



## **Cabin Crew Members' Workplace Well-being at Airpro Ltd**

Sanni Uttula

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor's Thesis

2021

Bachelor of Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management

## Abstract

**Author**

Sanni Uttula

**Degree**

Bachelor of Hospitality, Tourism and Experience management

**Report/thesis title**

Cabin crew members' workplace well-being at Airpro Ltd

**Number of pages and appendix pages**

39 + 2

The beginning of the 2020 decade hasn't been easy on people working at the aviation industry. Especially cabin crew members have faced one of the challenging obstacles so far, COVID-19 pandemic. When writing this thesis at the end of the year 2021, the world has opened again, aviation business is recovering slowly or even rapidly back to normal. Still, that does not indicate the pandemic is over. It is still a threat. Although the corona pandemic still limits travelling at some level depending the country and its laws and restrictions, the author wanted to focus on the post-crisis time, getting back to work after a long break and workplace well-being and it's phenomena.

The author of the thesis is a cabin crew member herself and therefore interested to research cabin crew members workplace well-being at Airpro Ltd who is the commissioner of the thesis and an employer of the author. The objective was to find answers to research questions as follows: how cabin crew members feel about their workplace well-being at Airpro, what kind of elements on workplace well-being they are satisfied, has Airpro succeeded to maintain a good working atmosphere after getting back to normal operations and what kind of expectations cabin crew members have on future with Airpro Ltd.

Theoretical framework of the thesis concentrates on workplace well-being and what kind of actions it requires to have a work community where employers and employees feel their work effort is meaningful and their well-being is a priority. The second part of the framework presents crisis management phases, different approaches to crises and crisis communication, from the internal point of view. Theoretical framework includes the introduction of the commission organization, Airpro Ltd and briefly introduces the basic model of a charter airline.

The targeted research group is cabin crew members of Sunclass Airlines that Airpro Ltd operates in Finland. The research method is a method used in qualitative research, theme interviews. Theme interviews were organized in November 2021 virtually at Microsoft Teams platform. The theme interviews included four different themes, workplace well-being in general, workplace well-being at Airpro, crisis communication and communication regarding going back to work after a break and values and future at Airpro.

The author managed to get six interviews and the main findings of the qualitative theme interviews were that cabin crew members felt their cabin crew work community is close, supportive, and motivating where a role of Airpro being their employer was seen distant and unclear. The future was seen brighter than before yet on-going negotiations regarding new collective labor agreement were seen worrying and raised a fear of worsening working conditions.

**Keywords**

well-being, workplace well-being, crisis management, crisis communication, cabin crew

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Well-Being at Work .....	3
2.1	Workplace Well-being is a Shared Responsibility.....	4
2.2	Cabin Crew Member’s Well-being and New Challenges .....	7
3	Crisis Management and Crisis Communication .....	10
3.1	Phases of Crisis Management .....	10
3.2	Different Approaches to Crisis Management .....	14
3.3	Post-Crisis Management: Going Towards The New Normal.....	16
3.4	Crisis Communication: The Most important Component of Crisis Management ..	17
4	Airpro Ltd – Your Journey is our Destination .....	18
4.1	Operations of Airpro.....	18
4.2	What is a Charter Airline? .....	19
5	The Research of the Cabin Crew Members’ Well-being at Airpro .....	21
5.1	Qualitative Theme Interviews with Cabin Crew Members of Airpro .....	21
5.2	Theme Interview Questions – From Well-being to Future Plans.....	22
5.3	Data Collection of the Theme Interviews.....	24
6	Results.....	26
6.1	It Takes Two to Create a Vibrant Workplace .....	26
6.2	Turbulent Times Require Clear Communication.....	29
6.3	Does the Future Look Brighter than Before? .....	30
7	Discussion.....	32
7.1	Conclusion .....	33
7.2	Reliability and Validity .....	34
7.3	Own Learning .....	34
	References .....	36
	Appendices.....	40
	Appendix 1. Semi-structured theme interview questions .....	40

## 1 Introduction

Recently, many organizations have understood the importance of workplace well-being and how it goes hand in hand with productivity, health and motivation of the employees and the employer in an organization. Workplace well-being is not a race of who scores the highest rates on job satisfaction, turnover, or employee satisfaction. It is a long-term achievement that is reached when the focus is on the well-being of the people who work for the organization.

The author chose the topic because she feels cabin crew members have had a rough path lately. From COVID-19 and layoffs coming back to work where the world is still balancing and recovering. The author is a cabin crew member herself and works for Airpro Ltd. COVID-19 is an abbreviation from Coronavirus that is a disease caused by a SARS-CoV-2 virus (WHO 2021). In 2019 coronavirus started to outbreak from China across the globe shutting down the operation of air traffic, as a result of that the majority of cabin crew members were laid off.

The objective of the thesis is to find out how cabin crew members feel about their workplace well-being, has COVID-19 affected to it, how was the internal communication handled and what kind of things cabin crew members value and look forward in the future. The research seeks to find answers to research questions, to the main question "What thoughts do Airpro's cabin crew members have about their well-being at work" and three sub-questions "What are the elements that make a cabin crew member content of their employer", "Has Airpro succeeded to maintain a good work atmosphere during and after the corona crisis?" and "What expectations do cabin crew members have on their future at Airpro?"

Theoretical framework is divided into two main topics. In the chapter two workplace well-being is explained and different theories on how to maintain a workplace where employees and an employer, the whole organization, feel good about their work, are presented. More individual approaches on how to maintain workplace well-being is presented. Chapter three reflects on current events, COVID-19, and crisis management. It presents different stages of crisis management and how an organization should generate and manage their crisis management plan. It has an emphasis on post-crisis management reflecting to the current COVID-19 status.

The commissioner of this thesis is Airpro Ltd (later Airpro). Airpro provides cabin crew services to various customer airlines and this thesis focuses on the airline Sunclass Airlines' cabin crew members workplace well-being. The commissioner party is presented in the

chapter four and it is briefly discussed what is the idea of charter airlines and how their future look like. The qualitative research of this thesis provides current and detailed information about cabin crew members' workplace well-being that is useful when planning and developing employee satisfaction. Airpro released their new strategy plan for 2025 and one of the goals is to increase employee satisfaction rate with 20%. This thesis helps to understand what actions has to be taken and what has been done well previously.

The qualitative research is based on theme interviews which serve a deeper level of understanding the state of workplace well-being and what is required both from employer and an employee. Communication during and after COVID-19 is discussed and cabin crew members values regarding to their work and how the values are seen in their job. The last part of the theme interview discusses the future and how Airpro is seen in the future. The author justifies why she chose the certain questions to each of the interview themes.

Results are discussed in the chapter six and theme interview structure with four different themes is explained and gone through from theme one to theme four. Results include interviewees' comments. The main ideas and main findings and their meaning are discussed in the chapter seven and the author presents her main findings. This chapter includes suggestions and actions that Airpro should consider and also the role of the researcher is evaluated. The validity and reliability the research is taken into consideration and the author presents some future research ideas. This chapter ends with the author's own learning and what did she learn during the whole thesis writing process.

## 2 Well-Being at Work

Before viewing well-being at work in a larger scale, it is important to understand and define different words and synonyms commonly used. The word well-being means the state of feeling healthy and happy (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). Well-being includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, ability to manage stress and a sense of meaning. Well-being emerges from thoughts, actions, and experiences. Positive thinking tends to lead to greater emotional well-being (Davis 2019.)

Well-being can be divided into subcategories such as emotional well-being, physical well-being, social well-being, workplace well-being and societal well-being. These sub-categories are presented in figure 1. Emotional well-being includes the ability to practise stress management, be resilient and generate emotions that lead to good feelings and boost self-love. Regular exercise habits and the ability to maintain healthy living habits are a part of physical well-being. Social well-being includes maintaining a support network such as developing meaningful relationships. Societal well-being means the ability to participate in an active community, culture, and environment. The last subcategory, workplace well-being, can be defined as the ability to pursue one's interests, values and life purpose that leads to feeling happy, pleased, and contented professionally (Davis 2019). This thesis has a concentration on workplace well-being and its phenomenon's.



Figure 1. Well-being sub-categories (Davis 2019)

## 2.1 Workplace Well-being is a Shared Responsibility

World Health Organization (WHO) defines a healthy workplace as a place where everyone works together to achieve mutual vision for the health and well-being of workers and the surrounding community. It provides all members of the workplace with physical, psychological, social, and organizational conditions that protect and promote health and safety (Burton 2010, 15.)

A workplace that invests in well-being of the employees have motivated management, the workplace itself is safe, healthy, and pleasant. Well-being at work increases productivity and commitment to the job. Also, the number of work-related incidents and sick leave decreases. Well-being at work means individual experience where an employee feels motivated and enthusiastic. Well-being at work is directly linked with productivity, competitiveness, and reputation of the organization (STM 2021.)

It is everyone's responsibility to create a pleasant workplace atmosphere. Maintaining well-being at workplace involves both employers and employees. The core elements are safety on the workplace, good management, and fair treatment of employees (STM 2021.)

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health has estimated that the value of investing workplace well-being is six times the investment. The founding indicates that developing workplace well-being is financially profitable as well. As a bonus of successful workplace well-being management, the workplace will most likely keep their valued employees for longer period of time and raise the image of the organization (Jabe 2012, 6.)

Grahan Lowe (Lowe 2020, 24.) has presented a model of the healthy organization that includes five main points. The first point when building a healthy organization is to view a well-being of an employee as a resource of organizational performance. The three important pillars an organization must have, as follows: a positive culture, an inclusive approach to leadership and a workplace that is vibrant and inspires employees. The organization must understand how drivers of employee well-being and work performance walk hand in hand and are connected. When these drivers are considered, the stakeholders, internal and external will benefit. (Lowe 2020, 25.)

