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Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind

- a qualitative study of the remote leadership within geriatric home care.

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Abstract

Title Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind - a qualitative study of the remote leadership within geriatric home care.

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This study will examine how managers within two geriatric home care services work with motivation and communication towards employees. Further on, the study aims at investigating if the physical distance impact on the level of motivation and the process of communication. With support from theories about motivation and communication along with interviews, the analysis will fall into a discussion of the aim. Lastly, a few suggestions for improvements in the management will be presented for practitioners within the geriatric home care business.

The research shows the importance of a well-performed work with motivation and communication when leading in a physical distance. By being aware of the challenges of motivation and communication when leading from afar, a manager could increase job performance. This study indicates how the employees in the specific geriatric home care services have an intrinsic motivation that is not stimulated by the managers. However, the study will present other ways for the managers to motivate their employees. Further on, different tools and channels for communication are not in the greatest of interest of the employees in specific geriatric home care services. Consequently, the managers have to continuously work with scheduled face-to-face meeting and their level of availability.

Keywords: leadership, remote leadership, distance, spatial distance, motivation, communication, geriatric home care and elderly care.

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1. Introduction

This chapter will start off by presenting the background to the chosen area of this study. Further it will discuss the problem background in order to introduce the aim and the stated research questions. Lastly, delimitations will be presented.

1.1 Background

Today the society is highly built upon information requesting new types of capabilities from humans (Nordengren and Olsen, 2006). Everything has to be quicker, people have to be able to integrate with each other when at different locations and there is a rising demand for new types of organizational arrangements. As a result, remote work arrangements have gained in popularity (Fang, Neufeld and Wan, 2008). However, a business that has stayed rather unmodified during the organizational development is the geriatric home care. The job assignment has long required a remote work arrangement where an employee gives care in the home of the caretaker.

The leadership within geriatric home care is performed in a spatial distance. The employees carry out their job in the homes of the caretakers while the manager works from an office. This implicates how a remote leadership is performed and when being a remote manager, some aspects are of great importance to observe. The two scientists Nordengren and Olsen (2006) identify two factors behind a successful remote leadership, namely *motivation* and *communication*. The existing studies within the field of remote leadership often include features of both motivation and communication. However, these two factors are rarely combined and discussed when studying a remote leadership. Consequently, the two components of motivation and communication will be examined from a geriatric home care manager's perspective together with the employees' point of view in order to understand how the two components affect motivation and communication.

Nordström (2000) describes how the geriatric home care business was developed as a complement for the institutional health care in late 1960. As of today, the elderly care is according to Abdelrazek (2010) expected to grow in importance, as the world faces

an increase in the proportion of elder people. Further more, Abdelrazek (2010) claims how an ageing population and the fact that Sweden is among the top countries with citizens over 65 years of age will trigger the elderly care business to grow in the future. This implicates an importance of investigating the remote leadership within the geriatric home care service.

1.2 Problem Background

Leadership is a complex phenomenon including a manager and employees put in different situations. Researchers have long studied leadership and there exists a large amount of research within the field of study. However, literature focusing on remote leadership in general and on the leadership within the geriatric home care in particular, is scarce (Fang, Neufeld and Wan, 2008).

Nevertheless, the business of geriatric home care as well as nursing homes is often challenged and is continuously exposed to criticism for its quality of output in the media (Tullberg, 2006). In addition to being a well-observed business, geriatric home care service becomes a significant matter to discuss as agedness will affect a majority of the people (Abdelrazek, 2010). Therefore, a study of one of the most essential components of the business, namely the leadership, is appropriate to perform and is highly in time. By studying the two most important components of a remote leadership (Nordengren and Olsen, 2006), this research could contribute to an understanding of how managers within geriatric home care work with motivation and communication when leading in a physical distance. Lastly, implications for practitioners in the business of geriatric home care will be presented with expectations of increasing the quality of the output.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this research is to study how managers within geriatric home care work with motivation and communication and investigate if the physical distance impact on the level of motivation and on the process of communication.

1.4 Research questions

- How do managers in the area of geriatric home care motivate their employees and communicate with them?
- How do the physical distance influence the level of motivation and the process of communication in geriatric home care?

1.5 Delimitations

The concepts of motivation and communication include many aspects. This study will primarily focus on the aspects of motivation applicable to the remote leadership in general and to the leadership within geriatric home care in particular. Furthermore, the section about communication will be limited to overview a few theories behind communications. The theories presented are the most relevant in order to understand how geriatric home care managers effectively can communicate with employees when at different locations. However, the spatial distance between manager and employee is in this study not definite. The two are not meeting on a daily basis, yet they meet sporadic.

When discussing leadership at distance, it becomes necessary to clarify how to interpret the concept of *distance*. When using the expression the majority will probably think of a geographical distance. However, working in distance can also express a social distance or a time distance. Yet, as this paper aims to examine the remote leadership in geriatric home care, the definition of distance will therefore imply how a manager is in a spatial distance from her employees.

2. Method

This section will present the methods used in the study. It will clarify and argue for the choices that have been made and give background information about the working process assimilated in order to answer the stated research questions.

2.1 Selection of subject

The subject was initially selected in order to be relevant for the overall field of study, namely Management. Early in the working process, the concept of remote leadership evoked special attention. However, in this early phase, there were two different types of remote leadership businesses of interest; the staffing industry and the area of geriatric home care. After some brief research, the selection of subject for this study was narrowed down to focusing on geriatric home care. The reasons behind the choice were three:

1. The leadership within geriatric home care has during the last decades been performed in a spatial distance and there are no significant implications of changes in the organizational structure;
2. Recently the media has paid geriatric home care a lot of attention. However, the focus has often been placed on the quality of the care, not the leadership; and
3. There are few existing studies concerning management within geriatric home care and the components of motivation and communication.

To sum up, these three reasons were a source of inspiration when formulating the aim. The conclusive angle of approach became to focus on the remote leadership within geriatric home care and how managers work with motivation and communication.

2.2 Selection of geriatric home care services

The choice of geriatric home care for this study was narrowed down to focus on two businesses located in a metropolis in Sweden. Two managers and two employees

were interviewed due to expectations of receiving different perspectives of the remote leadership. The process of selecting interviewees took off by calling four managers in order to present the aim of the study and ask for participation in the research. Further, emails were sent to the contacted managers with further information about the thesis and the purpose of performing interviews. Quick responses from two of the contacted managers enabled the interviews to be set up in the near future. The managers offered themselves to ask one of their employees to participate in the study since they describe how they were unable to distribute employees' contact information.

2.3 Choice of method

In this study, a method of abduction was adopted. Abduction is a combination of deduction and induction (Jacobsen, 2002). Further, the author explains how deduction is a traditional method starting off by formulating a theoretical framework and defining hypotheses which are tested in reality by observations. If instead adopting the approach of induction, the process is the same, yet it goes in opposite direction, from empirical findings to theory (Jacobsen, 2002).

Abduction is useful when developing new research in the sense that it includes a combination of several parts such as method, theory and empirical data (Jacobsen, 2002). This approach strengthens objectivity as earlier studies, theories and empirical findings are given much of attention while own opinions are not taken into account without support from theories (Jacobsen, 2002).

A sample of earlier studies about remote leadership as well as theories about motivation and communication was primarily overviewed. As the empirical section relies upon interviews about the leadership within geriatric home care, the most suitable theories about remote leadership, motivation and communication was presented in order to enable an analysis of the management. This process is called coding (Jacobsen, 2002). Firstly, the primary data was sorted by the similarities and differences found in the interviews with the managers and the employees. Secondly, the theoretical framework sorted the data into different categories.

2.4 Qualitative- and quantitative data

Using a qualitative strategy has developed the theoretical framework and empirical findings of this specific study. By using a qualitative method and by taking on an exploring approach which demands openness and flexibility, rich and gradate data was presented and analysed.

However, the method of research can be divided into two main categories. These are quantitative and qualitative research methods. The choice of using either one of them or both differs with the aim of the study. Simplified, the quantitative method can be described as a method resulting in numbers or other factors that can be quantified. In contrast to the quantitative method, the qualitative method gives empirical data in terms of words giving reasons and meaning behind specific events. (Jacobsen, 2002)

Further on, the method of performing interviews can also be categorised as a qualitative method (Jacobsen, 2002). Further, Jacobsen (2002) describes how the qualitative research enables a richer perspective of how people understand and interpret a situation which is suitable when performing interviews. The choice of not using the quantitative method in this study relies upon the fact that the aim of the study is not to measure a large quantity in order to generalize observations to a greater population. Even though a mix of the two methods can be seen as the most appropriate method according to Jacobsen (2002), the quantitative method will not be explored in this research due to a limited time period.

Performing interviews rather than distributing surveys gives a more profound understanding of the connections between presented theories and reality (Silverman, 2001). As this study seek to investigate the reality of the subjects being studied, advantages can be achieved by using a qualitative method as it implicates closeness to the subject and understanding about its daily practice.

2.5 Primary data

Primary data is data being gathered by the researcher himself with the intention to illustrate a specific problem (Jacobsen, 2002). The performed interviews with two managers and their two employees may be seen as a method of collecting primary

data. The reason behind interviewing two managers and two employees was due to a hope of receiving material that could be comparable in the analysis. Receiving employee's point of view gave a perspective of the leadership performed in the chosen geriatric home care services. Further, collecting more than one person's opinions and experiences of given situations contributed to a more profound analysis of the empirical data as similarities and differences was analysed.

The form of the interviews was semi-structured, meaning that both researcher and interviewee influenced the content of the interview (Pinder, 2008). The interviews took place at the offices of the managers or in a separate room in the canteen. The degree of structure reached the level where questions were prepared, yet not asked in a specific order and where it was up to the interviewee to come up with a personal answer. The overall theme of the questions concerned the performed leadership with special regards to motivation and communication. Found in Appendix, the questions that were asked to managers concerned their own perceptions of their leadership with regards to communication and motivation towards the employees. Some questions were based on traditional theories about the two components. Further on, the questions directed to the employees concerned their perception of the performed leadership and was also influenced by theories.

