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A new framework for analysing personal and professional manager-employee relationships in small retail organisations

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Abstract

Humans being social in nature naturally forms relationships. What kind of relationship a workplace has differs partly on the characteristics of the group but also on the leadership style. Previous research states that employees must feel satisfied at work in order to be motivated to perform well, where one factor is through good relationships with coworkers and the manager. In order to analyse how relationships look at a retail level (store manager and employees), managers and employees from six different small retail stores in Central Stockholm were interviewed, in two rounds. We found that organisations require a base of professionalism to establish structure, discipline and respect to run smoothly, but the personal human side of the connection including factors like camaraderie, support and listening ability are required for continued satisfaction. Pushing either extreme can create either an atmosphere of fear and lack of communication, or a flippant and overly relaxed attitude at work respectively, calling for an optimal combination depending on the organisation. We also present a model that illustrates this balancing act, and categorise the different combinations that arise, along with their causes.

Keywords: Employee retention, Leadership styles, Personal relationships, Professional relationships

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The relationships one forms at the workplace are among the most prominent social contexts for people in their adult lives. As full or part-time workers spend a large part of their working hours there, it is no surprise that getting along with people on an interpersonal level is crucial to how one judges their job as a whole. It is also nothing new that stress originating from dissatisfaction with people in the working context (be they colleagues, customers or most prominently bosses) is among the leading causes of employees choosing to leave their jobs. Many occasions of such resignations are preventable and depend on factors that the organisations (and by extension management) have control over.

One of these factors is the environment at the workplace, which is to a large extent affected by the relationships that the people in the group have with one another. A retail store is in most organisations led by a leader, a so-called store manager. It is the leader's responsibility that the group achieves predetermined goals, often decided by the higher-level bosses (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Positive employee attitudes and efficient teamwork results in higher motivation and better performance, benefitting the organisation in its entirety (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005). One way a leader can improve the workplace environment is by incorporating a type of leadership that enhances motivation and job commitment. It could be done by behaving with humility, trust and willingness to help (Van Dierendock, 2011).

When the manager applies a fitting leadership style (for the specific context) and forms the appropriate relationships at the workplace, it will increase employees' satisfaction with their jobs. Consequently, this leads to an atmosphere with a better sense of community and belonging, along with a feeling of being seen and heard, and deriving more meaning from the job as a whole. This will in addition result in less people entertaining the idea of leaving due to differences with colleagues, which is beneficial from an organisational point of view, as costs related to replacing employees are immense.

Over the years, research and managerial experience has taken issue with not just the concepts of keeping a distance between leaders and followers, but also its opposite approach, bosses

pursuing friendships with their employees. In this study, we will use insights from practitioners within small retail organisations to attempt to answer the dilemma, by which we refer to stores where there are 5 workers or less working simultaneously.

1.3 Purpose

People working in groups naturally form relationships. The type of leadership style will have a significant impact on the type of relations that will be formed in the workplace, which in turn will affect how the employees feel towards the leader and the workplace as a whole. The purpose of this paper is to, through interviews, get an understanding of how workers and employees perceive their current relationships to be. Afterwards, using our model, we will explain what possible outcomes e.g. in terms of productivity and employee satisfaction that can arise depending on the nature of said relationships. In addition, the model can be further used to give an indication of where organisations are today and ultimately guide managers to create a relationship with their employees that balances efficiency and well-being to create sustainable connections in small retail stores.

1.4 Contribution

Previous research emphasises that it is crucial to nurture relationships with employees in order to keep them, where one way is through evolving said relationships. However, most focus has been put on higher-level forms of management. The authors recognised a lack of research related to relationships at lower levels of an organisational hierarchy, in particular between managers and employees at store level. This paper aims to contribute to the field of management by giving managers and company policy makers an insight into how small individual stores or the bottom levels of larger chains operate, and the different issues that are unique to them. Additionally, we propose a new model in the form of the “Manager-employee relationship characteristics model” that can be used as a starting point in future research related to employee-manager relations in other contexts as well.

1.5 Disposition

The following paper consists of nine major parts. We start with an introduction into the current state of management research, followed by a review of literature in the areas most relevant to the subject of manager-employee relationships. After this, comes a brief explanation of the methodology of the study, a discussion of the data analysis, a compilation of qualitative results, and finally a discussion focusing on analysing the responses from our interview data, followed by a conclusion. Lastly, we provide implications for managerial actions, as well as recommending further research opportunities past the limitations of this paper.

2. Literature Review

In the following section, we review and compile different research areas within that relates to manager-employee relationships. Firstly, workplaces typically consist of one or more groups, and within each group there is commonly a leader that has a significant role in the organisation's performance. The focus will mainly be on the leaders as they are the ones whose policy decisions consciously shape these relationships.

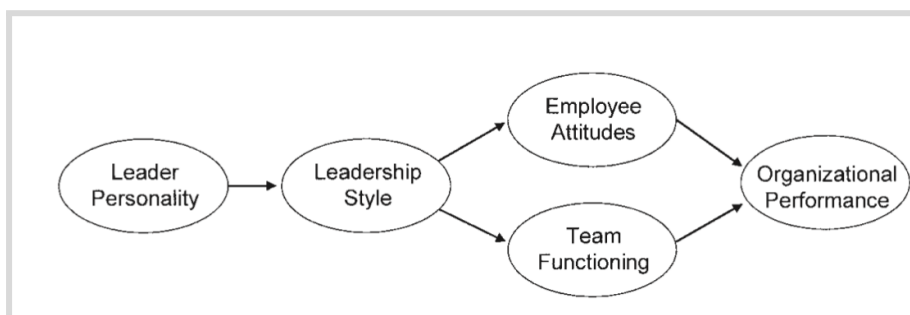
2.1 Leader & Leadership

Leader's role in the organisation

In all types of organisations, there is typically one or more people constituting leadership. Although there is no fixed definition, there is a general agreement that leadership is the ability to create and maintain long-term group performance relative to competition (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Leadership is a highly researched area which has provided a good understanding about successful leaders' characteristics. Despite that, many organisations feel like there is "a shortage of effective leaders" within their companies (Burke, 2006). Leaders have the crucial role of making sure that organisational targets are met. However, these are not only met by the leaders themselves, the responsibility instead being a task of delegating or in other ways influencing the workers to act in the interest of the organisation's objectives (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014).

To create a good working environment and motivation among the workers can be done using different types of leadership styles. What leadership style the boss applies depends heavily on their personality. The importance of a leader's personality should not be disregarded as it has an indirect effect on organisational performance. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) states that a leader's personality and leadership styles have a significant impact on the employees which in turn is reflected on how the company is performing. It can be visualised as a chain where the leader's personality predicts the leadership style which relates to communication, job-structures etc. The applied style then influences the “employee attitude” towards the leader and the overall job satisfaction, but also the “team functioning” which is possibly due to the fact that leaders behaviour (as a result of personality) directly affects the dynamics and culture of the team. Employees' attitudes towards the leader and working environment will in turn influence their individual motivation and contribution of achieving company-related targets which thus in turn determines the performance of the organisation, see figure 1.

Figure 1. “How leader personality affects organizational performance” (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005)



According to Lok and Crawford (2004), a leader's way of leading also affects job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The authors continue by explaining that when an employee is not satisfied with the workplace, they risk becoming mentally withdrawn, making the person less committed to perform and instead look for other job alternatives at other organisations. As the leader has a significant impact on the employee attitude, it is important that the leadership is conducted in a way that enhances the workers motivation, for instance by behaving with, among other things, humility, trust and willingness to help, in order to

ensure that his or her employees have the best possible experience at the workplace (Van Dierendock, 2011).

As employees have an essential role in an organisation, it is important that the firm does not disregard the fact that this group of people must be considered and that relationships must be nurtured in order for the workers to perform in line with company goals. This includes not just the day-to-day tasks they tackle at work, but also how they view their futures at the organisation. A dissatisfied employee may even decide to quit their job, which hurts the company massively (O'Connell & Mei-Chuan, 2007).