A fundamental goal of a healthy organization is constantly improving employee's well-being. Well-being is seen as a dynamic and ongoing process. Organizations, managers, and employees need to learn and adapt to new situations and cope challenges that can be social, physical, and emotional (Lowe 2020, 27.)

To understand a healthy organization model, organizations must look at the principles of the healthy organization model presented in Figure 2. Model illustrates four steps to follow in order to create a successful workplace culture. The first step is positive culture. When positive culture is highly valued, it leads to inclusive leadership that is the second step of a healthy organization. The third step is vibrant workplace. Vibrant workplace can be seen as a core of a healthy organization. The fourth step and the outcome of all the previous steps are inspired employees. Workplaces that succeed to follow steps of the model have inspired employees that are engaged, trusted, and satisfied. They form a vibrant workplace (Lowe 2020, 39.)

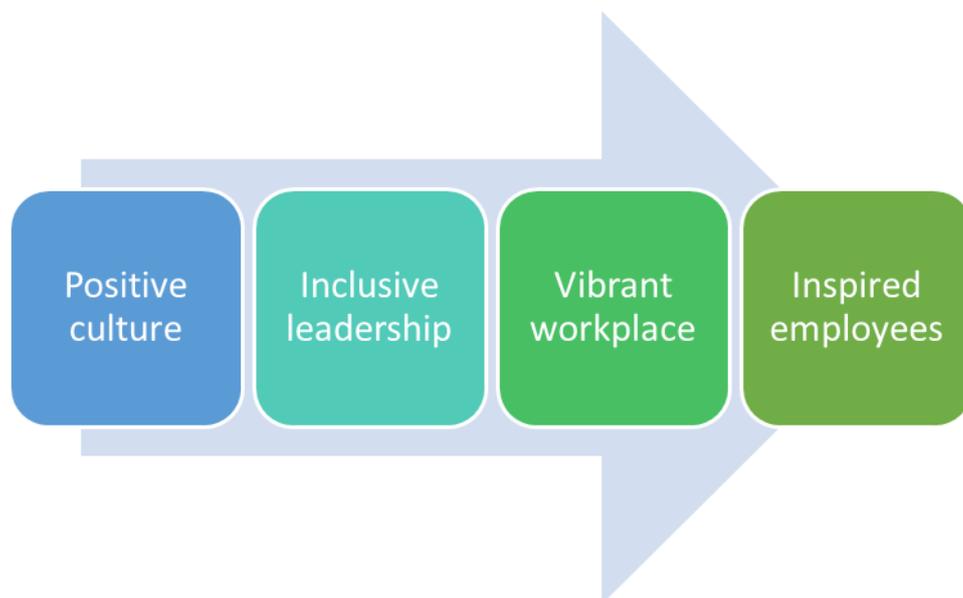


Figure 2. Grahan Lowe's Healthy Organization Model (adapted from Creating Healthy Organizations 2020, 39)

When a vibrant workplace has individuals who collaborate, the outcome is favourable for organizations. Then, well-being of an employee is not the end goal but a result of healthy processes and choices made inside an organization. (Lowe 2020, 40.) A vibrant workplace inspires employees to develop their skills, share their knowledge and co-operate effectively. Being highly satisfied with their work they look forward coming to work and feel the pride of making meaningful decisions and tasks. (Lowe 2020, 47.)

Prioritizing well-being starts from people-focused values. Developing organizations well-being is a dynamic, ongoing process in which workers and managers both need to attend to pursuit organizations goals (Lowe 2020, 56). An ideal process when creating organization's values goes as follows: firstly, everyone in an organization should be included.

Together, values are being evaluated, compared, and discussed. Secondly, leaders should act according to values. Values are always present in decision making and they are seen in an organization's everyday life (Jabe 2012, 45).

Under the stressful conditions individual's self-management abilities stand out. Individuals with transformative mindsets can build self-esteem, self-confidence, optimism, integrity, courage, and hope. Sarar Kovoov-Mishra (2020, 43) presents five different approaches that can be practiced maintaining well-being at workplace. These five strategies are rituals of recovery, mindfulness, positive emotions, positive relationships and appreciating small accomplishments. Figure 3 presents Kovoov-Mishra's five self-management abilities.

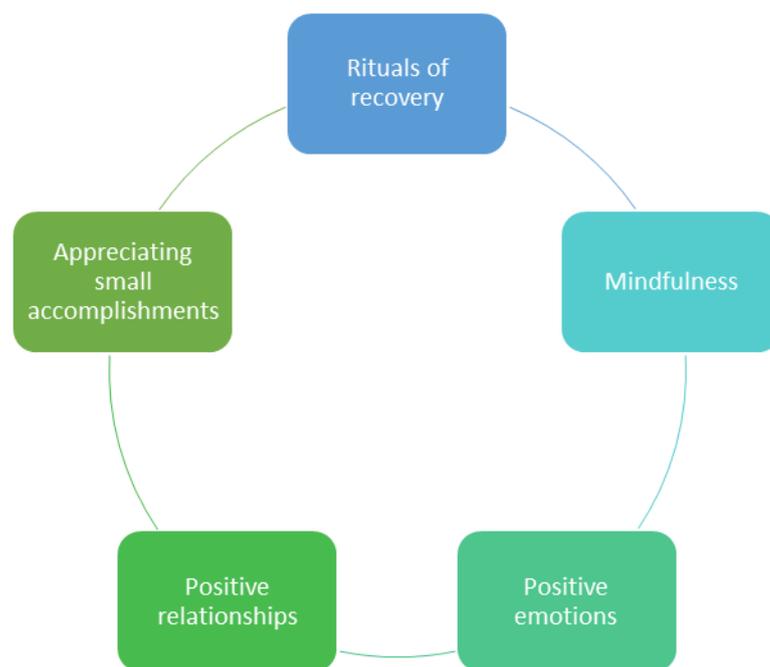


Figure 3. Self-Management abilities by Sarar Kovoov-Mishra (Kovoov-Mishra 2020, 104)

Rituals of recovery means when under a stressful situation, an individual has own ways to handle pressure and stress. These rituals may include physical exercise, healthy nutrition, enough sleep, breathing exercises and periods of rest. Mindfulness is a key for managing energy and maintaining physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Mindfulness includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Practicing mindfulness can be a key to constructive self-talk that builds up to self-compassion and positive outlook on one-self. Positive self-talk strengthens self-managing skills during stress (Kovoov-Mishra 2020, 104.) Positive emotions can be found even during stress. Believing that one's efforts help the organization and learning from small and large failures improve postcrisis phase. Maintaining positive relationships help individuals to feel supported. Small wins and accomplishments can be empowering during a stressful condition and it's essential to recognise them (Kovoov-Mishra 2020, 105.)

Sanni Rajaveräjä (2019, 26) researched new cabin crew members stress and fatigue management in her thesis "New Cabin Crew Members Stress and Fatigue Management". She found out new cabin crew members have individual ways to recover. Three out of five cabin crew members had experienced stress at their work. Interviewees were also asked their routines to avoid stress and fatigue. All interviewees mentioned individual routines that included physical exercise, the right amount of sleep, listening to own body.

The finding supports the idea that individuals who have found convenient habits to recharge their well-being at work are more likely to perform well under stress and pressure. Another finding from Rajaveräjä's research worth mentioning is to underline individuals' self-compassion. Listening to own body, expressing own feelings to others going through same situation and reserving time to oneself were highly appreciated stress management methods in Rajaveräjä's interview (Rajaveräjä 2019, 27).

## **2.2 Cabin Crew Member's Well-being and New Challenges**

A cabin crew member is a "qualified crew member, other than a flight crew or technical crew member, who is assigned by an operator to perform duties related to the safety of passengers and flight during operation", a definition by EASA, European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA 2021). The most important part of the cabin crew tasks is to be responsible of the safety of passengers and crew during the flight. The procedures of safety and security are constantly and regularly being trained.

The term fit to fly is commonly used when describing a cabin crew's physical and mental health and preparedness to fly. Two main organizations responsible for cabin crew safety related issues are EASA and ICAO. EASA works with Europe Commission and maintains close working relations with International Civil Aviation Organisation, ICAO (EASA 2021). A medical assessment is done regularly to maintain a great working condition. EASA has flight time limitations to cabin crew members to avoid fatigue. The limits are as follows: 100 block hours in 28 days, 900 block hours in calendar year and 1 000 block hours in 12 months (EASA 2020). One block hour is a period of time when an aircraft first moves from the ramp and ends when an aircraft comes to a complete still after landing (Law Insider 2021). Every aircraft model has different limitations on minimum crew that is monitored by ICAO. The number of minimum cabin crew is based on an effective and evacuation that increases the survivability of passengers during an accident (ICAO 2021).

Fatigue is a psychological state of reduced mental or physical performance capability resulting from sleep loss, circadian phase or workload that affects crew member's alertness

and ability to perform safety-related duties. ICAO has a fatigue risk management system, FRMS, that continuously monitors and manages fatigue-related safety risks. The aim is to ensure cabin crew members are performing well on their job and are alert at all phases during a flight (ICAO 2021.)

Resilience is an individual's capacity to thrive despite the adversity. Resilient people have similar characteristics and habits on new situations. They think forward, adapt easily to unfamiliar situations, find opportunities, and see a better future (Lowe 2020, 104.) The world resilience is an old concept that has found a new meaning when organizations have started to concentrate on well-being and understood the importance of it. It is recognized that employees who experience well-being have strong resilience skills. Graham Lowe (2020,103) calls it a twenty-first-century organizational survival skill. Resilient people do not look back – they look forward and find new strength and balance. They are not passively adapting unfamiliar situations but actively find new opportunities (Lowe 2020, 104.)

