Servant leadership and experience of job satisfaction and job autonomy among residents of small Icelandic town.

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ABSTRACT

Small rural towns often face challenges in recruiting qualified staff or depopulation of the community. Job satisfaction and positive work experiences are important for employees and for the growth of companies and of the society in general. Limited knowledge is available about work experience of individuals working and living in small communities in Iceland. Research on turnover in companies in Middle East Iceland show variation in turnover rates and this leads to some questions about if there is different perception of job satisfaction and other working aspects among residents of Egilsstaðir. Previous studies show that there is a positive relationship between servant leadership and positive job outcomes, such as job autonomy and job satisfaction. To further knowledge about this matter it was decided to conduct a qualitative study to explore the topic with the potentials to add new insights into this area of knowledge. The purpose of this study is to provide deeper understanding and knowledge about employees perspectives and perceptions of leadership, job satisfaction and job autonomy at their workplaces and to explore if these views reflect servant leadership.

A qualitative research method was used and interviews conducted among participants living in a small town in Iceland and working in different jobs e.g. municipality office, hotel, gas station, discount store and kindergarten. The researcher used open-ended questions about attitudes towards communication, collaboration, leadership and management as well as perception of job satisfaction and autonomy at work. Data was analysed with reference to models on servant leadership and previous studies on job autonomy and job satisfaction.

Three themes emerged from the data: Enjoying own knowledge, freedom and flexibility, Feedback and rewards and Plan, policy and goals. Participants experience autonomy in their jobs and they are satisfied with their work. They experience flexibility which helps them to balance their personal life with work but formal feedback and rewards from their managers seems limited. However, participants perceived supporting leadership at work reflecting servant leadership and they also experienced of job satisfaction. The results of this study are in line with previous studies showing a link between servant leadership, job autonomy and job satisfaction. The study has the potencial to add new insights into this area of knowledge.

Key concepts: servant leadership, job satisfaction, job autonomy, rural community.

ÚTDRÁTTUR

Lítil sveitafélög standa oft frammi fyrir erfiðleikum við að ráða hæft starfsfólk í vinnu eða koma í veg fyrir fólksfækkun í samfélaginu. Starfsánægja og jákvæð starfsreynsla eru mikilvæg atriði fyrir starfsmenn og vöxt fyrirtækisins og fyrir samfélagið almennt. Takmörkuð þekking er fyrir hendi um starfsreynslu einstaklinga sem starfa og búa í litlum samfélögum á Íslandi. Rannsóknir á starfsmannaveltu í fyrirtækjum á mið Austurlandi sýna breytileika í starfsmannaveltu og gefa vísbendingar um að ekki liggur ljóst fyrir hver er reynsla fólks af starfstengdum þáttum meðal íbúa á Egilsstöðum. Fyrri rannsóknir sýna jákvætt samband á milli þjónandi forystu og sjálfræði í starfi og starfsánægju. Til að auka þekkingu á þessu sviði var ákveðið að gera eigindlega rannsókn til að kanna efnið með það í huga að varpa ljósi á rannsóknarefnið. Tilgangur rannsóknarinnar var að dýpka skilning og þekkingu um reynslu og viðhorf starfsmanna til forystu, starfsánægju og sjálfræði í vinnu og til að kanna hvort þessi sjónarmið endurspegli þjónandi forystu.

Í þessari rannsókn var eigindleg rannsóknaraðferð notuð og voru tekin viðtöl við þátttakendur sem búa í litlum bæ og starfa í mismunandi störfum t.d. í sveitafélagsskrifsofu, hóteli, bensínstöð, matvöruverslun og leikskóla. Rannsakandi notaði opnar spurningar til að kanna viðhorf þátttakenda til samskipta, samvinnu, forystu og stjórnunar á vinnustöðum og líka til að kanna viðhorf til starfsánægju og sjálfræði í starfi. Gögnin voru túlkuð í ljósi þjónandi forystu og fyrri rannsóknum um starfsánægju og sjálfræði í starfi.

Þrjú þemu komu fram við greiningu gagna og þau eru: Njóta eigin þekkingar, frelsis og sveigjanleika; Endurgjöf og umbun og Áætlun, stefna og markmið. Þátttakendur upplifa sjálfræði í starfi og þeir eru ánægðir með starfið sitt. Þeir upplifa sveigjanleika í starfi sem hjálpar þeim að halda jafnvægi milli persónulegs lífs og vinnu, en formleg endurgjöf og umbun frá stjórnendum þeirra virðist vera takmörkuð. Þátttakendur hafa reynslu af forystu sem endurspeglar þjónandi forystu og þeir hafa einnig upplifað ánægju í starfi. Niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar eru í takt við fyrri rannsóknir sem sýna tengsl milli þjónandi forystu, starfsánægju og sjálfræði í starfi. Rannsóknin getur veitt nýja innsýn í rannsóknarviðfangsefnið og getur verið framlag til þekkingar á sviðinu.

Lykilhugtök: þjónandi forysta, starfsánægja, sjálfræði í starfi, sveitafélög.

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This project is my own work and the result of a survey that I conducted. Where work of other authors is mentioned, all citations are being quoted according to the rules.

Reykjavík, 02. May 2016

Marta Kaminska

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INTRODUCTION

Small rural towns often have to face challenges such as acquiring available qualified staff or depopulation of the community. Icelandic data shows that population development varies according to location. Population seems to be growing only in big cities and its surroundings and decreasing in smaller areas (Byggðastofnun, 2014). People often decide to look for jobs in larger urban towns to get better compensation, friendlier working environment, better life/work balance and more opportunities to grow at work (Muniscope an Icurr Service, 2012). Therefore, it is important to shed light on how people feel about their work in small towns, their attitudes toward management and leadership and what could be done to improve it, so they will decide against leaving small towns. The government should focus on creating an environment that is favorable for human capital creation. Otherwise, people will seek better opportunities elsewhere (Matovac, Bilas, & Franc, 2010).

Human capital of each community consists of individuals with skills and capacities that are put to productive use, can be a more important determinant in delivering long-term economic success, than virtually any other factor. Thus to develop a community that performs well we need to develop a healthy, educated and productive labor force, which will benefit both the community as a whole and, its individuals (World Economic Forum, 2015).

Literature shows that one of the factors that have an impact on job performance is job autonomy (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997). Autonomy leads to hands-on learning, more opportunities for the employees to interact with the environment, get more knowledge and become more involved in the production process. As a result, employees gain broader understanding and ownership of problems and take a more proactive view of performance´s which ultimately leads to better performance (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997). Moreover, high levels of job autonomy are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction as the result of employees having more power to decide about their effort, actions and schedules (Saragih, 2011). Satisfied workers are less likely to quit their job; they have more willingness to „go that extra mile", and they perform better, which leads to reduced cost to the organization, therefore giving it a better competitive advantage in the market (Society for Human Resource Management, 2012).

One of the influencing factors on employees´satisfaction and autonomy is leadership, in particular, servant leadership. A servant leader has a primary focus on followers, and his

behavior and actions are compatible with followers focus. His main goal is to fulfill followers most necessary needs (as the need for autonomy and satisfaction) and lead them to achieve their full potential (Patterson, 2003). Servant leader makes sure that he empowers his followers. Empowered employees take responsibility for their actions, take initiative, are creative and learn from their mistakes, which leads them to experience autonomy that in turn results in increased task performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). Also, a strong relationship has been established between servant leadership and job satisfaction. According to many types of research, servant leadership contributes to the satisfied workforce (Guillaume, Honeycutt, & Savage-Austin, 2013).

Servant leadership, job autonomy, and job satisfaction are important concepts for employees in general regardless of the kind of job they are performing and the place they are living. Job satisfaction is important for the individuals themselves and their quality of life. Also, satisfied employees are important for their workplace as well as for their community. Therefore, increased knowledge about attitudes towards these concepts among residents of a small community can increase our understanding about worklife of people in a small community and provide knowledge about potential improvements in the area.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, a limited number of studies have been conducted in Egilsstaðir that focus on these particular concepts. That is why the researcher decided to investigate attitudes and views towards leadership, job satisfaction, and job autonomy and to explore if these views reflect servant leadership among residents of the small Icelandic town, Egilsstaðir.

About Fljótsdalshérað - Egilsstaðir

The central part of Fljótsdalshérað district is located in towns Egilsstaðir and Fellabær that support a strong rural community with thriving agriculture areas and small communities in Hallormsstað, Eiðum og Brúarási. The municipality is broad, and it is the most extensive in Iceland. Its size is 8.884 square kilometers and as of the 1st December 2013 there were 3,464 residents in this community (Fljótsdalshérað, n.d.).

The centrum of Fljótsdalshérað is Egilsstaðir and Fellabær. The centrum is at crossroads and has thriven because of smooth communications by air and land. This has made a variety of business and service, both private and public, to thrive. Egilsstaðir is at main crossroads with the most trafficked intersection roads in the area. (Fljótsdalshérað, n.d.).

Most of the residents in this town are employed in the service industry and public administration. In recent years, in Egilsstaðir and Fellabær transportation, trade and service center has evolved tremendously. The most important point of the town is the airport partly due to its tourism that is also flourishing. This city has a diverse variety of hotels, accommodations, restaurants, and stores and there are about 100 sheep and cow farms around this place. In Egilsstaðir, you can also find a health clinic, nursing home, dentist and animal doctor. (Fljótsdalshérað, n.d.).

For years, the schooling system has had a big impact on the community of this town. The schools of craftsmanship and homemaker are located in Hallormstað, and it has worked for decades. A high school in Egilsstaðir has been active since 1979 and about 5 hundred of students have attended this school during its lifetime. Office Austurbrú is also located in Egilsstaðir, and it offers a variety of courses and distance education. Kindergartens are found in three places in the town as well as primary schools. In the town, there is also a library, museum, sports center, athletics and football field, pool, community center, companionship and service center (Fljótsdalshérað, n.d.).

Structure of the study

Chapter one discusses the most relevant literature on, job autonomy, job satisfaction and servant leadership and considers in particular how these factors are linked to each other.

Chapter two sets out the conceptual framework of the study, presents the study objectives and the method that was used, research approach and design. At the end of this chapter is the discussion of ethical aspects of the study.

Chapter three presents findings from the analysis of the data and it is divided into three sections representing three themes that emerged from the data, i.e. 1) Enjoying own knowledge, freedom and flexibility; 2) Feedback and reward; 3) Plan, policy and goals.

In chapter four the findings of the study are discussed in light of theory and previous research. In this chapter the strengths and limitations of the study are discussed.

In chapter five, main conclusions are presented and the contribution of the study to knowledge.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1   Introduction

Recruitment and retention of employees on positions across many departments, especially those that require some degree of specialization, can be challenging in small rural municipalities. Usually, the lack of financial resources is seen as the major reason for small municipalities´ being not able to attract and retain the workforce. But other factors play an important role in this topic as well. For example, strategic directives to attract available qualified staff include an examination of compensation practices, examination of work environment strategies that help with life/work balance, pointing to benefits resulting from working in a small rural town, and creating opportunities for young persons to grow in their work. Implementation of these strategies can help small rural towns to compete with larger urban towns in acquiring and retaining qualified municipal staff (Muniscope an Icurr Service, 2012).

Research on work environment and turnover in Middle East Iceland is limited. Only one research on a turnover in Egilsstaðir and Fellabær has been conducted. This research focused on measuring employees turnover and investigating attitudes of employees toward job satisfaction, personnel management, and communication in two workplaces. The results of this study show a great difference between turnover in the two companies. However, in both places turnover has decreased in years 2009-2010. Employees of this workplaces seem to be satisfied with personnel management, communication and job satisfaction (Hulda Dagbjört Jónasdóttir, 2011).

