.

Due to the discrete nature of the topic, in addition to the full anonymity provided to the interviewees, the interview questions needed to be chosen carefully; a high probability of the interviewees not willing to comment on the difficult matters or *disconnect themselves* due to the discrete questions needed to be avoided. Therefore the interview questions followed the pattern of Kananen (2011): from general to particular, the "peeling of the onion". Thus, the most specific questions, that were designed to summarize the point of the chapter in a nutshell and give the most relevant answers, came in the end after the generic questions regarding the topic had been asked. (Figures 2 & 3). The two figures below describe the peeling of the onion from generic to specific in the Figure 2 (Q1, Q2, Q3 & Specific question).

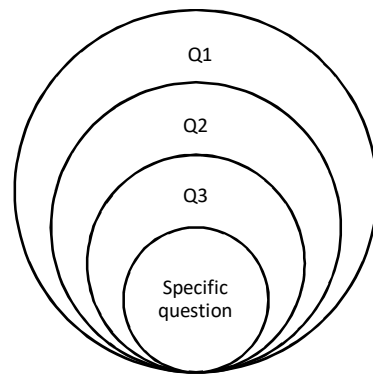


Figure 2. The Peeling of the onion

The figure 3 demonstrates as an example of the full interview (Appendices). In this case the chapter starts off with generic questions regarding work-place well-being and finishes with the interviewee having to answer the specific question regarding where the employees get their motivation from. The interview questions and chapters will be explained more thoroughly in the following chapter *Implementation*.

Workplace well-being
How would you describe an efficient employee?
Do you feel that your employees enjoy their work? How can you detect that, in your opinion?
According to your experience, where do you feel that your employees get their motivation from?

Figure 3. The example chapter of the interviews

The interview questions originally were designed in English, however, each of them were conducted in Finnish in the end. As the questions were translated into Finnish at the interview, some variance in terms of addressing the interviewees exists. Since there were no strict translations in Finnish, but the terminology were explained more thoroughly.

According to Kananen (2011) the role of the researcher in qualitative studies is to observe whether the *data saturation* point is achieved. Data saturation point is reached when the data collected in the interviews does not provide new information for the conclusions.

All the interviews were conducted as 1-to-1 semi-structured interviews. The researcher took notes during the interviews and all the interviews were recorded for later transcription and analysis. After the interviews had been conducted, the researcher reviewed and re-listened to the recordings. All the recordings were loosely transcribed for the content analysis, with the main focus of searching patterns and similarities in the material, as well as strongly differing insights that would propose a strictly personal conclusion of the topics discussed.

2.4 Research Implementation

As stated above according to Kananen (2011), a good qualitative interview proceeds from general to particular. This pattern was followed in the form of the interviews, all the interviews used can be found in the Appendices-section at the end of the study.

One of the pinpoints of the interview, as well as the structure, were the questions designed to gain as relevant information as possible from the interviewee personally. For this reason, to some of the questions the form was specified with “*according to your experience*” in the beginning of the question, to eliminate the possible generalizability of the response.

The first draft – The health and security representative (APPENDIX 1) - The structure of the interview

The beginning started with the *Background* of the interviewee: their connection to the company and their amount of experience. Following the Background chapter came *Human Resource Management and Strategy*, focusing on the role of HRM in the company and the direct connection it had to the company strategy.

From HRM, the questions went on to *Communication* within the company. The respondents were asked in regards to such themes as *open communication, communication and hierarchy* and *the nature of the communication in the company*. The aim

of this section was to define how according to their experience, what kind of an impact does communication have in the company.

From communication, the questions led to the *Role of Management*. In this chapter the interviewees were asked about how they saw their **management level as leaders**. The focus was on the characteristics, the relationship with the workers and the roles of the management. In order to get a full view of the theme, the respondents were asked as well how they saw the management in terms motivating the employees, and according to their experience, what type of a leader is the most efficient.

After this, the interviewees were asked questions regarding their **Workplace Well-being**. This chapter can be considered to be one of the cornerstones of the study. However due to the width of the subject, the questions had to be narrowed down to *employee efficiency, the sources of joy of the work, how challenging do they find their job and where they thought people in the organization get their motivation from*.

The second to last part of the interview focused on **corporate cultures**.

In this part of the interview, the interviewees were asked how they saw the culture of the company that they worked in, how they saw *the group dynamics* in the company, how *diversified* it is and their take on diversity. The “according to your experience” question was aimed to examine how the respondents felt that managers can affect the group dynamics of the company.

The last part of the interview was deliberately designed to cover the specificity of workplace exclusion and inclusion (also including workplace bullying). The figure 4 below describes the full structure of the interview. According to Kananen (2008), the formation of a qualitative interview should inquire around the main purpose of the interview. In this modified figure of Kananen’s formation of the qualitative research interview, the specific Workplace inclusion and exclusion part was added to the form of the interview, therefore the former parts of the interview had been designed to have the interviewees answer the broader questions with the “according to your experience” – questions towards the end, to get their full insight on the subject.



Figure 4. The formation of the qualitative research interview (Adapted from Kananen 2008)

The **Workplace inclusion and exclusion** - part of the interview focused on how the interviewees saw their *company for the newcomers*, personalities in the organization, of the *unwritten rules* of the company and whether there had been cases of *workplace bullying* or exclusion in the company. The "according to your experience"-question of this section was the last question of the whole interview, and put the interviewee into a situation where they would have to summarize their thoughts on one answer. By this time the interviewee had had the whole interview to gather their thoughts around the topic and to respond directly how they saw the phenomenon.

The second draft, the final version – HRM and Management (Appendix 2)

In the first draft the questions were too general to have been used in the final version of the interviews and so they were left out. Questions such as - *how do you feel that your current company handles diversity?* - were deleted since they did not align with the original topic of the study.

The last part of the interview was heavily modified, when comparing the questions from the first draft to the second. In the end, the most important questions regarding *personalities, unwritten rules, cases of workplace bullying and exclusion at the workplace* were left in the final interview.

All in all the second version of the interviews was shortened drastically.

The first test interview took 45 min to conduct, without having the chance to ask the last questions fully. The ideal length was 25 min. In the first draft of the interview there were all in all 44 questions that needed to be reduced to 30 (Appendices 5 & 6). In order to get more relevant answers from the interviewees, more “according to your experience”- questions were added and some of the too generic and less contextual questions were eliminated.

2.5 Plan for research quality and ethics

Given the discrete nature of the topic of this study, the ethical aspect of the research needs to be clarified.