Requirements to become a cabin crew member that performs well in their job has similar attributes and cabin crew members tick many boxes with resilient individuals. Cabin crew members are used to adapting new situations, perform their work in constantly changing environment and are used to face some turbulence, literally in aviation industry. Can we thereby think cabin crew members are more resilient than any other industries' employees?

Jani Hyppänen (2020, 26) researched if temporarily laid-off cabin crew members have stayed resilient during laid-off and what kind of factors affected to resilience of cabin crew members. The reason for layoffs was COVID-19 virus and the rapid increase on infections worldwide, as a result many airlines stopped commercial flights. Hyppänen (2020, 26) interviewed eight cabin crew members and all interviewees were taken situation relatively well. Most of the interviewees were younger generation which is shown on answers concerning income. They didn't have children to take care of or house mortgage to pay. The signs of resiliency are shown in the results on the study: staying active, accepting the situation, and approaching it a calm way. Still, some negative feelings raised. A temporary laid off caused concerns on pandemic and feeling of loneliness. (Hyppänen 2020, 27).

Yvonne Görlich and Daniel Stadelmann (2020) researched mental health of cabin crew members. A German study consists of two samples. The first sample was made in May 2019 consisting of 105 participants but when Covid-19 spread worldwide and became a pandemic, they expanded the survey to investigate the impact of the crisis. New, unknown, and terrifying virus stopped air traffic completely and cabin crew members all over

the world were uncertain and worried about their future. The second sample was collected in April 2020 with 119 participants.

Cabin crew members mental health and changes in the symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress were monitored and Görlich and Stadelmann found positive correlations on symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress with subjective stressors as time pressure, work intensity, fatigue, demands of the flight profile and burdens of on-call duty. They also found that support from colleagues and appreciation from the supervisor decreased stressors (Görlich & Stadelmann 2020.)

As an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health of cabin crew members has significantly dropped. Cabin crew members who continued flying during the pandemic suffered even more anxiety symptoms such as fear of getting COVID-19 infection (Görlich & Stadelmann 2020.) The most affected group that had stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms were the youngest cabin crew members. The research suggests preparing the aftermath of the virus. Healthcare must be aware that there could be a big wave of mental health problems and social services need preventing measures (Görlich & Stadelmann 2020.)

Another worrying finding from Jessica Lukkarilas thesis (2020, 40) where she researched the employee experience of cabin crew members during corona virus pandemic. In her quantitative survey with 150 respondents from 19 different airlines, a little under quarter of the respondents felt safety performance at work has suffered. Lukkarila was expecting a number would have been higher but the author of this thesis thinks every little or minor decrease on safety performance must be taken seriously and actions must be taken in order to keep safety number one priority. Also, over a half of the respondents felt passengers had not taken the pandemic seriously. Over 70% of cabin crew members who answered the survey said they felt safe at work (Lukkarila 2020, 40.)

Today, corona virus doesn't stop people from travelling. Travel industry slowly, or even rapidly starts to recover after majority of the population have had corona vaccination. There are still many concerns on the future of the aviation and cabin crew jobs. Respondents of Lukkarilas thesis believed recovery would be slow and challenging, working conditions were believed to worsen and some airlines might take advantage of the poor situation (Lukkarila 2020, 41.) However, Lukkarilas research was taken place in March/April 2020 when corona virus was unknown, uncertain and a global threat. Negative and worried views might feel distant now that the world has opened again.

### 3 Crisis Management and Crisis Communication

“A crisis is unpredictable but not unexpected” (Coombs 2018, 4). A crisis is an extremely difficult or dangerous point in a situation and it can be experienced as a great difficulty, danger, or suffering (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). There are different types of crises that varies from social, political, religious to personal crises. Organizational crisis is a crisis that is caused by an organization and has negative consequences. The damage might affect economic capital, political capital, social capital, or symbolic capital of the organization (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 10).

Organizational crises are complex and diverse. Crises often feel threatening, urgent, and stressful for organizations, leaders, and stakeholders. If an organization invests in effective crisis management plan, potential opportunities can be gained and it is a great advantage (Kovoor-Mishra 2020, 20.) Crisis management means definition, implementation, maintenance, and activation of the crisis preparedness. Crisis management includes different stages; to identify, to analyse and evaluate signs of the crisis, to reduce as much damage as possible and to learn from the crisis experience and implement changes (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 53).

#### 3.1 Phases of Crisis Management

Crisis management is designed to combat crises with a set of factors and lessen the damage. The goal is to prevent or lessen the negative outcomes of a crisis and protect the industry, organization, and its stakeholders from damage. Nowadays crisis management has evolved into profound set of actions. Coombs defines four main factors that are: prevention, preparation, response, and revision (Coombs 2018, 6.) These factors are presented in Figure 4.

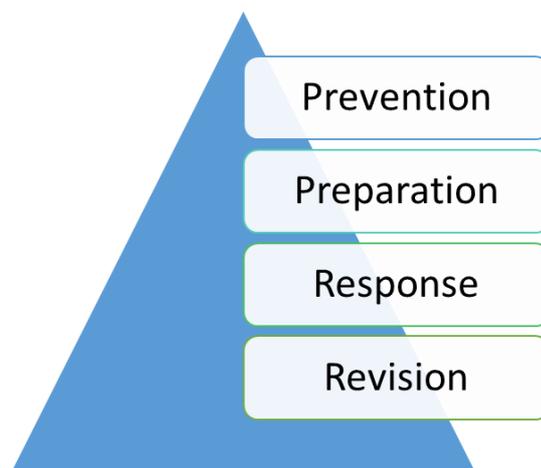


Figure 4. Coombs' actions to prevent or lessen the crisis damage (Coombs 2018, 6)

In prevention phase steps to avoid crisis must be thought throughout. Often managers ignore the first signs of a crisis. If the first signals are not being recognized, it might be too late to take actions regarding to prevention of the crisis. Crises that are in the prevention phase are unseen by the public (Coombs 2018, 6.)

The second step is preparation. This step includes crisis communication plan (=CCP), diagnosing vulnerabilities of the crisis, selecting, and training a team that is responsible of the crisis and refining a crisis communication system. The preparation that includes crisis communication plan must be tested regularly (Coombs 2018, 7.) A team that is responsible of monitoring the use of CCP is called crises management team (=CMT). Usually when a crisis occurs, CMT makes the important decisions, such as when to activate the crisis communication plan and when to make the important decisions. Usually, CEO designates the members of CMT and in most cases they are a cross-functional team consisting of middle-managers representing the key functions of the organization such as corporate communication, security, finance, marketing, and human resource management (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 77).

When a crisis occurs, the third step is response. Response is very public and the aim is to reduce the negative impact of a crisis on stakeholders and organization. When crisis management plan is made carefully, there is a chance response leads to an improved organization for instance a stronger reputation of an organization (Coombs 2018, 7). The biggest challenge is to activate the crisis communication plan and to prepare the crisis management team at the right time and in the right place (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 80.) Recovery is a part of the response phase and it seeks to return to normal operation as fast as possible. The quicker an organization can get back on track, the fewer financial losses will occur. (Coombs 2018, 7.) But, responding quickly should not be confused with resolving a crisis quickly. Response time is a tactical element of the crisis response management (Coombs 2018,133).

After response comes revision. Revision is the last phase and the goal is to evaluate actions taken, learning points and mistakes to avoid on the future to become a better organization on crisis handing (Coombs 2018, 7.) The more an organization goes through different crises, the better it becomes handling them (Coombs 2018, 7.) Capacity to effectively handle future crises grows and a crisis is an opportunity for gain to do following: to improvise, innovate and develop solutions for more complex crises (Kovoor-Misra 2020, 6.)

After a crisis is over and an organization has followed phases above, they need to evaluate overall performance. Evaluation compares the level of risk before and after the crisis

management program is implemented (Coombs 2018, 53). Evaluation is important because without it an organization does not know if the change has been effective or has it reduced the chance of a crisis. In practise this means monitoring workplace behaviour. For instance, if are employees adapting and following new safety procedures (Coombs 2018, 52.) Two types of evaluation are important before the information collected can be transformed into knowledge that the organization can learn from: 1) evaluation of the consequences of the crisis and 2) evaluation of the crisis management process (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 83).

Another way is to divide crises into three phases: pre-crisis phase, crisis phase and post-crisis phase presented in Figure 5. In the pre-crisis phase, signals can be seen (Kovoor-Mishra 2020, 19). If an organization has a crisis management team, this is the time to step in. The focus is to prevent crises from breaking out. Signals can be seen but the biggest challenge is to identify signals as early as possible. Typically, it is not as easy as it sounds since it might be unseen when to be alert. The environment and the organization are complex and dynamic phenomena and neither CEO nor the crisis management team has a helicopter view of the situation. The earlier the weak signals are spotted, the easier they are to miss. The biggest challenge of the pre-crisis phase is to identify signals as early as possible. This is called signal detection. Signal detection is based around two important questions, When an organization needs to be alert and what an organization have to keep an eye on. The earlier an organization discovers the signals, the greater chance it is to prevent the crisis from entering to crisis stage (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 71.) A team that is responsible of monitoring the use of CCP is called crises management team (=CMT). Usually when a crisis occurs, CMT makes the important decisions, such as when to activate the crisis communication plan and when to make the important decisions. Usually, CEO designates the members of CMT and in most cases they are a cross-functional team consisting of middle-managers representing the key functions of the organization such as corporate communication, security, finance, marketing, and human resource management (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 77).



Figure 5. Three phases of crises (Frandsen & Johansen 2017)

The crisis stage is the stage when the organization becomes aware of the crisis and the damage control starts (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 80.) The biggest challenge is to activate the crisis preparedness in the right place and at the right time. Then the big decisions are made by crisis management team as quickly and as effectively as possible (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 81.)