The semi-structured form together with individual interviews encouraged an open dialogue rather than a question-answer-type of interview (Silverman, 2001). This type of interview is preferable when few units are measured as it is very time-consuming (Jacobsen, 2002). Consequently, four interviews were performed which resulted in a large amount of data that was compiled and analyzed.

The interviews were recorded in order to secure important material such as details in their stories. As the interviews were semi-structured which highly contributed to a fluent dialogue, the recorded material became useful when direct citations were to be presented in the empirical findings (Jacobsen, 2002). Straight after each interview, a summary of the answers was created in order to function as a complement to both memory and the recorded material. The summary was completed with the help of a coding system (Jacobsen, 2002). This coding system divided firstly the interviewees from each other. Secondly, it connected each answer to a topic within the theoretical

framework by the usage of a colour schedule. Later on, the differences and similarities in the answers could easier be distinguished and presented in the empirical findings. According to Silverman (2001), a summary together with recordings could be perceived as reliable data when using empirical findings in the analysis.

The choice of performing interviews face-to-face was due to rather open and personal interview questions requested a familiar and confidential situation. Furthermore, being able to observe the interviewee reacting to different questions facilitates the decision weather or not to push further into an issue.

2.5.1 Ethical considerations in qualitative research

The question about informing the interviewees about the aim of the study or not became a current standpoint to take. Since the aim primarily focuses on studying a leadership, an employee may be careful when discussing the leadership carried out by her own manager. However, according to Jacobsen (2002) the interviewees are entitled to know where the information will be used. Consequently, they were all informed about the aim of the study and how the results from the interviews were to be used.

Another important aspect to consider when performing an interview is weather or not to hold the interviewee anonymous. In this research, a small sample of interviews was performed. According to Jacobsen (2002) having a small sample makes it impossible to ensure total anonymity. In such cases, requirements of confidentiality are more achievable, meaning that personal information will not be identifiable throughout the study (Jacobsen, 2002). Obtaining the requirements of confidentiality, the presented data was cleared of personal information such as name, age and years of experience. Further, the city where the businesses are operating is not presented due to its irrelevance for the aim of the study. More important information to present is the fact that the study has been performed in a metropolis in Sweden. One may imagine how the geriatric home care in smaller cities and on the countryside may differ from metropolises. The gender of the interviewees in this study is revealed since the business of geriatric home care as a whole largely consists of female managers as well as female employees (Tullberg, 2006).

The interviewed employees were asked to participate in the study by their managers. Silverman (2001) takes the discussions about the ethical aspects further by stressing the importance of voluntary participation. In order to secure voluntary participation, the interviewee should make the choice to participate completely on her own, without any external pressure (Silverman, 2001). The degree of voluntary participation can therefore be questioned, as researchers did not directly ask the employees to participate in the study. However, during the interviews there were no signs of unwillingness to participate by the employees.

2.6 Secondary data

Secondary data is information the researcher collected from other sources. (Jacobsen, 2002). The secondary data in this research has been selected by its relevance to the chosen subject and degree of reliability. It mainly consists of published books, scientific articles and other literature within the topic. The scientific articles have been collected through libraries and through several well-known and recognized databases. The usage of the different databases indicates how experts have reviewed the articles before they were published (Gothenburg University Library, 2013). In this study, scientific articles from different databases have been used with expectation of trustworthiness.

As there were not found any secondary data with the same angle of approach as this study has adopted, several articles within different topics had to be combined in order to meet the stated research questions. The wide search generated in an understanding of earlier research in the topic of elderly care, remote leadership and identified a gap of the area investigated in this study.

According to Jacobsen (2002) a usage of secondary data in combination with primary data gives the most reliable information. Presenting several types of data enables comparison and they can give support to each other as well as strengthen achieved results (Jacobsen, 2002). In this research, secondary data such as theories about motivation and communication have firstly been compared with other secondary data

such as scientific articles and literature. Secondly, the findings from secondary data have been compared to the collected primary data.

As the collection of literature begun, a large amount of information about leadership, motivation and communication was found. In order to limit the information and use the most relevant data to the study, some keywords were identified. Keywords such as “leadership”, “remote”, “distance”, “motivation”, “communication”, “geriatric home care” and “elderly care” were used in different combinations when searching for scientific articles and literature.

2.7 Analysis method

As the interviews were summarized and coded into different topics, the section of empirical findings could be compiled. The data was coded by a colour system, meaning that the answers were coded in different colours to match different topics (Jacobsen, 2002). A decision about what to include in the empirical findings were made in order to limit the presented data to be the most relevant in relation to the aim. As the analysis took off, there were noticed how theories about motivation and communication were excluded from the theoretical framework since they were not applicable to the findings of the empirical data. In the analysis, the empirical findings were compared and analysed with support of earlier studies and the theoretical framework of this study.

2.8 Criticism of research method

As there are both advantages and disadvantages with the different methods and data, this section will discuss the criticism that could be pointed towards the choice of working process. The chapter will start off by introducing the concept of validity and reliability as the two may have affected the method of investigation.

2.8.1 Validity

Validity refers to the degree of relevance of the collected data to the specific concept that is being examined. In other words, the approach of collecting data and the data

itself must be relevant and indicate something about the given problem or concept. (Jacobsen, 2002)

In the beginning of this study, many different theories about motivation and communication were overviewed and presented in a draft. However, as the study proceeded with interviews, the amount of theories relevant for the study was narrowed down in order to meet the criteria of validity. Examples of theories that were removed are *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*, *Hertzberg's motivational- and hygiene factors*, *Vroom's expectancy theory* and *Engquist's three aspects of communication-theory*. Removing these theories made the theoretical framework more relevant to the specific aim of this study and applicable to the empirical findings.

As the empirical section of this study is based upon geriatric home care, the management within the chosen business represent only one area of remote leadership. The study will therefore not be applicable to the remote industry as a whole. The aim of this study is not to generalize the understanding of remote leadership but to give an understanding of the specific management within the geriatric home care business.

2.8.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of safety in the procedures of collecting data. In other words, be able to trust the collected data. (Jacobsen, 2002)

By collecting the empirical data through interviews the reliability may be questioned. It was a face-to-face situation where the interviewee may have provided answers she found appropriate after observing the facial and body appearance of the researcher. (Silverman, 2001) Furthermore, as the employees were picked out and asked to participate in the study by their managers, the level of voluntary participation could be questioned. To handle this dilemma, information about future anonymity was presented during the interviews. Consequently, the fear of being exposed was decreased. The managers on the other hand were asked to participate directly by the researcher and with regards to a given timeframe for consideration; no external pressure was put on the managers to accept the inquiry.

In addition to a questionable level of voluntary participation by the employees, there was also a risk of not receiving the full picture as they were asked to answer questions about their manager. Even though they were informed about the anonymity, asking employees about their perception of their manager may have aggravated more profound answers. Aware of the sensitivity in the topic of the research, the interview questions were formulated in order for the employees to not be uncomfortable when answering questions about their manager. The questions did not encourage any answers about the employees' opinions about the manager as a person, only their perceptions about the leadership performed.

2.8.3 Criticism of primary data

In addition to the highlighted problem about voluntary participation a question about linguistic impact on the interview may be illuminated. The interview questions as well as the interviews were formulated in Swedish. However, the summary of each interview was translated into English and then presented as empirical findings. Direct citations were used in the text in order to give a profound understanding of personal opinions. However, as the citations were originally formulated in Swedish, there is a risk of misquoting when translating into another language. (Jacobsen, 2002)

2.8.4 Criticism of secondary data

Consideration should be taken to how some of the scientific articles and published books are elderly. When using elderly sources, it is of great importance to remember that the researcher may have updated the information. The Motivational Theory such as Job Characteristic Model may be seen as an timeworn theory and not applicable to today's organizational environment. However, it is a traditional theory which is taught in management courses and could be seen as a foundation for newer motivational theories. Therefore, it was included in this study as it contributed to interesting aspects of motivation.

When collecting secondary data it becomes necessary to compare the information with more than one source in order to secure reliability (Jacobsen, 2002). In this

study, one example of this could be the collection of data regarding remote leadership. Different scientific articles were compared and used in the study as they confirmed each other for example in the parts of working with goals in order to achieve motivated employees and to mediate trust in employees when working in a physical distance.

With regards to a quite short time-period reserved for the research, the study may have been angled in order to cover the most important subject of the study. The secondary data had to be limited to a few theories about motivation and communication. There exist many theories related to leadership that could have been relevant for the research, yet delimitations had to be made in order to specifically answer the research questions and be suitable for the empirical findings.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will firstly overview earlier studies about leadership in elderly care. Further, it will provide an overview of the most relevant theories about the two principal components of this study; motivation and communication, with regards to the findings of the chosen geriatric home care businesses.

3.1 Earlier studies about leadership in elderly care

The business of eldercare is essential for many of us and it evokes strong feelings. Eldercare could be examined from many perspectives. However, according to Tullberg (2006) important aspects to investigate are the leadership and the potential way of improving the quality of the leadership performed.

The leadership function within eldercare has achieved greater importance as bureaucratic control has faded away (Thylefors, 1991). Further, Thylefors (1991) argues how goal management has replaced direct-controlled management such as rules, prescriptions and instructions. As the organizations have gained more freedom, higher demands on the manager are now required (Thylefors, 1991).

Earlier studies by Thylefors (1991), indicates how employees in eldercare have a greater loyalty towards the caretakers than towards their manager and organization. However, the manager could achieve a higher degree of responsibility and trust from her employees if she continuously works with delegation. When doing so, the managers mediate confidence in her employees and the employees may be more self-driven in their work (Thylefors, 1991).

Furthermore, Thylefors (1991) highlights the importance of satisfied employees. As the eldercare relies upon human interaction the employees are seen as the main resource in the organization. Accordingly it is highly important to cherish for them as a manager.