In order to secure the neutrality of the purposes of the study, the interviewees and the companies involved are referred as example companies of digits A,B,C and D, as well as the interviewees with the combination of a letter and a number. Also some of the responses in the *Results*- section were modified in order to preserve the identities, as the interviews presented discrete information on some of the companies.

“In a qualitative study, the researcher does not have the authority to take part in producing the material, but it is the responsibility of the respondent. The role of the researcher is to analyze and interpret the material in the later stages. The researcher must not mix their own ideologies or beliefs to the topic, but their role is to aim to understand the own point of views of the interviewees” (Virtual Statistics of Finland-website, accessed in April of 2016). The researcher conducted the interviews in accordance to the best of his abilities to provide as authentic interpretations as

possible of the interviews and analyzed them by reflecting them on the collected theory.

3 Theoretical framework

“There’s no theory without empirical world. Theory is a simplified description of the empirical world and it helps us understand the phenomena, factors that affect it, and the relationship between them” (Kananen, 2011, 28).

The purpose of this chapter is to review the theoretical data collected before entering the empirical part of the thesis: the data analysis of the interviews.

3.1 Human Resource management & Human Capital Management

Human Resource Management as a field of study can be considered to be quite recent and having gained more and more attention during the past decades. Organizations have had to keep up with the progress; today companies are more flexible and demanding than compared to 30 years ago. People are no longer expected to stay in the same companies to move up the corporate ladder as the previous generations. Due to this, investing on the individuality of the employees demanded change and can be seen in the business world today (Laakso- Manninen, 2007, 8).

Solely put, Human Resource Management is the Management of People. The biggest asset and the most differentiating factor that a company possesses are indeed, the people. For the purpose of this, the role of HRM is to fully harness *The Human Capital*, which then means that each company has a diverse group of different assets. According to the assumption an employee’s skillset can be improved on by investing in them, since not all labor force is equal (Investopedia, accessed March 2016), thus the Human Capital Management, HCM.

Building on Human Resource Management from solely strategical side in the case of workplace inclusion and exclusion, the importance of the role of managing the human capital represents the preventive work and the reactivity of the organizations. For the benefit of an organization, the work in terms of recruiting, employee

development and personnel development, organizations that put more effort for the good of their employees will gain more out of the workforce. Simply put, according to Huselid et al (1995) organizations that can effectively influence the behavior of their employees through human resource management systems will be able to increase their performance and viability (Mansour 2011, 3-4).

Closely connected with workplace well-being and the corporate cultures (to be explained more thoroughly in the following chapters), the aim of the strategic aspect of HRM is to align the actions taken by the management for the benefit of the workforce. A clear line can be drawn between the linkage of satisfied and motivated people and the people that are less likely to leave the company. According to Delery & Shaw (2001, 174), the danger in neglecting the importance of the alignment of the strategy and the HRM can be disregarded and taken for granted.

Ulrich divides the roles of Strategic Human Resource Management into 4 different categories:

1. Strategic partner role
2. Change agent role
3. Employee champion role
4. Administrative role (Ulrich 2007,48-49)

For the purposes of workplace exclusion and inclusion the role of a strategic partner stresses the most the importance of the workforce; the aim of the role is to align the company culture directly with the actions taken by the management to benefit the organization on the long-term sustainably. From the HRM and HCM point of view a “successful”, or a positive example of an inclusive organization can be considered to be the one that contributes to the performance of the entire workforce and improves on their constant learning by creating an environment of sustainability. Whereas, in an exclusive environment, cases of workplace bullying, burnouts, missed deadlines and overall lowered results represent the other end of the line.

3.2 Workplace Exclusion and Inclusion

The key theme to this study is to explore the phenomena that are workplace inclusion and exclusion. From the point of view of the research the aim is to discover the sustainable aspect of inclusion and how to harness it, as well as the long-term issues that exclusion to an organization is to create, and how to avoid it. Therefore the long-term thinking and the sustainability of the phenomena are to be described.

The power of Inclusion

According to Hyter & Turnock in order for an individual to succeed, they must have the opportunity for an observable, and repeatable process of development, success is not an innate ability. Through inclusion, a company can provide all employees with the same opportunities that in bigger organizations could be reserved only for a selected few, and thus maximize the potential and the productivity. (Hyter & Turnock, 2009, 4).

Building on on the long-term thinking of inclusion, Judith Katz & Fred Miller, two consultants from the field of diversity management define inclusion as the sense of belonging, feeling respected, valued and seen for who they are as individuals. Inclusion creates a level of supportive energy and commitment from the community in order to gain the full benefit (Hanamura, 2009, 1).

A clear metaphor in order to define inclusion, created by Hanamura (2011), is to picture an organization working as a choir: all the collaborative relationships in the working community, be it accounting, engineering, HR, administration, global office workers, upper management etc. work together for a common goal. Hanamura (2011) adds that the determining factor of whether a group will, or will not be inclusive is dependent on 4 factors:

1. Each person is competent in their position
2. The leader has made clear expectations clear of each participant
3. Everyone is aware of the shared goal
4. There is an appreciation of an expanding market place

An environment of Exclusion

It has been proven in the previous researches, that people at work, as us individuals, have a natural tendency of needing belongingness within a group and that there is a minimum of needed relationships that contribute to the work and the well-being of an individual (Hitlan, Clifton & Desoto, 2006, 220). From the perspective of long-term thinking and sustainability, an exclusive environment can have an enormous impact on the development of an individual. Hitlan, Clifton & Desoto, from the University of Iowa (2006, 217) define Ostracism, or Exclusion, at the workplace as the rejection, or ignoring of an individual (or a group) by another individual or a group, that hinders one's ability to establish or maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, or favorable reputation within one's place of work.

Exclusionary behavior may occur in many forms at the workplace. According to Leary (2001), an individual or a group that have been given the "silent treatment", unrequited love, being shunned, ignored and rejected, are considered to having been excluded. All cases of workplace exclusion are to be treated with severity, as the impact of workplace exclusion, or workplace bullying can lead to juridical actions at worst (next chapter, workplace bullying). As far as ostracism, or exclusion as the phenomenon could be studied, according to previous studies the impact on an individual can be a matter of life and death, however in this study the definition of Exclusion follows the form of Williams (2001) and thus to be kept at rejection or bullying of an individual (Hitlan, Clifton & Desoto, 2006, 217).