The post-crisis stage and how it can be observed in aviation industry are looked more closely in the chapter 3.3. In recent studies, pre-crisis stage and crisis stage have had more attention and research made than post-crisis stage. However, this does not mean that post-crisis stage is less important than other stages. Post crisis stage has three important aspects: 1) evaluation, learning and 3) implementing change after crisis. (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 83.)

The task of crisis management is a never-ending process. Organizations and individuals need to be ready, prevent possible future threads and build an organization future so that they can be resilient and transformative if future challenges and threads occur (Kovoor-Misra 2020, 233.) But then again, never assume any change is automatically better. Some changes are not seen on the results where other changes may strengthen warning signs or risks (Coombs 2018, 52).

It is not always possible to determine the time and place for each of the stages. Secondly, several crises can happen at the same time and must be handled simultaneously. The means an organization can face different phases of a crisis at once (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 86.) Organizational learning is not a process that takes place only the revision stage. There are learning points related to every phase of the crisis management process (Jaques 2014, 13-14).

### 3.2 Different Approaches to Crisis Management

Crises cannot be completely avoided; the least is to strive to handle them in the best possible way by practicing crisis management. Many organizations are hit by a crisis at some point (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 52.) This chapter presents different approaches to crisis management from traditional models to new, modern ways to deal with crises. Traditional perspectives include the narrow tactical perspective and the broad strategic perspective (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 55-58). New trends include transformative crisis management and a complexity point of view to crises. That view has elements of mindful management and resilience (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 56). These traditional and new models are stated in figure 6.

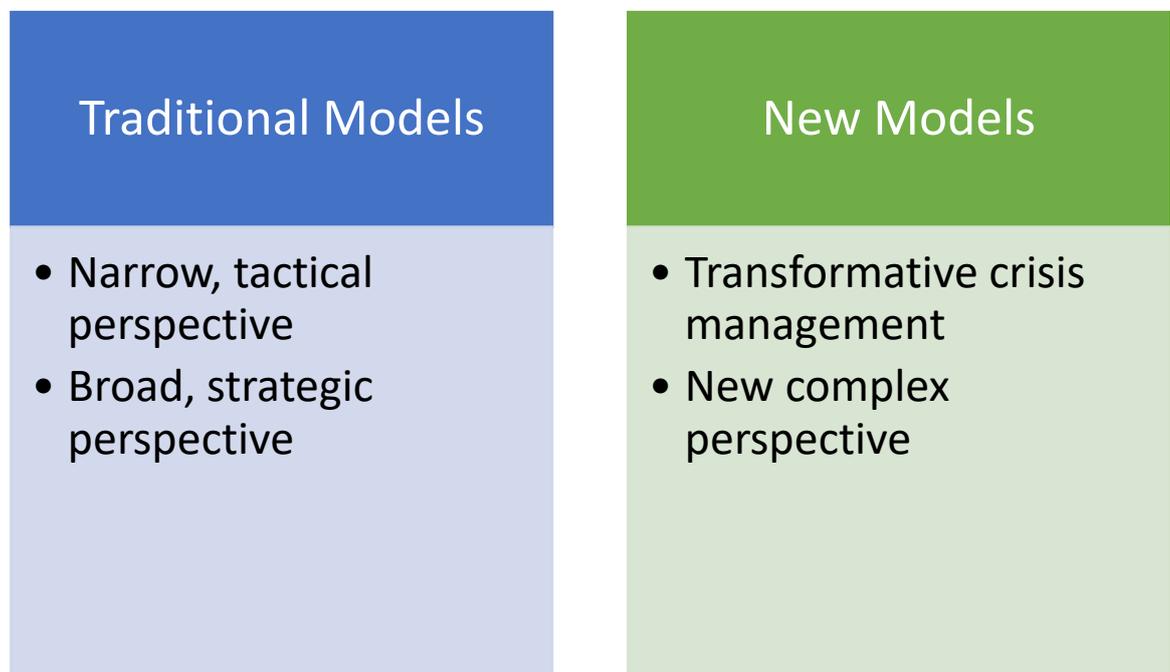


Figure 6. Different approaches to crisis management. Traditional models and new models (adapted from Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 56)

The narrow tactical perspective has a focus on the crisis stage. Regarding to Frandsen and Johansen (2017, 56), Roux-Dufort (2000) and Jaques (2014) state that this perspective can be used when dealing with accidents, fires, or floods, when the reaction must be as fast as possible. Communication follows command and control. Often from this viewpoint crises are seen as something negative, and the goal is to return to normal operations as quickly as possible. In the recent years this narrow view has developed more broadly. It has been adapted those disasters and emergencies are dynamic processes that evolve through the phases of the crisis (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 57.)

The broad strategic perspective crises are not seen conceptualized or isolated cases but dynamic processes evolving through crisis phases. There is no need to wait until the crisis

occurs before starting to handle it. Vice versa, to focus what is going on in the pre-crisis and post-crisis stages (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 57.) The broad strategic phase underlines the importance of crisis preparedness thoroughly in an organization. Not only top managers are aware of processes but also employees of the organization share an understanding of the processes. It is no longer a matter of information, instructions, and crisis intervention but also a matter of protecting and repairing the image, reputation, trust, and credibility. Crises are not viewed as something truly negative; they are viewed as something that can have a contribution to positive thinking. Organizations may rise stronger from a crisis (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 58.)

Today, the new complex understanding of the crises is commonly operated. The focus is on organizational learning and not on prevention and preparation (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 61-62.) One orientation of modern crisis management is mindful crisis management. It is highly recommended to use especially in organizations that have succeeded in avoiding catastrophes in an industry where the risk of accident is high such as: aircraft carriers, air traffic control systems, nuclear power plants, firefighters, and emergency medical treatment. In a mindful crisis management the unexpected does not have to be a major crisis, it can be an unexpected series of events that has an unexpected outcome (Weick & Sutcliffe 2001; 2007). In mindful learning model the attention is drawn to the barriers of learning specifically in the precrisis stage. Organizations that understand warning signals and crises are more likely to recognize tendencies and to remain in the pre-crisis stage. The sooner the warnings and failures are recognized the less damage will occur (Veil 2011, 140.)

Transformative is an adjective that means "causing a major change to something or someone, especially in a way that makes it or them better" (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). Leaders and individuals often find difficulties to perform under pressure and be at the same time innovative, problem-solving, communicative, learn and grow from the experience. They tend to take short-term, defensive, reactive, and self-interested approach and that leads to ignoring stakeholders, the loss of trust among employees and brand getting stained (Kovoor-Misra 2020, 39). Therefore, transformative approach during crisis management leads to positive change. Two different aspects to be transformative are: having a positive resilience and having the capacity and willingness to create positive change. To be transformative an individual must be positively resilient before, during and after crisis. The second aspect is being a catalyst for positive change and contributing to the strengthening of others. (Kovoor-Misra 2020, 42).

Transformative behaviours can strengthen relationships during crisis management. It improves coping and well-being. Positive emotions and behaviours are a protective and a

valuable resource for everyone during crisis phases (Kovoor-Misra 2020, 45.) It is a learning and growth point for an organization's members and they gain new knowledge, problem solving and improvising during an uncertain period. If a failure happens, individuals have a great opportunity to understand the causes of failure so they can be more effective in the future (Kovoor-Misra 2020, 47).

### **3.3 Post-Crisis Management: Going Towards The New Normal**

The concentration on this thesis is in post-crisis management from different crisis management stages because when looking at the global environment and reflecting on corona virus pandemic, the word is recovering and aviation business is getting back to the normal operations. It could be addressed that the current stage aviation organizations are going through and need to pay attention now is a post-crisis stage of the crisis.

Evaluation starts with the collection of information. Two different evaluations should be made. Firstly, evaluation of the consequences of the crisis and secondly, evaluation of the crisis management process. Evaluation of the consequences includes economic, human, material, and symbolic consequences. These can be measured for instance investors' reaction to the crisis, reputation damage or media monitoring. Evaluation of the crisis management process measures the performance of the organization (Frandsen & Johansen 2017, 83.)

When it comes to post-crisis management and recovery, three important areas of damage need to be addressed: damage to business operations, physical damage, and psychosocial damage from the crisis. Damage to business operations is often visible to organizational leaders and their stakeholders. Physical and psychological damage is less visible, yet equally important to be addressed in order to regain vitality and recover from the crisis. (Kovoor-Mishra 2020, 192.) After a crisis has occurred, organizations need to get back on track and continue their business operations so that further financial losses can be avoided. To repair operational damage and resume business operations, leaders of the organizations need to ensure that production systems, information and communication systems and financial systems are up and running. To repair physical damage, organizations need to work with experts and agencies that are external to the organization. Recovering from the physical damage

COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the aviation industry permanently and have long-lasting effects on airlines and airport operations. Strict hygiene requirements inside the aircraft, reducing consumer surplus and some cost reductions are supported by governments.

Unfortunately, some changes can be seen in a negative outcome for example airport might be forced to increase airport costs of airlines (Achim, Xiaowen, Zheng, & Tae 2020, 9.)

What does this mean from cabin crew members' workplace well-being perspective? As stated in the chapter 2.2 earlier, cabin crew members stress, anxiety and demands on their job have increased. The negative impact of covid-19 pandemic is decreased mental health of cabin crew members. Insecurity about the future and work contract restrictions increase symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress (Görlich & Stadelmann 2020).

### **3.4 Crisis Communication: The Most important Component of Crisis Management**

The current crisis aviation industry and organizations has faced is corona virus pandemic. Especially businesses around aviation industry had hit hard and are struggling to survive. Airlines globally have done extreme solutions to protect their business and employees. Cutting workforce, different laid-offs and operation changes have been everyday life to most of the airlines.