Another factor that small municipalities have to face is depopulation of the community. Overview of years 1998-2014 shows that population development in Iceland varies according to location. A number of people have increased significantly in Reykjavík and its surroundings. Some stability has been in the growth of the population in Akureyri and close vicinity of it as well as in the Middle East. Almost everywhere else the number of residents has reduced (Byggðastofnun, 2014). It is among the roles of Icelandic Regional Development Institute to monitor this development and provide a sound basis for drawing up plans for the development and strengthening of small communities in Iceland (Byggðastofnun, 2014).

For many years, it has been said that capital is the foundation for developing powerful industry, but today we know that this is no longer true. Well performing and enthusiastic labor is the base of growing industries (Dessler, 2015). Changes that are taking place in all businesses force companies to become more competitive. One way to achieve a better level of competitiveness is by having efficient labor. A workforce that is expected to perform well need some level of job autonomy and job satisfaction (Saragih, 2011; Society for Human Resource Management, 2012). Ása Fríða Kjartansdóttir noticed in her paper that in working conditions where employees have little control over their actions they experience less of job satisfaction and are more likely to experience health damage. As we can see working conditions, job satisfaction and job autonomy are very important variables even if we are talking about small companies in the rural municipality (Ása Fríða Kjartansdóttir, 2010). Previous research show servant leadership as a factor that is positively linked to both of these variables (Patterson, 2003).

In this chapter, relevant literature will be presented starting with job autonomy, where the concept is being described and its link with job satisfaction. Next, the term of job satisfaction is presented and its main factors are mentioned. Then the definition of leadership is introduced, and main differences between leadership and management are discussed. Finally philosophy of servant leadership is presented, its primary attributes, development of servant leadership measurement, and relationships between servant leadership, job satisfaction, and job autonomy are discussed. Then some recent studies on servant leadership conducted in Iceland and worldwide are presented.

1.2 Job autonomy

Hackman and Oldham (1975) developed a theory of work design that have been used in management practices to enhance motivation, improve work performance, increase job satisfaction, increase commitment and decrease level of absenteeism among employees. Autonomy is one of the job design characteristics that have been used as a research topic in numerous studies (Smith, Kot, & Leat, 2003).

Hackman and Oldham define autonomy as:

"the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out" (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 258).

Job autonomy is a factor that benefits both organization and individuals. When individuals have support in exercising job autonomy they feel more capable, resourceful and trusted within that particular job (Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal, & Ali, 2013). An employee who can schedule and choose his work feels more valued and feels like his skills and talents are appreciated. When an employee receives autonomy, he sees it as a sign of respect from the company and a sign that his work matters, which lead to higher motivation (Park & Searcy, 2012). Increased intrinsic motivation leads to employees increased effectiveness at work (Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal, & Ali, 2013). The more efficient the employee, the higher the company performance, according to a study carried in Cornell University which showed that small businesses with significant employee autonomy grew four times faster than those with low levels of job autonomy (Davermann, 2006). Furthermore, autonomous employees have the opportunity to train themselves on the job. Robert Polet Gucci´s CEO confirms that autonomy he had at work helped him to deliver new skills regarding leadership (Gumbel, 2008).

1.2.1 The link between job autonomy and job satisfaction

Research shows that job autonomy can influence job satisfaction. High levels of autonomy are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction as the result of employees having more power to decide about their effort, actions and work schedule (Saragih, 2011). Previous studies support these links. For example, Morrison et al. (2005) declare that job autonomy is a crucial factor in the process of increasing employees´ intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. According to Finn (2001), job autonomy is key element of job satisfaction among nurses. Cuper and Witte (2005) state that job satisfaction among permanent and temporary employees is affected by job autonomy, and DeCarlo and Agarwal (1999), on the other hand, argue that job autonomy has an impact on a salesperson´s job satisfaction (Saragih, 2011).

Research conducted in recent years supports this thesis as well. Studies carried out in fast food sector in Pakistan (2013) among waiters, managers, supervisors and floor in charges of top fast food restaurants in Rawalpindi and Islamabad showed that a raise in levels of job autonomy leads to a rise in levels of job satisfaction and employees commitment to the

organization (Ishtiaq, Kanwal, Ali, & Naqvi, 2013). Research performed by Wu et al. (2015) confirmed the fact that job autonomy can lead to higher job satisfaction through giving individuals a chance to grow and mean something. Autonomy is becoming a source of freedom that helps individuals to deal in an effective way with work demands (Wu, Griffin, & Parker, 2015). Study among academic staff members in Sri Lanka also found that job autonomy was significantly related to academic staff members´ overall job satisfaction (Amarasena, Ajward, & Ahasanul Haque, 2015). Another study conducted in Bangladesh amongst the banking sector indicates that autonomy, leadership, and teamwork linked to job satisfaction, however, the influence of autonomy is less than in other factors (Rana, 2015).

In summary, studies indicate that autonomy gives individual freedom and independence to schedule his work and allows him to determinate the procedures that he will use in carrying it out (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Individuals that had some degree of autonomy felt more capable, resourceful and trusted with their job. Companies by giving employees autonomy show them that they respect them and believe in their capabilities (Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal, & Ali, 2013; Park & Searcy, 2012). More autonomy leads to hands-on learning, more opportunities to interact with the environment, getting more knowledge and becoming more involved in the production process (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997). Furthermore, high levels of job autonomy are related to higher levels of job satisfaction which are the result of employees having more power to decide about their effort, actions and work schedule (Saragih, 2011). It turns out that job autonomy is linked to employees creativity and job performance, and its levels vary between countries (Cekmecelioglu & Gunsel, 2011; Dobbin & Boychuk, 1999).

1.3   Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a broad concept that affects both the employees well-being and organizational health. One of the most popular definitions of job satisfaction belongs to Edwin Locke (1976) which says that job satisfaction is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from one's job or job experiences" (Lock, 1976, p. 1300). Definition of job satisfaction developed by Lock is the most popular one. Each author has a different approach towards defining job satisfaction and here are few definitions of job satisfaction developed by various authors.

In 1935, Hoppock described job satisfaction as any combination of psychological and environmental circumstances that influence individuals to express satisfaction with their work. This approach defines job satisfaction as an internal state that employees feel, on which many

external factors have an impact. In other words, job satisfaction is a set of facets that lead to a feeling of satisfaction (Aziri, 2011). Vrooms (1964) definition, on the other hand, focuses on the role of the employee in his workplace. According to the definition, job satisfaction describes workers' affective orientation regarding the current job role that he is occupying (Aziri, 2011). Another very popular definition of job satisfaction belongs to Spector (1997) who describes it as the way in which people feel about their job and its diverse facets (Aziri, 2011). For Kaliski (2007) job satisfaction is the sense of achievement and success deriving from an employees´ job. Kaliski argues that job satisfaction is connected to productivity and personal well-being of an individual and that someone who is satisfied with work is also enjoying his work, doing it well and getting rewards for his input (Aziri, 2011). According to Armstrong (2006) job satisfaction depends on attitude and feelings of an individual toward his work. People who have a positive attitude toward their work indicate job satisfaction, whereas negative attitude towards the job indicates job dissatisfaction (Aziri, 2011). George and Jones (2008) claim that people don´t only have attitudes and feelings toward their work but also toward particular aspects of the job, such as the kind of work they are performing, the people who they work with, their supervisors or subordinates and their salary (Aziri, 2011). But why is job satisfaction so important?

Job satisfaction is important from both organization and employee perspective. Organization benefits from job satisfaction because high level of job satisfaction contribute to organizational success and is associated with decreased levels of turnover and absenteeism. In result job satisfaction leads to increased profits to the organization in terms of high performance and increased productivity (Society for Human Resource Management, 2012). From an employee point of view, job satisfaction is important given the amount of time that he spends throughout his lifetime at work. Because work is a crucial part of our lives, it is no surprise that it has a high impact on an employee´s overall life satisfaction. Also, individuals who experience job satisfaction are of better mental and physical well-being and are less likely to experience anxiety or depression (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005).

1.3.1 Job satisfaction factors

According to Eyþór Eðvarðsson (2005), job satisfaction is a subject that has been studied for decades because of its close relation to job performance. Most people prefer to work jobs that they are interested in. When doing something you like you are more likely to perform better

and experience satisfaction, a low level of job satisfaction leads to absenteeism and higher organization costs, which is another reason that this subject has been studied for a long time. Today, thanks to numerous research, we can estimate which actions and factors increase job satisfaction (Eyþór Eðvarðsson, 2005).

According to Furnham (2006), job satisfaction is affected by *personal factors*, *job characteristics,* and *working environment*. Below these factors are presented.

Personal factors

Schultz and Schultz (1998) in their studies have established nine factors that have an impact on job satisfaction: *age*, *gender*, *race*, *education*, *job experience*, *skills*, *personality*, *matching the work* and *class status*. The studies show that with age job satisfaction increases. The reason for such outcome can be the fact that often with increasing age, confidence, competitiveness, self-motivation, and responsibilities increase as well. Regarding gender results of the study are ambiguous, but they shed some light on the fact that men seem to experience greater job satisfaction than women, which might be a result of men receiving higher salaries and having increased opportunities for a career than women. Educated people experience less job satisfaction which can be attributed to the fact that persons with higher education also have higher expectations for their work. The studies also show that people who can use their talents and abilities at work are happier than those who can not. Also, the more an employees knowledge and skills are equivalent to those required by their work, the more they seem to be happier and satisfied with their work. This study also notices that workers who were placed higher in the organization experienced more job satisfaction (Furnham, 2006).

Job characteristics

Frederick Herzberg (1957) has studied the factors that are affecting job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. He developed a *two-factor theory* which shows that particular characteristics are connected to job satisfaction and motivation while different characteristics are connected to job dissatisfaction. According to this theory, the opposite of satisfaction is no satisfaction and the opposite of dissatisfaction in no dissatisfaction. In other words, Herzberg argues that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are results of different factors which are motivational and

hygiene factors. *Motivational factors* are related to work itself, they contribute to the job satisfaction and have a positive impact on productivity and job performance. Motivational factors include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Motivation is described as the inner need to achieve personal and organizational goals. *Hygiene factors* relate to working environments such as working conditions, social matters, company policies, supervision, salary, security, and status. Hygiene factors can not lead to job satisfaction, but in the best case, they can lead to no dissatisfaction (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014).

Hackman and Oldham (1980) mention the job that suits the employee well will result in job satisfaction and inner motivation. To acquire internal motivation an employee needs to know when he is doing good or bad; he needs to take responsibility for his achievements and feel that his work is relevant, important and that he is personally valued (Spector, 1997).

Working environment

Anna Þóra Baldursdóttir and Valgerður Magnúsdóttir (2007) did a study based on six factors of a working environment that have an influence on job satisfaction based on Maslach and Leiter model on environmental factors of work (1997). These factors are: *workload* (defines amount of projects that needs to be done at a given time), *control* (revolves around opportunities of employees to make decisions, have choices, solve problems and to do everything in their power to meet responsibilities that the job involves), *reward* (refers to recognition in terms of wage, positive feedback from superiors and colleagues, job security and opportunities to work their way up), *community* (relates to the social environment of the workplace), *fairness* (based primary of trust, integrity, and respect; rules of workplace are fair and apply to all employees) and *values* (they are about important things for the workplace and employees like policies, goals, communication, work, and conflict resolution). The study showed that five of six factors of working environment (workload, rewards, work community, fairness, and values) prove to have a significant effect on the emotional development and one of them in particular which is workload. Rewards, work community, fairness, and values also have a major impact on the objectification, based on this data. Only one of these factors affect job performance, and that is values (Anna Þóra Baldursdóttir & Valgerður Magnúsdóttir, 2007).

In summary, job satisfaction is a way in which people feel about their job and its diverse facets (Aziri, 2011). Job satisfaction is important for many reasons. Organizations benefit from it

because satisfied workers are less likely to quit, they perform better, experience less burnouts and are less likely to display absenteeism, lateness, and drug use. High level of job satisfaction reduces the cost to the organization (Society for Human Resource Management, 2012). For employees job satisfaction is important because it has a significant impact on overall life satisfaction (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005). Because of the high correlation between job satisfaction and job performance, job satisfaction has been studied for centuries. Years of research show that there are many factors that have an impact on job satisfaction such as personal factors, job characteristics, and working environment (Furnham, 2006).