2.2 The employee in focus

Employee retention

Employee retention is the percentage of employees that stay within a company, while the percentage leaving a company is called employee turnover (Phillips & Connell, 2011). From an organisational point of view, hiring new people implies large costs related to recruitment, training and other indirect costs (O'Connell & Mei-Chuan, 2007). Employees are in turn also one of the organisation's most valuable assets as skilled workers are harder to imitate and replace. Despite organisations' interest in keeping employees, 80% are actively seeking jobs with better work environments (Kundu & Lata, 2017). In order to increase employee retention, it is vital that the organisation offers a supporting work environment as wellbeing positively correlates with job satisfaction and commitment. The employee attitude will in turn impact the organisational profitability and effectiveness (Rogg et al, 2001).

Importance of employee satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a measure that shows how satisfied a person is at their workplace in terms of e.g. fulfilment, appreciation and engagement (Reclaim.ai, 2022). In 2022, 49% of Swedes did not look forward to going to their jobs, see appendix 1.1 (Report 3. Jobbhälsoindex, 2022) while over 45% would not recommend others to work at their workplace, [see appendix 1.2] (Report 1. Jobbhälsoindex, 2022). The results show that employee dissatisfaction is an ongoing issue at many workplaces, making this research paper relevant for several organisations that want to improve employee satisfaction.

From an organisational perspective, employee satisfaction is a crucial topic as it is proven that happy employees do a better job. Happy and satisfied employees are estimated to be 31% more productive and generate 37% more sales, while unhappy employees are 10% less productive than their happy colleagues (Edwards, 2015). It shows that employees have a strong influence on organisational performance, so in order for an organisation to utilise the full potential of its workforce, the firm would benefit by finding ways of keeping the employees satisfied, in order to motivate good performance.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations

When discussing motivations, research often highlights two general drivers of employee satisfaction: “Extrinsic” and “Intrinsic” motivations.

Extrinsic motivations refers to “the pursuit of an instrumental goal” (Reiss, 2012). Instrumental means that actions are performed in a specific order to get a certain outcome (Legault, 2020). An example of extrinsic motivation is a young girl cleaning her room to make the parents proud, or to get money for an ice cream. Nevertheless, extrinsic incentives in general relate to external rewards. In a workplace it could be in the form of bonuses or extra days off. Intrinsic motivations however, are motivating factors to engage in activities that provide satisfaction and pleasure (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Legault 2020). These kinds of motivations are driven by the individual's self interest (Reiss, 2012) e.g. a boy playing football because he likes it or a person skydiving to feel the enjoyable adrenaline kick.

Although people generally are driven by both extrinsic and intrinsic incentives, the two types are not equally important. Extrinsic incentives that negatively affect the intrinsic motivations can on the other hand have a counterproductive affect, in the sense that the incentives instead of motivating workers, ends up making the employees dissatisfied, resulting in lower levels of employee productivity and a reduction of net profits efforts (Kreps, 1997). The reason for that is that extrinsic incentives undermine intrinsic motivations (Reiss, 2012), meaning that the internal motivation is viewed by people to be more highly valued than external rewards. In a workplace setting, providing intrinsic motivation has a crucial potential

to increase motivation and creativity of employees (Shafi et al, 2020), but is also the type of incentive that gives higher satisfaction.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory states that an individual's psychological health is built upon several different needs and can be grouped into five categories: physiological, safety and security, belonging, esteem and self actualization (Lester, 2013), which is often visualised as a pyramid. The further down the pyramid a need is, the more important it is for the individual's psychological health. According to the model, the ones located higher up in the pyramid can only be reached if the lower-level needs are satisfied. "Belonging" relates to the fact that humans are social beings and thus have a need of having associations with others. Much time is spent at a workplace, thus a person develops a need of feeling closeness to its colleagues, which is linked to the desire of wanting to belong in the group. This results in relationships being naturally formed (at times even unconsciously), often in the form of friendships (Greene & Burke, 2007). People in addition have a tendency of wanting to be liked as it gives self-affirmation (Davey et al., 2010).

Just like managers need employees to perform well in their professional duties (to benefit the organisations), workers also have personal goals and desires. In order for the employees to remain satisfied with the workplace it is important that the workers are given the opportunity to satisfy personal needs and that the working environment is pleasant. Only then will they feel motivated enough to perform well and remain in the company.

2.3 Relationships between manager and employee

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

In order to understand the way leaders can affect satisfaction among their employees, one must be aware of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. This field focuses on the study of social interactions between supervisors and their subordinates and how they affect the organisation as a whole. Based on the different and inimitable relationships that arise between the two parties from these interactions, Jha & Jha (2013) observe two groups of subordinates: determined by reciprocity with their leaders' favourable treatment of the member, the degree

of similarity-attraction they feel with their leader and how well they identify with their roles in the organisation, high and low-quality LMX relationships are formed. High quality relationships are characterised by mutual trust, loyalty and obligation and have been shown to improve job performance, satisfaction and turnover intentions (Gerstner & Day, 1997). On the other hand, low-quality ones result in hierarchical, more formal interactions and more distant relationships (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004). Although the formation of these relationships depends not just on how leaders conduct themselves but also on the personality of the subordinate (Jenkins, 1994) and external circumstances beyond the control of either party, this paper focuses only on the manager's role.

Personal and Professional relationships

There are many different approaches to view the leader-member exchange from, but the aspect discussed in this paper will be that of the professional-personal axis in working relationships. Relationships are of course extremely complex, making it nigh-impossible to cover all, or even just the biggest factors in detail within a study of this scope. Therefore, for the sake of the paper, we decided to focus on this one component, even if it is not the be-all, end-all of the aforementioned relationships.

Personal relationships are those more closely resembling familial bonds or friendships, the latter of which has been defined by Boyd & Taylor (1998) as “voluntary interdependence between two persons over time that is intended to facilitate social-emotional goals of the participants, and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection and mutual assistance”. This mirrors the characteristics of high-quality LMX relationships. On the other hand, a professional relationship arises through work and its aim changes over time, its continued existence relying on the duration of role positions and the achievement of instrumental goals (Boyd & Taylor, 1998). Although the two sides represent very different sets of values, most working relationships lie somewhere between the extremes.

Both professional and personal relationships between manager and employee have distinct advantages and disadvantages from the perspective of the parties involved. Having friendships at the workplace has been shown to be an important factor in the happiness and

productivity of professionals, and many firms have recognised and begun to actively promote it (Berman, West & Richter, 2002). On the other hand, some consider the boundaries of the relationship between boss and employee to be incompatible with real friendship, where respecting one will eventually be highly detrimental to the other. Managers have an obligation to make sure the organisation performs at its best, which includes having to be impartial at all times, or firing an employee if necessary. In organisations where the relationships are more personal, performing these routine obligations (or even rewarding some employees along given guidelines) becomes more difficult (Derfler-Rozin et al., 2020).

Thus one can conclude that the kind of relationships that the people at a workplace have with one another (including with the boss) has a large impact on how the employee will perceive the workplace.

2.4 Friendship formation at the workplace

Lastly, it is important to consider how relationships between the members of an organisation can change over time. In their article on the development of workplace friendships over time, Sias & Cahill (1998) outline several stages of a working friendship. The first step is about transitioning from the “coworker/acquaintance” to the friendship stage. The cause of this change was mostly due to physical proximity, socialising outside of work and generally being on the same page. After this, the development takes them from friends to what the paper refers to as “close friends”, which is facilitated by the parties sharing each other’s work-related or private problems with each other. This is where communication becomes more intimate and less cautious. The last transition dealt with becoming “almost-best friends”, and was characterised by an even higher degree of trust, openness and intimacy.