Rapid changes in economy and safety have forced organizations to new and unknown situation the world have never seen before. Jessica Lukkarila (2021) examined the employee experience of cabin crew members globally during Covid-19 crisis. One key finding is the response or the lack of the response when it comes to communication between managers and workforce. 42% of the respondents didn't feel the actions of the airline were fair (Lukkarila 2021, 30). Managers should show more solidarity towards employees. For example, not accepting bonuses or even divide the bonus with workers (Lukkarila 2021, 41). To make matters worse, 10 respondents believed airlines have taken advantage of the COVID-19 to worsen contracts and working conditions (Lukkarila 2021, 30).

Speed matters for employees. The credibility of management suffers when employees learn about the crisis from the media rather than from the organization at first (Coombs 2018, 133). A perfect example of mishandling of cabin crew communication from Lukkarila's thesis: six answers pointed out the poor communication and even 17 told they were not given enough updated and info during COVID-19 crisis and some of them cached the news from media (Lukkarila 2021, 31). Cabin crew members want to be a part of the team and have their voices heard and make an impact to their duties. Honesty and transparency are highly valued on organizational communication (Lukkarila 2021, 41.)

## 4 Airpro Ltd – Your Journey is our Destination

The thesis is commissioned by Airpro Ltd. This chapter briefly introduces Airpro's history, services, and operations. Airpro Ltd. is founded in 1994, being one of the oldest ground handling companies in Finland and the only nationwide service provider in the aviation business in Finland. (Airpro 2021).

### 4.1 Operations of Airpro

Airpro has over 900 employees and it operates air traffic at 12 airports in Finland. Airpro has cabin crew services for various airlines such as Sunclass Airlines, TUI and Finnair (Airpro 2021.) In 2018 revenue exceeded 75 million euros. In figure 7 the operation chart of the Airpro is presented. The head of operations is Chief Operating Officer after that comes Ground Handling Services, Security Services, Logistics Services, Cabin Crew Services and Resource Planning. This thesis is concentrating on cabin crew operations and charter airline Sunclass Airlines cabin crew members.



Figure 7. The operation chart of Airpro (adapted from Airpro 2021)

Airpro defines their mission is to provide high-quality and ecologically smart services to customers and develop new solutions for dynamic aviation business. Their vision is to be a pioneer in aviation business and provide smooth travel experiences. Airpro wants to grow and develop as a company and maintain position as the leading service provider for airport operations in Finland (Airpro 2021.)

One of the latest developments is IATA Safety Audit for ground operations (ISAGO) registered for Airpro at Helsinki and Oulu stations (Airpro 2021). ISAGO is a programme for assessing the operational management and control systems of an organization. Some of the

goals are safer ground operations, improved safety and quality standards and coherent audit process (Arepo Solutions Ltd 2021).

In November 2021 Airpro released their strategy for the year 2025 with the slogan that involves vision and mission, "Your journey is our destination". The goal is to develop the industry with the co-operation of customers, stakeholders, and personnel. The vision is to be the best service producer in the Nordic countries. The aim is to have the first emission-free ground handling operations, to focus on employee satisfaction and work safety, to have the newest technology at security services and to cabin crew operations, to have new customer airlines (Airpro 2021.) The new strategy is presented in figure 8.



Figure 8. New strategy plan for the year 2025 (Airpro 2021)

#### 4.2 What is a Charter Airline?

Airpro has a long history of handling customer airlines, especially charter airlines such as TUI and Sunclass Airlines. This thesis researches the workplace well-being of cabin crew members of Sunclass Airlines that is the operates Tjäreborg's holiday flights in Finland, Spies in Denmark, and Ving in Sweden and in Norway.

A charter airline is an airline that involves multiple flights which may be paid for by tour operators, oil companies, the military or others requiring regular systematic transfer of people (Doganis 2019, 130). Charter airlines have been operating low-cost passenger services very successfully before the rise of low-cost airlines entered to markets. In fact, charter airlines were considered as the first low-cost airline model (Rodriquez, O'Connell 2017; Barret 2008). They grew at first in response to markets that were regulated

restrictively. Tour operators combine round trip seats to hotel or other accommodation to package that forms a full service product (Doganis 2019, 131). In 2017 charter airlines presented 10,6% of all passenger kilometres by European airlines (IATA 2017.) But a rapid growth of low-cost airlines in the early 2000's resulted in a relative decline of charter airlines in Europe (Doganis 2019, 132). Today inclusive tour package holidays have been declining in relative importance because travellers are demanding greater flexibility and choice when planning their holidays (Doganis 2019, 131).

When markets are changing, travel operators have to respond fast. How did they succeed to have passengers choosing charter airlines over route scheduled flights? Some of the charter airlines realized they have to match the flexibility demanded by their customers and offered more options from a seat-only sale to an inclusive holiday. A seat-only sale means a customer buys only one way or return flights but it does not include hotel or other services. A freedom of choice on the length of the holiday, hotel, and additional services on flight for example more legroom or including in-flight meal. This is called dynamic packaging and brings competitive advantage to charter airlines (Doganis 2019, 133.)

What about the future of the charter airlines? The charter airline business model has some competitive advantages. They enjoy the benefit of two unique features. Firstly, their capacity is sold well in advance to tour operators or travel agents. This ensures high load demand and a close perspective to supply and demand. Secondly, the airline doesn't have marketing costs since it does not sell direct to passengers but via tour operators (Doganis 2019, 142.)

On the other hand, leisure travel tends to recover faster than business travel, if comparing to earlier crises such as 9/11 attacks in 2001 or the outbreak of SARS in 2003. This was researched when comparing passenger numbers at London Heathrow that is mainly a business airport and at London Stansted, mainly a low-cost leisure airport. Also the research compared premium and non-premium traffic of British Airways (Graham; Papatodorou; Forsyth 2008, 22.)

Sunclass Airlines was re-introduced after Thomas Cook's bankruptcy and the new airline started their flights in October 2019. Although many charter airlines have succeeded to attract customers, Thomas Cook lost the competition in constantly changing and evolving aviation market. A rise of low-cost airlines, a decrease in interest of package holidays, a debt burden, and old-fashioned travel agencies that were not to compete with online travel agencies (Fernandez 2020). These are the main reasons why Thomas Cook collapsed and were bankrupted.

## **5 The Research of the Cabin Crew Members' Well-being at Airpro**

The objective of this thesis is to research Airpro's cabin crew members, who are operating Sunclass Airlines flights and have a permanent or a seasonal work contract with Airpro, well-being at work. The aim is to find out how cabin crew members feel about their well-being at work, how do they see crisis communication, especially after corona virus pandemic and what kind of thoughts and values they have regarding to the future of working at Airpro.

### **5.1 Qualitative Theme Interviews with Cabin Crew Members of Airpro**

Qualitative research is an approach that explores and understands meanings individuals or groups consider to a social or human problem. The research process involves questions and procedures, general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. Qualitative research focuses on individual meaning and honours an inductive style. The complexity of a researched phenomenon allows room to be innovative and work more within framework the researcher has designed (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018, 4.)

In comparison to other research methods, the qualitative method includes comments by the researcher about their role and their self-reflection. The background and previous experiences of the researcher may shape the direction of the research. (Creswell & Creswell 2018, 180-182.) In qualitative research a researcher and a respondent construct a communicative competency that is the main tool of collecting data. What information a researcher will gain access to depends crucially on the adoption of a role or position (Flick 2014, 160.) The limitations of qualitative research are the generalization of a random sample. When a random sample is selected, it is a representation of that population (Flick 2014, 13). Even though the sample size might be small, there are no rules how much respondents qualitative research must have.

The chosen method for this thesis is qualitative research which allows more in-depth analysis of the researched topic, workplace well-being of cabin crew members. The author is willing to find out cabin crew members' thoughts on well-being at work, ideal internal communication, their values, and future plans at Airpro. Many surveys regarding workplace well-being in organizations are done via online surveys. In comparison to online surveys, an interview offers a possibility to discuss the topics more thoughtfully, offering an interviewee an open approach to their answers that are not limited by scales or ready-made options where to choose from. The interview might raise new questions and subjects that are not thought previously.

Theme interview is a semi-structured interview where questions are divided into different themes. Theme interviews research interviewees subjective experiences and their feelings, thoughts, and experiences (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000, 47-48.) Theme interviews are chosen as a research method of this thesis because it offers a possibility to have more detailed, explained, and profound information on chosen topics. The interview questions are divided into four sections with different themes. The themes of the interviews are based on the theoretical framework as well as wishes of the commissioner party. This enables interviewees to concentrate on one subject at a time. It helps the interviewer to follow written structure of the interview and ease the process of data sampling.

Interviews were held online on Microsoft Teams application. This method is convenient since all cabin crew members are currently working and have different schedules and it might be hard to find time on face-to-face interviews. Despite the thesis language is English, online interviews are spoken in Finnish. This provides a larger vocabulary and mutual understanding since cabin crew members native language is Finnish.

Interviews look for rich and detailed information. Questions are not yes-or-no or agree-or-disagree responses. Questions are open ended and can be adapted into a flow of conversation. A researcher must be prepared to adapt to the flow and shape the order during the interview. It raises a challenge of how to remain the original set of questions while going with the flow of the interview (Flick 2014, 199). Questions in theme interviews of this thesis are semi-structured and open because it enables for more discussion where both the interviewer and the interviewee are active participants. Still, the author remains her neutral attitude and approach in order to achieve an objective perspective.

An important note to responsive interviewing is to build a trust relationship between the interviewer and interviewee and leads to fruitful conversation. The tone is friendly and gentle with a little confrontation. Typically, on qualitative interviews the focus is on what the interviewee has experienced and what they see as important in relation to the study. The goal is to develop a thorough picture from interviewees' points of view, not just a simple answer to the interview questions (Flick 2014, 208.)