Workplace Bullying

Due to the severity and the wide extent of the topic of exclusion, the aspect of workplace bullying needs to be established and the scope of the negative effects it may have to an individual or the community. According to a Finnish study by Kess & Kähkönen (2009, 28) Workplace bullying are such cases of inappropriate behavior that are continuous and have the purpose of bullying an individual. These acts are

deliberate and an individual has the feeling of being bullied at work. According to this definitions, misunderstandings and conflicts related to them are not considered bullying.

Also in the past researches Workplace bullying has been conceptualized as exclusionary behavior, as well as retaliatory behavior and ethnic harassment (Hitlan, Clifton & Desoto, 2006, 218), for the purposes of this study ethnicity was not one of the factors studied.

Past researches have shown that the impact of psychological impacts of workplace exclusion or bullying are related to increased social anxiety, depression, loneliness, anger, hurt feelings and lower psychological health. For the purposes of this study the specificity of the negative psychological impacts is not the aim, but one of the means of describing the depth of the phenomenon.

Building on this, even if the study is not to focus on the psychological impact, the following chart by Dyck (2009) on costs of losing an employee due to mental disabilities, can be applied as the costs of workplace bullying to demonstrate the costs from the point of view of the organization (Harder, Wagner, and Rash, 2016,42):

- Paid sick leave, weekly indemnity and short term disability costs
- Salary for replacement workers
- Healthcare benefits
- Extended supplementary healthcare benefits
- Rising provincial worker's compensation board rates
- Long-term disability insurance premium rates and costs
- Supervisory time to reschedule work
- Supervisory time to work with the disabled employee
- Disability claim and case management time and costs
- Recruitment and case management time and costs
- Lowered employee morale
- Lowered productivity
- Lost business opportunities

Workplace exclusion and Inclusion – The responsibilities of the Management

The reason why leadership and the role of management needed to be separated from the previously described Human Resource Management and Human Capital Management is due to the responsibilities of the leader of the organization, be it a small or medium sized enterprise, a corporation or a NGO for example.

According to the Finnish legislation the non-discrimination act (Yhdenvertaisuuslaki), article 1325/2014, that every individual in the organization has the right not to be discriminated, or in this case, bullied or excluded, as well as every individual the responsibility to obey to the terms set in the health-and-security legislation. It is the responsibility of the management to provide the community these rights (Yhdenvertaisuuslaki 1325/2014. 7§, 8§ &14§)

As a preventive action, it is in the responsibility of the management to provide the means of dealing with cases of workplace exclusion or bullying. The Finnish Centre for Occupational Safety (Työturvallisuuskeskus) suggest for every organization to have set and clear rules at the workplace on how to act in regards to possible workplace exclusion or bullying. Obeying these rules is mandatory to every person in the workplace, and there needs to be a penalty in case of a breach of these rules (The Centre for Occupational Safety-website, accessed on May 2016).

It has been widely proven that by securing open communication between the management and the employees, the likelihood of cases as workplace exclusion or bullying from occurring will decrease. According to Reinboth (2006, 26) a dialogic type of a leader is more prone to preventing exclusion and bullying due to well-established ways of communicating. It is in the responsibility of the leader to be able to bring difficult topics forward in order to work on them as a community.

3.3 Recruiting and Employee development

Two of the cornerstones of the strategy of each HRM strategy should be recruiting and personnel development; the aim to hire people that embody the values, the principles as well as naturally the skills that would also benefit the company and the worker on a longer term. Referring to the previous chapter of costs of losing an em-

employee due to mental disabilities (Dyck, 2009, chapter 4.2. Workplace Bullying) although not directly connected to workplace inclusion and exclusion, the scope of neglecting recruitment or employee development is enormous and resource consuming.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruiting as a process has to have a steady and clearly defined plan for the people; the applicants, the probation, the possibilities to evolve and how well can the company attract the right people into the right positions. According to Bach (2009, 116) recruitment and selection involves making predictions about future behavior of the applicants, a “jigsaw puzzle”: putting the correct pieces (the recruited person) in the right places and to distinguish the wrong pieces.

Building on the costs mentioned earlier (salary for replacement workers, supervisory time to reschedule work, recruitment and case management time & costs lost business opportunities, Dyck 2009), the impact of hiring a wrong individual is a drain of resources. Therefore, for a company, a clear vision and plan in recruiting both in the sense of long-term profit as well as on the negative side can avoid certain pitfalls.

From the perspective of workplace exclusion and inclusion, the process of recruiting represents the company effort for the proactive avoidance of exclusion to look for the ideal people who can fit into the company culture, as well as the reactive actions in the sense of using the best potential of the workers they have and to provide them the best possible environment for their work and creativity.

Employee development

As mentioned above, HRM, as the management of people and full empowerment of the human and social capital does not end at the moment the new person is hired

and started to work. In order to gain and keep the competitive advantage, companies and the management are to create value for the employees by investing in them; by providing regular appraisal discussions, trainings and success plans.

On the behalf of the organization, the duty to provide employee training programs benefit both the employers and the employees in the long-term. For the employees the benefit of having trainings benefit them on their career competencies, employee satisfaction, and individual employee performance. For the employers on the organizational level the importance of the trainings can be measured on the risen market growth, overall organizational performance and employee retention; keeping the talent within the company (Khawaja, & Bashir, 2013).

The fundamental goals of employee development are in order to deliver the **mission** of the company and to learn the **culture** of the organization. It has been proven that the (Khawaja, & Bashir, 2013). From the point of view of workplace inclusion and exclusion the role of personnel development demonstrates the relationship and the attitude of the company towards their staff.

In this study the companies interviewed were asked regarding the sources of motivation people get from their work, and whether they find it challenging e.g. the purpose of these questions were to discover the sustainability and the environment for professional growth of individuals that the companies provide.

4.2. Corporate Culture

The way we do things around here

Deal and Kennedy (1982)

As it is the simplest way described. An organizational culture is the sum and the description of company values, daily operations, company principles and the way of addressing one another put together. Corporate cultures, as cultures in different countries, also differ because of the way they have formed. Each organizational culture has their own symbols, rituals, heroes and values. According to his theory symbols, heroes and rituals can be constituted under the practices of the organization, because they are visible. In the core are the values of the company, “in

the sense of broad, nonspecific feelings of good and evil, beautiful and the ugly, normal and abnormal, rational and irrational”. This shared perception that has been developed and constantly modified by the history of the company, the field and the people (Hofstede, Neujien, Ohayv & Sanders, 1990, 291-292). For the purposes of workplace inclusion and exclusion, the core values of the company are examined with the concept of **unwritten rules** in order to distinguish the phenomenon in a clearer sense with the interviews.

