



Organisational trust in HR

Exploring managers and employees demands and expectations of the HR function

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Abstract

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Purpose: This study aims to explore how the Human Resource (HR) function tackle demands on trust in a multinational medical-technical company by identifying managers and employees' expectations. Furthermore, the study aims to identify challenges that exist between HR, managers and employees.

Theory: The concept of trust and communication is used to analyse the empirical meanings and how it relates to theory. Furthermore, social exchange theory is applied to understand the social exchange between HR, managers and employees. Also, it helped the researchers understand how this exchange is related to trust.

Method: This thesis was drawn upon a qualitative study, implemented in one case company. The empirical data was conducted through 14 in-depth semi-structured interviews. The target group of this study have been managers that have direct or indirect contact with HR, employees and HR professionals. The interviews were analysed through the thematic method to get familiar with the data and find meanings relevant to the purpose of the study.

Result: The study describes and identifies different demands and expectations from managers and employees at the case company, which can contribute to sustaining trust. The study maps out challenges and different opinions that both HR, managers and employees face, as well as how these are tackled by HR.

Preface & Acknowledgements

What a journey! This research has opened up for new experience and knowledge in the HR field. It has been a challenge, but also a great way to get different insights and opportunities. We want to express our gratitude to Company X and to all participants who took their time to make this research feasible. A special thanks to our supervisor Bertil Rolandsson, who have guided and supported us through the whole study. His insights and advice made it possible for us to create and get different perspectives on the subject. The collaboration with Company X and the support from our supervisor has allowed us to develop this study in the best possible way.

Table of Content

1. Introduction	6
1.2 Purpose and research questions	7
2. Previous Research	8
2.1 The relationship between HR and valued constituent(s)	8
2.2 The perception and understanding of HR's credibility and trust	9
2.3 The impact of HR perceptions	10
2.3.1 Employees' perceptions of HR	11
3. Theoretical framework	12
3.1 The definition of individual trust and organisational trust	12
3.1.1 Trust and communication	13
3.2 Social Exchange Theory (SET)	13
4. Methodology	15
4.1 Research design	15
4.2 The case company	15
4.3 Selection of respondents	16
4.4 Data Collection Process	18
4.4.1 A semi-structured interview	18
4.5 Data analysis	19
4.6 Data quality	19
4.6.1 Limitations and Risks	20
4.7 Ethical considerations	21
5. Results	22
5.1 Managers	22
5.1.1 HR is a support to the managers	22
5.1.2 Administrating rather than driving the development	22
5.1.3 The invisible function	23
5.1.4 Being open and communicative	24
5.1.5 The unsystematic system - a challenge for HR	26
5.2 Employees	26
5.2.1 An invisible HR function for blue-collar workers	27
5.2.2 Experiencing a lack of HR engagement with professional development	28
5.2.3 Trust as an existing and maintained key factor despite challenges	30

5.2.4 Feeling involved and updated through their direct manager	31
5.2.5 A general feeling of improvement opportunities	32
5.3 The HR function	32
5.3.1 A visible HR function for white-collar workers	32
5.3.2 HR as support and operational function rather than a strategic partner	34
5.3.3 HR experiencing lack of time - HR duties delegated to managers	36
5.3.4 The communication flow stops between HR and managers	38
5.3.5 Everyone does not know what HR is working with	39
6. Discussion	40
6.1 The demands and expectations between HR, managers and employees	40
6.2 The challenges and tension between HR, managers and employees	41
6.3 What is done to tackle challenges and tensions	43
7. Conclusion	45
7.3 Recommendations for future research	46
Reference list	47
Appendix 1 - Information Sheet	51
Appendix 2 - Survey	52

1. Introduction

In the following chapter, the authors will narrate the background for the thesis subject, which further will lead to the topics problematisation. Furthermore, the authors will present why they believe that this is a fascinating subject to investigate, which, after that, will flow into the research questions for this study.

1.1 Background

Previous research has shown that HR professionals must have a good relationship with various constituents in the firm to gain visibility and a voice around the table (Ferris & Judges, 1991; Tsui, 1990; Buller, 1988). To possess the resources that the HR professional need, it is of great importance that they have both political and personal support from the top management (Ferris & Judges, 1991; Tsui, 1990; Buller, 1988). In many studies, it has been shown that the HR Business Partner (HRBP) has a direct link to line managers, and in some firms, even to the top management. A study by Sheehan, Cooper, Holland and De Cieri (2007) found that HR appears on the board only to have a symbolic value rather than a strategic value. Related to this, Brandl and Pohler (2010) also saw in their recent study involving five CEOs from different companies that they only interacted and delegated duties to HR depending on their perception of HR's abilities. The perception that the CEO has of the HR function is also shaped by how he or she is engaged with the HR function in their work, and also how many HR cases that exist in the company (Brandl & Pohler, 2010).