1.4   Leadership

"*In industrial, educational, and military settings, and in social movements, leadership plays a critical, if not the most critical, role, and is therefore an important subject for study and research* " (Bass, 2008, bls. 25).

Leadership has intrigued humankind for centuries. One of the first writings about the philosophy of leadership goes all the way back to Machiavelli and his "The Price" (1531/2005) and biographies of great leaders. Development of the social sciences during 20th century led to increasing number of studies on leadership that emerged from every discipline that can have any interest in leadership: anthropology, business administration, educational administration, history, military science, nursing administration, organizational behavior, philosophy, political science, public administration, psychology, sociology, and theology (Northouse, 2015). But what is leadership?

Many definitions of leadership are available and in fact, there is no single correct definition. Leadership is a diverse and complex topic that consists of interactions between the leader, the followers and the situation they are in (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2012). The complexity of leadership leads researchers to focus on different aspects of it which result in many theories. Some of them study the personality, physical trials, or behaviors of the leader; others focus on relationships between leaders and follower; and still others take a closer look at aspects of the situation which affect how leaders act (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2012).

According to Hughes, Ginnett and Curphy leadership is a process, not a position. You can not be a leader merely because you hold title or power. Leadership involves interaction

between leader and followers which leads to something happening (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2012).

1.4.1 Leadership approaches

During the past century, many leadership approaches have evolved. While there are many different leadership theories, most of them can be classified under one of the six major approaches (Northouse, 2015).

Trait Approach

The early trait approach theories also known as „Great Man „ theories focus on listing traits or qualities possessed by great social, political and military leaders such as Catherine the Great, Mohandas Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Moses, and Joan of Arc. Strong interest in traits accounts for years 1900 to 1940 and a renewed emphasis at the beginning of the 1970s when visionary and charismatic leadership emerged. Also „Big Five" personality factors earned special interest in the 1980s as well as emotional intelligence which gained favor in 1990s (Northouse, 2015). The term "man" was used intentionally since at the time leadership was seen as primarily male quality (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, & Dennison, 2003).

Behavior Approach

In the late 1930s, researchers focus on the actions of leaders and not on mental qualities or internal states. The groundbreaking studies had a place in the 1940s at the Ohio State University and the University of Michigan. In 1950s leaders actions in a small group, situations went under the loop. The time when behavior approach theories hit their heyday is dated for the 1960s when Blake and Moulton (1964) in their work uncover how managers use task and relationships behaviors in the organizational setting. According to behavioral theory, people can learn how to become a good leader through teaching and observation (Northouse, 2015).

Situational Approach

According to this approach, leadership style depends on the situation in which it is being exercised. For example, some situations may require autocratic style while other cases may require more participative approach (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, & Dennison, 2003). Investigation of situational approach began in the late 1960s by Hersey and Blanchard (1969)

and Reddin (1967). This approach was refined and revised from the 1970s through the 1990s. While one of the theories, path-goal theory, explore how leaders use employee motivation to enhance performance and satisfaction; the other theory, contingency theory, focus on identifying the situational variables which best predict the most effective leadership style in certain circumstances (Northouse, 2015).

Relational Approach

The relational approach began in the 1990s, and it analyzes the nature of relations between leaders and followers, which ultimately evolved into the Leadership Member Exchange Theory (LMX). This theory states that high-quality relations generate better leader outcomes than low-quality relations. The relational approach still creates interest among researchers today (Northouse, 2015).

„New Leadership" Approaches

Approaches that originate in the mid-1980s are called"new leadership" approaches and with Bass (1985, 1990) as a pioneer leadership studies generated *visionary* or *charismatic leadership theories.* Later from this approaches developed *transformational leadership* theory, which portrays leadership as a process that changes people and organizations (Northouse, 2015). Transformational leaders motivate and inspire members of the group by helping them see the importance and the higher good of the task. These leaders focus on the performance of the group but also make sure that members of this group fulfill their individual potential (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, & Dennison, 2003).

Emerging Leadership approaches

During the 21st-century a number of approaches to leadership are emerging, like for example, *authentic leadership* that focuses on the authenticity of leaders, or spiritual leadership approach that focus on values that leaders use, a sense of „calling" and membership to motivate followers. On the other hand, *servant leadership*, pictures leaders as servants, who use a set of leadership practices that enrich the lives of individuals, build better organizations and ultimately create a more just and caring world. The picture below shows the development of leadership theories through history (Northouse, 2015).

1.4.2 Leadership vs. Management

Organizations give managers legitimate authority to lead, but there is no certainty that managers will lead effectively. In today´s dynamic workplace organizations that want to operate effectively need both, strong leadership and strong management (Lunenburg, 2011).

As said before there are many leadership definitions available, but the majority of them have few specific components in common. According to those components, leadership: is a process, involves influence, occurs in a group context and involves goal achieving. Therefore, we can say that leadership describes a process where individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Management, on the other hand, is exercising executive, administrative and supervisory direction of a group or organization (Ricketts, n.d.).

It is common that people assume that someone who is a manager is also a leader, but the truth is that not all managers exercise leadership, and not all leaders manage. Often leadership is performed by people who are not in management positions. Even though terms of „leadership" and „management" are seen as being very different there is some overlap between them and the degree of this overlap is a point of disagreement among scholars (Lunenburg, 2011). Leadership and management are similar from the perspective that both of them involve influence, working with people, and working with effective goal management (Ricketts, n.d.). According to Zaleznik, leaders advocate change and new approaches, while managers advocate stability and the status quo. Both of them contribute to the organization, just on a different level. John Kotter (1987), on the other hand, argues that leadership is about coping with change, whereas management is about coping with complexity (Kotter, 1987). Kotter (1987) states that leadership process is referring to the development of a vision for the organization, aligning people with that vision through communication, and motivating those people to action by empowering them and fulfilling their basic needs, whereas management involves planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, controlling and problem-solving (Kotter, 1987). The purpose of management is to reduce uncertainty and stabilize the organization (Lunenburg, 2011).

1.4.3 Servant leadership

"*The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one*

wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best

test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become
healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become
servants? " (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 15)

The term servant leadership was first coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in his essay entitled „ The Servant as Leader" (1970). The event that crystallized Greenleaf´s thinking about servant leadership occurred in the 1960s when he came across a novel written by Hermann Hesse „Journey to the East." A story about a group of people on a spiritual quest made Greenleaf realize that great leader is first experienced as a servant to others, and this is the main point of his greatness (Greenleaf, 1970).

In his essay Greenleaf divides leaders into two groups, those that are leaders first and those that are a servant first. People who are servants first earn their authority by serving. For them serving others feels natural and, later on, they take a conscious decision to lead. (Greenleaf, 1970). The leader focuses on followers and his behavior and attitudes are compatible with follower focus (Patterson, 2003). The primary motivation of a true leader is the will to help others grow (Spears, 2005). According to Greenleaf (1970), key elements of servant leadership are growth, health, wisdom, freedom, and autonomy of followers. In his essay „*The servant as leader*" Greenleaf discuss „the best test" of a servant leader. In his opinion to check if one is a servant leader, one must ask himself a questions „Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (page 15). If answers to those questions are positive it means that person who took the test is a servant leader (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 15). Furthermore, self-interest should not motivate servant leaders, but rather it should ascend to a higher level motivation. The main mission of a servant leader is to develop people, help them to strive and flourish, provide clear vision, earn followers' credibility and trust, and influence others. Servant leadership is an approach to leadership whose priority objectives are to serve others, have a holistic approach to work, to promote a sense of community and to share the power of the decision-making process. This leadership theory is not „quick-fix", rather a long-term journey that has the potential to create positive change throughout society (Spears, 2005).

1.4.4   Attributes of servant leadership

A servant leader is someone who seeks to serve, who involves others in decision making, whose behavior is ethical and caring and someone who wants people to grow and flourish while he is

improving the caring and quality of organizational life (Spears, 2005). This chapter will examine a set of characteristics of servant leadership from different points of views.

Research of Patterson (2003) led to the formation of servant leadership model which describes seven virtuous constructs of a servant leader (Patterson, 2003).

1) *Agapao love.* Love, precisely agapao love, is a cornerstone of the servant leadership where servant leaders have so great love for followers that they are willing to take time and effort to know and accept the talents of each of them. The leader who is guided by agapo love, first of all, focuses on the employee then on his talents and lastly on benefits of the organization (Patterson, 2003).

2) *Humility.* Humility is about having an opinion of yourself that is not better or worse than the opinion that we have about others. Humble people have the ability to look from the perspective of their talents and accomplishments, they are free from arrogance and low self-esteem, they realize their imperfections but still they have a sense of self-acceptance. Humble leaders are eager to listen to opinions of others even when they are contrary (Patterson, 2003).

3) Altruism. Altruistic people seek the fulfillment of others through behavior that is directed toward benefits of others. This behavior is coherent with servant leadership whose purpose is to do things that are best for others rather than for the leader himself (Patterson, 2003).

4) Vision. The job of a servant leader is to look forward and help people achieve their goals that they are meant to achieve. Looking ahead is an ability that involves the leader to have faith and vision of what can be and foster the capacity for growth on the behalf of others (Patterson, 2003).

5) Trust. Trust is an important element of servant leadership where servant leader is trusting in others and creating a standard of excellence for the entire organization. Trusting leaders empower followers and they, in turn, become a workforce that has the freedom to serve the organization as those who form it. (Patterson, 2003).

6) Empowerment. Servant leaders empower by teaching and developing others. By empowering others, leaders let people feel the freedom to achieve their goals and help them to make their dreams come true. The fact that employees grow and flourish in their work give leaders satisfaction (Patterson, 2003).

7) Service. Service is the heart of a servant leadership philosophy where actions of a leader are not in his own interest but rather in the interest of others. The core of Greenleaf's´ servant leadership theory is to make leaders understand that their primary function as a leader is to serve others (Patterson, 2003).

Dr. Sigrún Gunnardóttir (2011) created a model based on Greenleafs´philosophy and identified three primary elements of a servant leader.

1) Sincere interest in the ideas of others. Listening and having an interest in people's ideas is the foundation of a servant leader. Listening to what people have to say is the main aspect of leading, and it enables leaders to understand better needs and ideas of their colleagues. (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2011).

2) Inner strength. Internal strength is a result of self-knowledge that describes someone who knows and is aware of his strengths and limitations. By knowing and understanding yourself, you are better prepared to understand the others, their needs and wants. (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2011).

3) Foresight. The role of a leader is to see far into the future, have perspective, create conversations about the purpose of the work and setting the goals. Servant leader´s ability to see in advance and logic thinking help to see opportunities and threats that others are not able to see, and that is why someone with this capability should take the lead (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2011).

Based on Greenleaf's original writing Spears (2010) identified ten characteristics of servant leader that according to him are of critical importance.

1) Listening. By careful listening servant leader can hear not only things that are said but also those things that are unsaid. Listening helps to identify needs and wants of followers and give the opportunity to fulfill them. Listening and reflection are crucial to the growth and well-being of the servant leader (Spears, 2010).

2) Empathy. A servant leader is someone who tries to understand and empathize with others. He accepts and recognize people for who they are and assumes good intentions of followers even if they do something wrong (Spears, 2010).

3) Healing. A servant leader is a healer who can see what each individual needs to feel complete and he uses opportunities to help others in their journey to completeness (Spears, 2010).

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4) Awareness. A leader that have a high level of awareness is more likely to take better decisions regarding ethics, power, and values. He is able to view situations from more open and holistic position (Spears, 2010).

5) Persuasion. Servant leader uses persuasion to make people go with him towards the appointed goals rather than tell them what to do (Spears, 2010).

6) Conceptualization. Looking at problems from conceptualizing perspective means that one must look at things from a broader view than day-to-day realities. Servant leader has more general conceptual thinking so he can concentrate on long-term goals (Spears, 2010).