3.2 The concept of motivation

The concept of work motivation has become a major industry. According to Pinder (2008) work motivation is one of the most important topics in organizational science since the issue has such a crucial importance for a firm's profitability. As well as labour is one of the most important assets in a firm, alone it stands for the major operating costs (Pinder, 2008). Consequently, managers need to understand human work motivation in order to benefit from higher workforce productivity and improved job performance.

Once established that work motivation is a matter to further look into, one will meet multiple definitions of the concept of motivation. In order to give an idea of the variety of the existing definitions, a few is here presented.

Eagly and Chaiken (1993) states that the understanding of work motivation requires a throughout understanding of human attitudes since the attitudes plays such a central role in why and how people work.

Locke & Latham (2003) stress how the activities that are tied to specific goals energize behaviours, which in turn improves performance.

(...) goals are the primary source of an individual's motivation.

(Locke & Latham, 2003, pp 4).

Ryan and Deci (2002) clarifies their own definition of motivation and divide the concept into two dimensions, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

To be motivated means to be moved to do something. (...) People have not only different amounts, but also different kinds of motivation. (...) The most basic distinction is between intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome. (Ryan and Deci, 2002, pp 54)

Ryan and Deci (2002) continue their discussion by explaining how the intrinsic motivational activities are not triggered by a reward but instead, the reward lies within the activity. Further, Ryan and Deci (2002) describe how the intrinsic activities are the ones that provide satisfaction for psychological needs while the extrinsic activities are performed since they are instrumental to some separable consequence.

The above-mentioned approaches to work motivation show how there is no single definition of the concept. However, the research in the field of motivation is often concerned with what causes the specific actions, and what determines the intensity of such action (Hume, 1995). In the following chapter an overview of a few existing theories about motivation will be presented.

3.2.1 Job Characteristic Model

This model, designed primary by Hackman and Oldham (1976), was formulated when scientists started to question how jobs could be designed in order to maximize individual satisfaction and motivation. The theory relies heavily upon how specific job characteristics affect motivation (Pinder, 2008). Hackman and Oldham (1976) describe the phenomenon of work motivation as a result of a job that generates three psychological states within an employee. These three are described in detail in Hackman and Oldham (1976) and are here presented more shortly:

1. The employee must feel personally *responsible* for the work and for the outcome;
2. The work or the task has to be *meaningful* to the employee or at least being experienced as worthwhile; and
3. The employee must receive *feedback* on the accomplished work.

The job should, with regards to the three psychological states of mind, be designed in a way so that the employee experience meaningfulness, responsibility and are aware of her results.

Furthermore, Hackman and Oldham (1976) develop their job characteristic model by adding five core job dimensions to the three psychological states. The relationship

between the job dimensions and the psychological states can be overviewed in figure 1 and the dimensions are presented in more detail below the figure.

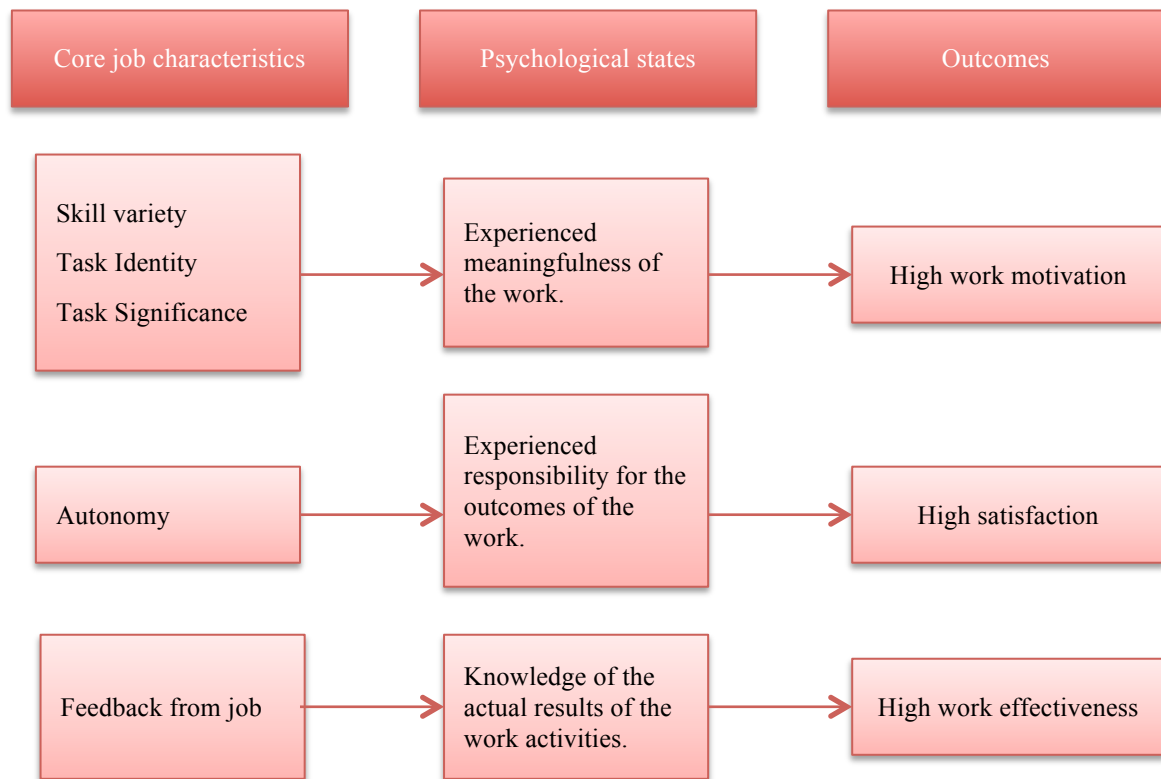


Figure 1: Showing the relationship between characteristics of the job, the psychological states of employees and the expected outcome.

(Source: own figure with inspiration from Pinder, 2008, pp 212)

Figure 1 illustrates the links between the five job dimensions and the three psychological states and between the psychological states and the job outcomes. At the most basic level, the job dimensions are seen as inciting the psychological states which, in turn, can lead to several positive work outcomes. Hackman and Oldham (1976) further define the five core job dimensions as:

- **Skill variety:** refers to the variation in skills and the usage of competence required to fulfil a job;
- **Task identity:** refers to the visible outcome of a job;

- **Task significance:** refers to the degree on impact the work has on other people;
- **Autonomy:** refers to the degree of freedom, interdependence and discretion an individual is experiencing by doing his work; and
- **Feedback from the job:** refers to the degree of how well an employee understands how she is doing at work. Could be both feedback from the job itself or from other people.

3.2.1.1 Job Characteristic Model and leadership

By studying the Job Characteristic Model, a manager could measure the overall motivational potential among her employees (Pinder, 2008). When combining the job dimensions with the psychological states, one may be able to analyse the level of motivation for each employees. The most important to have in mind as a managers will be to ensure that employees experience a high level of variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and receive feedback on the job (Hackman and Lawler, 1971).

3.2.2 Goal Setting Theory

Goal setting theory can help us explain human action and the factors behind motivation (Pinder, 2008). According to the author, the link between goals and human behaviour is strong where the goals are indirect and immediate regulators of human action. By studying this theory one can predict, explain and also influence work performance and the motivational mechanisms behind it (Pinder, 2008).

3.2.2.1 Definition of goals

There is not one single definition of what a goal is. Scientists such as Locke and Latham (2002) suggest that a goal is what a person tries to attain, achieve or accomplish. More over, Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham (1981) add to the definition that a goal is the object or aim of an action. However, they all have in common that goals in organizational settings frequently have a time limit, a deadline, which also serve as a motivational factor (Pinder, 2008).

3.2.2.2 Goal difficulty

Goal difficulty indicates that a certain level of task competence need to be attained in order to achieve the goal. The goal setting theory tries to find the optimal level of goal difficulty in order to obtain maximum performance (Pinder, 2008). Locke and Latham (2002) have in their studies showed on a positive, linear function, which indicates that the most difficult goals evoke the highest level of effort and performance. Furthermore, they link the high level of performance to specific and difficult goals, rather than goals urging people to do their best or set their own standards.

3.2.2.3 Goal commitment

Locke (1996) describes the link between the level of goal commitment and the level of job performance. He stresses the importance of high commitment when the goals are specific and difficult since higher level of commitment will lead to higher performance. Further on, the author describes how low established goals does not require much dedication and will therefore give rise to low performance. According to Locke (1996), high commitment to goals is achieved when the individual is convinced that the goal is both important and attainable. If the commitment is not there from the beginning, effective leadership can enhance commitment by practicing relevant leadership techniques. Examples of leadership activities are presented in figure 2.

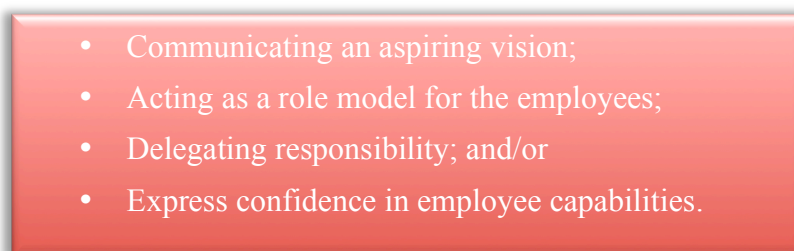
- 
- Communicating an aspiring vision;
 - Acting as a role model for the employees;
 - Delegating responsibility; and/or
 - Express confidence in employee capabilities.

Figure 2: Illustration of leadership activities.

(source: own figure with inspiration from Locke, 1996, pp 119)

3.2.2.4 The role of participation in goal setting

Many scientists have studied to what extent, if at all, employees should be involved in the process of setting goals. Mitchell (1973) suggests that a high level of participation can increase job effort and performance. Regarding a higher motivation, Mitchell

(1973) believes that it is not participation per se that increases the motivation. He rather points at the social process including expectations, control, social influence and the choice of rewards to be factors increasing the level of motivation. Latham, Winters and Locke (1994) has also studied the relationship between participation and motivation. They conclude that there is a strong correlation between the two.