Although the study presents a clear and general development of relationships, it is important to stress that it mostly worked with peer friendships, rather than supervisor-subordinate ones, the important difference being the hierarchical difference and how it manifests in these interactions. However, as small retail settings deal primarily with managers who work in very close proximity and have a very large overlap in their work tasks, we expect to see some degree of similarity with the process outlined above.

Despite organisations often being structured similarly (boss + employees), there is not a method that works for all groups. The kind of relationships that the employees desire and are possible can heavily vary depending on a country's culture, the type of industry and so on. For instance a military squadron in Indonesia most likely can not have the same type of relationships as a café in Stockholm.

2.5 Contextual differences (Small retail & Sweden/Nordics)

Although management styles have long been a prominent topic, not much has been written about how these different relationships affect small retail organisations (those with 5 or less people actively working at a time). These stores, restaurants and other establishments have the unique task of constant interaction with private consumers, thereby requiring from their employees a different skill set compared to other professions. Additionally, many of them have very low personnel counts compared to larger companies, which should be reflected in leadership strategies.

Voluntary turnover is the highest of any industry in retail with 38% in 2002 (Knight et al., 2006). This, together with the immense cost of replacing employees can make smaller organisations very vulnerable (O'Connell & Mei-Chuan, 2007).

Another unique factor in our context is that of Swedish work culture. Management styles tend to be more democratic and less hierarchical than in many other places in the world. This results in flatter organisations, more open communication and less political workplaces. Swedes are also more likely to be withdrawn and concise in their communication (Tixier, 1996). As a consequence, some leadership practices are expected to be less accepted while others more so, compared to other cultures.

2.6 Summary and gap in research

From previous research it is evident that working efficiency is positively affected when employees enjoy the workplace. Employees are an important group of stakeholders to satisfy

as they have a direct effect on organisational performance. In order for employees to actively work in the interest of the company, they must feel motivated to do so. People have different types of motivational drivers where intrinsic and extrinsic are two of the most researched ones. Employee attitude and team functioning are directly influenced by a group's leader's personality and style of leading, making the leaders not only responsible for leading the group to reach the organisational targets, but also to apply a leadership style that enhances employee satisfaction and motivates employees to perform to their full potential.

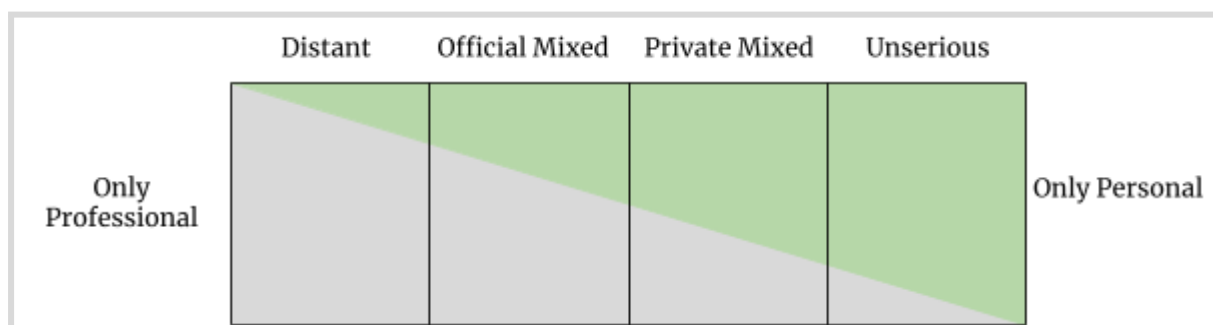
Although leader characteristics and leadership styles is a highly researched area, there is a lack of research related to employees point of view of what makes a leader "good".

Despite the large amount of research dedicated to the psychology of manager-employee relationships being formed and transformed in different circumstances, there is yet to be a defined ideal amount of personal and professional in these workplaces. It is known that strong emotional connections improve many employee performance indicators, but too close personal ties have been shown to cause problems in the day-to-day functioning of organisations. Additionally, small retail organisations have unique success factors that go unexplored as most leadership research has been conducted in very different workplace contexts. Neither has much been said about how the working culture of the Nordic countries (such as Sweden) may affect these structures.

Although there are numerous types of leadership styles and in general a lot of research about leadership, this paper will focus on personal and professional relationships as the research field remains relatively unexplored. The types of leadership will be reviewed and an analysis will be made to see what combination between personal and professional relationships that generates the best employee satisfaction and productivity and organisational profitability in a given scenario.

2.7 The manager-employee relationship characteristics model

Figure 2: The manager-employee relationship characteristics model (Authors' work)



Combining previous research and the answers from the interviews, we ended up classifying the different approaches of our participants alongside a diagram that shows the proportion of professional and personal elements in working relationships. We will use the names we have given to the categories alongside our compilation of results, and provide more detailed definitions for all of them in general terms under the Discussion section.

3. Methodology and Findings

3.1 Research method and data collection

Interview approach

Previous literature showed that good leadership is a large driver of employee satisfaction. In order to see how leadership is implemented in practice and perceived by employees, a structured interview was conducted with one store manager and one store employee from six different retail organisations (shops).

Qualitative research is an appropriate method when information can be interpreted in several ways (Jones, 1995) and cannot be measured in numbers. Another reason for choosing interviews was the need to know the views of the respondents themselves beyond a uniform yes-or-no basis. In a qualitative interview, the subjects become participants in meaning-making (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), the process of interpreting phenomena using their own (often subjective) experiences and previous knowledge. We decided on semi-structured interviews, consisting of a list of questions to help us guide the conversation, but supplemented by improvised follow-up questions when we saw a good opportunity for the respondent to elaborate on what they have said (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

The interviews were conducted individually, partly due to the fact that the questions differed depending on whether the respondent was a manager or employee. To conduct interviews individually is the most common form of making interviews, mainly because such approaches reduce the risks of the respondent “holding back or altering information in the presence of another member for fear the information would negatively affect the relationship” (Gubrium et al., 2001). By doing it that way, we were confident that the answers became more sincere and accurate compared to if the interviews were done with the manager and employee together.

The questions were prepared in advance and remained unknown to the interviewees until at the point of the interview. The expectation was that the answers would that way be less thought through (giving the respondents less time to make something up) and ultimately corresponding more with their actual feelings. It would also lessen the time investment on the part of our subjects, some of which were already hesitant to answer our questions before getting to know it would only take a short time. The interview questions were available in both Swedish and English so that the respondent could decide in what language the interview would be held, making the interview process more comfortable but also an attempt by the interviewers to make the questions more understandable and reduce risks that the answers were not answered to the respondents full potential as a result of language barriers and other limitations (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). This in turn implies that the responses in Swedish (which stood for a large majority) were translated to English by the authors of the report.

The questions were asked in a fixed order, a reason for which was partly that we wanted to create a more relaxed environment but also reduce question order biases (Rowley, 2012). Question order bias is an issue where the order of questions asked can negatively affect the honesty of the answers, which thus affects the reliability of the results. For most authentic results, an interview should start off with non-personal questions followed by more personal ones (Roberts, 2020; Perreault, 1975). As the interviewers and respondents are strangers to one another, the interview was started off by asking questions that would reduce the tension and awkwardness. Such questions were “what are you working with?” and “how long have you worked at your current workplace?”. These are examples of non-personal questions that

most people do not have much problem answering. Thereafter, the questions gradually became more personal e.g. “what are your expectations of your leader?” and “what is your relationship with your employees like?”. If the interview had started off by asking personal questions right away, there would be a risk that the respondents would feel that the authors invaded their personal space, making them feel uncomfortable - which could potentially have a negative effect on the answers (Perreault, 1975).