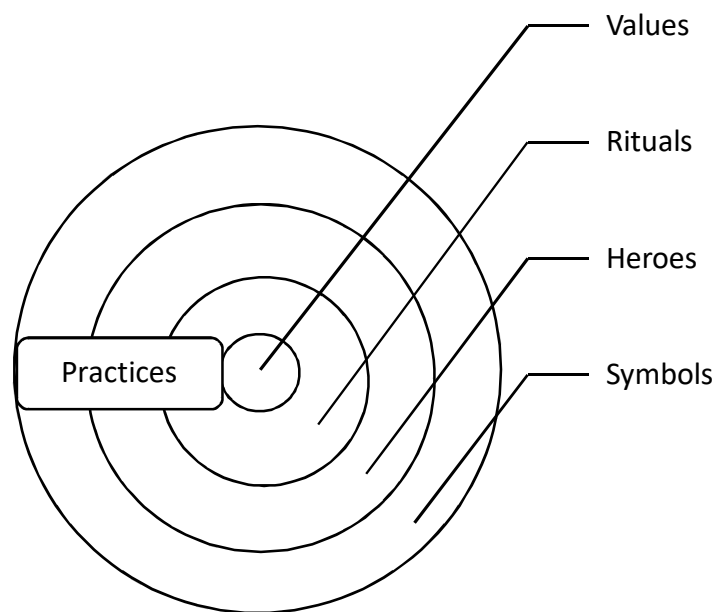


Figure 5, Manifestations of culture: from shallow to deep (Hofstede, 1990)

From the point of view of workplace inclusion and exclusion, the concept of corporate culture has one of the most direct and important impacts on the group dynamics; the most preventive work, as well as reactive actions in order to improve the organization mentality have to do with the culture of the workplace. The management has the biggest role in this, by providing the surroundings and the means for an atmosphere according to their own vision. But the company still consists of every individual, where each person can make an impact both in a positive as well in a negative way.

4.3. Workplace Well-being

As stated above in the chapter of HRM, the main purpose of the management of people is the full usage of Human capital: to provide the employees the best possible surroundings for them to grow both professionally and for the most part, personally. Why the concept of workplace well-being is vital and connected to workplace exclusion and inclusion, is because it aims to explore the phenomenon through topics as group dynamics and communication within an organization, and how they affect the organization. The sole aim of exploring the workplace well-being of the workforce can give a straightforward answer on how well all the resources of the company are being used. The past researches by Greenglass, Fiksenbaum, & Burke, 1996 have proven the connection between how an employee is accepted by their peers and their overall psychosocial well-being. An individual has a natural need to be accepted by others and to be included in the group (Hitlan, Clifton & Desoto. 2006, 220).

By the means of exploring the level of job-satisfaction, cases such as workplace bullying can be sought beforehand as preventive actions. In this study, the job level of job-satisfaction was not measured by using the more common method of yes/no questionnaires or a scale from 1 to 5. The questions explored job-satisfaction through a description of efficiency, motivation and the opportunities of sustainable growth.

Motivation

As in the field of HRM and well-being, the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943, 1954) can be considered to be a classic to describe the aim of the full empowerment of the organization. The figure below demonstrates in the form of a pyramid the Maslow hierarchy according to McLeod, S. A. (2014).

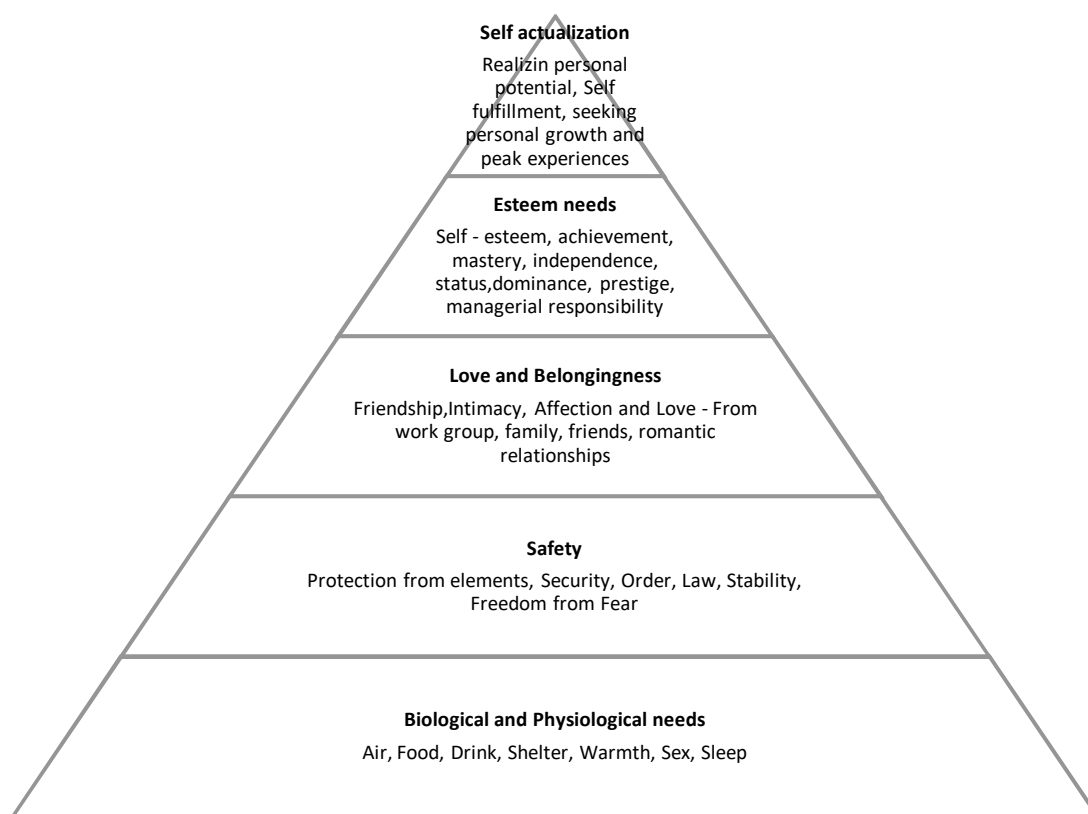


Figure 6. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs according to McLeod, S. A. (2014).