3.2.2.5 The role of feedback in goal setting

Setting goals as an intention to increase motivation and performance is not effective without giving the employee relevant feedback (Pinder, 2008). Latham and Locke (1991) conclude how giving feedback to people about whether they achieved established goals or not, is necessary in order to motivate higher performance.

3.2.3 Remote leadership and motivation

In many ways, the traits of managers do not differ depending on leading from afar or in a direct contact with employees (Nordengren and Olsen, 2006). However, some aspects are of greater importance when performing a remote leadership. According to Nordengren and Olsen (2006) one of these aspects is the question about how a remote leader successfully motivates her employees. They conclude how the key to a successful remote leadership is the managers' ability to motivate and enthuse people in the organisation and secure persistent motivation in the future.

As the remote leadership heavily relies upon trust between all parts involved, a remote manager must be able to let go of having full control and trust her employees (Nordengren and Olsen, 2006). When employees feel that their managers have confidence in them and trust them fully, the level of motivation will increase in the organization (Nordengren and Olsen, 2006).

When studying existing theories about remote leadership, one may conclude how these theories often include features from the more traditional motivational theories. However, in some parts, the theories applicable to the remote leadership differ in the sense that they have more of a guiding function of how to lead from afar. With regards to motivation, Andrews (2004) states how a remote leader should pay

attention to several aspects when leading at distance. Three of his guidelines are presented below in figure 3:

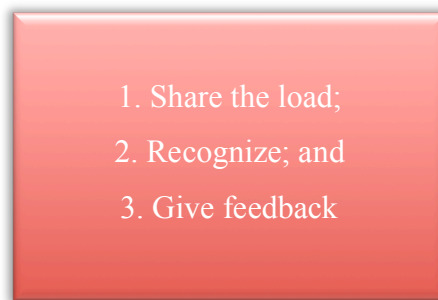


Figure 3: Illustrating three guidelines for a remote manager

(Source: own figure with inspiration from Andrews, 2004, pp 14)

Andrews (2004) emphasises how a remote leader should give responsibility to employees in order for them to feel trusted. Trust is one of the most important aspects when leading from afar, yet it is extremely vulnerable. In order to cherish the trust between manager and employee, the manager must in all times keep what they have committed to do (Andrews, 2004). Further more, Andrews (2004) highlights the importance of acknowledging employees and give them feedback. Traditional theories about motivation put great emphasis on the role of feedback. Also Andrews (2004) conclude that feedback is an important factor behind motivated employees in a remote leadership.

Quiros (2012) suggest how a remote leader should recognise and celebrate when goals are attained or when other objectives are accomplished. If doing so, the employees will feel acknowledged and involved in the working process (Quiros, 2012). Further more, Quiros (2012) as well as Andrews (2004) underscore the importance of setting a good example when leading from afar. As manager for a group of employees working in a distance, it becomes important to set an example of respect, punctuality, interest and determination (Quiros, 2012; Andrews, 2004). All these attributes are demanded from each employee; however, the manager must first model them.

One of the most important aspects of the remote leadership is the knowledge about each employees individual driving forces (Quiros, 2012). In order to fully understand

the reasons behind people coming to work everyday, the distance manager have to update herself and discuss the matter with each employee on a regular basis (Quiros, 2012). When the manager has an understanding of each employees' driving forces, first then she can start working with increasing motivation and job satisfaction (Quiros, 2012). This implies how flexible and adjustable a distance manager has to be. For each employee, routines about goal attainment, feedback and follow-up should be established (Nordengren and Olsen, 2006). This will in turn lead to the employee feeling acknowledged and motivated to fulfil her job.

If the organization has established goals, it is of great importance for the leader at distance to follow-up how the employees are working in order to attain the goals. If no follow-up or feedback is given on the goal attainment, the employees will learn how they easily can hide behind their distant work and as a result the organization will not proceed forward. A distance leader should therefore put extra effort in formulating clear goals and actively work with follow-up and feedback. (Nordengren and Olsen, 2006)

3.3 The concept of communication

Most of people's daily life is spent in organizations in different forms where a few examples could be schools, hospitals, businesses and social clubs. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976) define an organization as a stable system of individuals who work together to achieve common goals. Furthermore, Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976) describe how communication is a critical factor behind the survival and success of an organization. Further, they explain how communication is seen as the thread that holds the individuals together and how it function as a tool for integration and for the understanding of organisational structure. Not only is the communication important for internal purposes, it also becomes vital in the exchange of information with the external environment.

3.3.1 Organizational communication

Communication is something we all practice everyday, and usually without thinking about it. Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson (2011) points out that it is impossible to

not communicate when you are interacting with other people. In order to understand organizational communication a clarification of the concept of communication becomes necessary. Engquist (2012) defines communication as an activity between two or more people, in other words communication is a mutual activity. Consequently, the expression *one-way communication*, which implies how communication is practised in only one direction rather will be classified as information and not communication (Engquist, 2012).

Further on, Engquist (2012) clarifies how communication can be symmetric, that is when the parts are equally strong in their communication. Communication can also be classified as complementary, which implies how one person in the communication is dominant. Thus, communication between an employee and a manager is highly different from communication between employees. According to Manning (1992), communication from a manager's point of view is to achieve stated and official goals. When managers are effective in communicating their vision, they win trust from their employees and they can achieve higher output and an increased job satisfaction (Madlock, 2008). As a result, the most successful managers are the once who interact and communicate with their employees frequently (Bass, 1990).

3.3.2 Theories about communication

Many researchers have tried to illustrate communication through models. One model that is frequently occurring in early research of communication is the linear model by Shannon (1948). The model indicates the process of communication, divided into five parts schematically:

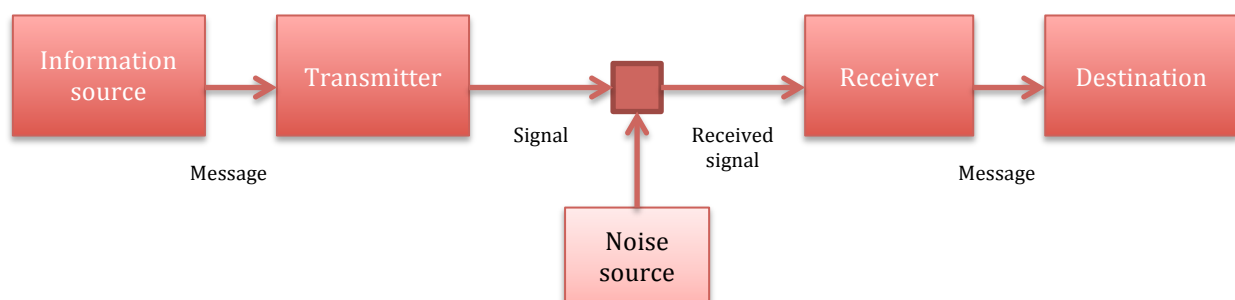


Figure 4: Illustrating the linear communication process.
(Source: own figure with inspiration from Shannon, 1948, pp 381)

1. **Information source:** the creator of the message.
2. **A transmitter:** operates on the message to produce a signal suitable for transmission over the channel.
3. **A channel:** the tool used to transmit the messages and signals from transmitter to receiver.
4. **The receiver:** who is reconstructing the message from the signal.
5. **The destination:** the object for which the message is intended.

Shannon (1948) defines the noise factor as something that affects the communication process from the transmitter to the receiver. Noise factors can affect the efficiency and the accuracy of the original message. Later research has added feedback into the communication process. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976) clarify how feedback makes communication a dynamic, two-way process between people. The feedback may either be positive or negative, however, the overall aim of giving and receiving feedback is to make the communication more effective (Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, 1976).

The linear communication model has been criticised for its simplicity. It was said to be easy to understand; yet it may distort reality. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976) rather ingest a systematic approach which highlights how communication is a flow, streaming through time and without a clear beginning or end. This systematic approach also shows how communication is a dynamic, yet complicated process (Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, 1976).

3.3.3 Communication tools and channels

Daft and Lengel (1986) and Rice (1993) illustrate how managers and employees use different kinds of communication and information tools in their communication. Frequently used communication tools are e-mail, telephone, voice mail, collaborative

software systems, video conferencing and text messages (Daft and Lengel, 1986). Even though technology facilitates the communication process, communicating through the tools may be less effective than physical presences as face-to-face conversations. However, in *normal* working climates where employees and managers are in the same workplace, studies have shown how a usage of communication tools is more common than having a face-to-face interaction (Kelley and Kelloway, 2012).

3.3.4 Remote leadership and communication

When leading from afar, frequent communication with employees becomes extra important as to make sure that everyone has a common view and direction (Howell, Neufeld and Avolio, 2005; Kelley and Kelloway, 2012). Further, Avolio, Kahai and Dodge (2000) argue that a distance manager should pay extra attention to encouraging her team by repeating the value of each individual. Moreover, the manager has to spend more time and effort in explaining and formulating information that otherwise could have been shared more easily through physical presence (Avolio and Kahai, 2003).

Other scientists such Kelley and Kelloway (2012) illustrate how a manager should interact with her employees in two ways – unplanned and regularly scheduled communication. Unplanned communication can be performed by the usage of communication tools or by spontaneously arranged visits. An example of scheduled communication is yearly, individual meetings. Furthermore, Kelley and Kelloway (2012) claim that a higher usage of technological tools in the communication would be beneficial for the remote manager and her employees.

There exist several guidelines for remote leaders with regards to communication. Andrews (2004) stresses how three parameters are of special importance when planning for communication. These three are:



Figure 5: Illustrating guidelines for planned communication.