7) Foresight. Foresight is a characteristic that enables people to learn the lesson of the past, understand the situation in the present and estimate likely consequence of taking a particular decision for the future. (Spears, 2010).

8) Stewardship. Stewardship means protecting and overseeing something that in our eyes is worth caring for. Servant leadership, as well as stewardship, holds that first and most important job of a servant leader is to be committed to serving to needs of others (Spears, 2010).

9) Commitment to the growth of people. Servant leader wants each and every individual in the organization to grow so he takes actions that support the growth of team members (Spears, 2010).

10) Building community. Building community is one of the tasks of a servant leader. Recently in human history, there has been a shift away from creating communities, and a lot have been lost as a result of that, but Greenleaf argues that true community can be established among those who work in the organization (Spears, 2010).

Russel and Stone (2002) developed two kinds attributes of servant leadership: functional attributes and accompanying attributes. Functional attributes (vision, honesty integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others and empowerment) describe operative qualities, characteristics ann distinctive features of leaders that were established through observation of leaders behaviors in the workplace. On the other hand, the role of accompanying attributes (communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching, and delegation) is to supplement and augment the functional characteristics (Russell & Stone, 2002).

James A. Laub (1999) also provided 6 clusters for servant leadership:

1) Develop people (by providing opportunities for learning and growth, by modeling appropriate behavior, and by building up others through encouragement and affirmation)

2) Shared leadership (by facilitating a shared vision, by sharing power and releasing control and by sharing status and promoting others).

3) Display authenticity (by being open and accountable to others, by a willingness to learn from others and by maintaining integrity and trust).

4) Values people (by believing in people, by serving other´s needs before his own and by receptive, non-judgemental listening).

5) Providing leadership (by envisioning the future, by taking initiative and by clarifying goals).

6) Builds community (by developing healthy personal relationships, by working collaboratively with others and by valuing the difference of others) (Laub, 1999).

Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) in their research described eight characteristics that together exemplify servant leadership behavior (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

1) Empowerment: Servant leader recognizes, acknowledge and believe in the intrinsic value and skills of each person and help them to learn more, be passionate and self-confident (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

2) Humility: Servant leader looks at his talents and accomplishments from the perspective, and acknowledge his limitations (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

3) Authenticity: Servant leaders´ behavior, first of all, should reflect whom he is as a person and then show his professional role (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

4) Courage: It is an ability to take a risk and look for new and better approaches. Courage is crucial for innovation (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

5) Standing back: Standing back, giving support to followers and letting them take credit for their achievements is part of the job of a servant leader (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

6) Accountability: Letting people take responsibility for their performance and holding them accountable for outcomes is part of servant leadership. (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

7) Interpersonal acceptance: Understanding other people and trying to look at things from their point of view is an important job of a servant leader (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

8) **Stewardship:** When someone is taking a role of leader he needs to be sure that he wants to take responsibility for the organization or institution and be prepared to serve others instead of having control and self-interest at his heart (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

1.4.5   Servant leadership and autonomy

According to Self-Definition Theory, each employee has three basic psychological needs: *autonomy, competence,* and *relatedness needs*. Fulfillment of those needs leads to increase in task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. Satisfaction of autonomy need relates to the experience of having choices and of initiating actions yourself (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). Study of Chiniara and Bentein show that there is a positive relationship between servant leadership and satisfaction of needs related to autonomy. Results of the study show that followers who have leaders behaving as servant leaders estimate their psychological need of autonomy as fulfilled (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016).The role of a servant leader is to believe in intrinsic value and abilities of each individual. Servant leaders recognize and respect feelings, opinions, views, interests and suggestions of each individual to provide them the right environmental conditions to build their creativity and potential (Greenleaf, 1998). Greenleaf (1970) states that servant leader wants to serve others so they can grow as persons, become healthier, wiser, freer and more autonomous (Greenleaf, 1970). According to Liden et al. ability to make choices falls under empowerment. Servant leaders can empower their followers by holding them responsible for their actions, let them decide the course of their activities in a particular situation and encourage them to make important decisions on their own. Employees who take initiative, are creative, learn from mistakes, handle difficult situations on their own and take responsibility for their actions experience satisfaction of autonomy need (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008).

1.4.6   Servant leadership and job satisfaction

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine if a relationship exists between servant leadership and job satisfaction. These studies show similar findings and most of them are consistent regarding the fact that there is a strong relationship between servant leadership and

job satisfaction. Research that examines the connection of servant leadership with job satisfaction in private University in Atlanta, Georgia show that servant leadership contributes to the satisfied workforce (Guillaume, Honeycutt, & Savage-Austin, 2013). Guðjón Ingi Guðjónsson and Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir and in their study of servant leadership in the University of Iceland also shows that there is a significant positive correlation of servant leadership with staff job satisfaction (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir & Guðjón Ingi Guðjónsson, 2014). Also, research among employees of telephone companies showed that servant leadership is positively and significantly linked to employees satisfaction from the job (Sepahvand, Pirzad, & Rastipour, 2015). Furthermore, a study that explored the relationship between servant leadership and core self-evaluation and job satisfaction, showed that servant leadership predicts both core self-evaluation and job satisfaction and that core self-evaluation also predicts job satisfaction among working adults in white collar jobs in three U.S. companies (Tischler, Giambatista, McKeage, & McCormick, 2016).

According to Ding and co-workers servant leadership is linked to employee satisfaction which plays mediating role between servant leadership and employee loyalty (Ding, Lu, Song, & Lu, 2012). As we can see, there is extensive available literature that supports the statement that servant leadership is significantly and positively linked to job satisfaction. However, Sendjaya (2015) points to that leaders interact in accordance to constraints that emerge from organizational settings and their decision-making depends on the organizational structure of the particular place, in particular with regard to decision-making processes (Sendjaya, 2015). According to Hina Saleem (2015), organizational politics also have important influence on employee outcomes since it often interferes with organizations process of rewards, decision-making, and promotions. Perception of organizational politics is strongly connected with justice and fairness and hence it can increase or decrease the level of satisfaction of employees. One of the factors that can influence employees perceptions toward organizational politics is leadership style (Saleem, 2015).

1.4.7 Recent international research on servant leadership

In recent years, servant leadership is enjoying growing interest among worldwide scholars. Every year number of new interesting research articles are published. Some of the studies published in the year 2015 will be presented.

As the title of an article written by Bande, Varela, Fernández-Ferrín and Jaramillo (2015) „ *Emotions and salesperson propensity to leave: the effects of emotional intelligence and resilience*" indicates, the authors investigated the importance of emotions and its impact on salespeople behavior and performance. This study was conducted among 209 industrial salespeople working at 105 Spanish enterprises and according to its results servant leadership has a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and intention to leave the organization. Research shows that the link between emotional exhaustion and planning to leave work seems to be weaker for people whose supervisors demonstrate a high level of service leadership and correspondingly stronger for employees whose supervisors display a low degree of servant leadership. This study highlight the need for promoting the development of emotional skills which can help in alleviating work-related stress and reduce the possibility of people leaving the organization (Bande, Varela, Fernández-Ferrín, & Jaramillo, 2015).

Plessis, Wakelin and Nel (2015) similar to the prior author, examine the relationship between servant leadership, emotional intelligence, and trust, but from a different point of view. The aim of their research is to measure the relationship between emotional intelligence, trust servant leadership. In their study Plessis and co. used standardized questionnaires to measure all three dimensions. Data in this research was collected from two separate private sector organizations within the South African context where 154 candidates responded to the questionnaire.With the respond rate of 34 %, results show that all three factors have a high level of reliability. According to this study, emotional intelligence and trust in the manager are significantly and positively linked to servant leadership. As authors point out, there are rather limited resources that discuss the relationship between emotional intelligence and servant leadership, however, this study suggests that significant relationship exists between emotional intelligence and servant leadership (Plessis, Wakelin, & Nel, 2015).

Research of Panaccio, Henderson, Liden, Wayne and Cao (2015) Investigate why and in which conditions servant leadership accounts for employee extra-role behaviors. Authors examined the psychological contract (PC) as a mediating mechanism between servant leader behaviors and two forms of employee extra-role behaviors: organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and innovative behaviors. The study was conducted among supervisors and subordinates of a production and distribution company located in the Midwestern USA at two points in time, to reduce the likelihood of participants recalling their previous answer. According to the result of the study, PC fulfillment is an essential process by which servant leader can influence followers engagement in personal initiative, citizenship behavior, and

innovative practices. Servant leaders need to communicate and understand followers´expectations (by listening), follow through on commitments and fulfill followers expectations. The theoretical approach also shows that servant leadership is more than verbal statements, but rather involves behaviors which followers can recognize as desirable and ones that fulfill their PCs (Panaccio, Henderson, Liden, Wayne, & Cao, 2015).

Gutierrez-Wirsching, Mayfield, Mayfield and Wang (2015), on the other hand, state that motivating language has an impact on employee outcomes. According to the authors, motivating language is a mediator that increase positive effects of servant leadership on subordinates´outcomes. For example, motivating language can positively affect such an outcomes as worker performance, job satisfaction, less absenteeism and worker innovation. Furthermore, a combination of verbal characteristics mediated by motivating language and the non-verbal characteristics of servant leadership can positively influence outcomes as self-efficacy, organizational citizenship behavior, satisfaction with the leader and employee commitment. Last but not least, non-verbal characteristics of servant leader, such as true listening to what is being said or not being said, having consciousness of the situations, ability to look further into the future and predicting the most likely outcome, can lead to positive results as employee being inspired to become servant leader (Gutierrez-Wirsching, Mayfield, Mayfield, & Wang, 2015).

Dierendonck and Sousa (2015) focused in their research on humility, action and hierarchical power and its impact on follower engagement. A study conducted among 232 people that work in diverse range companies in Portugal showed that humble leaders regardless of their position had the highest impact on followers engagement. Less humble leaders that occupy lower positions can compensate being less humble by strong action-oriented leadership style. The action-oriented leadership of leaders that are in high hierarchical positions seems to be the most influenced by moral virtue of humility (Sousa & Dierendonck, 2015).

1.4.8   Research on servant leadership in Iceland

Servant leadership differs from the concept of management and leadership that have prevailed in Iceland in recent decades (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2011). Servant leadership involves humanity and morality that appears in caring for the interests and welfare of others above the need of gaining power and glory. The concept of servant leadership is based on peer culture, harmonious employee participation and social responsibility. Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir points to

that many Icelandic institutions and companies are lacking such factors as trust and professionalism, which are the base of servant leadership (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2011). Lack of above-listed factors in Icelandic companies and the fact that servant leadership is positively related to job satisfaction and better job performance, could be the reasons why in recent years interest in servant leadership have grown so significantly in Iceland (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2011).

A survey conducted by Guðjón Ingi Guðjónsson and Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir (2014) at the University of Iceland show that servant leadership is maintained in academic fields with a moderate amount of 4,19 (on scale 1-6). The factor of servant leadership that scored the highest was *stewardship* followed by *forgiveness* and *empowerment*. Researchers also measured job satisfaction in University, and it comes out that in total 82,6% of participants were satisfied with work. Regression analysis of the study showed that there is a significant positive correlation between servant leadership and job satisfaction. Interesting is the fact that high value of servant leadership is in the line with results of previous studies on the working environment of the University of Iceland, but not in line with American studies that show low levels of servant leadership in US based universities (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir & Guðjón Ingi Guðjónsson, 2014).

Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir (2014) carried out questionnaire survey among health care staff in nursing in four Icelandic hospitals. The purpose of the questionnaire was to measure the level of servant leadership and job satisfaction. With respond rate of 65%, the survey showed that servant leadership is practiced in nursing care management in these hospitals, and it amounts from 3,99 to 4,99 (on the scale of 1-6). The results also show that the majority of participants were satisfied with the job (97,8%) and servant leadership was significantly correlated to nursing staff job satisfaction were *humility, empowerment*, *accountability* and *authenticity* (Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2014).