In the second round of interviews, the interviewers made another approach. Firstly, each respondent was asked a very straight forward question “What kind of relationship do you feel like you have with your boss/employee? More personal or more professional?”. Thereafter questions were asked such as “Are there any consequences for bad performance?” that would hint at whether the remaining answers would correspond to the first answer of either being professional or personal. In this round, a list of questions was prepared for the authors to understand the day-to-day relationship of the participants. The intent was to get more free-form, developed and personal answers, rather than continuing the point-by-point, more factually focused approach of the first section. Akin to a behavioural interview, the new questions included prompts to make the interviewee tell their stories, scenarios to apply their knowledge of their relationship to, along with reflections on their current situation (Rowley, 2012). As in the previous round of interviews, this round was also made individually and anonymously. However, these interviews differed in the sense that they were more semi-structured, meaning that there were pre-written questions, however the interviewers could change the questions or include new ones depending on the direction that the authors wanted the conversation to go towards (Rowley, 2012).

Selection of participants

In most research talking about leadership, the focus is aimed towards leaders at higher levels of an organizational hierarchy e.g. CEO, while research about managers at store-level is very limited, making it more relevant to investigate the less explored area. Additionally, in order to analyse if the manager's perception of their current leadership was consistent across the workforce, an interview with an associate was also conducted at each place. That was a crucial requirement in order for the material to be used as the aim was to get information from several angles.

The selection of stores was made by visiting several random local stores, restaurants etc. in the geographical area of Central Stockholm. The intent was to get a variety of small-sized organisations. Thus, each pair of respondents (manager & employee) represents one unique firm/chain. That way, the author could see if there was any potential difference between different types of work-environments observed, e.g. cafés vs. clothing stores. When selecting participants it is important that the interviewees are knowledgeable within the interviewed area in order to be perceived by the reader as reliable (Rowley, 2012). The interviewees all worked in their respective retail stores regularly thus they know the best about the atmosphere and relationships at their workplace.

The majority of the respondents were women (in a 3-to-1 split), mostly in their mid-twenties to early thirties. All the interviewees worked in the retail sector, more specifically, either in a clothing, optics, café, fitness or budget store. The leaders being store managers showed that they had a position just above the remaining employees, thus the bosses and workers had daily contact while working together at the sales floor. The managers had in general worked at their current job longer (between 1 to 3 years) compared to the employees which ranged from 6 weeks to several years, but most had worked between 4-6 months.

In the first round of interviews, 6 employees and 6 managers were interviewed in total. In the second round of interviews the aim was to conduct a follow-up with every participant from the first batch of subjects. However, scheduling issues, workplace changes and other factors prevented some of them from partaking again. Therefore, the scope (3 employees and 3 managers) was smaller but the style of the interview aimed to get a deeper understanding of the situation of our subjects. As such, we do not consider the aforementioned setbacks to have hindered the contribution of this paper.

Interview execution

The interviews were made in-person at the respondents' workplace, individually and in independent order. The interviews were either conducted at the sales floor or at an only-staff area based on if the store had a disclosed room or not and the respondents preferences. Thereafter the respondents were asked to consent to the interviews being recorded. However

the authors conducting the interviews clarified that the person, firm and answers would be anonymous. The questions were predetermined and asked in a predetermined order. The interview was kept structured in the sense that the interviewers avoided to say more than the questions as interfering or giving examples of possible answers could impact the responses, thus the questions were further explained only when the respondent expressed that he/she did not understand it. After all questions were asked, the recording stopped, and the interview was officially done. The same process was made in all interviews.

The first round of interviews showed that the perception of leadership differed depending on the kind of relationship that the manager and employee had, where employees with more personal relationships were more satisfied at work. Thus requiring a second round of interviews to find out the exact cause.

In most regards, the interviews were conducted in the same manner as in the first round. However, the conversations in the second round of interviews were made more free-flowing, as the participants were sometimes asked follow-up questions based on their answers, in order to get a more complete picture of their specific situation.

4. Data analysis

The data gathered is primarily based on interviews that were conducted with bosses and employees on a selection of retail stores. The empirics were transcribed and grouped based on the company they were conducted at. Such an approach made it easier for the authors to go through the answers several times, keeping it fresh in memory, while also being available when needed. It also made it easier to group the responses, making trends among the answers more clear. Some common patterns that was highlighted was: leaders being relatively uncertain of their employees satisfaction of the workplace (how they would talk about the workplace to loved ones), employees expressed that they had expectations on the leader, but what exactly they expect was unclear & the majority of employees had not worked at the workplace for long (under 12 months). However, the most crucial bit of information gathered was that there are different types of relationships between bosses and their workers. Previous research mentions the importance of good leadership, however there are knowledge gaps

related to employee expectations and perception, which this report looks into. In the second round of interviews, the authors saw a pattern that managers recognised the presence of risk in both overly professional and overly friendly relationships, along with a strong preference for wanting to know about potential future conflicts rather than solving them as they arise.

As the interviews were conducted and recorded in person, a lot of filler words and some incomplete sentences had to be cut in order to get across the experiences and opinions the subjects were trying to express in written form. One question in the first interview stood out as being hard for the interviewees to understand, which was “Who do you interact with, and in what way?” [in Swedish], the problem was handled by the author either rephrasing or explaining the question, making sure that the respondent fully understood before continuing with the interview.

5. Results

Table 1. Respondents

Respondent	Type of store	Time worked	Sex	Interview Rounds
Manager	Fitness store	7-12 months	Male	2
Manager	Café	1-6 months	Female	1
Manager	Optics store	1-6 months	Female	2
Manager	Clothing store	12+ months	Male	2
Manager	Confectionery	7-12 months	Female	1
Manager	Discount store	12+ months	Female	1
Employee	Clothing store	1-6 months	Female	2
Employee	Confectionery	7-12 months	Female	1
Employee	Fitness store	1-6 months	Female	2
Employee	Optics store	7-12 months	Female	2
Employee	Café	12+ months	Male	1
Employee	Discount store	1-6 months	Female	1

Displays of caring and support are crucial

From previous research, it is well known that employees perform better when they feel well and comfortable at work. Additionally, it is the most crucial part of retaining employees in the long run (Rogg et al, 2001), especially as we noticed a trend of employees usually spending significantly less time in their roles compared to their superiors. However, to know what is necessary to get to this level of satisfaction, we need to know the workers' and managers' general expectations of the workplace. Therefore, the first round of interviews focused on how the respondents evaluate their interactions at work and what they consider the ideal to be within their respective sector. The following insights come from small retail employees, as well as their comparatively more experienced managers when asked about what they consider their ideal workplace to be:

Employee A:

“An ideal workplace to me is to have a boss that I can have open dialogues with, I shall not be afraid to call in sick, not to be afraid of having to talk about my life outside of work, or about things that have happened to me or something that I do not feel good about. To me it is very important to have these open conversations as we [employee and manager] see each other so frequently. To feel safe, enjoy coming to work, good camaraderie with colleagues and that my boss creates a good working environment are also important factors to me. Lastly, to have fun at work, to have clear goals and that these goals are achieved as a group. It should be fun to go to work.”

Employee B:

“A workplace where one gets the opportunity to develop, where one feels safe, heard and there is a good sense of community between those one works with.”

In the examples above, we can see that our respondents value the human interaction aspects of their workplace heavily. Well-being, in their mind, is perceived as a function of the connections, safety and camaraderie they form through their regular interactions with the other parties at their respective jobs. This was true irrespective of whether the respondent worked in an optics shop, a café or sold sports equipment. All have reported a high level of

satisfaction with their work at their respective shops or restaurants, though some of them took issue with the executive leadership of the owner companies.

Manager 1:

“An ideal workplace is a place where people, be they colleagues, customers or managers, feel a sense of community and a trust in the organisation that they run. Also, [it is important] to feel that one is safe and seen, gets a sense of development, and is taken seriously, not just in their working positions, but also as a person.”

Manager 2:

“The best thing you can have is a really, really good team behind you, so that everyone feels at home and safe. It is thanks to them that I actually have a job. And as long as they are having a good time, the organisation will be going really well.”