(Source: Own figure with inspiration from Andrews, 2004, pp 14)

By carefully plan meetings, consideration is taken to people's schedules and their time-limitations (Andrews, 2004). As a result, the communication will be more effective without taking too much valuable time from the employee (Andrews, 2004). Moreover, Andrews (2004) highlights the importance of using different communication channels by using technology creatively. By doing so, a manager can attract more attention and get through easier with the message. The last suggestion by Andrews (2004) regards the availability of the leader. The remote managers should make availability a top priority so that employees feel how they always can get in touch with their manager and how their manager have time to listen to them.

Quiros (2012) underscores how a remote manager could be successful in building a trustful relationship if she reviews action-plan progress, talk about career development and foster an open communication. Furthermore, Quiros (2012) emphasises the importance of scheduling face-to-face contact as often as possible and when it is not possible to meet face-to-face, he highlights how the manager should use the most suitable technology instead.

3.4 Summary theoretical framework

Looking from a broad perspective, the theoretical chapter of this study discuss theories about motivation and communication. The theories are firstly presented from a general perspective and later on overviewed from a remote leadership perspective. The traditional theories about the two components will contribute to a profound understanding of how a leader can work with motivation and communication. Job

Characteristic Model and its components of responsibility, meaningfulness and feedback are useful to remember when continuing on to the empirical section of this study. Moreover, the traditional goal setting theory highlights the importance of goal commitment and shows on a linear function between difficult goals and high level of job performance and motivation.

The model by Shannon (1948) illustrates the communication process. The most protruding component of her model is the noise factor. When communicating with another person, the surroundings of the receiver highly affect how the message is received. Moreover, the theoretical framework aims to explain the difference between communication and information. It is important to have in mind that communication implicates a two-way-dialogue while information implicates a one-way-dialogue.

In the section of the more specific theories about remote leadership, several aspects are beneficial to remember for the study. In order to discuss the work with motivation by a remote leader, the aspects of trusting employees and acknowledging them are of great importance as the empirical section proceeds. With regards to how a remote leader should work with communicating with employees, the aspects of a high level of perceived availability can explain a successful remote leadership. Moreover, the mix of interacting with employees face-to-face by unplanned- and planned communication are aspects that will be further discussed in the analysis of how the geriatric home care manager work with communication.

4. Empirical findings

This chapter is based upon interviews with managers and employees within two geriatric home care services in a metropolis in Sweden. It aims to exemplify how managers in the specific area of business work with motivation and communication when leading from afar. Furthermore it will examine how employees perceive the work of their managers with regards to the aspects of motivation and communication.

4.1 Geriatric home care

Each manager has between 35 and 40 employees working on their own in the homes of the caretakers. The offices of the managers are typically located in a different location than the canteen, which serve as a rallying point for the employees. Here the employees meet up every day and have morning sessions before they head out to the caretakers. One of the chosen businesses has a so-called coordinator who function as an intermediary between the employees and the manager. The coordinator is located in the canteen and has daily face-to-face contact with the employees.

In this study, two managers and two employees were interviewed. All four was willing to share their perspective and opinions of the leadership carried out in the geriatric home care. All four will be presented anonymously throughout the study and will be mentioned as manager 1 who work together with employee 1 and manager 2 who work with employee 2.

4.1.1 Opinions about the remote leadership in geriatric home care

As well as a distant leadership give rise to a variety of challenges, it also brings about new possibilities. Manager 1 describes how she at first experienced difficulties in letting go of the control. In order to get across the need for constant control, she established routines. She describes how the routines help the employees feeling confident in their work and her self to be sure that the work was performed as agreed upon.

The opinions about the remote leadership differ between the two employees. While

employee 1 shares positive experiences about her manager leading from afar, employee 2 rather stresses how she perceives the remote leadership negatively.

It is difficult not meeting the manager at a daily basis. It would have been so much easier to have an on-site manager so I could step by her office whenever I have a small thing I would like to share with her.
(Employee 2)

Employee 2 expresses a dissatisfaction of having her manager in a spatial distance. Only meeting the manager occasionally has contributed to a perception of the manager as invisible and not present in the operational activities. Consequently, employee 2 experiences an increase in her self-action at work.

4.1.2 Organizational context

The geriatric home care services are municipal businesses where a higher level of management establishes salary, technological systems, routines and goals. The interviewed managers describe how they lack the ability to impact the decisions, yet they are supposed to deliver new information to their employees. Manager 1 accentuates how she cannot impact on decisions concerning budgets and organizational goals, yet she has to adjust her business and inform her employees about the new directions. Directions of this type are decisions rarely give rise to motivation among her employees, thus it may impact their dissatisfaction towards their job.

When discussing the organizational context the employees mention the aspect of the working conditions. The geriatric home care struggles with tight time-schedules and employee 2 highlights the problem with the schedules.

There is a constant lack of time. I am supposed to be in the home of a caretaker in the exact same minute as I quite a session in the home of another. It is impossible. (Employee 2)

Employee 2 emphasises how the work is stressful and how she struggles with time

pressure everyday. Conversely, employee 1 expresses how she is content with the overall working conditions, yet she describes how time is a constant stress-factor.

4.2 Motivational factors

The business of geriatric home care relies upon human interaction. The two managers accentuate how the compassion for caretakers is a unanimous personality type of the employees and one of the strongest motivational factors. In addition to compassion for caretakers, the managers describe how the acknowledgement from the caretakers contributes to work motivation among their employees.

The word “acknowledgment” is frequently occurring in the yearly staff surveys when asking about the most important aspect of the work. This indicates how the employees experience meaningfulness in their job task towards the caretakers. (Manager 1)

When my employees receive feedback and appreciation from the elder, they become more motivated in their work. (Manager 2)

By distributing and analysing staff surveys, manager 1 concludes how acknowledgment from caretakers and meaningfulness of their job assignment are two important motivational factors. Manager 2 continues the discussion by adding feedback to the list of motivational factors. In order to mediate and remind the employees about the importance of their job task, manager 1 describes how she repeat the meaningfulness of the job at times when she meet with her employees.

As the work within geriatric home care is structured around people in need of nursing, the employees agree upon how the sympathy towards caretakers is the primarily incentive to their job. Furthermore, they both describe how the acknowledgment and gratefulness from the elder is what give rise to a feeling of meaningfulness in their job assignment.

The elder are the ones who encourage me and motivate me to continue doing my job. I have a large proportion of sympathy towards the

caretakers. (Employee 1)

I would not say that my manager motivates me in my daily work. However, what really drives me to continue my job is the fact that I get to help the ones who are in the most need of my help. (Employee 2)

In addition to the feeling of meaningfulness, both employees describe how they are fully aware of their responsibility of the job outcome. They describe how the care has to be carried out in the right way and at the right time. Otherwise, the caretaker could be anxious or even more ill. As a result of tightened time schedules and tight budgets, the employees describe how the job task has been more controlled, repetitive and limited during the last ten years. Employee 2 explains how the development has limited her freedom and variation in the job. As a result, she often feels frustrated and dissatisfied.

Even if it is not in the paper, if there is time, I water the flowers anyway.
(Employee 2)

This citation implicates how employee 2 sometimes performs additional tasks when at home of the caretaker. Further, she describes how the strict frames for the job sometimes makes it necessary to look outside the box and make own decisions. When doing so, she believes she increases satisfaction for the caretaker.

4.2.1 Feedback

The management in the chosen home care services lighten the importance of feedback. However, the distributed feedback to employees do mainly consist of reviewing complaints or other operational problems.

Giving feedback is extremely important, both for personal development yet also organizational development. A lot of focus is placed on the operational activities when having follow-up with the whole group.
(Manager 1)

I give personal feedback during the yearly individual meetings. However, feedback to the whole group is given more often. During those sessions we discuss social aspects of the work but mostly the discussions concern eventual problems in the care given to the caretakers. However, I feel like I could spend more time on giving feedback to my employees.
(Manager 2)

Manager 1 points out how she believes in a learning climate which is the reason behind giving feedback to the group as a whole. By discussing problems and complains, she believes that they can learn from each other and increase the level of motivation. Manager 2 underscores the importance of feedback with regards to the social aspect of the work. Yet, she highlights how the feedback usually ends up in a discussion about problems in the operational activity and she experiences a shortage of time to give more feedback.

Once a year, the employees are invited to individual meetings with their manager where personal feedback is received. However, employee 2 express how the amount of positive feedback received from her manager is too low and she instead relies on feedback from the caretakers.

I would like my manager to put more effort in giving positive feedback to me. Today, the feedback is mostly about complaints from the caretakers and unfortunately, all the positive responses we get directly from the caretakers do not reach our manager. (Employee 2)

4.2.2 Organizational goals

Middle management and employees do not have the authority to impact already established goals. As a result, both managers describe how focus is placed on *how* to achieve the goals rather than discussing the already established goals.

The goals should at all times be visual and the employees are highly informed about the objectives of the business. A lot of effort is put into

discussing the process of attaining the goals instead of discussing the goal setting. (Manager 1)

Manager 1 underscores the importance of informing her employees about the prescribed goals and how to achieve them by discussing the process. She further describes how she has a yearly run-through of the goals and how the goals later are followed-up at the individual meetings with each employee.

Manager 2 points out how she sometimes experience a high level of goal difficulty as the goals are not fully adjusted to the operational activity. Therefore, she describes how she settles for a yearly briefing of the goals. Among the employees, the level of understanding and commitment to the goals is varying. The employees describe how they are informed about the goals during a group session. However, employee 2 highlights how the document with established goals is put into a file somewhere in the canteen and often forgotten about.

I would not say that I am fully aware of each goal, yet I know where I can find them if I would like to check. (Employee 2)

Employee 1 shares the same picture as employee 2 when she describes how she does not know the prescribed goals. However, she is not concerned about her job being affected by not having full knowledge about the operational goals. She rather relies upon her long experience and the feedback received from the caretakers.