Research conducted in Akureyri Hospital by Hulda Rafnsdóttir, Ragnheiður Harpa Arnadóttir and Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir (2015) was aimed to measure work-satisfaction, nursing staff attitudes towards work-related factors and the quality of care, and to explore whether servant leadership correlated with these factors. With the response rate of over 50%, a total score of servant leadership was 4,3, and sub-factors scores ranged from 3,99 to 4,6 (in scale 1-6). According to this survey, most of the responders (96%) were satisfied with their job and pleased with the quality of care (95,3%). Job satisfaction and work-related factors correlated with sub-factor *empowerment* but job satisfaction correlated with it in a significant way. Overall

results of this study support that servant leadership is linked to staff support, joint decision-making, good working environment, and good information flow. Therefore, according to these findings, servant leadership can enhance work satisfaction, quality, and safety in healthcare (Hulda Rafnsdóttir, Ragnheiður Harpa Arnardóttir, & Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2015).

Attitudes towards servant leadership, job satisfaction, and burnout were investigated among service employees of Information Technology Consulting Companies. With a response rate of 39,5%, results of the study show that about 21% of service employees reveal symptoms of emotional exhaustion on the job, while 82% of participants seems to be satisfied with their job. The level of servant leadership among responders was 4,46 (in scale 1-6). Significant correlation was found between low emotional exhaustion on the job and servant leadership, as well as between high job satisfaction and servant leadership.The results seem to be in line with similar studies conducted abroad which underpin the importance of IT companies staff experiencing leadership that gives one the opportunity to enjoy their own skills and knowledge that can lead to satisfaction and better customer service (Sólveig Reynisdóttir & Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2015).

In summary, leadership is a process that involves interaction between leader and followers which leads to something happening (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2012). Recent studies indicate that often managers have authority to lead, but they don´t do it effectively. Furthermore, studies show that successful leadership builds on skills to serve, listen, encourage and empower others. Also, the literature shows that important elements for the success of leaders are to be humble, let others take credit for theirs achievements and have a foresight (Greenleaf, 1970; Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2011; Spears, 2010). To operate efficiently and achieve long time success, organizations need both strong leadership, that influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal, as well as strong management, that exercise executive, administrative, and supervisory direction of a group or organization (Lunenburg, 2011; Ricketts, n.d.). Servant leadership about serving others, including them in the decision-making process, acting ethical and caring about the others. One of the roles of servant leadership is empowering their followers by holding them responsible for their actions, letting them decide the course of their activities in a particular situation and encouraging them to make important decisions on their own. By letting employees take responsibility for their actions, they experience the satisfaction of their autonomy need (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). Icelandic and international studies also show that servant leadership contributes to the satisfied workforce and is significantly linked to positive employee outcomes and well-being

(Guillaume, Honeycutt, & Savage-Austin, 2013; Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2014; Sepahvand, Pirzad, & Rastipour, 2015). Despite increasing research about leadership limited knowledge is available about the attitudes of people living in small communities towards leadership in their workplaces, and in particular about their experience of the characteristics of servant leadership. Therefore, it is important to gain insight into attitudes towards leadership and work related experiences of people working and living in a small community.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1   Introduction

This chapter introduces the research methodology used in the study. First, the purpose of the study is presented. Then research approach and design are presented as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the study. Next, the researcher focuses on participants of the study and methods used to gather data. She also presents some ethical considerations.

2.2   Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study was to explore experiences and attitudes towards leadership, job satisfaction, and job autonomy among residents working in different workplaces in a small Icelandic town, Egilsstaðir. The aim of the study is to provide deeper understanding and knowledge about employees perspectives and perceptions of leadership, job satisfaction, and job autonomy at their workplaces and to explore if these views reflect servant leadership.

2.3   Research approach and design

In this study, a qualitative research method was used among a selected sample of volunteer participants from the population of Egilsstaðir residents. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research aiming to investigate and shed light on fields of study and try to better understand the complex reality of a given situation or existing data (Jamshed, 2014). This method tries to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspective of the individuals that are involved in the study. By using qualitative research method, we have the ability to provide complex textual descriptions of the phenomena based on individuals experiences and perceptions. The data that we can collect through this method provides „ a human" side of the issue (Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, 2013).

Because qualitative and quantitative methods have different approaches they entail different epistemic results. According to Sigríður Halldórsdóttir (2013), there is a difference between what is considered as knowledge in qualitative and quantitative research and what is

approved to be the best way to obtain it. The main disadvantages of using this kind of methodology in studies are that we can not measure human experiences or experiment with them. Experiences are simply there, and the only thing that we can do with it is to try to understand them. The researcher must always remember that the number of participants is quite small, so the objective of the study method is not to generalize but rather deepen understanding and increase knowledge of the phenomenon as such. On the other hand, the advantage of this research method is that it can provide valuable information that otherwise would be difficult to collect with a different approach. This method gives us an opportunity to better understand the complexity of human experiences from the perspective of those who experience it first hand. When the researcher is consciously seeking to enhance the legitimacy or credibility of the investigation, he can ask for further elaboration on replies, which is possible with this approach (Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, 2013).

A phenomenological approach was chosen for this study because it is well suited to draw up a credible picture of people´s experiences. The Vancouver school of doing phenomenology was used in this study. It originates from Dr. Joan Anderson, a professor at the Univeristy of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada but later on, this school has been developed further into comprehensive and published methodology by Dr. Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, a professor at the Univerity of Akureyri, Iceland (Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, 2000). This orientation is mainly influenced by phenomenology, hermeneutics, and constructivism. The principle is that each person experiences the world differently, and their vision is shaped based on that what has happened in their life previously and how they cope with these experiences.The main purpose of this school is to understand people´s experiences so in future we can guide them more effectively, for example, through a transition in life (Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, 2000).

In regard to the above, the researcher decided to use this qualitative research method to investigate topics of servant leadership, job autonomy, and job satisfaction among individuals working in various workplaces in Egilsstaðir.

2.4   Population and sample

The target population was employees that work and live in Egilsstaðir, and the purpose was to explore the perception of leadership, job autonomy, and job satisfaction among study participants.

The researcher looked for volunteers who worked in various workplaces and used purposive sampling, where sample size depends on data collection, the results and time available, as well as the study´s objectives (Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, 2013). In total 9 individuals volunteered to participate in the study. The researcher made sure that there was variability among respondents; thus, she was talking to women and men, workers with short seniority and those who had worked for a long time, talked to the staff that works cleaning jobs, service and those that work in high positions. The range of staff seniority was between 1 to 10 years.

2.5   Interviews

Data was collected by interviews. For the interviews, an interview guide was developed according to published models and previous studies on servant leadership, job autonomy, and job satisfaction. These models are presented below.

Servant leadership is about serving, listening, encouraging and empowering others as well as sharing vision and accountability. Servant leaders are humble, let others take credit for their achievements and have a future vision (Greenleaf, 1970; Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, 2011; Spears, 2010). To shed light on perspectives and perception of servant leadership among Egilsstaðir residents, the researcher prepared open-ended questions with her attention focused on a model of servant leadership as presented by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011). This model consists of eight leadership dimensions that are empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship. The researcher tried to deliver open-ended questions as possibly to be open for participants views and opinions that could be reflected according to these eight dimensions (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Those questions were, for example, „Can you tell me about your job in general?“, „Can you tell me about communication in your workplace?“, „Can you tell me about cooperation in your workplace?“, „What can you tell me about the communication between you and the management?“, „What can you tell me about feedback at your workplace?“, „ Is there someone in your workplace that has a vision?“ (see Appendix 3).

Job autonomy describes the degree to which particular job provides individuals with freedom, independence, and discretion to schedule his work and methods that he will use to carry it out (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). To help investigate autonomy at work and gain some insight about the attitude toward autonomy and its perception among residents of Egilsstaðir,

the researcher created open-ended questions with attention being pointed to psychological and social factors such as job demands, job control, role expectations, predictability and mastery of work. These are factors presented in measures on job autonomy such as in General Nordic Questionnaire on work environment (QPSNordic) (Lindström, et al., 2000). Developed question in regard to autonomy was „What can you say about the decision-making process at your workplace?" (see Appendix 3).

Job satisfaction consists of many factors that lead to a feeling of satisfaction. Because there are many characteristics that can influence job satisfaction, we can look at it from many points of view (Furnham, 2006). The researcher decided to stick with four open-ended questions that could give some insight about attitudes and perception of job satisfaction in those working places. These questions were „Is there something that you would like to have differently in communication or cooperation in your workplace?", „With which aspects of your job are you most satisfied?", „ Are there any aspects of your job that needs improvement?", „Overall, what would you say about your job satisfaction?" (see Appendix 3).

2.6   Data analysis

All interviews were written verbatim and then emphasis was placed on careful reading and reflecting on written interviews. First, they were read through, and a lot of effort was given to find key concepts that appear in participants words. Then the interviews were read again, and words that had special resonance for the study were marked. Next, the main issues were highlighted and themes were developed to reflect the experience of the participants. Participants were given new names that were not consistent with their real names and a concept model was developed for each of them. This concept model was presented to each participant to check whether it was consistent with his or her experiences. When consistency was approved the researcher focused on putting models into one whole and asked some participants again if, at this point, they could still determine their experiences as being described correctly. To see better the whole process of acquiring information from the interviews, the researcher followed the Vancouver school as described in 12 basic steps that need to be taken in the research process (Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, The Vancouver School of doing Phenomenology, 2000, p. 57):

Step 1   Selecting dialogue partners (the sample).

Step 2   First, there is silence (before entering a dialogue).

Step 3   Participating in a dialogue (data collection).

Step 4   Sharpened awareness of words (data analysis).

Step 5   Beginning consideration of essences (coding).

Step 6   Constructing the essential structure of the phenomenon for each case.

Step 7   Verifying the single case constructions.

Step 8   Constructing the essential structure of the phenomenon from all cases.

Step 9   Comparing the essential structure with the data.

Step 10   Identifying the overriding theme, that describes the phenomenon.

Step 11   Verifying the essential structure with some of the co-researchers.

Step 12   Writing up the findings.

After the fifth interview, following interviews seemed to confirm the content of previous interviews. The experiences of participants working in the same places were consistent and in many cases participants used almost the same words when describing certain things. Participants didn´t know who else except them was taking part in this project, so they could not have influenced each other answers. After the fifth interview, it was decided to take few additional interviews, in total interviews with nine individuals. It was estimated that more interviews would most likely not provide new or different data and thus decided to stop after the ninth interview.

2.7   Ethical considerations

The primary goal of *research ethics* is to deal with the interaction between researchers and the people who participate in the study. „The research process creates the tension between the aims of research to make generalizations for the good of others, and the rights of participants to maintain privacy" (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynanden, 2000, bls. 93). Appropriate ethical principles can prevent doing harm and help in delivering good (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynanden, 2000).

The nature of ethical issues in qualitative studies differ from those in quantitative study. For example, in qualitative research potential problems lay in fact how researcher got access to

a community group and the influence that he can have on participants. However, ethical conflicts in qualitative research can be decreased by consciousness and use of well-established ethical principles, specifically autonomy, beneficence, and justice (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynanden, 2000).

When interviewing people, researcher consider such factor as respect for persons. Informed consent is one of the things that ensure respect for participants. In informed consent, people ensure that they understand what it means to participate in the study and that they consciously decided to participate in it. In consent appear information about purpose of the research, what is expected of the participant (such as amount of time that is needed for completing interview), the fact that participation is voluntary, how confidentiality will be protected, the information about investigator (name, contact information), and the name and contact information of an appropriate person to contact with, regarding one´s rights as research participant (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynanden, 2000). In this study, all participants were informed about the study and they read and signed an informed consent (see Appendix 2). Also, the study was reported to The Data Protection Authority (Persónuvernd), (see Appendix 1).