Manager 3:

“It is important that everyone feels well because if the workers are feeling well at the workplace then it will result in good numbers [in terms of sales], which will result in my bosses being satisfied and it will benefit the organisations as a whole. So well being is very important and is an aspect that I put a lot of weight on.”

Similarly to their employees, the managers also value good relationships and the general well-being of the people at their jobs. They also see that employees must feel safe and heard in order to thrive in their jobs. However, the answers from the managers differed a bit in the sense that they considered these aspects in terms of the long-term benefits to the store, and the parent company as a whole where there was one. Satisfied employees according to them are more efficient in reaching the goals that are expected of them. Still, the managers are responsible for creating an environment where this can flourish, and as such, a well functioning workplace with satisfied employees requires good leadership. And since most of the respondents [employees] had regular interaction with the manager, it is important that the boss meets the employees perception of a good leader. But what is a good leader?

Manager 1:

“To be a leader is more about showing the way, to get people to follow you, inspire people to fight through tough times, do things that are arduous and

understand that the importance lies within the details, that each customer encounter is equally important as all the others. And that pressure never really stops when one works with consumers and customers. [...] It is not just about running an organisation, you also want to have a good reputation and take care of your local environment.”

The answer indicates that the working environment at this retailer could be categorised as “Private mixed” in the sense that the manager wants some structure, but emphasises that relationships are important and valuable in the long run.

Manager 1 views his role as one who is supposed to take on the role of the one showing the way and teaching his or her workers to see the importance of the same things as he or she does. He is not alone in this, as several leaders among the ones that were interviewed also perceive facilitating education and improvement to be one of their primary roles. A reason some do this is not only to provide satisfaction for their employees from the aforementioned sense of constant development, but also so their workers can take care of the day-to-day tasks in the best way possible when they themselves are not present. Other bosses have stressed the importance of open communication and feedback, as well as motivating employees with external incentives such as competing about who could sell the most, among other concerns.

Employees on the other hand, expect their boss to be structured and provide clear goals and guidance to reach them. The boss should also take responsibility so that the work is run smoothly. However, employees also expect the manager to be responsive, accommodating, helpful and appreciative of the work that the workers do. Lack of praise reduced the employees motivation and meaning with completing job-related tasks. In addition, the employees stress the want to feel supported when going through tough times. Lastly, in order to not feel scared and tense when the boss is present, several employees stress on the importance of equality, in the sense that the boss is perceived more as a colleague rather than a boss.

As employees and managers in a store setting often spend much time in the same space, relationships will be formed naturally. The kind of relationship that is formed can heavily differ depending on work setting, time spent, individual traits and so on. As previously explained, in a work-setting, two common opposites of relationships between employees and

manager are “Professional relationships” and “Personal relationships”, where the first is more formal and emotionally distanced while the other is perceived to be more friendly. The respondents (including managers and employees) were asked to say which one of these two types of relationships that they felt suited their workplace the best.

The proclaimed importance of boundaries

This is where it took an interesting turn. Despite most employees and managers having discussed feeling very close and in some places “like family”, when asked about whether the relationships were more personal or more professional, both parties agreed that being professional is the nature of their connection, along with several people stating that it should be the default for any workplace, even when they themselves saw their own workplaces as having a friendly atmosphere.

Employee A:

“It is a bit of both but definitely more professional, which I think is good. We do things outside of work, but at work, there is only work. You cannot come 1 minute late. [...] It is not okay, he [boss] says it in a good way: “I must be able to put trust in you, if you start quarter to, you cannot [arrive at] 46. [...] I should be able to trust you if I am ill or away.”

Manager 3:

“It has a little of both. I think one should keep a good degree of separation between the two. Of course, you should talk openly if you want [to get] a little family feeling. Because it is like a second family that we have here at work, and it is important for me to create good relationships [with the employees], but it should not cross the line. I should always be a leader that helps with anything at work. But at the same time it is important to have a good relationship. So I would say that it is important to maintain a balance in between.”

Based on the answer of manager 3, one could regard the relationship type she wanted to pursue as “Official-mixed” in the manager-employee relationship characteristics model (Authors’ work). The friendly elements in it serve mostly to have a nice feeling atmosphere while working towards a set of financial goals (which she outlined later), and to reap the benefits of high levels of employee well-being.

Even the ones who brought up close connections as the defining characteristic of an ideal workplace have vouched for the importance of keeping personal bonds outside of the context of the organisation. Bosses say that although they see the value that personal relationships bring, they still in general think that keeping private life and work separated (more of a professional relationship) is important in order to maintain mutual structure, trust and respect, and that too personal relationships might jeopardise that. From an employee perspective it is interesting that this group in general are very satisfied with their current workplaces despite the relationships being more “professional”. However, while at the same time being united in highly valuing equality and for the boss to be more like a colleague. By “being friends”, employees and managers alike are afraid that workers would start treating the store as a space to hang out, diminishing the effectiveness and hurting the financial results. In their view, a common characteristic of professional relationships is a well-defined structure and clear expectations with appropriate follow-up, which together create a more serious environment built on mutual respect and accountability. In the interview, employees and managers were asked whether what they say is taken seriously by the other party.

Manager 1:

“Yes, absolutely. [...] If people are open with each other, it also creates a trust that makes it so things are taken the right way.”

Manager 3:

“Yes, I think so. Of course, misunderstandings sometimes occur, therefore I try to be very clear and express my expectations for the day, and write it down. It usually works well. So I would say that they [employees] take it very seriously.”

Employee C:

“Yes, God yes. One hundred percent.”

Employee A:

“Yes, I feel so.”

The dangers of being friends

The answers clearly indicate that employees and managers feel heard and understood. Thus, one could assume that the workplace is characterised by mutual respect. Manager 4 reasoned

that a more friend-like relationship would be a hindrance in getting his communication realised. According to him, being too friendly makes it so people are going to stop listening to you [the leader]. Considering the “the manager-employee relationship characteristics model”, this type of leadership style and way of having relationships could be categorised in the category “Distant”.

Manager 4:

“If I am decisive and they are aware of my opinions and our expectations of one another, communication becomes much easier. [...] We are colleagues at work, but ultimately, I am the one who makes the decision.”

This was a trend among the other managers as well. Manager 1 felt that having relationships become too friendly is analogous to shooting oneself in the foot, at least work-wise. When having close friendships with employees, there is an increased chance of letting things slip through and allowing unprofessional behaviour. And if such behaviour is tolerated over a longer period of time, the structure and routines will slowly diminish and eventually break down. Similarly to Manager 4, he also encourages managers to be stubborn in their decisions, but at the same time be open to other viewpoints, as he acknowledges that he cannot always be correct. One of the employees told about a scenario when a manager being too friendly with personnel becomes an issue.

Employee D:

“... My previous boss was very loose with the rules. And then people were coming in late, and it became more of a “yeah, we are friends”, but in that case, it also became less like a workplace. Instead, people will start going there to be with said friends.”

The scenario that employee D explains is a great example of a relationship that could be categorised as “Unserious”, the relationships between manager and employees are too close resulting in employees not taking the workplace nor the boss seriously, affecting the organisational structure and performance negatively. Based on this presented outcome it is understandable that the responding managers felt a need to keep relationships somewhat distanced.

6. Discussion

This paper aims to better understand relationships between managers and employees in small retail stores. There has been research in the past that focused on the importance of friendships in the workplace as well as advocating for keeping a distance and not letting one's personal feelings about one's employee or boss get into their work. These approaches were often presented as mutually exclusive alternatives (which we decided to refer to as personal and professional), while other forms of research (such as LMX theory) concentrated on the individual actions and their results or categorising people in organisations rather than a general picture of individual working relationships as a whole. By conducting our study with small retail actors, we could get a focused picture of people who spent a lot of time individually running an establishment together in manager-employee relationships.