According to the theory motivation consist of layers of needs, all of which need to be filled in order to reach the next step. The first and the second layer consist of very basic needs that each individual in the developed society should possess Biological & Physiological needs and Safety. The third layer Consists of Love & Belongingness, meaning friendship and intimacy – from the work group as well as personal life. The fourth layer implies for Esteem needs, and is considered to represent the need for achievement and dominance an individual gains through work. The highest level of well-being and motivation is self-actualization. One can describe self-actualization as a state of possessing a full view of themselves; the possession of full confidence in one's abilities, whilst being fully aware of one's weaknesses and how to work on those, either with the help of others or through work.

By reflecting on this theory, an inclusive organization could be described with the stages up from the ladder 3. The inclusive organizations have succeeded in providing the most sustainable surroundings for their workers' motivation, whereas the exclusive examples might struggle with reaching the 3rd step, and have failed in creating the favorable environment.

Also from the organizational perspective, the highest level of the pyramid encourages such qualities on the people involved as problem-solving, taking risks and innovation. For an organization to create such an environment of healthy competition, the competitive edge of their human capital is enormous.

Diversity

Following in the footsteps of ongoing progression in the workplace are the rapidly changing workforce from different backgrounds. When comparing the status of Finnish-based SME- companies 30 years ago to today, for example, the dispersion of the employees in the sense of how homogenous workforce in the enterprises is compared to as it was before, is enormous. The concept of diversity is widely connected with inclusion, and a number of studies regarding the role of group dynamics, ethnic backgrounds and the role of management have been made. In today's world diversity management is more crucial than ever. For the purposes of this study, however, the role of diversity is to measure the impact on a "smaller" scale, leaving out the focus on gender, ethnicity and age - differences in specific, but to have a wider picture of all of them according to the specific cases. What this means in practice is that the interviews were not designed to ask the interviewees whether they had more females or males in the organization, or whether they were Muslims or Hindus, for example. Therefore the aim was to see how the professionals of their field of HRM and the people who had the needed working experience saw diversity in their organizations.

From the managerial point of view the attitude of hiring diverse workforce can have a direct impact on the motivation of the employees. According to empirical data of Bill Donius (2011), the former CEO of Pulask-Bank, for employees the impact of notion that the organization works in a progressive manner that demonstrates equality by hiring people of different backgrounds, sexual orientation, gender identities reflects in a way that the organization truly values individuality. An organization like this is more likely to benefit from the diversified employees, with more views and different solutions that further outside-of-the-box thinking and embraces the differences.

According to Prasad (1997,8) “Embedded within the philosophy of managing diversity is the notion that traditional mono-cultural organizations cannot function effectively in the context of today’s and tomorrow’s workforce. Thus the main focus of managing diversity is cultural”. What needs to be stressed is the last sentence, that in the end most of the possible conflicts or misunderstandings occur because of cultural differences. For the purposes of this study, cultural differences are examined from the same angle as gender and age, for example, and not specifically by the expansion of cross-cultural matters.

5. Results

As presented above, all in all 6 people from 4 different companies took part in the study on workplace inclusion and exclusion with a semi structured face-to-face interview.

All the interviews were recorded in the spring of 2016 and all the companies involved are from different fields to each other, however still from the sector of providing services. The researcher took notes during the interviews, all interviews were recorded and loosely transcribed for the analysis after the interviews. The transcriptions are available at the author at request upon agreement for quality control purposes for the research.

All the interviewees of the thesis are referred to as according to their profession and the combination of the digits of a letter and a number (A1, B1, B2, C1, D1 and D2), whereas the companies are referred to as example companies A, B, C & D.

- Interviewee A1, Office Manager & the Vice CEO, company A
- Interviewees B1, Sales representative of B2B Sales and technical consulting & B2, Team leader of customer service, Company B
- Interviewee C1, CEO & Operative manager, Company C
- Interviewees D1 HR Director & D2 Team-lead and Operations Manager

Does HRM affect the company strategy on the long-term, and does it contribute to sustainability within the company?

All the respondents emphasized the crucial role of HRM and the company strategy on the longer term. Company A & B highlighted the importance of the company values and principles, and C & D answered that due to the many years of operating that a steady HRM plan has to be clear as well as up-to-date.

Which one would you say that comes first in your company? The people or the result?

The interviewee C1 was not asked this question due to the generalizability of it. All the interviewees asked had similar views that the company could not exist without one. However D2, the Operative Manager, stressed the importance of the profit, whereas A1 the HR manager stated that money is not the ultimate goal e.g.

Would you consider your company an open community?

To this question there was a notable variety in terms of the results: According to A1, B1 and B2, their organizations can be considered to be extremely flat in terms of hierarchy, with very open channels of communication, a lot of outside the office activities and with set meetings on a regular basis.

C1, however, the CEO answered that the communication level is not at the level she had hoped in the organization she is currently working in. According to her there had been issues, because of it, and therefore new channels for open communication had had to be established, as well as she personally had to sit down with everyone from the organization to get to the root causes of them. The two interviewees from the company D, had different opinions. D1, the HR director, saw open communication as a goal that demands constant work and not as automatic. She also emphasized the importance of knowledge sharing in terms of timing, and with who to share the most discrete company information. She does not believe that anyone can benefit from complete clarity in terms of knowledge sharing. D2, the Operational Manager, saw the community open in terms of communication, however not yet at the level as it should be, due to vast growth.

According to your experience, do different roles of the company affect the communication?

All of the interviewees had different responses regarding whether the roles in the company could affect the communication. According to the interviewee A1, the HR manager different methods of communicating can affect it (e-mails, phone calls, face-to-face meetings etc.), B1, the sales representative, did not see roles as a factor, whereas B2, the team-lead felt that there is a knowledge gap due to different tasks in the company. C1, the CEO, responded that due to the vast and rapid organizational changes the role clarity is still extremely uncertain in her current company. The interviewees of the company D replied that some positions have an upper hand in terms of communication (D1, the HR Director) and that the nature of the data can affect the quality of the information flow (D2, the Operative Manager).

How do you feel that your workforce that your workforce is motivated in the company?

According to the responses to this question all the respondents had a different view on how the motivation appears. B1 & B2 answered that they have a lot of activities outside the organization. A1 and D1 replied that the company turnover in terms of new people is low. D1 & D2 felt that the job satisfaction in the company D is at a good level. As a threat D2 saw the rapid growth of the company, and due to that the workforce would lose the sight of the bigger picture. C1 saw the company as very unite group, however with some "clicks" between the management and the employees.