In this study, the researcher gave considerable thought to creating criteria for recruitment of potential participants for a study. Those of participants that were unable to give consent or did not want to participate in interviews were not asked again to participate (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynanden, 2000).

Egilsstaðir is a small community where participants could be easily recognized. The researcher took as a moral obligation to prevent the potential consequences of revealing participants´identities and decided to create pseudonyms to prevent such a possibility (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynanden, 2000). Also, it was taking into consideration that the investigator makes sure that participants approve the use of the quotations in publications and don´t feel like their identity could be revealed through them (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynanden, 2000).

During research on people, the researcher remembered all the time that the well-being of participants is a priority, and the study is of secondary importance (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynanden, 2000). That is why she made sure that no real names, personal information or names of companies appear in the study. Moreover, professional working procedures were held as high as possible in honor of the aim of the quality of the study and its results that would be understandable and useful to participants and other stakeholders purposes.

3. FINDINGS

3.1   Introduction

This chapter considers the findings of the study. The aim of the study is to provide deeper understanding and knowledge about employees perspectives and perceptions of leadership, job satisfaction, and job autonomy at their workplaces and to explore if these views reflect servant leadership. Nine interviews were conducted with people who live and work in Egilsstaðir in the following workplaces: municipal office, hotel, gas station, discount store and kindergarten. In this chapter, the researcher will refer to places as those that provide *public services* (municipal office and kindergarten) and *trade services* (as hotel, gas station and discount store). The participants that work in the public sector are: Sigga, Jenný, Lilja and Pétur and the participants that work in the trade sector are Davíð, Stefán, Anna, Freyja, and Emma. Participants age ranged between 23 to 50 years old, and staff seniority ranged between 1 to 10 years.

In analyzing the data, three themes developed. These themes are 1) Enjoying own knowledge, freedom and flexibility; 2) Feedback and reward; 3) Plan, policy and goals. Each section starts with a short description of the theme and then examples of participants words are presented.

3.2   Enjoying own knowledge, freedom and flexibility

The first theme that emerged from the findings is: enjoying own knowledge, freedom and flexibility. By enjoying own knowledge the participants refer to being able to use their knowledge at work which leads to experience of enjoyment and satisfaction. In the findings freedom refers to participants ability to decide when and how they conduct the tasks that the job requires and when they can decide themselves about their work speed. In the findings participants talk about flexibility as it refers to existence of opportunities that they can use to balance their personal life with work.

One of the first things that struck the researcher most was how much freedom the participants enjoyed at work and how much they were able to use their knowledge and autonomy at work. All participants agree that they have a lot of autonomy in their jobs. After

some time spent in their work supervisors believe in their capabilities and trust them with taking all sorts of decisions on a daily basis. Sigga, a participant that works in public services, said „ *I´m the only one with this kind of knowledge ...they* [supervisors] *listen to me, they trust me. They say „you know this, so you decide."But I also have to remember not to disappoint them"*. Usually, they decide themselves in which order and in which speed they will perform their daily tasks. Of course, sometimes comes unexpected tasks that have to be done immediately, but otherwise they have the freedom in deciding how and when they perform their tasks „ *usually I plan my day and then I do something totally different. Sometimes something unexpected comes up that needs to be done immediately, and I have to help with that"* (Jený public service employee). There are some standards according to which particular tasks have to be done during the work day, but usually, participants design their own work routine. Practically they decide when the task that is required will be done. Davíð that works in the trade service said

> „ *I decide myself how and when I do things...I´m not told „ok you do this now and this then," it is not like that...Of course sometimes deciding which things I should do first is just common sense. Some things need to be done before others"*.

Leaders encourage people to take an initiative and try new things „*We have a lot of freedom to do many things"* (Stefán). They listen to all ideas and often help employees to realize them:

> "*I often have ideas about this week's special offer and some idea how to prepare it. I have a lot of freedom in deciding these things, but also, I like to ask my boss his opinion (because he has experience) and for help if this is something more complicated, and then we discuss things together.*"

Flexibility is also a common experience at work among the participants. Participants, both men and women, seems to enjoy their flexibility in life, that helps them to balance their personal life with their work career. Each and every person said that there is no problem for them to jump out of work for some short time to take care of their personal matters, in fact, they do it quite often

> „*They understand that you can not go to the doctor after work, so if you need to go out to the doctor or the bank, it is no problem. If there is something going on and you need to quit work early, it is fine, no problem with that"* (Pétur that works in public services).

The only thing that participants need to consider before going out or asking for permission to go out is, if there are rush hours and if there is someone who can take over for

them „ *it is ok to jump out to doctor or bank during your work, but I need to remember not to schedule appointments during rush hours or when there is no one who can take my place*" (employee of trade services). In the opinion of the participants, usually, there is no problem with finding someone who can take over for you and often employees fix these things between themselves, without telling about it their supervisor.

All participants, except one, said that if there is something happening in their personal life supervisors show understanding and try to make things work the way so both parties can benefit from it. Here is an example that Davíð, who works in trade service, brought up

> „ *Last week I told my boss that I could not come to work on time because my child was sick, but I could come at … His respond was "it is ok, we will fix it"…He knows how it is, he understands*".

Social acceptance seems to be exercised at this places. People are accepted for who they are and all needs of employees are taken into account. Davíð describes a situation where he could not get back to full-time work and how his boss responded to it

> „ *I could not work eight hours a day because I had a baby in the daycare. I wanted to work more, but I never went to ask for it. And one day my boss came to me and asked me „hey…I have an idea, what would you say if you come to work at … and then you finish at… so you can work the full eight hours and we both benefit from that"? I was like Yes! And I did not even ask for this; this was his idea*".

Another employee describes a different situation where he had a sick kid and a lot of responsibility at work for the things that only he could manage „ *If my son is sick… then I just say ok I need to be home after lunch… even if I´m home I can still work from there*"(Stefán). Leaders try to find the ways to help people balance their personal life with work.

If there is any judgment present, it comes rather from coworkers than from management. Also, some of the people who the researcher spoke to are in school, and they also get a lot of understanding because of that. Pétur said

> „ *I can always get free time to go for working weekends, no problem with that. Also, I made a deal that I would have Mondays free so I can study. I call these days learning days…If I have a lot of projects and deadlines, they* [bosses] *will say „just take the day off"*."

Another student Anna that works in the trade service, commented the following „ *at the moment I am free on Wednesdays…and both of us* [the participant and management] *benefit from this arrangement*“.

The participants that work alone a lot and are setting their own goals can often go home earlier or come to work later, if the work they do is finished or going well. Sigga, an employee in the public service, said

> „*In my situation I have a lot of flexibility, I assess myself the time I have…it is ok for me to go home earlier so I can go to a party or the theater…I have a lot of flexibility, but I need to remember to finish my tasks. If everything goes well, then it is no problem for me to finish earlier or come to work later*“.

Supervisors go out and talk to people. If there is a need they work with them on tasks and listen to their tips. They have no problem admitting that they don´t know something, and they look for information among employees, because they realize that they are valuable assets of the company. Here are the words of Davíð that describe this situation perfectly:

> „*if he [boss] does not know something...he has said to me "listen I´m not sure about this but what do you think, you probably know this"...You know he is still learning, and he does not know everything...He knows that, so he does not act like "oh I know this, don´t need your opinion"...He would rather ask me or somebody else " I don´t know this but you probably will" and then he asks about things*“.

Supervisors trust the judgment of employees who have a lot to say about decisions regarding their working position. Leaders realize that people who work there for quite a long time in a certain position know many things that they don´t and let them freely express themselves. One participant (Stefán) said that he has a lot of freedom in decision making and recently he was asked by the company to carry out lectures for other employees around the country and share his knowledge

> „ *They called me and asked „ could you prepare a course* [in particular field]*? We would like you to go to Reykjanesbær, Akureyri and West to give a speech. You think you could do that for us?*“*…You know I´m just a regular employee… but they are not very much about getting their knowledge from somewhere else; they want to use people who already work for them*“.

In this particular place, individuals seem to be really happy with their job, and they couldn´t imagine to changing it for something else. Also, they care about this place „*I really care what people say about this place because this is my workplace. Without it, I would be out of a job*" (Davíð). People often don´t understand why some employees work there for a so long and here is one of the answers that Davíð give to such a question

> „*Often people would come to me and ask me „why are you working here for so long? Don´t you want to try something else?" then I would say „ I´m in a job that fits me perfectly, that is awesome… and I feel good in my job. When you work in a place that fits you so well, you don´t just jump out to some other uncertain job, only because people want you to do that*".

In summary, from a general point of view, we can say that participants who live and work in Egilsstaðir seem to experience autonomy in their jobs, and they seem to be happy with that fact. They have a lot of flexibility in their work and experience understanding for their needs and problems. Acceptance of who they are and taking their personal lives into account helps them to balance their personal life with work. Also, participants say they have opportunities to take advantage of their knowledge and use their capabilities in delivering new ideas and resolutions at work. In general, participants seem to be satisfied with their job

3.3   Feedback and rewards

The second theme that emerged from the findings is: feedback and rewards. Feedback at work refers here in the words of the participants that the employee is being provided with helpful information or criticism about his or her performance. Participants explain that this information give them insight about how they are doing at work and if there are any aspects of their performance that need improvement. Rewards refer to the employee getting compensation for his or her output. In other words, rewards are a result of the employees effort being noticed and appreciated by employers.

The most common experience of the participants is that they do not get regular feedback on their performance. Some of the participants receive annually a questionnaire where they evaluate themselves. Among other things they are asked about is to describe their strong and weak sides, their responsibilities and such. Pétur and Jený describe it as follows „*once a year we evaluate ourselves and then we have a meeting with our supervisors. It is more as we*

evaluate ourselves how we are doing at work". Then a similar evaluation of the individual is done by their supervisor. In the next step, these two evaluations are compared. They say that the problem with this assessment is that it is done only once a year, and people don´t get very much feedback from it. If there is something that needs approvement, it is announced by supervisors to employees as a whole and not personally to each individual „*they will not reprimand you, but rather they will just say how you should do it next time*" (Pétur). In that case, people don´t know if this is addressed to them or maybe to someone else. Such feedback misses its purpose entirely. One of the participants, Anna, said „*I never know how I am actually doing at work. If I don't get any reprimand, then I take it as a sign that everything is fine with my performance*".

In contrast, for other participants, e.g. working in trade services, feedback is taken seriously and is delivered to each employee on a weekly basis. The participants explained this as such that an employee can clearly see what is expected of him or her. On such paper, you can see the lowest point, which according to a company, the employee can go to and see the highest point of his performance, which means that if the employee gets there, he is doing a very good job. Then employees are provided with information about how they did last week and how the situation looked at the same time last year. Based on that, employees can estimate what their goal will look like for the next week. If an individual doesn't trust himself to make a decision he talks to his boss who will make the decision for him, but will also help him to understand the information that he has and learn how to make the decision himself in the future. Davíð described the situation in these words:

> „*He would say „ok now we are going to set ourselves a goal. We are doing very well at the moment, but I think we can still do better. So here are the numbers from last week, here are the numbers from this week. Based on that, how should the numbers for next week look like?" If I don´t know the answer, he will help me to calculate it*".

Stefán explained this further and said that employees are given the opportunity to try their ideas at work, and feedback is delivered to them on a weekly basis to help them see if their ideas are working or not „*The information flow is very good, and we always get it once per week…We constantly get the opportunity to improve ourselves…We get to know right away how we are doing…so we will not keep making the same mistakes.*"(Stefán).

When it comes to rewards, most of the participants said that they don´t receive a lot of recognition for good or bad performances. As one of the participants, who works in the trade

service, said, „*Even if you know that you are doing well its always good to hear it.*" For some participants, e.g. in trade services, supervisors seemed to be focused only on bad sides of the people, and only one thing they acknowledge to employees is when they do something wrong. Emma, said about this:

> „*They need to let people know when they are doing well, that they are doing well because then people will keep doing well…instead of always picking on the things that are not done…they are very much focusing on showing you what your bad sides are…it is like they are trying to drag you down*".