From the outset, employees and bosses alike have stressed the crucial role of different social aspects in the workplace. Employees particularly want to receive support when they need it, be heard when they have things to say, and want a sense of community, belonging, trust and safety (which can be related to an individual's intrinsic psychological needs, as demonstrated by Maslow's description of the hierarchy of needs). These are the defining characteristics that we have associated with friendship (based on Boyd & Taylor, 1998), and, by extension, personal relationships. Rather than talking about the day-to-day actions they wish to perform in their store or restaurant, the above list of concepts seems to be the essence of what they want from their jobs. Judging by their responses, their bosses have recognised this need, and the majority of them considers them an asset when their subordinates are satisfied, be that reflected in how well the store is doing financially, or how smoothly the routine operations are moving. This relates closely to the high-quality relationships outlined by Gerstner & Day (1997), alongside showing signs of the servant leadership style as defined by Van Dierendock (2006), meaning a willingness to help and put trust in their subordinates. Mutual trust and loyalty especially are traits that have come up among the answers, and the expected consequences of improved satisfaction and job performance. An environment like this would also be effective at increasing employee retention (Rogg et al, 2001).

An inconsistency that was evident among the responding employees related to the leaders expectations of them. Although all employees agreed that the manager's expectations were

clear, only half of them could give practical examples of what was expected from them. Similarly, the bosses acknowledge that employees have expectations of them. However, when asked about what actions the managers take to satisfy these expectations, several of them did not have an answer. This could mean that although both parties state that the expectations on one another is clear, the lack of response indicates that it might not be as clear as they believe it is. A reason could be that the parties lack in communicating their fundamental expectations. This could perhaps be solved through more frequent or deeper discussions about the topic, which can be related to being more personal, making both parties more open to freely stating their opinions.

Managers recognise the value that more personal relationships can have on their organisation, however can simultaneously not avoid the fact that such a type of relationship can be problematic. They have a responsibility for their organisations to reach certain goals e.g. in terms of sales, and must influence the personnel to work in line with these goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014).

Despite benefits with personal relationships, most of the responding managers and employees recognize that risks arise when relationships become too friendly, for instance that the leader allows too much. This gives employees opportunities to take advantage of the relations, and take the “rules” of the workplace less seriously. Our respondents have voiced their concerns (some with concrete previous experiences), that this can easily devolve into a situation where people do not show up on time, ignore tasks that need to be done, or generally treat their jobs as a place for hanging out. In addition, it was mentioned that employees at times chose to underperform while the boss is not present. These are among the reasons why most respondents in our interviews have opted (or at least strived for) a relationship that was professional at its core.

In order to maintain structure and respect, in most of the workplaces the positions are clear. Many of the managers had internal or external training on how to lead a group, which could be where they learned the lesson that employees should be encouraged to engage and raise their opinions but that ultimately the boss decides. The bosses also show professional traits while handling late arrivals by not letting it slide but instead immediately confronting the

employee. That way the bosses show little tolerance for breaches without understandable motivations. By doing so, the manager makes it clear that running the organisation is a priority above non-urgent issues in people's private lives, and needs proper dedication to succeed. Such an approach reduces the risks that the employees do not work in alignment with the organisational objectives, and gives the managers a better sense of control over its employees.

However, we also saw that a good number of them showed signs of a more friendly bond. Despite having a knowledge about how an organisation theoretically should be run (partially distanced, good structure, clear goals etc.), most managers still develop more personal (friendly) relationships with their employees. A reason could be that humans are social beings and therefore desire to be liked and belong in the communities they associate with (Greene & Burke, 2007), which in turn constitutes the need for belonging (Lester, 2013). As retail managers and employees work in close cooperation, in a relatively small space and on most days of the week for months or years, it is not hard to imagine that they will eventually yearn to get along with their colleagues instead of playing a role designed to carry out work tasks effectively. Using the definitions of Sias & Cahill (1998), some of the relationships we have seen (such as the ones that have lately started talking about more private topics) are around the stage of the transition of "friends-to-close friends". Only one employee between the ones we have interviewed had worked at the same place for a long time, which meant that we had less opportunity to talk to people with long, established relationships with their managers. Additionally, retail (especially in a city as large as Stockholm) is a fast-moving industry where employees are less likely to stay in the same place for a long time. This may have been a contributing factor as to why we did not get to meet a lot of life-long friends in our research.

A common theme in the rhetoric of the respondents was the separation of these types of relationships, where many perceived the base of the relationship to strictly be a fulfilment of determined roles and duties in the organisation, and displays of positive or altruistic actions to be a tool for ensuring the operation runs as smoothly as possible, rather than a sign of a genuine social bond ("friendly, but not friends"). This was despite the fact that there have been concrete elements of private relationships such as feelings of betrayal, that were akin to

how a genuine, social friendship would be formed by the same thing happening. There seems to be a prevailing expectation that the manager, on the whole, needs to always be deliberate in determining the nature of his or her relationship with the subordinate, and every action they take, no matter how minor, should be the one that best suits the success of the organisation. However, we are talking about human beings interacting in an inherently social setting. Additionally, it is usually here that both parties spend the second longest time on an average day, right after their own homes. Therefore, it often becomes unrealistic to expect the leader to be in complete charge of the relationship at all times, in addition to always expressing themselves in the best way possible.

An interesting case the authors noticed was that of Manager 4 and his employee, who said they could separate their connection in private and work life entirely, and remain completely in control of their relationship at the workplace, while being friends outside of work and hanging out together. However one could question if this sounds too good to be true. It is evident that the workplace is structured and the manager is in control, however it is unavoidable to notice that the two people, despite being very different in terms of personality, still have a form of more personal relationship. One example is how the employee explicitly said how she looks forward to going to work and that they can talk about everything, and that she learns something new each time they work together, which generally is not the case when relationships are distanced.

On the employees' side, several people stressed the importance of a positive work environment and that "in an ideal workplace", the work should feel less like work, in the sense that they want to enjoy the place where they spend so much of their life. According to Berman, West & Richter (2002), friendships at the workplace have an important impact on the overall happiness and productivity of employees. Although the study was conducted in firms with larger teams and mostly referred to connections between the employees on the same level, it is reasonable to assume it still holds in an environment where much of the interaction between parties comes down to the manager and employee being present in a pair and seeing each other during the entire day, even if there is a hierarchical difference between the parties.

One should not disregard the fact that the relationships are not always mutual. One manager expressed a situation where a close relationship was formed with an employee. The boss viewed the employee as a friend, but ended up feeling hurt and betrayed when the employee quit out of the blue and the boss had found out that said worker had been talking about her unfavourably to colleagues behind her back. She mentioned that she reconsidered how she was going to handle employee relations going forwards, which might mean she takes on a more distant approach with future hires to avoid these emotional troubles. The reverse could also be a problem. If a manager does not make certain expectations very clear, for instance making it look like they are fine with the other's private life getting in the way of work, but punishing them for bad performance after the fact, there is also a disconnect with what one of them thought their bond was supposed to be like. All in all, one must make sure that both parties view the relationship similarly to establish a well-working exchange.

Based on previous research and interviews with managers and employees the authors believe that relationships can not be solely personal or professional. An organisation with only personal connections and no established duties or leader-member hierarchy will be unable to function, while one with no human connection between the parties will be hindered by its own distance between them. Rather, a well-working relationship is always a combination between the two types. To illustrate, we have created a model to demonstrate the different outcomes that the combinations create, see figure 2.

Figure 2: The manager-employee relationship characteristics model (Authors' work)



Distant: When an organisation is built on professional relationships and slightly to no personal elements at all. This is the quarter that best describes working relationships where employees and bosses are separated by strict hierarchies and superiors show little

consideration for the other, often creating an atmosphere of fear or pressure. The lack of personal relationships will mostly result in employees not feeling seen and not have enough motivation to express their feelings and concerns.