## **5.2 Theme Interview Questions – From Well-being to Future Plans**

The original idea was to research cabin crew members of Sunclass Airlines who had a permanent working contract with Airpro, but the author didn't get enough candidates to attend to the interviews. Therefore, the theme interview request was sent to all of the Helsinki based Sunclass Airlines cabin crew members. As a result of it, some questions were

modified in a way that it didn't matter if a cabin crew member had a permanent working contract or a seasonal working contract with Airpro.

The author started to prepare the questions while writing the theoretical framework of the thesis. During the writing part of the framework the author wrote down every question that arise in her mind. When she had a list of questions, she started to divide questions into different groups based on the research questions. Four different themes were formed. The author sent the questionnaire form to the commissioner and requested their opinion and based on their review, some questions were added to the form.

The first pattern of questions are general questions on well-being, the second theme is workplace well-being at Airpro, the third theme involves crisis communication and internal communication, and the fourth theme discovers values and future plans of the cabin crew members. The starting question is a question of what workplace well-being is in general. These questions form the first theme that is workplace well-being defined.

The second theme consist of questions on workplace well-being more precisely in Airpro Ltd, the commission party. Now that the interviewee has given their general view on workplace well-being, their task is to describe how it is experienced at Airpro. This theme includes questions on workplace community at Airpro, how it is described, does the interviewee feel they can actively participate to make changes when it comes to workplace well-being, what are the main resources that affect positively to workplace well-being, and do they recall any changes that has been made lately and how those changes affected on workplace well-being. These questions figure out how respondents view the role of the Airpro when it comes to workplace well-being. Also, two questions on covid-19 pandemic and how it has affected on workplace well-being are asked. These questions are How did the covid-19 pandemic affected to workplace well-being and how did respondents maintain their workplace well-being during the break from flying.

The author deliberated whether it is necessary or not to ask about the work before COVID-19 pandemic because that is a long time ago and memories might have blurred but chose to include a couple of questions since it still is a big variable on workplace well-being especially at aviation industry. The author didn't want to concentrate on COVID-19 and its phenomenon's more deeply because during the writing process of the thesis at the end of the year 2021, it is overly long time from the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, which took place on Spring 2020. Thus, questions on going back to work after COVID-19 pandemic has been added and included in theme three.

Theme three includes questions about what ideal crisis management and/or crisis communication is, where Airpro has succeeded in communication overall and communication regarding returning to work after a break. Then a question where a respondent has to choose between two options regarding crisis communication. It pictures two different ways of communication, and which one is preferred: fast but not precise communication or slow but comprehensive, including detailed information. The rest of the questions at theme three are regarding going back to work after a long break from flying. In this case, a long break refers to half a year to one and a half year from flying. How communication after a long break was described, where Airpro has succeeded and is there any area to develop and which communication channel is preferred to be the prior. The goal is to form an ideal picture of communication that is preferred and based on the answers a communication plan of the company can be modified.

The fourth theme focuses on values and the future. The interviewer has picked some key values from a list of values that are previously been used in Airpro's meetings. A respondent is given an opportunity to mention their own ideal values that comes to their mind. They are asked to describe how the values are seen in their work. Questions on future starts with asking how they see the future at Airpro. They are also asked what they expect from Airpro and do they have any concerns on future at Airpro.

The author wants to finish the interview with the final question that concludes the whole conversation; If an interviewee could change one thing that would significantly improve workplace well-being, what would it be? The question sets the interviewee to weigh their previous opinions and to prioritize between them.

### **5.3 Data Collection of the Theme Interviews**

Sample size depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what will be credible, what can be done with available time and resources (Patton 2002, 244). In this research, the author was aiming to get 8 to 10 interviews since the total amount of cabin crew members is currently 39. The author managed to get six interviews.

Interview recruiting started by sending emails first to all the cabin crew members who had a permanent working contract to Airpro. The author wrote a letter where she briefly described the main themes and the reasons why it could be beneficial to attend to the interview. When the author didn't receive many responds, she decided to widen the scope of the respondents to all Helsinki based cabin crew members who work for Airpro and Sun-class Airlines. She got the commissioner's permission and as a result, some questions were modified so the question format fitted to both groups, permanent and seasonal

workers. The setbacks didn't stop here, after sending the invitation the researcher still didn't get enough answers so she decided to send individual, more personal invitations. She picked contacts from different backgrounds, both genders and different work experience in years in order to get as versatile group as possible. Although the number of interviews is smaller than expected, the author thinks interviews can be seen creditable enough since the total amount of targeted cabin crew members is currently 39, where ten has a permanent working contract and the rest are seasonal workers. Also, this number excludes new cabin crew members that are about to graduate to become a cabin crew member for Airpro.

Six theme interviews were held in November 2021 on Microsoft Teams application. The average duration of the interview was around 30 minutes. All six interviewees were working at Airpro, operating Sunclass Airlines flights. Any background information about the interviewees were not asked in order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees. Cabin crew members that are operating Sunclass Airlines' flights and working at Airpro are a group of 39, therefore information on gender, age or experience in years might have threatened the anonymity of the interviewees.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. When transcription was done, the author pinpointed the most important comments and subjects of each interview and made a recap from them. When she had six different recaps, she collected the information together and made another summary of all interviews included. The language of the interviews was Finnish because all cabin crew members' native language is Finnish and the author thought conversation is more natural, fruitful, and descriptive when speaking in Finnish.

## 6 Results

In this chapter, all six theme interviews are looked thoroughly starting from theme one, workplace well-being and what questions the theme included, then proceeding to theme two that is workplace well-being at Airpro. The interview continues to theme three, communication during and after corona virus and theme four, values and future expectation of the cabin crew members.

### 6.1 It Takes Two to Create a Vibrant Workplace

At the beginning of the interview respondents are greeted friendly and the author recaps that interviews are confidential and asks if they agree to recording of the interview for data sampling.

The theme interview started with a question one on workplace well-being as a concept and general assumptions what workplace well-being is. This question aims to spark the conversation flow and evokes the interviewee to think their idea of workplace well-being, what does it include and who is responsible of workplace well-being. Three interviewees mentioned occupational health care system being a part of workplace well-being. The feeling of being supported and encouraged by an organization were mentioned to be an important matter.

Interviewee 4 "It is a broad concept that has different sub-divisions such as measuring working hours and rest hours, taking care of employee's health, and offering occupational health care services. It is also how you're treated and accepted at work"

Another point of view stood out when discussing workplace well-being in general. One interviewee pointed out it feels like a forced manner that has to be there.

Interviewee 3 "Workplace well-being is important but I feel like it is like some kind of label glued on top of the organizations' image to look better and as a result of it, all an employee gets is some sort of a benefit card"

Interviewees were asked who is responsible of workplace well-being and all six interviewees agreed both sides need to make an effort to create a vibrant workplace. After discussing on a general level of workplace well-being, the interview continued to the second pattern of questions. The second theme was workplace well-being precisely at Airpro. Interviewees described the cabin crew department to be a warm, open, and friendly community where everyone knows and supports each other.

Interviewee 2: "Our cabin crew department is close; everyone is working towards the same goal and all of us knows each other. It feels easy to ask for help from the supervisors and you can always trust the co-workers."

However, most of them felt a cabin crew department of the targeted airline is a separate unit and all of the six interviewees didn't identify themselves that much of an employee of Airpro.

Interviewee 1: "Well, the arrangement between two organizations is a bit complicated. It is so easy to identify you're working for the airline when you're actually not working for them."

Interviewee 3: "In my point of view it is a complex situation. We, as cabin crew members, are a part of Airpro but we're also a part of Sunclass Airlines."

Airpro's role as an employer was seen unclear, distant, and somehow incoherent. The difference between a certain cabin crew department workplace well-being and workplace well-being at Airpro was remarkably vast and all of the six interviewees followed the same perspective.

Interviewee 4: " I have to say it feels like we're a separated, detached group. Sometimes it's hard to perceive which one between the two organizations is responsible of certain matters"

Cabin crew members' opinions were divided when asked if they felt like they can develop workplace well-being or have an impact and make a change. Two out of six interviews felt like it is possible to affect or develop directly to workplace well-being at Airpro where two interviews didn't think they could have an impact. Interviewee one pointed out regular questionnaires cabin crew department have received in the recent years. A questionnaire consists of questions on supervisors, colleagues, and workplace conditions as well as workplace well-being but the results of these questionnaires have not been gone thoroughly together.

Interviewee 1: "I feel like any concrete changes has not been made. When it comes to questionnaires like this, I hope an employee would receive a summary of what have been done based on the results and what is yet to be done. At the moment, it feels like the results end up being background data

and numbers without any real value. For example, a unit somewhere gets a score three point something, another unit four point something. Does it really tell anything about state of well-being?”

A theme interview continued with a question of actions that have affected in a positive way to workplace well-being. Interviewees were given examples such as employee benefit card, personal discussions, feedback, and a support of the work community. Four out of six mentioned a benefit card to be a rewarding although, two interviewees said the amount currently is relatively small and should be greater in order to get the full benefit. Four interviewees felt it's important to get feedback from the employer, both positive and constructive.

Interviewee 1: “It is essential to get personal feedback, it should be given more often, more regularly even though quite often it might feel difficult”

Interviewee 2 phrases that well-being at work is not only about how things are done at work but also about giving the opportunity to connect outside the work environment. Free-time activities, company parties and events offered by an organization are a good incentive that connects colleagues in a new way. Two interviewees have experienced that cabin crew members are even more motivated and co-workers have a good spirit after starting to work again after the break.

The next question proposed if interviewees wanted to point out any changes made recently and what kind of effect it had on workplace well-being. Interviewee 3 pointed out new arrangements regarding to new crew room and construction work at terminal one is a factor that causes stress when a walking distance from a crew room to the gate is relatively long.

Working as a cabin crew member can be tiring and a rest period between shifts is needed. Cabin crew members were asked about working life and free time balance and five out of six cabin crew members were satisfied on their work schedules and balance between work and days off. One interviewee felt they had more hours than expected and at first it was challenging to balance between school and work but it has turned to be alright.