Some participants talked about that they don't receive any recognition, good or bad „*they* [bosses] *do not sit with you and tell you that you did well or anything like that* " (Sigga). When mistakes are made they are not announced, but sometimes comments are made to all employees and not the particular person who actually made the mistake.

Some participants, e.g. in trade service, actually receive recognition for things that they do well. To the researcher were shown notes that have been made on feedback sheets that contain congratulations for excellent performance and tips to those that did not do very well. These tips were formulated the way so people will not feel offended and only realize the need for improvement in a particular aspect. Also, employees said that they sometimes receive on a daily basis good words from their supervisor and sometimes rewards. Davíð told of an example that he heard from his boss „*WOW! Listen; you did awesome! Well done.*" Here is one example of a reward that Davíð and Stefán got the last time:

> „*I think it was two weeks ago or something like that when we had coffee time in our cafeteria. Because we did so well in the last week as a reward we got food for lunch croissants, cheese, ham and stuff like that..and they said to us „you did very well last week, congratulations with that."*" (Stefán).

The important thing here is, according to the participants, that the leader is letting employees take the credit for their achievements. As said earlier a manager decided to award brunch to the employees in reward for their hard work and in his eyes, they did the hard work of making the place perform well, and he was just helping them. Davíð explained this followingly: „*because we performed so well last week he* [manager] *decided to award brunch to the employees…he felt that we deserved it*" (Davíð). The manager rewarded the employees and not himself, even though he also contributed to this achievement. Participants with this experience also said that they feel close to their boss: „*He is your boss, but he works in tasks as*

much as you do. He is everywhere…He is somehow close to you…I have known him for years"(Davíð).

In general participants in this study are satisfied with their jobs and reward in the form of salary except one person. Emma an employee in the trade service, said that she will be happier if she got better pay. All other aspects of her job would not bother her if she got better paid for the job that she is performing *„I´m not satisfied with my job…maybe I will be happier if I get more pay for what I'm doing…I feel like I´m getting too little money compared to others who do less and get more*" (Emma).

Participants seem to be happy with their jobs and with almost all aspects of it. Some individuals that work in trade service, seems to be really happy with their jobs and the salary. One of them describes it with these words:

> *„ I'm substantially satisfied with my work, and as it is today I can not even think of going to work some place else…I have a fine salary, very good salary, all flexibility I need, and I get rewards for what I´m doing…I can not imagine working somewhere else…I don´t know another company that thinks about the wellbeing of their employees as much as here they do*".

In summary, most of the participants do not receive formal feedback on their performance which leads to the fact that they don´t know it they are performing well or bad at work. When it comes to rewards, employees don´t get genuine compliments for their achievements. The same situation is with reprimanding. Supervisors rather skip reprimanding or point it to employees as a whole, than to particular individuals. Some participants in trade services seem to experience a high level of servant leadership, they appear to be euphoric about their job, and they don´t want to change anything in it. In general, participants seems to be happy with their salary as a form of the reward.

3.4 Plan, policy, and goals

The third theme that emerged from the findings is: plan, policy, and goals. By planning work the participants talked about being able to identify the goals that they want to achieve and the methods that they are going to use to achieve them. By policies the participants refer to day-to-day decisions and actions that are taken to gain given objectives.

Another thing that appears to be common for all the participants is that they experience a lack of vision among leaders. Participants said that if leaders have foresight they do not share it with their subordinates. Most of individuals interviewed said that they are not aware of any policy that they could use in making day-to-day decisions. Sigga that works in public services said „*I feel like there is no policy or goals, and I don´t see any changes…I don't see long to the future and don´t know what will happen next*". Those of participants that have some sort of policy in their work seems to have difficulty remembering it or describing its purpose „*We do have a policy, but I don´t even remember what was the name of it* " (Pétur that works in public services). Sigga explained her experience such: „*I prepare my own plan and goals for the future so everything will work the way I want it. I create my own vision because this is what my job is about*" (Sigga). Anna that works in trade service said: „*This is such a small town that people don't need policies in small working places, this is only present in bigger companies that are employing over 100 people*". One of the participants, when asked about the future of the company and decision making, said: „ *I got to know about changes that managers were thinking about from another employee…they didn´t tell me about it!*" (Freyja from trade services).

On the other hand, some participants said that they know very well their workplace policy and long time goals and that they are frequently discussed in meetings „*Our policy is… and it is regularly discussed in all meetings and courses... and everybody knows it*" (Stefán from trade services). A special meeting is called, and all aspects of the policy and goals are explained. All changes that are going to have a place are described, so people know what is going on in their workplace, and where those changes are leading „*They tell as about changes that are coming, and how long they are going to take and I like that*" (Davíð). Another employee commented: „*I get all information about everything that is happening here*" (Stefán).

Another interesting thing is that according to some participants who work in trade service „*supervisors are taking part in all day-to-day tasks as much as employees do. They don´t just sit in the office*" (Davíð) and also

> „*We are all human…Supervisors, they think a lot like we are on in a football team, and we are playing the same game. You can kick the ball, but you will not score every time…We are like a team that is playing together*" (Stefán).

Also, some participants in trade service said that they feel like they have the possibility to grow at work. There are all sorts of courses that they can take for which the company will

pay as long as employees can use their new abilities and knowledge at work. There are many opportunities for people there, and Davíð described it in the following

> „*There is a certain number of courses per year from Bifröst for employees. I think it is about six courses per year that we can choose from…You always go there and come out more conscious. You always think that you know everything, but then they point you on to things that you could do better*".

Stefán brought himself as an example of this education of people „*I have got a diploma from Bifröst…that* [company] *paid for…They offered me training and to cover all costs, flights south and everything else*".

In summary, according to the participants opinion, there seems to be a lack of appointed plans, policies or the goals for the future. Participants are usually not informed about the future vision of the company or their goals, except for few individuals who experience policy, goals and changes being regularly discussed. Those of participants that have some sort of policy in their work seem to have difficulty remembering it or describing its purpose. In general, participants appear to lack the knowledge of where the company is heading and what can possibly happen in the future. Participants appear to get used to the fact that there is no set plan, policy or goal and if there is a need for future plan they deliver their own.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

The main purpose of the study is to provide deeper understanding and knowledge about employees perspectives and perceptions of leadership, job satisfaction, and job autonomy at their workplaces in a small Icelandic town and to explore if these views reflect servant leadership. Nine individuals from five various workplaces in Egilsstaðir were interviewed by the researcher. This chapter is split into two parts. In the first part, the researcher is drawing upon the findings and investigates the relationship between these findings and research objectives. These are considered in combination with results from literature review, earlier research, and in the context of the present study. In the second part, the researcher is reviewing the strengths and limitations of the study.

4.2   Findings with regard to earlier studies

4.2.1   The reflection of servant leadership in statements of study participants

According to the view of Dirk van Dierendonck, servant leadership represents eight characteristics: empowerment, humility, authenticity, courage, standing back, accountability, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). From this point of view, only a few participants experience these factors of servant leadership at work, therefore, presence of servant leadership in employment places in Egilsstaðir seems to be rather low. Most of participants perceived level of listed above characteristics of servant leadership as rather low at their workplaces based on data that the researcher got from the interviews with participants. The need for feedback, lack of foresight, employees who can not look very far into the future because they don´t know what can happen next in their workplace, lack of leaders who are working side by side with the employees and encouraging them to try new ideas, are only a few elements that are needed but not present in experiences of most of the participants. Only few participants in trade service seem to experience all characteristics of servant leadership. In general, we can say that according to collected data servant leadership is barely present in the work experience of the study participants when their words are compared to these factors above.

Only two aspects of servant leadership, in the form of interpersonal acceptance and autonomy, were experienced by all participants. Dierendonck does not recall autonomy as a factor of servant leadership, but the researcher based on Liden et al. theory decided to include it as an element of empowerment that is common for all interviewed individuals (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). Other factors that characterize servant leadership as humility, authenticity, courage, standing back, accountability and stewardship appear to be practically non-existent in experiences of participants according to their statements.

From Greenleaf´s point of view, freedom and autonomy at work are important concepts and key elements of successful servant leadership. According to „the best test" of a servant leadership leaders know that they are servant leaders by checking if their actions lead to freer and more autonomous followers (Greenleaf, 1970). Results of the study show that all participants experience some degree of freedom and autonomy at work which can lead us to the conclusion that possibly all participants experience some degree of servant leadership as well.

However, some participants that work in trade service seem to experience a lot of servant leadership in their workplace according to their statements, which looks like a contrast to the opinions and experiences of other participants. These participants talk about that their managers recognize, acknowledge and believe in the intrinsic value and skills of each person and help them to learn more if they show signs of interest. Employees become more passionate and self-confident (empowerment) (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Supervisors are not scared to admit that they don´t know something, and they ask for the opinion of others (humility) (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Also, they show who they really are so people who work with them feel like they have known them for years (authenticity) (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). New ideas among employees are welcome, and the supervisor helps to realize them (courage) (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). When employees achieve good results leaders assign credit to them and not to themselves (standing back) (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). With the help of professional and frequent feedback employees are able to take responsibility for their performance and be accountable for outcomes (accountability) (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Employees personal needs and life are taken into account. Leaders try to understand their subordinates and look at things from their point of view (interpersonal acceptance) (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Supervisors are ready to serve others instead of being self-focused (stewardship) (Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

4.2.2   The attitudes and experience of study participants towards work autonomy

Job autonomy seems to be present among all participants that work and live in Egilsstaðir. All participants said that they possessed quite a lot of freedom in their work. They have substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to create their routine and methods that they will use in carrying it out which is consistent with the definition of autonomy developed by Hackman and Oldham (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). The flexibility they have helps them to balance better their personal life with professional life. All of them seem to be quite happy with this kind of arrangement.

When considering the reasons why so much freedom in scheduling work is given to employees the researcher came up with the idea that this can be the way in which employers show employees how much they respect their capacity, resourcefulness, and knowledge (Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal, & Ali, 2013). Giving people so much autonomy is the way to reward them for their job and a sign that their work matters, which leads to higher motivation (Park & Searcy, 2012). It could be that leaders realize that high levels of job autonomy can lead to enhance motivation, improve work performance, increase job satisfaction, increase commitment and decrease level of absenteeism among employees and that is why they give it to employees, because both organizations and individuals can benefit from it (Smith, Kot, & Leat, 2003). Also, it can be that leaders in some degree are servant leaders who want their employees to grow as persons, become more healthier, wiser and freer, and that is why they give their employees more autonomy at work (Greenleaf, 1970).

On the other hand, the researcher also considers the fact that Egilsstaðir is a small town where everybody knows everybody. People in this town have known each other for generations, and they tend to have a lot of trust in each other. Maybe that is why employers are more likely to provide employees with more autonomy than they would get in another place. They know employees on the private grounds, and they know what they are capable of. People in a small town usually have their life rhythm according to which they live and work.

4.2.3   The attitudes and experience of study participants towards job satisfaction

Same as for job autonomy, job satisfaction appears to be present among most of the participants that the researcher spoke to. Almost all participants, except one, view their job in a positive

manner which is consistent with the definition of job satisfaction that Edwin Locke developed (Lock, 1976).

Based on answers of participants we can see that many factors can have an impact on job satisfaction. In the case of one participant that was dissatisfied with her job (Emma) she explicitly states that the only aspect that causes her to be unhappy about her job is salary. This is consistent with *two-factor theory* Herzberg's where he says that lack of *hygienic factors* such as satisfactory compensation can lead to dissatisfaction (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014). In contrast, participants that appear to experience high level of servant leadership seems to enjoy recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for growth at work. These elements, in turn, are categorized by Herzberg as *motivational factors* that lead to job satisfaction which seems to be compatible with findings of the researcher among those participants (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014).