Official mixed: The relationship is still characterised by the presence of hierarchies, but people are encouraged to raise their voice when they have concerns, and leaders do their best to show that they sympathise with their subordinates when they need it. Overall, there are less factors separating the parties from each other.

Private mixed: The parties involved have a close relationship, characterised by camaraderie. The manager tries to be on the same level as employees, often discussing private matters and other things, in a way they would with a friend. However, there is still a foundation of professionalism, and ignoring it has real consequences.

Unserious: When managers and employees fully rely on personal relationships, the working environment is reflected by unseriousness, lack of accountability and lack of respect towards the manager. Although personal relationships are beneficial when wanting camaraderie and a warm working environment, solely private relationships will prevent effectiveness and increase the risks of employees making actions in line with private interests and not work in line with the organisational goals. Having such a relationship, the manager typically loses most of its control and authority.

To run smoothly and successfully, an organisation requires a structure where the employees are working in line with the company objectives. As a leader, the boss has the ultimate responsibility of recruiting a group that will reach those goals, providing training and guidance - and reforming or removing those who do not align themselves with the objectives. Respect and accountability is achieved when the leader shows authority and confronts unpleasant behaviours or actions e.g. arriving late. By having a strong foundation built on professional relationships, the leader retains control of the group and its performance. Over time, most organisations will experience a movement towards more friendly behaviours, as employees and managers develop a sense of mutual trust and liking, but also as employees need to be satisfied with their workplace in order to stay (Rogg et al, 2001).

7. Conclusion and Managerial implications

Leaders have a crucial role when it comes to the employees' satisfaction towards a workplace. That is because the leadership approach will have a direct effect on the attitudes and the culture of the team, which will determine the relationships between the coworkers and with the manager. The importance of getting these working bonds right for the organisation is clear. A better fit for the people involved and the nature of the job means a higher degree of satisfaction, which allows for higher levels of retention. This grants the company a solid basis of competence, and out of that, a competitive advantage.

Based on previous research and interviews with managers and employees, it has become evident that relationships will be formed. What kind of relationship depends on the individual's traits but also the manager's way of leading. The authors of this paper argue that it is important that an organisation has a base of professional relationships as it encourages structure, accountability and respect towards the boss and the company. However, keeping too much distance in human connections to employees can cause people to be unmotivated, uncomfortable and less loyal to the organisation. Therefore, we propose using a range of combinations that refrain from either extreme and thereby create a work environment that is sustainable in the long term for the given foundations and objectives of the organisation.

Managerial implications

The paper is intended to be used by managers to position their own organisation in the Manager-Employee relationships characteristics model and see what approaches to be made in order to move to the desired category (e.g. if the managers feel like the structure at the workplace is too loose and position itself in the “Unserious” category, then the paper explains that the organisation can move more towards the left side of the model by strengthening professional aspects and keeping relationships a bit more distanced.

In order to use our model as a tool for planning out the course of relationships over time, it is important to keep in mind that the mix of the relationship is not static throughout its duration. Usually, relationships start from a purely professional base, and go on to become more

friendly over time, as they get to know each other more. It is also hard to completely control the course of such a relationship, meaning leaders should try to set a range of mixes that they think will work for the organisation, and keep it within those approximate boundaries if possible when the personal elements are developing.

Although the manager-employee relationship characteristics model works in most situations, some companies start the other way around. Co-operative family businesses or start-up partnerships between friends will inherently start from the reverse position of a personal connection compared to the working relationship that most begin as. Their development over time will need to be focused on establishing a professional groundwork in their everyday operations, and maintaining that status in the long term, without losing friends or growing apart from one's family members out of work-related frustration.

8. Limitations

When conducting in-person interviews about sensitive topics such as relationships between employee and manager, and manager's type of leadership, the risk of non-real or “sugar-coated” answers increases. To tackle this risk, the interviews were made individually (thus the manager and employee did not answer questions together) in either separate rooms or at a distance from one another so that the respondent would feel more comfortable responding truthfully. Despite this effort, it was acknowledged that some participants still were hesitant when answering questions related to their boss (might be afraid of the consequences if the boss found out). In future research, when conducting interviews with people at the same workplace, we propose that they are made outside of the working environment e.g. at a nearby café etc. That way, the interviewee should feel more distanced from the workplace and its coworkers, increasing the chances of feeling safe and thus becoming more willing to answer the questions in line with the respondents actual thoughts.

Additionally, the first round of interviews were made at 6 small retail stores (café, clothing store etc.), implying that a total of 12 responses were collected. The second round was made with 6 of the previous participants. For future research, a larger sample size would be beneficial as it gives the authors more ground to make generalisations and conclusions that

better reflect reality. However, as a large majority of the respondents (including both employees and managers) answered similarly, it was enough ground to understand how the perceptions were in the selected places, and due its consistency, can to some extent also be assumed to be at least relatively similar for other retailers.

9. Future research

Despite the broad nature of the topic and conclusions, our research focused on a niche part of the overall market. There are many differing contexts that could be explored using this framework as a starting point. Firstly, larger retail stores (such as a hypermarket with many employees) presents a situation in which managers supervise several times the number of workers small shops do. Taking a deep dive into how the attention is divided up between up to 200 people is bound to result in very different conclusions in what the factors of success are.

Similarly, differences in cultures will affect the conclusions in this paper. Scandinavia (and to a lesser extent much of Europe) places a lot of emphasis on equality between people, which results in generally flatter organisations and approachable leaders. However, hierarchical or collectivist societies such as those in East Asian countries have much more specific requirements on how a leader should be viewed and how one is or is not supposed to interact with them. As a result, further research on how these employees can be held onto in small retail should be conducted.

There could also be a difference between the industry the business operates in. There are different degrees and types of customer service that need to be provided (a luxury clothing boutique will have more a inspirational focus, while a hardware store will have to be more technically knowledgeable), there are different work tasks surrounding inventory management (a supermarket will need to work more with moving items than a jewellery shop) and many other factors that affect the employees' level of stress or need for support, among other things. Managers will need to adapt to the specifics of what their field requires, and use it as a starting point when deciding the relationship they want to create. In future

research, one could focus to either only look at one type of retailer (e.g. clothing) or a specific chain (e.g. McDonalds) to see if there are significant commonalities or differences.

Lastly, future research could look at the way relationships are affected by certain turning points. Our study focused more on the gradual, day-to-day happenings of organisations, but we could see that some people mentioned single moments that shaped their approach (for instance the manager who found out her employee was talking behind her back). These sudden events are harder to plan for compared to daily routines and common problems, and as such can steer the relationship in an unintended direction instead of a smooth and deliberate development that managers would usually try to pursue.