How would you describe the relationship between the management and the employees?

On this questions the respondents felt that the biggest differentiating factor is indeed the knowledge gap between the management and the employees. Due to the different nature of a manager compared to an employee is how to see the bigger picture of the company. C1 responded that there is a clear lack of trust in the organization.

How can the management affect the group dynamics of the company?

All the respondents felt that the management has an enormous role when it comes to group dynamics. All the respondents pointed out the responsibility and the opportunity to create an atmosphere for learning and improvement. Also the importance of the attitude of the management was highlighted by each.

How would you describe an efficient employee?

All the respondents saw an efficient worker as a person with the proper energy and the thirst to develop themselves. B2, the sales rep, emphasized the role of the organization in motivating the workforce, whereas the rest highlighted the importance of being self-active and self-demanding.

Do you feel that your employees enjoy their work? How can you detect that, in your opinion?

Each of the respondents felt that the people in their organizations enjoyed their work, because of the good result (profit, positive feedback, sales, etc.) of the company, the chance to improve on oneself on a daily basis and that the people in their current positions get to be proud of their work.

According to your experience, where do you feel that your employees get their motivation from?

On this question the respondents from the companies A, B and D stated that the motivation comes from challenging oneself, the co-workers, the leadership, the chance to see the result of one's work, as well as the feeling of being proud of one's work and the bigger image. C1 responded, due to the field of their business, the seasonal changes as most of their sales take place during spring time.

Do you see the workforce as diversified or homogenous? How do you think that affects the group dynamics?

All the respondents saw the workforce in their current organization as diversified, however each on a very different level company-wise. The only company with the most diversity in terms of volume and nationalities was the company D. As for the

rest, the biggest differences in the workforce were in terms of education, background, working methods and therefore tasks and expectations. In terms of gender, the company C attracts more female workers to the field as opposed to males, however all the interviewees responded that diversity in the workplace is usual with the chance to learn from the different ways of working. D2, the long-time HR director added that diversity is a richness that when adjusted properly.

Are there strong personalities in the company? How do you think they affect the group dynamics?

On a general level all the respondents felt that they have indeed strong personalities in their communities that have an impact both in a positive as in the negative way. A1, the HR director, and C1, the CEO, responded that due to the nature of the field that they are working in, it attracts certain kinds of individuals that can create difficulties at the workplace. They both emphasized the importance of the role of the management, especially conflict management and when resolving any issues. D2, the operative Manager added that strong personalities have the courage to challenge existing patterns and therefore can push the company forward. B1 & B2 emphasized the role of teamwork in terms of having different personalities onboard.

Are there "unwritten rules" in the company? According to your experience do you see them affecting the culture?

All the respondents felt that each organization naturally evolves unwritten rules. How the responses differed to each other were in terms of how the unwritten rules affect the newcomers, be it of any level of entry, and how easy are they to adapt to. According to B2, the Team-lead, the unwritten rules are always based on company values and principles, however there are always rules "below the surface" that have to be learned. D2, the Operational Manager, described it as a part of a responsibility of the newcomers to proactively discover. D1, the HR director and C1, the CEO both said that the longer the company has roots, the more unwritten rules there are and the more difficult it is to transmit them.

Have there been any cases of workplace bullying or possible exclusion?

To this difficult and very direct question could clearly be seen the difference in the job descriptions of the interviewees. A1, the HR manager had not encountered direct cases of workplace bullying, but cases of misunderstandings that needed to be solved. B1, the Team Lead had come across cases in the organization, whereas B2, the sales rep, had not. C1, the CEO, admitted there having been direct incidents of workplace bullying. She stresses that it is always a very serious matter with possibly long consequences. D1, the HR director also admitted there having been such cases in her organization, that demanded her to create the means of solving them. D2, the operational manager had no knowledge of such cases.

Are there any company guidelines or lines of action that will be done in these kinds of cases?

None of the case companies had set guidelines of procedures implemented before cases had emerged. However as they had, it was on the responsibility of the HR-personnel or the management to create these actions needed, mostly with direct conversation and as well with the presence of a third party in case needed. Therefore each of the respondents demonstrated that they are aware of the severity of such issues.

According to your experience: what kinds of issues contribute to a socially inclusive company, and what to an exclusive one?

To the last question the respondents all provided very different responses compared to each other, but still in accordance to the answers they had provided previously in the interview. According to A1, the role clarity in the company helps to diminish the possible knowledge gaps and contribute the overall equality in the company. B1 the Sales rep, highlighted the role of management and the mentality of the recognition that work is only a one part of life, B2, the Team-lead also emphasized the role of management and the clarity of the communication. C1 answered that the emotional connection to the work has to be there, therefore the right people need to be recruited.

D1, the HR director as well as continued with the importance of the management, she also added the element of the economic situation and the struggles on the long-term as affective to the group dynamics. D2, the operational Manager concluded his

interview by acknowledging the role of trust, and that it can either make the team very cohesive, or completely unsustainable.

6. Conclusions and Discussion

6.1. Conclusions

Based on both the data collected during the literature review that consisted the theoretical framework to this study, as well as the interviews the final part of the analysis are the conclusions. Before heading to the last chapter, on what was discovered after the transcription and the data analysis it needs to be noted that the aim of the research was not to look for flaws in any of the organizations, or to analyze them as one being more inclusive than the other. The goal was to discover the phenomena around the concepts of workplace inclusion and exclusion. This conclusions chapter is will respond to the **research problem** and the **research questions**.

How do workplace inclusion and exclusion occur in an organization and how do they affect the work of the community?

According to the responses based on the 6 interviews of professionals from different positions, the ways for an organization to manage the characteristics that can lead up to an inclusive or an exclusive environment can differ greatly. Regarding the first research question, how do workplace inclusion and exclusion occur in an organization and how do they affect the work of the community? The respondents gave multiple insights that, admittedly, also have to do with their point-of-view as well as the current situation in the company at the time of the interviews.

Many of the interview questions focused on open communication, the information flow and the knowledge sharing within the companies. The companies that had succeeded in creating *“a flat organization in terms of hierarchy, with very open channels of communication”* and that organized *“a lot of activities outside the office walls”* had lesser cases of workplace bullying, or clicks between the organizational levels, as the

companies A and B had, based on the interviews. By reflecting these results on the theory, the indication refers to high motivation and strong group-dynamics (Figure 6 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs).