4.3 Communication in remote leadership

Manager 1 describes how a high level of availability is an important aspect in her leadership. However, she describes how this component is her *Achille's heel* and how she constantly works in order to not be perceived as difficult to reach. By informing her employees about leaving a message when she is not answering her telephone and that she will answer as soon as possible. She believes that she creates communicative availability. Manager 2 also underscores the importance of being available for her employees. However, she describes how she has a lot of administrative job to be done and how she therefore cannot be as reachable as she would like to be.

We have a lot of administrative job to do, so we do not always have time to be as involved as we would wish. (Manager 2)

This indicates that they both are aware of the importance being available and responsive, yet they have limitations. For manager 2 one of the positive outcomes of leading from afar is that she has time to formulate herself in her communication and avoid misunderstandings. However, the negative aspects lies in the fact that she is not able to communicate spontaneously and rapidly with her employees.

When working in an organisation where remote leadership is performed, the spontaneous chat or quick thought will not be shared with the manager. It could be days between the meetings with the managers and questions, ideas or thoughts are often forgotten about by then. Employee 2 explains how she during her daily work at home of the caretakers can come up with ideas she would like to share with her manager. As she has no time to contact her manager during the stressful working day she usually forgets to tell the manager about her thoughts. However, both employees are satisfied with the communication with their manager, yet their experiences about their managers' level of accessibility differ. Further on she describes how she rarely contacts her managers due to a feeling of disturbing her and when trying to get in contact, she is often in meetings.

I only contact my manager if it is really important and urgent. I'm self-driven. I do not want to disturb my manager with something I can resolve by myself. (Employee 2)

As one of the geriatric home care services has a coordinator, the manager and the employee think this may have positive affect on their communication since the coordinator is more approachable for both of them.

The coordinator function heavily as a helping hand in my communication with the employees as she work close to them in the canteen. (Manager 1)

Our coordinator handles the daily operational activities and I feel that she is always reachable when I have a quick question. (Employee 1)

4.3.1 Scheduled communication

The managers highlight several essential aspects in the communication with their employees. Scheduled meetings are something they both believe is very important, as it becomes the only time for them to interact face-to-face with the employees without stress or other noise-factors. During those meeting, the managers are able to check that the employee is fully informed and that the work is carried out in a desirable manner. Furthermore, they strongly believe that those types of meetings offers the employees an opportunity to present opinions about the work and discuss what works well and what needs to be improved. Manager 1 describes how she, during the yearly individual meeting, focuses on individual feelings, routines, divergence and the working environment rather than taking time to inform the employee about organizational issues.

The employees are content with having scheduled meetings, as it is the only occasion when time is set aside for discussing operational issues without interfering with the daily work. Without these meetings, it can be difficult to find time and the right occasion for expressing opinions and communicate with the manager.

Scheduled time for communication and information is good; I want to know the exact time for the meeting so I can plan my day after it.

(Employee 2)

However, it has been experienced how a large amount of information are distributed during the group meetings, interrupting important operational discussions and problems. Employee 2 describes how she would appreciate more meetings regarding the caretakers.

I would like us to more frequently have a dialogue about issues with certain caretakers and together come up with solutions; more focus meetings are probably needed. (Employee 2)

4.3.2 Unplanned communication

With regards to spontaneously arranged meetings, both managers describe how they try to show up at the canteen and have their lunch together with the employees occasionally. By doing so, they underscore how they can interact with the employees under more relaxed circumstances. Manager 1 highlights how these occasions let the employees to get to know her better while Manager 2 rather points to the fact that she is perceived as more available to her employees when showing up at the canteen.

The level of appreciation towards spontaneous meetings differs from person to person. Employee 1 highlights how the occasionally lunches together with her manager are appreciated as the manager often produces positive energy and they have time to chat. Employee 2 on the other hand has a more negative approach to the spontaneous lunch meetings.

During the lunch I want to be able to talk about what I want with my co-workers and I do not want to share my private life with my manager. (Employee 2)

Employee 2 describes how she, during lunch time, wants to be able to speak about private life and how she prefer not sharing this with her manager.

4.3.3 Communication tools and channels

As a remote manager it becomes extra important to use different tools when communicating with employees. Every employee is different and prefers different communication channels. Both of the managers are aware of the differences existing among their employees and put effort in adjusting their way of communicating depending on the receiver and the level of importance of the message. When the messages are more urgent, they commonly use telephone, e-mail or face-to-face conversation. The latter is always used when the managers have to discuss complaints that have been directed towards individual employees. As the business of geriatric home care relies upon human compassion for giving care, the managers describes how their employees are not very interested in learning new technological tools for communication.

My employees are more interested in giving care than e-mailing.

(Manager 1)

Manager 1 describes how her employees do not cheer for new technologies and therefore implementations of new technologies are rare. Further, she experiences a challenge in making sure that her messages are always received and noted down. Therefore she often repeats the information by formulating it in different ways. Manager 2 says that she is aware of that her employees do not always check their messages when emailing or having up newsletters in the canteen. Despite her awareness, she continuously chooses these kinds of tools when the message in her opinion is not that important.

Employee 2 describes how the telephone is practically the only communication tool she uses daily when communicating with her manager. Employee 1 says she tends to use several communication tools depending on the level of importance of the message when contacting her manager. If the message is urgent, she normally uses the telephone. If it is less urgent, she uses emails or wait until she meet with her manager face-to-face.

Our time is so stretched that we do not have time to check our emails or the newsletters. The messages are rarely in focus since we have other more important things to do. (Employee 2)

As they are on a tight time-schedule they describe how they do not have time to either read the messages in the canteen or check for new emails during the day. The weekly or sporadic newsletters as the managers often print and place in the canteens are seldom fully noticed by the employees. However, employee 1 are satisfied with her manager sending her emails since she can answer when she has time and has by now implemented this communication tool in her communication with her manager.

4.4 Summary empirical finding

The empirical data of this study consist of four interviews. Two managers and two employees shared their experiences and opinions about leadership within geriatric

home care. The studied objects had, broadly, the same perception about existing motivational factors. Even if not defined in the same way, the meaningfulness and the responsibility for the job outcome were the two most important motivational factors. The managers emphasize how they work with feedback and individual meetings to encourage and remind their employees about the two driving forces. Further, organizational goals exist in the operational business. However, they are not fully implemented, as they are experienced as too difficult to achieve.

The question about feedback evoked strong feelings among the interviewees. The managers agree upon the importance of giving feedback, yet they have time-limitations for distributing feedback. However, the employees wish for more feedback.

A matter that will be further discussed in the analysis of how managers within geriatric homecare work with communication is the level of availability. Once again, the comprehension differs in the sense that employees wished for a greater availability by their manager while the managers expressed how they continuously worked with their perceived availability.

The pros and cons of scheduled and unplanned communication are highlighted in the empirical data. The managers underscored how they work with both methods in their communication with employees. However, one of the employees had a quite negative approach to the unplanned meetings which is a matter that will be further analyzed. To sum up the findings about communication tools, the managers expressed how they are trying to reach out to employees through different communication channels and tools. However, the employees explain how they, because of shortage of time and lack of interest in new technologies, do not pay the written messages from their manager much of attention. Consequently, they wish for more face-to-face communication with their managers.

5. Analysis

As the aim of this paper is to study how managers within geriatric home care work with motivation and communication and investigate if the physical distance impact on the two components, this chapter will highlight and discuss the most essential parts when comparing the theoretical framework with the empirical findings.

5.1 Mediating the feeling of meaningfulness and responsibility

One of the most consistent responses from both managers and employees was the one regarding the motivational factors. The meaningfulness and the level of responsibility were the distinguished motivational factors for employees to continue their job. As the managers were well informed about these driving forces, they continuously worked with mediating the meaningfulness of the work as well as reminding employees about the personal responsibility for the job outcome. According to Hackman and Oldham (1976) and their Job Characteristic Model, the feelings of meaningfulness and responsibility are of great importance in order to achieve work motivation. Consequently, connections between motivational theory and the work of increasing the level of motivation within geriatric home care can be identified. As found, the managers within the geriatric home care businesses practiced two of the most important components of the findings of Hackman and Oldham (1976) as they continuously repeated the meaningfulness and responsibility of the job.

However, as the employees described how they feel compassion for the caretakers, the feelings of meaningfulness and responsibility could be defined as what Ryan and Deci (2002) name intrinsic motivation. When facing intrinsic motivation, the work of increasing the level of motivation will neither be aggravated, nor increased by the physical distance. The motivational factors come from the inside of the employee and cannot be encourage by external rewards. Consequently, the physical distance between managers and employees in the geriatric home care business cannot be said to highly impact the level of motivation with regards to the two components *meaningfulness* and *responsibility* in the model by Hackman and Oldham (1976).

Further, Thylefors (1991) highlights how the employees in elder care often show greater loyalty towards the caretakers than towards their managers. The employees in the studied geriatric home care businesses express how it is the caretakers who motivate them in their job, not the managers. Regardless of the physical distance, a greater loyalty is created for the caretakers and motivation is achieved as they receive most of the feedback from them.

5.2 Feedback, skill variety and autonomy

Another keystone in the model by Hackman and Oldham (1976) is the psychological state of employees with regards to receiving feedback. The experiences about the amount of given feedback and the amount of received feedback differed among the managers and their employees. While the managers seemed fairly pleased with the given feedback during the monthly group sessions and the individual yearly meetings, the employees were of a different opinion. They wished for more frequent positive feedback on their job as most of the current feedback was focusing on complaints. Nevertheless, the managers distributed feedback with hopes of achieving higher job performance and motivation as the employees were expected to learn from the discussion about complaints and other operational problems. Thus, it may be identified how the third components of the psychological states of Hackman and Oldham (1976) is practiced, yet without the positive outcome of the increased level of motivation.

With regards to feedback it may be identified how the physical distance impact on the level of motivation among employees. Quiros (2012) stresses the importance of scheduling time for meeting face-to-face when the work is performed in a distance. Yet, one of the employees expressed how she was dissatisfied with the amount of occasions she met with her manager and she expressed how she would prefer having an on-site manager in order to receive direct feedback. This may indicate how the physical distance can aggravate an increased level of motivation, as the occasions for giving and receiving direct feedback are not as many as if a normal work arrangement would exist.