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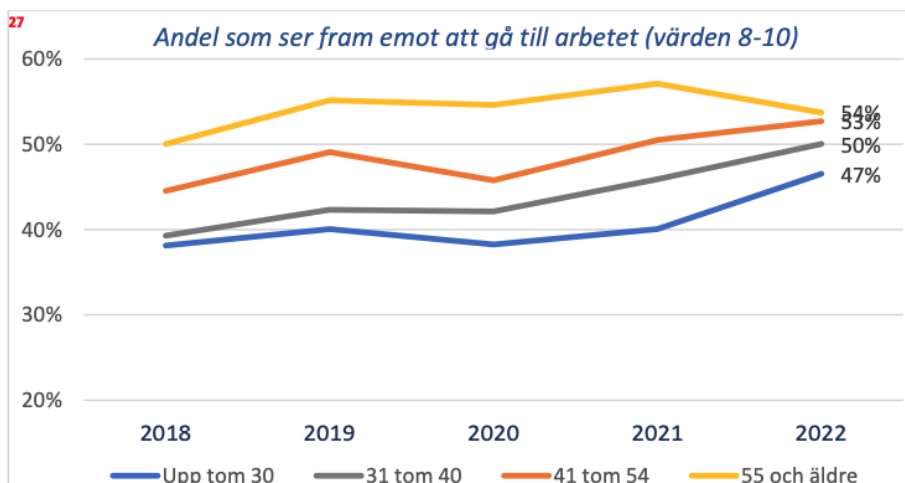
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10. Appendix

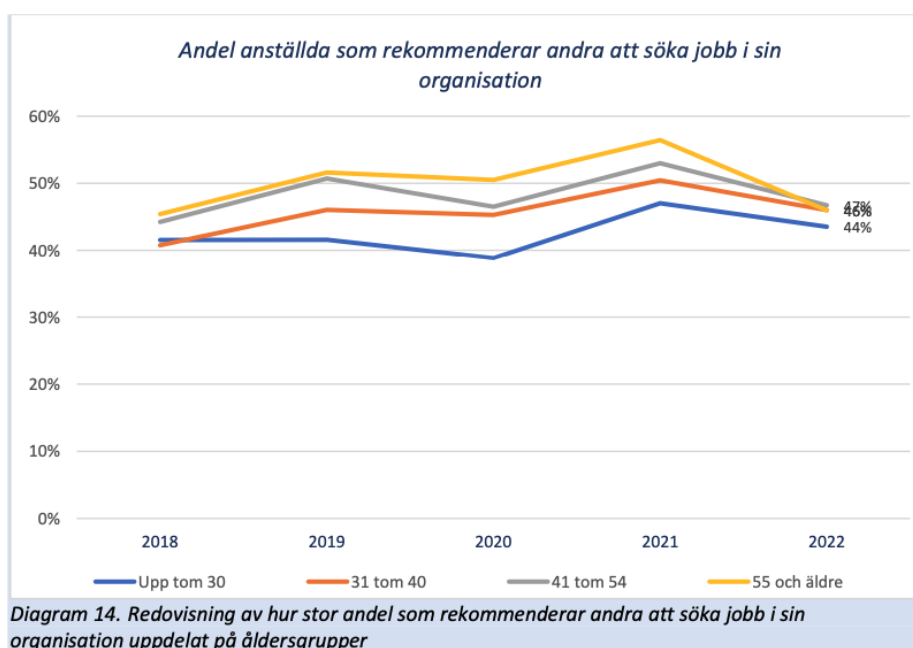
1.1 Proportion looking forward to go to work



Source:

http://www.jobbhälsindex.se/uploads/1/2/0/0/120098069/jobbhälsindex_2022_rapport_3_meningsfullt_arbete.pdf

1.2 Proportion that would recommend others to search for work in at the person's workplace.



Source: [jobbhälsoindex 2022 rapport 1 .pdf](#)

Interview questions (Swedish)

Frågor intervju 1. Anställd

- Vad jobbar du med?
- Vad är en ideal arbetsplats för dig?
- Hur ofta har du kontakt med din chef?
- Vad har du för relation med dina kollegor och din chef?
- Vad har du för förväntningar på din chef?
- Uppfyller din nuvarande chef dina förväntningar? På vilket sätt?
- Är det något du tycker att din chef skulle kunna bli bättre på?
- Vad har din chef för mål och förväntningar på dig? Är de tydliga?
- Vad säger du om din arbetsplats för dina nära och kära?

Frågor intervju 1. Chef

- Vad jobbar du med?
- Hur länge har du jobbat på din nuvarande arbetsplats?
- Hur länge har du haft en ledande position?
- Har du gått en utbildning/kurs inom ledarskap?
- Vad är en ideal arbetsplats för dig?
- Hur leder en ideal ledare i din sektor?
- Vilka interagerar du med, och på vilket sätt? Interagerar du med dina anställda dagligen?
- Vad har du för relation med dina kollegor?
- Vad har de anställda för förväntningar på dig som ledare?
- Hur uppfyller dina ledarskapsmetoder dessa förväntningar?
- Förstår dina anställda dina mål och förväntningar på dem?

- Vad säger dina anställda om arbetsplatsen till sina nära och kära?

Frågor intervju 2. Anställd

- Vad för relation tycker du att du har med din chef, mer personlig eller professionell?
- Finns det konsekvenser för dålig prestation?
- Vad händer om du kommer försent?
- Tar din chef dina åsikter på allvar?
- Påverkar er relation kommunikation mellan er, känner du att du alltid kan säga vad du tycker?
- Scenario: Föreställ dig att du ska på kompisens födelsedag. Precis när du är på väg att runda av för dagen kommer chefen och säger att han behöver dig 30 min till. Du vet att om du jobbar de extra 30 minuterna kommer du komma för sent till festen. Vad säger du till chefen? Vad tror du att chefen kommer svara? Känns svaret okej?

Frågor intervju 2. Chef

- Vad för relation tycker du att du har med dina anställda, personlig eller professionell?
- Tar de anställda det du säger på stort allvar?
- Finns det konsekvenser för dålig prestation?
- Kan du berätta om ett tillfälle där er personliga relation påverkade ert arbete på ett negativt alternativt positivt sätt.
- Scenario: På arbetsplatsen är det 2 personer tillgängliga (chef + 1 st). Det är inte fullt med kunder men butiken är aldrig helt tom. Du som chef tycker att balansen mellan anställda och kunder är lagom. Det är 30 min kvar innan nästa anställd kommer och tar över arbetare As skift. Men 30 minuter innan kommer arbetare A till dig och säger att deras kompis födelsedag flyttats fram i sista minuten och frågar om att få gå tidigare. Det innebär alltså att det bara är du på plats fram tills nästa anställda kommer. Hur svarar du? Hur reagerar arbetaren?

Interview questions (English)

Questions interview 1. Employee

- What do you work with?
- How long have you worked at your current workplace?
- How does an ideal workplace look to you?
- Who do you interact with, and in what way?
- Do you interact with your leader on a daily basis?
- What is your relationship with your boss?
- What are your expectations on your leader?
- Does your current leader meet your expectations? In what way?
- Is there something that your leader could become better at?
- Are they clear and straightforward?
- What do you say about your workplace to friends/others?

Questions interview 1. Manager

- What do you work with?
- How long have you been at your current workplace?
- How long have you had a leading position?
- Have you taken an education or course in management/leadership?
- How does an ideal workplace look to you?
- How does an ideal leader lead in your sector?
- Who do you interact with, and in what way? Do you interact with your employees on a daily basis?
- What is your relationship with your employees like?
- What are the employees' expectations of you as a leader?
- How does your leadership and leadership style meet these expectations?
- Do you think your employees understand your expectations of them? Are they clear and straightforward?

- What are your employees saying about the workplace to friends/others?

Questions interview 2. Employee

- What kind of relationship do you feel like you have with your boss? more personal or more professional?
- Are there any consequences for bad performance?
- What happens if you come to work late?
- Does your boss take your opinions seriously?
- Does your relationship have an impact on the communication, do you feel like you can always say how you feel?
- Scenario: Imagine that you are attending a friend's birthday. While you are just about to finish off for the day the boss comes and tells you that he needs you 30 minutes more. You know that if you work the extra 30 minutes you will arrive too late for the party. What do you say to the boss? What do you think that the boss will answer? Does the answer feel okay?

Questions interview 2. Manager

- What kind of relationship do you think you have with your employees, professional or personal?
- Do your employees take what you say very seriously?
- Are there any consequences for bad performance?
- Could you tell us about a time when your type of relationship affected your work in a negative way? Would the other type have any advantages over yours?
- Scenario: There are only you and one employee in the store, and there is a medium amount of traffic. There is still some time before the next employee arrives, and the currently working one tells you s/he needs to go 30 minutes earlier (to get to a friend's birthday, for instance), leaving you to handle the store alone for a while. How do you respond?
- How is it with people coming in late? Does it happen often?