In the case of the company C, there had been complications due to the non-efficient communication and information flow that then demanded drastic changes to the organizational charts. Given that for the company C, for the newly outsourced CEO, C1, to come to an organization with 30 years of experience to make these changes, is highly dependent also on the current situation at the time of the interviews. Therefore for an organization to function in a manner for it to become inclusive, the methods for communication need to be well-established. As D1, the HR Director summarized it *"Open communication is a goal to reach and it demands a lot of work. It is not an automatic characteristic"*.

Another crucial point connected to communication flow were the pitfalls on how an organization is to cope with **knowledge gaps** in the workplace, and their affect. B1, the Team Lead stated that the cases of their workplace exclusion had occurred due to ignorance of the tasks of the other departments. C1 stated that there is a definite **lack of trust** in the company due to knowledge gaps, as well as there had been more cases of workplace bullying and inclusion. In the company D, due to the **vast changes to the company** and the **higher volume** both the respondents felt that there is a definite knowledge gap between departments. However the HR Director, D1, responded that according to her the importance in dealing with knowledge sharing is timing, not all the information can be shared with everyone, in according to her *"No one in the organization would benefit from pure clarity"*.

Highly linked with motivating the workforce and the corporate culture is the engagement of the people involved. Both B2, the Team-lead and D2, the Operative Manager emphasized the importance of engaging the workforce by letting them see the big picture of the company, and that they could **see the effect** of their own work and be **proud** of it.

According to Maslow's Pyramid of needs, (Figure 6), the highest level of motivation occurs when an individual has fulfilled the lower steps of the pyramid. According to the cases of lack of trust, workplace bullying and the complete reconstructing of the

organizations, it can be concluded that the motivation in terms of the ladder had not been fulfilled, and the organizations have not been able to fully utilize their workforce. However, in the case of the company D, they had managed before the interview to increase the company from 50 to 300 that is a clear indication of improved results.

How can inclusive and exclusive characteristics be detected? How can an organization act on them proactively or reactively?

As based on the interviews, detecting how to get the full view of an organization in terms of the group dynamics of the workforce and whether the atmosphere is inclusive and therefore inviting towards newcomers will either happen with precautionary methods, that are in the responsibility of the management as well as the HR- department, or through reactive methods, when the situation has already occurred.

On detecting the characteristics, according to the respondents a clear sign of an inclusive environment is the **good financial result; low turnover of the workforce, quick learning of tasks and improving on oneself after the orientation**. In the case of the company A, there had been very few changes to the workforce in the past years. As for detecting an exclusive environment, the warning signs according to the responses of the interviewees were the involved **knowledge gaps, drastic changes to organizational structures, clicks between the different layers of the organization and cases of workplace bullying and exclusion**.

On the cautions both in the proactive and reactive manner based on the responses, **the role of the management as well as the HR-management is enormous**. Based on the results, a clear HRM plan has to be set up within the company. This includes the **role clarity** and expectations in terms of **recruitment, employee placement, team dynamics and employee development**. Based on both the literature review as well as the responses the role of recruiting and group dynamics can contribute to both the exquisite results and sustainability, as well as conflicts at the workplace and expensive changes to the organization.

In order to setting the right example, both the management and the HR need to base the **company strategy aligned with the principles and the values of the company**, as they may present as well the danger of the occurrence of the **unwritten rules that are difficult to transmit then further on**. However, as stated above, the creation of the unwritten rules is inevitable, however preparing them for the newcomers as well as writing them down as they occur help on soothing the process. Also based on the results, it can be stated that the longer roots the company has, the more unwritten rules there are.

As it has been stated above, the study showed the crucial importance of the **role of communication and knowledge-sharing**. The biggest issues according to the respondents occurred due to knowledge gaps and the lack of trust. In order to turn the situation around it demands actions from the whole organization. And, as in these cases, from the top.

A great example of an exclusive environment and the reactive measures on how to work on the situation is the company C, and the CEO C1: having known and seen the past complications due to unclear role division, lack of communication and trust, she and the management restructured the form of the company entirely, by creating new positions, creating clear job descriptions as well as having 1-2-1 meetings with each of the employees in the company. At this stage it cannot be measured how the procedures worked. However, this covered all the aspects the respondents highlighted as important in terms of creating group dynamics: the serious **attitude of the management, leading by example and establishing the means for open communication** that help to “diminish the possible pitfalls and contribute to the overall equality in the company” as A1, the HR Manager stated it.

As for motivation. The interviewees of the companies A, B and D stated that motivation of their workers comes “from within, the leadership, the co-workers and the feeling of being proud of one’s work by seeing **the big picture**”. These factors reflect on HRM in terms of recruiting and employee development, the company culture (Figure 5, Manifestations of culture: from shallow to deep Hofstede,1990) in terms of the people orientation and the overall workplace well-being of how an individual feels the accomplishments within the company (Figure 6, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs).

In terms of diversity. The companies who, according to the interviews, had established the gateways for sustainability, were able to harness the diversities. The respondents were asked about how diverse they saw the community as well as on the personalities in the company, based on the results, for those who had **clear gateways of communication, working group dynamics and set HRM-procedures**, were able to use the “full human capital” non-dependent on the person or their characteristics.

One notable preventive action was missing from all of the companies based on the interviews: **none of the companies had established set actions in regards on how to proceed in cases of workplace bullying**. As stated on the chapter 3.2. Workplace bullying, considering the costs of losing an employee (2009), it was a surprising result that none of the example companies had not established means of proceeding with cases of workplace bullying.

What factors contribute to an inclusive or exclusive workplace?

Therefore, to respond the research problem of the study the main factors that contribute to an inclusive or an exclusive working environment have to have a set and **clear HRM plan in place**: the recruitment, the job descriptions, the job role clarification and the employee development. The **values and the principles** of the company have to be clear and aligned with the strategy. The company culture is born through the values and the principles. They also create unwritten rules as the company progresses that can be difficult for the newcomers to comprehend and thus demand more work in the orientation of the newcomers.

According to this study, to an inclusive environment contribute the in the case of Finnish-based small and medium-sized enterprises best an organization with **no noticeable walls of hierarchy and with well-established ways of communication** in order to avoid any clicks, knowledge gaps or lack of trust due to misunderstandings in the company.

Vast growth of any company, as both the volumes of the sales or the core actions of the business go higher, so do the staff. According to the respondent the danger in hiring more workforce is losing the sight of the big picture.