Furthermore, Hackman and Oldham (1976) stresses the importance of skill variety

and autonomy in the job assignments in order to increase work motivation. However, the employees within the geriatric home care businesses expressed how their freedom in their job task was highly limited and how the tasks were experienced as too repetitive. However, as the job task of giving care does not differ substantially if working in a nursing home or in a home of a caretaker, the physical distance in the work arrangements of geriatric home care cannot be said to impact on the skill variety and autonomy in the job assignment specifically.

5.3 Working with goals

According to studies by Quiros (2012) and Andrews (2004), a manager could increase the level of goal commitment if she acts as a role model. By other words, a manager must have personal believes in the goals being attainable and first then, she can fully implement the goals in the organization and encourage the employees to commit to them. Furthermore, as emphasized by Locke (1996), high settled goals would contribute to high dedication and high goal commitment, which in turn will lead to high job performance.

For the specific geriatric home care services studied, the degree of commitment to goals was low among the employees. The low enthusiasm is probably best explained by the lack of goal commitment from their managers. As explained by the managers, the goals were perceived as too difficult to attain which resulted in a low commitment, which in turn aggravated the implementation of the goals. Consequently, the managers did not work with the goals as a method for increasing the motivation among the employees.

Whether the physical distance impact on the level of interest in implementing the goals or not could not be fully established by the empirical findings. Nevertheless, the managers explained how there is not enough time to give more feedback on the work with goals as they have a lot of administrative work to do and during the few opportunities when the meet with their employees, other issues are often in focus. Accordingly, as Latham and Locke (1991) stated, high motivation through the work of goals could only be achieved if feedback is distributed to the employees. Consequently, the physical distance may be identified as a factor affecting the level of

motivation negatively as feedback on the goal attainment is not often prioritized during the physical meetings with employees.

5.4 Mediating trust in employees

One characteristic feature of theories such as Andrews (2004) concerning motivation in remote work arrangement is the manager's ability to trust her employees. The author argued that when employees feel trusted, their level of motivation increases. Further on, as Thylefors's (1991) earlier studies about elderly care has shown, delegation could be a method of giving responsibility and mediating confidence in employees. If doing so, the author explained how managers can expect her employees to become more self-driven individuals.

Within one of the chosen geriatric home care businesses the employee expressed how she experienced a low degree of attendance by her manager. As a direct consequence, she had become self-driven in her work. According as the study proceeded it was understood how the low level of attendance was carefully considered and part of a more strategic management. Not showing up during morning sessions or at the actual work place of her employees was due to a high level of trust and confidence in the employees. The manager took in other words advantages of the distance work arrangements by in the quiet give responsibility to employees and show her confidence in them. As underscored by scientists such as Nordengren and Olsen (2006) and Andrews (2004), in order to achieve higher work motivation, a remote manager should put extra effort in decreasing the need for control and instead illustrate how she trust her employees. The physical distance may in this case be seen as an advantage for the managers by the means that she is practically forced to decrease the need for control and trust her employees as they carry out the work in a different work place.

5.5 Communication that often ends up as information

In the studied geriatric home care services there was a tendency of communication often ending up as information. For example, instead of having a dialogue about organizational issues, the managers rather distributed newsletters, new policies or

directions to the employees as information. Communication about operational issues was more frequently appearing during group meetings for example.

Distributing information is seen as a simple way of communicating as it implies a one-way dialogue (Engquist, 2012). However, this type of communication does not always reach the receiver. In the chosen geriatric home care businesses the managers wrote newsletters to their employees which they had printed and posted in the canteens. The knowledge about these types of letters differed among the employees. One of them expressed how she was aware of the newsletters, yet she did not pay them much of attention, as she experienced shortage of time. The other employee was not even aware of the existence of the newsletters.

Avolio and Kahai (2003) describe how the physical distance makes it more difficult for managers to make sure that information is received. Consequently, managers have to spend more time and effort in explaining and re-formulating the information (Avolio and Kahai, 2003). However, the physical distance do not encourage the managers to put any extra effort in in making sure that the information is received as they often are short on time during the physical meetings.

5.6 The use of different communication tools and channels

As stated in the theoretical framework by Quiros (2012), a remote manager should use the most suitable communication tool when physical interaction is not achievable. Considering that all employees are different individuals with different preferences, there could be several suitable communication tools. However, the managers within the studied geriatric home care services did not put a higher effort in adjusting their methods of communicating. Even if they were aware of the fact that not every employee checked their emails on a daily basis, they continuously send information of less urgent character through this channel. Yet, the communication is a two-way process indicating that the employees may also adjust their communication for their managers' preferences. One of the employees described how she found the emails from her manager favorable since both of them were able to answer when time permitted. The usage of email could be seen as an adjustment by the employee to meet the managers' way of communicating.

As the work is practiced in a physical distance, the tools and channels enable communication at numerous occasions. However, the empirical findings indicated how the usage of different communication tools is limited to only include a few. These include the usage of telephone, emails, newsletters and face-to-face contact. The managers explained how their employees are more interested in giving care rather than checking their emails and the employees confirm their neutrality to different technologies. Consequently, the managers rarely implement new technologies in the operational activity.

5.7 Influences of the linear model of communication

The linear model of communication by Shannon (1948) is the basic foundation for communication theory and the model could be applicable to the geriatric home care business. However, as Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976) and the empirical findings indicate, the communication process does not always follow the pattern of the linear model. In the specific geriatric home care services, a more dynamic and flexible model is practiced. As new components of transmitters, communication channels and noise factors are present in the geriatric home care sector, the communication process becomes more dynamic than the flat linear model. Further on, as the managers use several ways of communicating and are not always giving or receiving responses immediately, the argument of Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976) about the dynamic process without a clear beginning or end holds.

Even if not highlighted during the research there is an indication of existing noise factors in the communication between manager and employee. One characteristic and recurring noise factor in the specific geriatric home care services are the tight time schedules that contributes to a high stress level. Consequently, the quality of the message will be affected as both managers and employees experience time pressure. In line with the theories of Andrews (2004), the managers handle the existing noise factor such as stress by dedicating time for more planned communication.

In one of the studied geriatric home care businesses there were a coordinator who worked as an intermediary between the manager and her employee. With regards to

the linear communication model by Shannon (1948), the coordinator could be an example of a transmitter. As the coordinator often delivers messages from the manager to the employees, as well as the other way around, the original message is endangered to change as it goes through a longer process. However, both employee and manager have positive experiences of having a coordinator in the organization. For the manager, the coordinator function heavily as an administrative assistant who has daily contact with the employees. Conversely, the employee describes the collaboration with the coordinator as a helping hand, both for the manager and for herself. Having a coordinator close to the employees indicates how the communication becomes more effective and the employees may benefit from more available management. It may be seen as a way of decreasing the perceived gap between manager and employee in their physical distance.

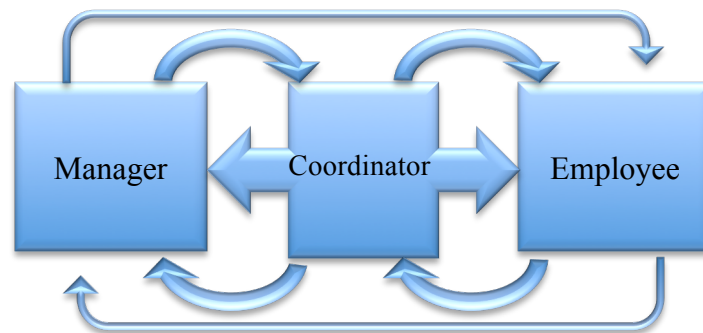


Figure 6: The figure is illustrating the impact of the coordinator on the communication process. The arrows symbolize messages.

(Source: own figure with inspiration from the result of the analysis)

Figure 6 illustrates the effects of having a coordinator. The messages can be seen as going through a longer process when it transits the coordinator. It also illustrates how the coordinator has direct contact with both the manager and the employees. Yet, it is still possible for the managers and employees to communicate directly.

5.8 Availability

Theories presented by Andrews (2004) together with the empirical findings put great emphasis on the level of availability of a remote manager. In the empirical findings the managers stressed how they work with their perceived availability by telling the employees that they were always welcome to contact them. Further on, they explained

how they inform the employees about how they would answer telephone calls, emails and text messages as soon as they have time.

The managers also put effort in spontaneous visits in the canteens in order to show their availability. However, a leader is only as available as she is perceived to be by her employees. In the studied geriatric home care businesses, the employees express how they rather not disturb their manager while the managers highlights a high degree of availability. Theories by Andrews (2004) stress the importance for the manager to be perceived as available and that the work with availability should be a managers top priority. These theories together with the empirical findings indicate how the physical distance may impact the employees' perception of their managers' availability. When leading from afar, the physical availability decreases as a direct consequence of the work arrangement and new ways of creating availability must be developed, many times through communication tools and channels.

5.9 Face-to-face communication

Theories such as Quiros (2012) stress the importance of face-to-face communication when leading from afar. Further, Andrews (2004) highlights the importance of well-structured and planned meetings in order to limit time-loss. Physical and scheduled meetings enable exchanges of information and opinions in a stress free environment (Andrews, 2004). Further on, the author explains how both manager and employee allot time for the meeting and the manager are able to put individual focus on the employee. With regards to the empirical findings, the spontaneous quick visits are more frequent than the scheduled meetings. However, as indicated by one of the employees, the spontaneous visits were not appreciated as it interfered in her privacy during the lunch break.

As stated by Bass (1990) the most successful managers are the ones who interact and communicate with their employees frequently. In the geriatric home care studied, the physical distance may increase the importance of having scheduled meetings as the spontaneous meetings are not as appreciated as scheduled meetings among the employees.