Three questions were asked about COVID-19 and the aim was to research the internal communication during COVID-19. Three out of six interviewees mentioned internal communication was better than expected during the first outbreak of COVID-19. Under the circumstances, nothing would have been done differently according to five out of six interviewees. One interviewee would have wanted more support and felt layoff of cabin crew

members was unfair and not taken care of in a good manner. The last question related to COVID-19 figured out how cabin crew members stayed resilient during layoff. Three interviewees were keeping an active lifestyle and doing sports. Two interviewees mentioned it was important to see friends and relatives as much as possible, taking into account the restrictions on COVID-19.

## 6.2 Turbulent Times Require Clear Communication

Moving to the third theme, the first question requests interviewees to define what an ideal crisis communication or internal communication consists of. In an ideal situation it would be straightforward, clear, and coherent. Communication reaches everyone and the receiver of the message is always left with an option to ask for more details, describes interviewee 2. Interviewee 1 focuses on the basics of successful internal communication as follows:

Interviewee 1: "It all starts with a proper introduction: who is the sender of the message. Without this information, it leaves a rude impression. There is no such thing as too much information, especially in a crisis situation is a vital thing to tell as much information as possible. Transparency is the key to a successful communication"

In the next question interviewees had to make a choice between two difference scenarios. Would they rather choose a crisis communication that is fast, reactive but not yet detailed or rather information that might be slow but profound and informative? All six cabin crew members chose a communication style where reaction is fast although it might miss some details.

Interviewee 6: "I would choose fast reaction; you can always add that "we're return as soon as we'll get more information" Missing information can be added later on. Some kind of information is better to be offered right away"

It has been a remarkable change when comparing the internal communication during COVID-19 pandemic and internal communication after going back to work. Most of the cabin crew members would have wanted more specific details and receive information sooner.

Interviewee 5: "The communication regarding going back to work was vague, surprising, and vital details were missing for example what kind of

work contract we'll have. It surprised me that I had the information on the specific dates going back to work only prior two weeks.

Interviewee 1: "Now that Airpro's operations have grown rapidly and the organization has a new customer company at cabin crew services, internal communication has been weak. We have not received monthly letters from the company that we used to receive earlier."

Interviewee 3: "The information should be received before a certain event is current. If there are any changes made on rosters or events that require participation, the message should be sent beforehand, not afterwards."

Interviewee 4: "When enough information is not provided, all kinds of rumours start to spread meanwhile no one has the correct information"

Even though there are things that can be done differently, Airpro has succeeded to arrange going back to work smoothly. Interviewee 2 says that they have always got an answer to their questions and everything has been flexible and possible to arrange. Interviewee 4 said that when the information has been received, it has been comprehensive and profound.

More detailed question on different communication channels and what was expected to be the prior channel on important messages is useful to the commissioner. All six interviewees said e-mail is the most important channel when it comes to internal communication.

### **6.3 Does the Future Look Brighter than Before?**

The last set of questions and the last theme addresses values and future career at Airpro. Interviewees were asked to mention important values at work and how the values are contributed to their work. The author named some core values that interviewees could choose from or they were given an opportunity to say whichever values across their mind. The core values were progress, clarity, bravery, equality, compassion, and trustworthiness. From the list above, equality was seen as the most important value, four out of six interviewees mentioned equality.

Interviewee 1: "Definitely equality. Everyone must be treated equally and the salary has to be equal for everyone."

Interviewee 5: "We all would like to have more equal treatment."

Interviewee 4: "Equality as in everyone can be themselves and feel respected as who they are."

Another values cabin crew members pointed out were friendliness, clarity, compassion, straightforwardness, and bravery.

Interviewee 3: "Bravery has always been an important value for me. An organization can be brave and express their opinion but what really matters is the ability to receive criticism and stood behind it."

The future as a cabin crew member at Airpro was seen brighter than before yet there are still concerns what will happen at the future. The biggest concern everyone addressed was the ongoing negotiations about the collective labor agreement. Four out of six interviewees said collective agreement worries them the most at the moment.

The closing question of the interview was "If you were about to change one thing that would improve workplace well-being significantly, what would it be?". This question is meant to conclude the interview and it's a question were an interviewee needs to evaluate what the biggest factor would be when improving workplace well-being.

Interestingly, there were only two same answers. Interviewee 1 would improve the internal communication, where interviewee 2 would like to have better employee benefits to everyone. Interviewee 3 said the salary doesn't compete with the demand of the work and interviewee 4 would concentrate on work contracts as a priority. Interviewee 5 said working directly to the airline would improve workplace well-being significantly and interviewee 6 agrees with the amount of the salary to be too small.

## 7 Discussion

The aim of data analysis is to interpretate and divide the collected material with following aims: to make statements about direct and indirect dimensions and structures of the samples and what is represented in it. The final goal is to form statements that can be generalized in one way or other (Flick 2014, 370.) The author felt the main findings of the research were easy to spot on. The analysis of texts may pursue two opposite goals. One is to reveal and discover statements and apply them into context in the text. The other goal is to refer the original text by paraphrasing, summarizing, or categorizing (Flick 2014, 371.)

As discussed in the chapter two, all interviewees mentioned that a workplace well-being is a set of different elements combined together. These elements are divided into physical, psychological, and social areas. All six interviewees agreed the responsibility of having a great workplace well-being belong to both parties, to the employee and the employer.

A significant cap can be seen in the answers when cabin crew members were asked to describe the work community at Airpro. Cabin crew department of Sunclass Airlines felt they bond together a strong and close community, whereas their role at Airpro was seen distant. Although the airline has a strong history with Airpro, still cabin crew members don't identify themselves working for Airpro. Balancing between two organizations might be problematic if the role of Airpro is seen unclear.

Three out of six cabin crew members didn't see tangible rewards being that important whereas intangible ones were more rewarding. That thought supports the idea that most employees highly value the intangible rewards of their work, such as developing and applying their capabilities and knowing their contributions are valued (Lowe 2020, 170). When we expand our ways of measure well-being from metrics to include less-tangible benefits, such as support and health promotion, this is a clear the company values and promotes well-being of their employees (Lowe 2020, 270).

An interesting finding was made before leading the interview to third theme that consisted of questions on communication and especially communication regarding coming back to work after a break. Communication, or lack of it was mentioned in many interviews before going into any questions discussing communication.

On the other hand, the communication during COVID-19 were successful and majority of the cabin crew members were satisfied that they were updated regularly and given a chance to discuss if any worries or concerns would have emerged.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter 4.1, Airpro has expanded their operations. As a result of the operational changes, internal communication has not succeeded to offer enough information about the changes made and has left cabin crew members confused.

Cabin crew members value feedback and feel personal development discussions are important. They felt it's essential to get personalized feedback and not just review different aspect on a scale one to five. This finding validates the recent health sciences officers view that it is not about who scores the lowest turnover rates or have the highest maintenance of quality personnel. It is about caring for their people and making sure they are an employer of choice (Lowe 2020, 271.) Evaluation is not about collecting data but also an opportunity for learning and development in an organization (Lowe 2020, 276). People-oriented values are usually a boost for setting and meeting healthy workplace goals (Lowe 2020, 270).

It's might not be comfortable to go through trouble areas, but a positive mindset might help. Problem areas should be looked at with the question of how an organization can support better their employees or work unit to be healthy, safe, and productive (Lowe 2020, 277).

## **7.1 Conclusion**

The objective was to find out how cabin crew members of Airpro feel about their workplace well-being, has Airpro succeeded to maintain a good work atmosphere and how the future for the cabin crew members of Airpro look like? Based on the theme interviews, the main findings are as follows: internal communication is not currently in line with the expectations of cabin crew members. Big changes, new operations, new responsibilities. This is the main reason to emphasize more on communication between the departments. Airpro has been facing big organizational changes, the focus has not been on internal communication where it should have been. The importance of communication highlights when working in an environment where physical office or regular meet ups are not everyday life.

In many organizations it is common to have yearly surveys on workplace well-being that are sent to employees. However, these types of surveys provide numerical data and they don't necessarily answer to all the questions and there is a risk an employee does not answer to open ended questions. This research provided more deeper analysis or the state of workplace well-being at Airpro. The research is beneficial to Airpro, especially when they revealed the new strategy plan for 2025. One of the goals is to increase employee satisfaction by 20%.

The author recommends a commission party to pay attention to the internal communication at first. On aviation industry it might feel like flying from one crisis to another. The working environment is a unique spot where everything is based on change. Cabin crew members need to be informed as fast as possible and later on provide as detailed information as possible.

## **7.2 Reliability and Validity**

The quality of the research should be taken into consideration during the whole research process. When it comes to reliability, it is important to take into consideration everything the interviewee has said and their point of view and reflect that on the results of the research (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2015, 184-189).

The biggest problem when doing this qualitative research is the amount of the interviews. The author managed to get only six interviews whereas a bigger number would have given more credibility to the research. Luckily, a cabin crew department is quite compact, in total 39 cabin crew members so the research can be seen reliable at some level.

The role of the researcher was objective, yet the author actively attended to the conversation and managed the conversation to be fluent. The role as a cabin crew member might have eased to build a trust relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. At first the author balanced how to participate to discussion without proposing her own thoughts and ideas into the conversation.

## **7.3 Own Learning**

I got familiar with the habit of writing where the purpose is to write something each day or at least engage in the process of thinking or collect information (Creswell & Creswell 2018, 81). I wrote a thesis diary during the process of writing thesis. I wrote down the tasks of each day and how many hours spent on writing the thesis. This made it easier to evaluate how much time should be reserved and to schedule writing and staying on the right track.