The role of the management is in crucial role. The management have the responsibility and the chance to create an environment of continuous learning, as well as uncertainty and lack of trust. Therefore the attitude and the priorities of the management have to be clear.

The companies that are **able to utilize diversity**, gain the most out of the workforce. What contributes to the full usage of the differences are the means set above: the HRM, the communication and the leadership.

A factor that had not been studied in the literature review emerged in the interviews: the importance of the **economic situation**. According to D1, the HR Director with 15 years of experience, a long-term period of struggling financially can affect the working environment to exclusion.

Lastly, the role of **trust**. This factor will either “make or break the company”, a company of trust is sustainable, innovative and risk-taking, whereas a company with no trust will most likely lead to both bad financial results as well as workplace bullying and exclusion.

6.2. Quality Assessment of the Research Process and Results

Reliability and validity

The quality of the research is defined by the reliability and the validity. The aim is to gather and produce as relevant and truthful data as possible. Through **reliability** and **validity** the researcher is able to justify the correctness of the research. Reliability refers to the consistency of the research and validity that the researcher has measured and studied the correct material (Kananen 2011, 118.).

Considering the length and depth of this study, it took all in all 7 interviews and interviewees from 4 different companies as well as 3 drafts of interviews. Various publications regarding the material during the literature review that constituted the theoretical framework. Transcriptions on all of the interviews were conducted with the

audio-recordings of the material, and the researcher took notes during each of the sessions. By using the transcriptions and notes the material were analyzed, the material was reviewed once more after the first transcriptions in order to secure the reliability of the analysis.

People interviewed all had experience regarding the topic of workplace inclusion and exclusion and worked in the field of providing reliable data in order to secure the validity of the study. The questions were designed according to the best of the abilities of the researcher to be aligned with the theoretical framework and the material collected.

Generalizability and limitation of the of the research results

With the given time-frame, the scope of the bachelor's thesis, the location and the fields of the respondent's as well as the fields the respondents operated in, the result and the conclusions of the study represent a limited part of the phenomena of workplace inclusion and exclusion. Therefore given the topic: "Workplace Inclusion and Exclusion in Finnish-based Small and Medium sized Enterprises" represents the generalizability of the study, as it covers the nature and the size of the companies involved as the respondents regarding workplace inclusion and exclusion.

Due to the severity and the scope of the topic, inclusion and exclusion as phenomena in the workplace are ever-current and global, for that reason it presents companies outside the Finnish borders to utilize and improve on the matters. However, due to the fact that this research was conducted as a cross-sectional study and dependent on the time of the implementation, the elements of adding internationality to the topic would require amending by updating it according to the time of the new study.

6.3. Ideas for further research

Due to the depth of the topic, the chances on conducting a larger study on either different grounds or similar, by interviewing also Finnish-based companies on the topic. The subject presents possibilities for a mixed study, by using different methods of

conducting the study, as this was done solely on semi-structured traditional interviews. For the further future studies on the topic observation, focus groups and group interviews could be applied. The mixed methods could be applied in regards to adding the element of quantitative data, however in that case the nature of the interviews would need to be different, and the volume of the respondents would have to be increased considerably, possibly of a larger and international corporation given that this study was conducted on small and medium-sized companies that are Finnish-based.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Health and security representative 1st draft

Background

What is your job description?

How long have you been working “professionally”?

How long have you been under the service of your current company?

How long have you been working as the health and security representative? Why do you think you were chosen to do so?

Why did you choose this line of career?

HRM

How would you describe your role as the HRM – mediator?

How do you see the role of HRM in the company you’re currently working in?

What impact do you think HRM has in your current workplace?

According to your experience, when adjusted properly, can you see concrete results because of well-organized HRM?

According to your experience: How do you retain sustainability in terms of HRM?

Communication within the organization

How would you describe the communication within your company?

Do you feel that you have an “open community”?

How would you describe the hierarchy within the organization?

Do you feel that the amount of communication within the company has increased or decreased during the last years?

According to your experience, what kind of and impact does effective communication have in a company?

The role of management

How long has the current management been operating in your current company?

How would you characterize them as leaders?

How would you describe the relationship between the management and the employees?

Do you see the management level of the company as contributing to the motivation of the employees?
--

According to your experience, what kind of a role of a manager is the most efficient?

Workplace well-being

How would you describe "an efficient employee"?

Do you feel that the workers enjoy their work?
--

Do you feel that there is room to grow within the company? How does it occur?

Where do you feel that the employees get their motivation towards the line of work?

Corporate culture & group cohesion

What kind of a culture do you think exists in your current company?

Do you feel that the employees get along? Or between the sectors?

Do you see as your workforce as a diversified community or homogenous?
--

How do you feel that your current company handles diversity? (Age, gender, profession, background, interests)

According to your experience, how can managers affect the group dynamics?

Workplace inclusion and exclusion
--

Would you describe the corporate culture of your company as inviting for new workers?

Do you feel that there are strong personalities within the company?

Do you feel that there are any "unwritten rules" within the company?
--

Would you feel that they have an impact on the new workers?

Have there been any cases of workplace bullying?
--

Did you ever feel that some employees might've been excluded?

According to your experience, what kinds of issues impact on the atmosphere of a company in order to make it either inclusive or exclusive?

Appendix 2.

Workplace Inclusion & Exclusion 2nd draft**Middle-management and HRM****Background**

What is your job description?

Why did you choose this line of career?

How long have you been under the service of your current company?

HRM

Does HRM affect the company strategy on the long-term, and does it contribute to sustainability within the company?

Which one would you say that comes first in your company? The people or the result?

Communication within the organization

Would you consider your company as an open community?

According to your experience do different roles of the company affect the communication?

The role of management

How do you feel that your workforce that your workforce is motivated in the company?

How would you describe the relationship between the management and the employees?

How can the management affect the group dynamics of the company?

Workplace well-being

How would you describe an efficient employee?

Do you feel that your employees enjoy their work? How can you detect that, in your opinion?

According to your experience, where do you feel that your employees get their motivation from?

Corporate culture & group cohesion

Do you see the workforce as diversified or homogenous? How do you think that affects the group dynamics?

Are there strong personalities in the company? How do you think they affect the group dynamics?

Are there "unwritten rules" in the company? According to your experience do you see them affecting the culture?

Workplace inclusion and exclusion

Have there been any cases of workplace bullying or possible exclusion?

Are there any company guidelines or lines of action that will be done in these kinds of cases?

According to your experience: what kinds of issues contribute to a socially inclusive company, and what to an exclusive one?