6. Conclusion

The concluding chapter will present the result of the study in relation to the aim. Further, a few implications of improvements in the work with motivation and communication will be presented for the interest of practitioners in the business of geriatric home care. To sum up the research, subjects for future studies will be proposed.

How do managers in the area of geriatric home care motivate their employees and communicate with them?

Working within geriatric home care includes human interaction where the employees work close to the caretakers. Consequently, the employees become the organization's most important resource, which in turn indicates the importance of having satisfied employees. Crucial in this research has been to display how geriatric home care managers motivate their employees by continuously encourage and remind them about the meaningfulness of their job. This is done by comments and encouragements whenever the manager has contact with an employee. By doing so, they highly verify important components of earlier studies and theories about how to achieve work motivation.

More over, earlier studies and theories such as Job Characteristic Model, Goal Setting Theory and theories about remote leadership discuss the importance of acknowledgment and feedback. The empirical findings indicate how the amount of received positive feedback and acknowledgement from managers is unsatisfying among the employees. Nevertheless, feedback was distributed in order for the employees to discuss and learn from problems and complaints, as the managers believed that it would contribute to higher level of motivation among the employees. Yet, as the empirical findings indicate, giving a majority of negative feedback has in this specific case rather generated an opposite effect on the level of motivation among the employees.

Moreover, the empirical findings show how the acknowledgement from the caretakers is a strong motivational factor for the employees. This tells against theories such as Job Characteristic Model highlighting the importance of receiving feedback and acknowledgment from the manager specifically. This theory highlights a correlation between frequent feedback from a manager and higher level of motivation among her employees. Instead, this study shows how the caretakers are the primary objects influencing the level of work motivation among the employees and not the managers.

Goal Setting Theory and theories about remote leadership indicate how working with organizational goals is highly important in order to increase motivation. It has been displayed how difficult goals increase the level of motivation in an organization. However, managers and employees in the specific geriatric home care services experience the goals as being too difficult to attain and consequently they are not fully implemented in the organization. Accordingly, the inadequate work with goals does not contribute to higher level of motivation in the studied geriatric home care services.

This research also confirms what earlier studies emphasize about the importance of effective communication in a successful remote leadership. Firstly, it is important to consider how the communication is performed with each individual employee since everyone has his or her own preferences. Yet, communication is a two-way process which implicates that it is not only the managers who have to adjust her communication. As the analysis of this study shows, a more effective communication between the managers and their employees is reached when interacting face-to-face. The managers are aware of the efficiency in communicating face-to-face. However, the time pressure aggravates the possibilities of increasing this type of communication and forces them to use less effective communication tools and channels such as emails and newsletters.

Secondly, the empirical findings show how the managers within the geriatric home care services use different communications tools and channels such as telephone, email, newsletters and face-to-face communication. However, the employees do not prioritize different high technology communication tools. Therefore, the planned face-to-face meetings increase in importance in order to achieve more effective

communication and minimize misunderstandings. To meet the dilemma of time pressure and the employees' neutrality to different high technology tools the managers schedule group meetings in order to make the communication more effective. In the same time as the managers gets an opportunity to meet the employees face-to-face they also save time by meeting the whole group.

How do the physical distance influence the level of motivation and the process of communication in geriatric home care?

The empirical findings indicate how employees seeking job within geriatric home care are people who are compassionated about giving care to people. Thus they already have intrinsic motivation towards the job and therefore the physical distance in the work arrangement does not have an immediate impact on the level of motivation. However, the managers may benefit from leading in a physical distance as they can achieve motivated employees by not even being present in the work place. Instead, the caretakers are the ones who encourage the employees in their daily work.

There is also a possibility of mediating feelings of trust and responsibility towards the employees when leading from afar. By not being present in the daily work, the managers are forced to decrease their level of control and increase the level of trust in their employees. Theories indicate how showing trust in the employees can contribute to higher motivation and more self-driven individuals. Therefore, working in a physical distance may contribute to higher motivation among the employees.

The low commitment to goals does not depend on the fact that there is a physical distance between the manager and her employees. It has most probably to do with a feeling of impersonal and too difficult goals which are established by higher management. In addition to that, the managers do not have the ability to impact on the goal setting process which may contribute to a dissatisfaction and a feeling of maladjusted goals.

The physical distance is affecting the process of communication between the managers and their employees in several ways. One example could be the level of

physical availability of the manager that in this specific study is perceived as fairly low by the employees. However, as one of the geriatric home care services has a coordinator, the physical distance between the manager and employee decreases as the management becomes more available through the coordinator. Yet, the communication goes through a longer way and endangers the original content of the message. Another example could be how the physical distance in the work arrangement enforces a differentiated usage of communication tools and channels in order to reach out with a message. However, in the specific business studied, the physical distance seem not to encourage a wider usage of new technologies as the employees are indifferent to high technology. Yet, the employees are forced to use some of the tools and channels due to the physical distance.

Finally it could be concluded how physical distance between manager and employees do not have to be an obstacle for achieving high motivation and an effective communication. However, the remote managers have to adjust to the situation and practice some components more than other in order to achieve a successful remote leadership.

6.1 Implications for practitioners in geriatric home care

As the theoretical overview and especially the Job Characteristic Model (1976) propose, managers should pay much attention to feedback. If managers put effort in collecting feedback from caretakers and their families, not only complaints would be given as feedback to employees but also positive comments would reach them and higher motivation could be achieved.

If the managers would put greater effort in firstly commit to the difficult goals themselves and then encourage their employees to embrace them, they could expect an increase in motivation. As studies by Locke (1996), Quiros (2012) and Andrews (2004) have shown, when high commitment to goals is reached, a higher level of job performance and motivation will be a fact. Therefore, it should be in the greatest of interest of each manager to accept, mediate and convince employees about adopting difficult goals in their daily work.

If the studied managers would become more effective in their communication about visions, they could expect to win higher trust from their employees (Madlock, 2008). Thylefors (1991) highlights about the employees' greater loyalty towards the caretakers than towards their managers. With regards to the findings of the two scientists, the studied managers should improve their communication in order to firstly achieve higher level of trust and finally win greater loyalty from their employees.

It is important for the studied management to schedule time for face-to-face communication in order to eliminate external factors such as stress or other noise factors affecting the original message. Another essential part in the manager's communication is to be perceived by the employees as available (Andrews, 2004). In order to make sure that the employees perceive them as available, the managers must continuously communicate their availability and encourage the employees to approach them. Even if operating in a physical distance, the distance does not necessary have to impact negatively on the overall level of availability, as the managers can be available in other ways.

6.2 Future studies

As the organizational structure of geriatric home care does not show any tendency of changing, a more profound research about the remote leadership would be favourable for the business as a whole. As limitations of time frame and the number of performed interviews have been present in this study, other methods of investigation could give different knowledge and perspective of the geriatric home care business in relation to motivation and communication. In order to extent the research of the remote leadership in geriatric home care, a greater sample of primary data such as observations could be used in a future study. An interesting topic for a future study could include the role of the coordinator as an intermediary between manager and employee with regards to motivation and communication.

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7.4 Interviews

Manager 1 (personal communication, April 2014)

Employee 1 (personal communication, April 2014)

Manager 2 (personal communication, April 2014)

Employee 2 (personal communication, April 2014)

8. Appendix

8.1 Interview guide: manager

- Hur ofta träffar du dina medarbetare?
- Vilka svårigheter och möjligheter ser du i ditt ledarskap?
- Vad tror du motiverar dina medarbetare?
- Hur motiverar du dina medarbetare?
- Jobbar ni med mål och visioner? Kan ni ge ett exempel på hur ni jobbar med detta?
- (Om de jobbar med mål) Hur följer ni upp arbetet med mål och visioner?
- Vad tycker du är viktigt i kommunikationen för dig som ledare?
- Hur kommunicerar du med dina medarbetare ute på fält och vilka kommunikationsverktyg används?
- Kan du berätta om en situation där det var svårt att nå ut till medarbetarna? Vad tror du var orsaken till detta? Hur löste du problemet?
- Hur tror du att dina medarbetare upplever din kommunikation och vad tror du att dem vill uppnå med kommunikationen er emellan?
- Många studier inom kommunikation visar på att det finns tre särskilt vanligt förekommande syften med kommunikationen, dessa är behov att få kontroll över en situation, bidragande till personlig utveckling, man vill få bekräftelse. Upplever du dessa tre som särskilt viktiga i er organisation och kan du ge exempel på hur det kan komma i uttryck i så fall?
- Anser du att uppföljning och feedback är viktigt och i så fall varför?
- Vilka aspekter är utmärkande i din uppföljning av motivation och kommunikation?

8.2 Interview guide: employee

- Hur ofta träffar du din chef?
- Vad finns det för svårigheter och möjligheter med att arbeta på distans?
- Vad motiverar dig i jobbet som medarbetare inom hemtjänsten?
- Hur arbetar din chef för att få dig att känna dig motiverad i arbetet?
- Finns det uppsatta mål och visioner i verksamheten?
- (Om mål) Hur utarbetas målen? Hur blir du påmind och hur följs arbetet upp kring dessa mål?
- Vad är viktigt i kommunikationen med din chef?
- Vad tror du att din chef har för målsättning med er kommunikation?
- Vilka kommunikationsverktyg använder din chef? Vilka kommunikationsverktyg föredrar du?
- Kan du berätta om en situation där det var svårt att nå fram till din chef? Vad tror du var orsaken till detta? Hur löste du problemet?
- Många studier inom kommunikation visar på att det finns tre särskilt vanligt förekommande syften med kommunikationen, dessa är: behov att få kontroll över en situation, bidragande till personlig utveckling och att man vill få bekräftelse. Upplever du dessa tre som särskilt viktiga i er organisation och kan du ge exempel på hur det kan komma i uttryck i så fall?
- Anser du att uppföljning och feedback är viktigt och i så fall varför?
- Hur arbetar din chef med uppföljning och feedback? Vilka aspekter är utmärkande i uppföljningen?