In the words of the participants, we can also recognize examples of *personal factors* established by Schultz and Schultz (1998). Such an example of personal factor is the possibility of individuals to use their talents and capabilities at work (Furnham, 2006). Here we can recall the example of Stefán, who was supported by the employer in his education so later he could use his talents and capabilities at work. In this way, the employer ensured benefits for both employee and the company itself. The employee receives more power and autonomy which makes him more satisfied, and the company gets a skilled and well-performing employee who is happy. Another example of a *personal factor* that comes up in the statements of participants, is equivalency of knowledge and skills with those required by their job (Furnham, 2006). Here the experience of Sigga could be cited where she highlights the fact that because she is the only one with the skills that her position requires this makes her automatically a perfect fit for the work that she is doing. That is why she is being trusted with all kinds of decision that hers job requires, and also that is why she is performing it very well. Like she points out „ *I have not made any serious mistakes in my job yet*“.

Signs of theory, developed by Anna Þóra Baldursdóttir and Valgerður Magnusdóttir, that describes *working environment* also can be found in comments of various participants. As we can see all of the participants appear to possess some degree of autonomy which gives them control over decision making, allows them to make choices, solve problems and work toward meeting responsibilities that the job involves. We also see that all of these people with autonomy seem to be happy or very happy with their job. These are exactly the same elements as Anna and Valgerður describe under the factor of *control* (Anna Þóra Baldursdóttir & Valgerður Magnúsdóttir, 2007). Another example of factor of working environment is a

reward. Participants who are perceived to experience high levels of servant leadership were the ones that got the reward in form of brunch for their hard work, and they seemed to be really happy about that. The fact that they described this example during the interview shows that they were pleased that it happened.

4.2.4   *Perception of job autonomy and job satisfaction among study participants*

Many types of research have been done to investigate the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. All of them agree that high levels of autonomy are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, as a result of employees having more power to decide about their effort, actions and work schedule (Saragih, 2011). These researches were conducted in many working sectors for example among nurses, salespeople or the fast food industry. They all come to the conclusion that job autonomy is linked in a positive way to job satisfaction. The more autonomy employees had, the more they were satisfied (Saragih, 2011; Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal, & Ali, 2013).

Findings of the present study appear to be compatible with previous research. Participants in this study have experienced some degree of autonomy at work, and they also talk about being very happy with their job. There was no individual that would complain about having too much freedom in their work. All of them when describing their freedom in making decisions, scheduling work and picking methods to complete the tasks, referred to job autonomy in a positive manner. Another aspect that is of interest in this matter is that participant experiencing job autonomy and job satisfaction have also experienced high level of servant leadership. These people seem to be the most satisfied with their job and they appear to have the highest level of job autonomy among other participants that were interviewed.

4.2.5   *Perception of servant leadership and job autonomy among study participants*

As discussed before servant leadership, seems, in general, to be perceived as rather low among participants that were interviewed. Only few of them that are engaged in trade services appear to experience servant leadership. Interestingly, these same individuals also experience job autonomy when compared with other participants. This provides an interesting insight into servant leadership and potential link to job autonomy.

Studies on this subject are rather limited, but those that the researcher came across are consistent with present findings. According to „the best test" of Greenleaf, leaders should ask themselves a question „Are those served becoming healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous?", bacause letting others be free and autonomous at work is one of the key elements of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970). Servant leader, described by Liden, let people take responsibility for their actions, let them decide the course of action and encourage them to make important decisions. This in turn will lead to creative thinking, learning from mistakes and ability to handle stressful situations, which finally result in the satisfaction of autonomy need (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). A study conducted by Chiniara and Bentein (2016) support this view and state that followers who have leaders behaving as servant leaders estimate their psychological need of autonomy as fulfilled (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016).

4.2.6   *Perception of servant leadership and job satisfaction among study participants*

Numerous studies have been conducted to establish a relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction and most of them are consistent regarding the fact that there is a strong relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. As an example, we can refer to research that examines the connection of servant leadership with job satisfaction in private University in Atlanta, Georgia, which shows that servant leadership contributes to the satisfied workforce. Also, the study of servant leadership at the University of Iceland conducted by Guðjón Ingi Guðjónsson and Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir (2014) also shows a significant positive correlation of servant leadership with staff job satisfaction and this is in line with the findings from Guillaume, Honeycutt, & Savage-Austin study (2013).

A study that the researcher conducted in the town of Egilsstaðir can possibly be perceived as contribution to previous results. In general, people appear to be happy with their job, however those people who appear to experience servant leadership at work seem to be more satisfied with their jobs than any other participants. Only those participants that experience strong signs of servant leadership talk about issues such as caring for the future of the company, not having any desire to look for another job elsewhere, and not being able to imagine working anywhere else. The researcher takes these words as a confirmation of being happy at work. From this point of view, the researcher can say that servant leadership appears to be positively related to job satisfaction.

4.3   Strengths and limitations of the study

The strengths of the study lie in its qualitative approach where the voices of employees are being heard and the study shed light on important factors in their work. Another possible strength is how diverse the group is, in respect to gender, work experience, education and the various working fields. The emphasis has been on providing insight into the attitudes that are delivered based on different experiences and backgrounds.

The study also has certain restrictions, like for example, it only inspects the point of view, attitudes, and experiences of a limited number of employees working in a small number of places. Certainly it would have been useful to get the perspectives of other employees in these workplaces as well as people working in other workplaces in Egilsstaðir. Also, it could be helpful to talk to employers and familiarize with their views, opinions, and experiences. As said before, because the sample was limited we can not draw any universal conclusions from the results.

The results, however, give some insight into experiences and attitudes towards leadership, job autonomy, and job satisfaction among residents of Egilsstaðir. Also, this research provides us insight about what aspects need further study and about future research that would be worthy to carry out. For example, it would be interesting to explore experiences and attitudes of remaining residents in Egilsstaðir towards leadership and in particular servant leadership and towards job autonomy and job satisfaction. It would also be interesting to conduct quantitative research among employees in all companies in Egilsstaðir and measure the level of servant leadership, job autonomy, and job satisfaction in those places. According to researchers opinion, it would also be very useful to interview employers that are located in Egilsstaðir and try to get insight and deeper understanding of what in their opinion means to be a good leader.

5. CONCLUSION

We create all the knowledge and experience by considering our opinions and experiences and discussing them. This is exactly what researcher and participants in this study did. The objective of this study was to get a better knowledge of particular aspects of work, which have an impact on our performance and well-being. The researcher was trying to investigate experiences and attitudes towards leadership, job satisfaction, and job autonomy among residents working in different workplaces in a small Icelandic town, Egilsstaðir, and estimate if these views reflect servant leadership. Before conducting interviews, the researcher took her time to think about and to prepare open-ended questions that she was going to ask (see Appendix 3), however, she did not have any concrete idea what the results would be.

Previous research shows that servant leadership is positively linked to job autonomy and job satisfaction. Research also shows that job autonomy can influence job satisfaction. High levels of autonomy are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction as the result of employees having more power to decide about their effort, actions and work schedule.

Limited knowledge is available about individuals working and living in a small communities in Iceland. Population growth in Middle East Iceland seems to be steady over recent years, so there is no evidence to suggest that residents of this area lack employment opportunities or job satisfaction. However, research on a turnover in Egilsstaðir and a nearby town, Fellabær, that have been conducted in recent years shows a great difference between turnover in the two companies that have been investigated, which can lead to suspicion that there is different perception of job autonomy and other working aspects among residents of Egilsstaðir.

The results of this study seem to be compatible with outcomes of previous studies where the link between servant leadership, job autonomy, and job satisfaction has been established. According to the present study we can suggest that there seems to be a positive relation between servant leadership and job autonomy, and between servant leadership and job satisfaction, based on participants experience at work. Also, this study provides some signs about a possible positive relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction in line with findings of previous research. All participants appear to have an impressive level of job autonomy as well as job satisfaction, which can lead to the suspicion that these two factors can possibly be linked

to each other. Also, many aspects that have been discussed in literature review are present in statements of participants, such as factors that have an impact on job satisfaction.

This study was very informative and entertaining. However, there were times when work became challenging and difficult. The researcher is really grateful to be able to have her contribution to this work and hopes to conduct further research in this field in the future.

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APPENDICES
Appendix 1: Ethics „Persónuvernd"

Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir
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Persónuvernd

Rauðarárstíg 10 105 Reykjavík
sími 510 9600 bréfsími 510 9606
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Reykjavík 15. mars 2016
Tilvísun: S7751/2016/ TS/—

Hér með staðfestist að Persónuvernd hefur móttekið tilkynningu í yðar nafni um vinnslu
persónuupplýsinga. Tilkynningin er nr. S7751/2016 og fylgir afrit hennar hjálagt.

Vakin er athygli á því að tilkynningin hefur verið birt á heimasíðu stofnunarinnar.
Tekið skal fram að með móttöku og birtingu tilkynninga hefur engin afstaða verið tekin af hálfu
Persónuverndar til efnis þeirra.

Virðingarfyllst,

Teitur Skúlason

Hjál.: - Tilkynning nr. S7751/2016 um vinnslu persónuupplýsinga.

Appendix 2: Informed consent

Rannsókn um viðhorf til stjórnunar og forystu og upplifun á starfsánægju og sjálfstæði í starfi.

Upplýst samþykki vegna viðtals

Ég undirrituð/aður samþykki hér með þátttöku í viðtali sem er hluti af rannsókninni *Viðhorf til stjórnunar og forystu og upplifun á starfsánægju og sjálfstæði í starfi.*Rannsóknin er unnin af Mörtu Kaminsku og er unnin sem verkefni til BSc gráðu við Háskóla á Bifröst undir handleiðslu Dr. Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, dósent við Háskóla Íslands og Háskólann á Bifröst sem er ábyrgðarmaður rannsóknarinnar

Tilgangur rannsóknarinnar er að kanna viðhorf einstaklinga, sem starfa á ýmsum sviðum í litlu íslensku samfélagi, til stjórnunar og forystu og að varpa ljósi á starfsánægju og sjálfstæði í starfi.

Rannsóknin felst í viðtölum við nokkra þátttakendur. Viðtölin, sem taka um 30 – 60 mínútur, verða hljóðrituð og síðan vélrituð. Skráning allra upplýsinga verður þannig að ekki verður unnt að bera kennsl á einstaka þátttakendur í rannsókninni. Allar upplýsingar verða meðhöndlaðar sem trúnaðarmál. Rannsóknin hefur verið tilkynnt til Persónuverndar. Fyllsta trúnaðar er gætt við meðferð allra upplýsinga sem eru ópersónugreinalegar og ekki er unnt að rekja neinar upplýsingar til þátttakenda. Rannsakendur einir hafa aðgang að frumgögnum.

Ég geri mér grein fyrir að mér er frjálst að neita að taka þátt í þessari rannsókn en ef ég tek þátt í henni ákveð ég sjálf hverju ég svara eða segi frá. Mér er einnig heimilt að hætta þátttöku hvenær sem er.

Hafi ég einhverjar spurningar varðandi rannsóknina eða rétt minn sem þátttakandi í henni er mér heimilt að leita til rannsakanda hvenær sem er (Marta Kaminska í síma 8417608, netfang martak13@bifrost.is).

Egilsstaðir_____   2016

_____   _____

Þátttakandi   Rannsakandi

Appendix 3: Interview framework

At the beginning of the interview information about the background of the participants are gathered, for example, people shortly describe their job, their regular working routine, with whom they have communication, the tasks that they have to perform, and for what they bear the responsibility.

1) Can you tell me about your job in general?
2) Can you tell me about communication in your workplace?
3) Can you tell me about cooperation in your workplace?
4) What can you tell me about the communication between you and the management?
5) What can you tell me about feedback at your workplace?
6) Is there someone in your workplace that has a vision?
7) What can you say about the decision-making process at your workplace?
8) Is there something that you would like to have differently in communication or cooperation in your workplace?
9) With which aspects of your job are you most satisfied?
10) Are there any aspects of your job that needs improvement?
11) Overall, what would you say about your job satisfaction?