Sometimes it was hard to concentrate on one subject at a time and I familiarized myself with Pomodoro technique. The main idea is to concentrate on one subject and work intensively for 25 minutes, then have a 5-minute break. When completed four Pomodoro's in a row, a longer break can be taken (Cirillo Consulting 2021). This technique helped me enormously and with this technique I remembered to take breaks too.

Overall, the whole thesis writing process taught me a lot. When I wrote the theoretical framework, I learned critical thinking and to rely on academical sources. At the research process the most time-consuming phase after the theory was transcription of the interviews. 30-minute interview took around 3-4 hours to transcribe. When my schedule was already tight, I should have reserved more time on transcription. I managed to keep on the original timetable, although sometimes I had to wait that the commissioner answer replies before going forward.

I had some obstacles during the writing process of the thesis. After sending interview requests, I didn't manage to get enough replies. I had to make quick decisions to proceed, and this taught me to make plans in case something unexpected happened. It also taught me resilience and stress management skills.

The writing process of the thesis was extremely fascinating getting to know in-depth of different aspects of workplace well-being and how it should be maintained. I truly hope every organization realizes the importance of employee engagement and satisfaction and want to see it as an asset, not as an expense.

## References

Achim, C., Xiaowen, F., Zheng, L. & Tae, O. 2020. Post pandemic aviation market recovery: Experience and lessons from China. Elsevier Ltd. URL:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2020.101971>. Accessed: 26 November 2021.

Airpro 2021. About us. URL: <https://www.airpro.fi/en/about-us/>. Accessed: 11 October 2021.

Airpro 2021. Airpon ja Finnairin yhteistyö laajenee matkustamopalveluihin. URL: <https://www.airpro.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset2/airpron-ja-finnairin-yhteistyo-laajenee-matkustamopalveluihin/>. Accessed: 29 November 2021.

Airpro 2021. Your journey is our Destination – Our new Strategy is Published. URL: <https://www.airpro.fi/en/highlights/news2/your-journey-is-our-destination--our-new-strategy-is-published/>. Accessed: 2 December 2021.

Arepo Solutions Ltd 2021. Ground Operations Software System. What is IATA's ISAGO certification? URL: <https://www.ground-ops.com/accidents-incident-software/iata-isago.aspx>. Accessed: 11 October 2021.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2013. Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners. SAGE Publications Ltd. London.

Burton, J. 2010. WHO Healthy Workplace Framework and Model: Background and Supporting Literature and Practices. Canada.

Cambridge Dictionary 2021. Crisis. Cambridge University Press. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/crisis>. Accessed: 11 October 2021.

Cambridge Dictionary 2021. Transformative. Cambridge University Press. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/transformative>. Accessed: 11 October 2021.

Cambridge Dictionary. 2021. Well-being. Cambridge University Press. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/well-being>. Accessed: 3 October 2021.

Coombs, W. T. 2018. Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding. 5th ed. SAGE Publications Ltd. London.

Cirillo Consulting. 2021. The Pomodoro Technique. URL: <https://francescoci-rillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique>. Accessed: 2 December 2021.

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. 2018. Research Design. 5th ed. SAGE Publications Ltd. Glasgow.

Davis, Tchiki. 2019. What is Well-Being? Definition, Types and Well-Being Skills. Psychology Today. URL: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201901/what-is-well-being-definition-types-and-well-being-skills>. Accessed: 3 October 2021.

Doganis, R. Flying off Course. 5th ed. Routledge. New York.

EASA 2021. Cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organisation. URL: <https://www.easa.europa.eu/domains/international-cooperation/cooperation-with-ICAO>. Accessed: 5 November 2021.

Flick, U. 2014. An Introduction to Qualitative Research. 5th ed. SAGE Publications Ltd. Thousand Oaks.

Frandsen, F. & Johansen, W. 2017. Organizational Crisis Communication. SAGE Publications Ltd. London.

Graham, A., Papatheodorou, A. & Forsyth, P. 2008. Aviation and Tourism. Implications for Leisure Travel. Ashgate Publishing Limited. England.

Görlich, Y. & Stadelmann, D. 2020. Mental Health of Flying Cabin Crews: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic. URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7773923/>. Accessed: 9 October 2021.

Hernandez, V. 2020. The Collapse of Thomas Cook: What Happened and Why. URL: <https://internationalbanker.com/brokerage/the-collapse-of-thomas-cook-what-happened-and-why/>. Accessed: 25 November 2021.

Hirsijärvi, S. & Hurme, H. 2000. Tutkimushaastattelu. Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö. Yliopistopaino. Helsinki.

Houghton, J.D. & Neck, C.P. 2002. The revised self-leadership questionnaire. Journal of Managerial Psychology. 17, pp. 672-691.

- ICAO Safety. 2021. Minimum Cabin Crew Requirements. URL: <https://www.icao.int/safety/airnavigation/OPS/CabinSafety/Pages/Minimum-Cabin-Crew-Requirements.aspx>. Accessed: 5 November 2021.
- IATA 2017. Global Passenger Survey. International Air Transport Association. Geneva.
- Jabe, M. 2012. Työhyvinvoinnin Työkirja. Voitko hyvin työssäsi? Yrityskirjat Oy.
- Jaques, T. 2014. Issue and Crisis Management: Exploring Issues, Crises, Risk and Reputation. Oxford University Press. Sydney.
- Kovoor-Misra, S. 2020. Crisis Management: Resilience and Change. SAGE Publications, Inc. Denver.
- Law Insider. 2021. Block Hour definition. URL: <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/block-hour>. Accessed: 11 October 2021.
- Loehr, J. & Schwartz, T. 2001. The making of a corporate athlete. Harvard Business Review. pp. 120-128.
- Lowe, G. 2020. Creating Healthy Organizations. Rotman-UTP Publishing. Toronto.
- Lukkarila, J. 2021. The Employee Experience of Cabin Crew During Covid-19. Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. URL: <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:amk-202105178970>. Accessed: 11 October 2021.
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. 2021. Wellbeing at Work. URL: <https://stm.fi/en/well-being-at-work/data-and-research>. Accessed: 3 October 2021.
- Morse, J. M. 2000. Determining sample size. Qualitative Health Research, 3, 5 pp. 147-149.
- Patton, M. Q. 2002. Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. 3rd ed. Sage. Thousand Oaks.
- Rodriquez, A. & O'Connell, J. 2017. Can low-cost long-haul carriers replace Charter airlines in the long-haul market? A European perspective. SAGE Publications. URL:

<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354816617724017>.  
Accessed 26 November 2021.

Seligman, M. E. 2011. Building resilience. *Harvard Business Review*. pp 1-8.

Veil, S. 2011. Mindful Learning in Crisis Management. University of Kentucky. URL:  
<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.925.5016&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.  
Accessed: 8 November 2021.

World Health Organization. 2021. Coronavirus disease (Covid-19). URL:  
[https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1). Accessed: 28 November 2021.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Semi-structured theme interview questions

#### Haastattelukysymykset

##### **Osio 1: Yleinen**

1. Mitä tulee mieleesi sanasta työhyvinvointi?
2. Millaisista asioista työhyvinvointi koostuu?
3. Mikä on työnantajan vastuu/kuka on vastuussa yllä mainituista asioista?

##### **Osio 2: Teemana työhyvinvointi Airrossa**

1. Miten kuvailisit työyhteisöä Airrossa?
2. Miten koet työhyvinvoinnin Airrossa?
3. Koetko pystyväsi vaikuttamaan tai kehittämään työhyvinvointiin liittyviä asioita työpaikallasi?
4. Minkälaiset keinot vaikuttavat mielestäsi myönteisesti työhyvinvointiin? Esim. Edenred-kortti, henk. koht. keskustelut, palautteet, yhteisöllisyys
5. Tuleeko mieleen muutoksia, mitä on viime aikoina tehty työpaikalla? Millainen vaikutus niillä on ollut työhyvinvointiin?
6. Miten työajan/vapaa-ajan tasapaino kohdallasi toteutuu? Muutoksia ennen vs. jälkeen koronan?
7. Millä tavoin COVID-19 pandemia vaikutti työhyvinvointiin?
8. Millaista tukea sait Airprolta? Mitä olisi voinut tehdä toisin?
9. Millä tavoin ylläpidit hyvinvointiasi/työkykyäsi lomautuksen/tauon ajan?

##### **Osio 3: Teemana viestintä/töihin paluu tauon jälkeen**

1. Millaista on mielestäsi hyvä viestintä/kriisiviestintä?
2. Mietitään tätä viestinnän näkökulmasta: Kumpi on mielestäsi tärkeämpää; nopea reagointi, vaikka tiedot puutteellisia vai ei niin nopea reagointi, mutta tiedot perusteltuja ja täsmällisiä?
3. Millaista viestintä oli töihin paluuseen liittyen tauon jälkeen?
4. Missä asioissa Airpro on onnistunut töihin paluuseen liittyvässä viestinnässä? Esimerkkejä toimenpiteistä
5. Missä olisi kehitettävää?

6. Miten toivoisit työnantajan viestivän tärkeistä asioista? Esim. näistä kanavista, mikä olisi toimivin: Outlook, Teams-palaveri, Whatsapp, tapaaminen tai puhelinsoitto?

#### **Osio 4: Arvot/tulevaisuus**

1. Mitkä arvot seuraavista (tukisanoja arvolistasta esim. edistys, selkeys, yhteisöllisyys, rohkeus, tasa-arvo, intohimo, luotettavuus) ovat sinulle tärkeitä työpaikalla? Miten ne näkyvät työssäsi?
2. Miltä tulevaisuus matkustamohenkilökunnan jäsenenä Airprossa näyttää?
3. Mitä asioita odotat tulevaisuudessa Airprolta? Mitkä asiat huolettavat?

**Viimeinen kysymys: Jos saisit muuttaa yhden asian, joka parantaisi työhyvinvointia merkittävästi, mikä se olisi?**