A study made by Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) showed that employees' perception of HR practices was connected to how they perceived job qualities, but also related to the commitment from the organisation. They argued that the behaviour and attitude of the front-line manager and the impact of HR practices had a dynamic relationship and is highly associated with the organisational commitment (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Compared to Purcell and Hutchinson (2007), Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010:139) investigated "the interplay between the perception of leadership behaviour and perception of HR practices". In their study, they confirmed that line managers shape employees' perception of HR practices (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010). Other studies, however, also point out that HR needs to base their strategy and decisions on more evidence-based proof instead of intuition (Sesil, 2014). In doing so, HR may then also gain more trust in their profession.

Studies show and identify that the HR function often works as an intermediary between several departments in the organisation (Alagaraja, 2013; Ruona & Gibson, 2004). Researchers have over a long time discussed that different fields in HR have a strategic connection of the human capital and the organisation's goals (Alagaraja, 2013; Ruona & Gibson, 2004). However, research has shown that HR's

role and function are not estimated fully. Furthermore, it has been shown that employees' perception of how HR is playing a strategic role is rather low and unclear (Alagaraja, 2013; Ruona & Gibson, 2004). Mitsuhashi et al (2000) also saw that line managers' perception of the contribution from HR was rather low. The HR function is often underrepresented in higher levels of an organisation where decisions are made and were also perceived as adding less value in comparison to other essential business interests (Becker & Huselid, 2009).

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to identify how the HR function tackle demands on trust concerning managers and employees, hence to identify expectations that these constituents have on the HR function. The study draws on one Nordic company providing an empirical understanding of the previously outlined problem. In an attempt to fully grasp and investigate our topic, managers and employees at all levels are included in a qualitative study. To understand the condition for trust in HR and to support the purpose, we need to investigate and identify what impact HR have on the constituents. To support this purpose, the study is guided by three questions:

- 1. What demands do managers and employees have on the HR functions?*
- 2. What challenges and tensions emerges in the relation between HR, managers and employees?*
- 3. How do HR manage this tension?*

1.3 Disposition

To be able to answer these research questions, this study will begin by presenting previous research that defines how the HR function has an impact on the organisation and employees' trust in the organisation. Afterwards, the theory will be presented to analyse and identify what the literature is stating in comparison to our findings. In the section of the method, we will present how the data was collected and which limitations we have had during the process. Furthermore, the results will be presented and subsequently, our discussion where we apply previous research and theory will be described. Finally, the conclusion will be presented to address our findings of the research, and recommendations for future research.

2. Previous Research

This chapter consists of previous research chosen for the aim of this paper. The focus of this chapter is to map out previous research about HR's credibility and reliability as a support function, the perception of HR held by different constituents and hence, the interactions between these constituents. The chapter consists of three main sections. First, we present previous findings on the relationship between constituents. Second, the perception of HR credibility, and third, previous findings on the impact of HR perceptions.

2.1 The relationship between HR and valued constituent(s)

In previous research by Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, Stiles & Zaleska, 2002, they found that HR's most valuable constituents were managers and the CEO, however, managers are the HRBP closest and dominant constituent. Much of HR's duties are shared or devolved to the business-line manager. The HRBP is expected to be an administrative support function to the line manager and act as an advisor and be efficient to meet the managers' requests (Ulrich, 1997). However, this is only achievable if the line manager shows engagement and meets the HR professional in their day-to-day collaboration. The ability of the line managers to include HR in their team is vital (Ulrich, 1997). Previous research has also shown that even if the individual HRBP or HR professional is doing a good job he or she will partly still be evaluated from the perspective of the whole HR functions status and reputation (Truss et al, 2002; CIPD, 2007; Antila & Kakkonen, 2008). It is also of great importance that the general opinion of the HR function is positive. A view of the HR-function that it is slow, inefficient, expensive and time-consuming can immediately impede on the HR professionals' effort to create trust and credibility towards the line manager (Truss et al, 2002; CIPD, 2007; Antila & Kakkonen, 2008).

When it comes to implementing different HR practices, Kuvaas et al (2010) found that it is of great importance how the line-manager applies these practices for how the employees are going to perceive them. Their findings stated that if employees did not have a positive perception of the line manager and HR practices, they would not be able to succeed. On the other hand, if the employees showed positive attitudes towards both the line-manager and the various HR practices, it would have a positive result on the employees' performance, which were also needed for employees to work on developmental HR practices (Kuvaas et al, 2010).

2.2 The perception and understanding of HR's credibility and trust

HR's credibility has been defined in different ways depending on the author and also by changes and development in HR as a support function. Becker, Huselid and Ulrich (2001) describe HR's credibility by three different dimensions; "trust", "living the firm's values" and "acting with attitude". The three dimensions involve various factors which the HR professionals need to possess to create credibility and trust. 1) The HR professionals build trust when they have a relationship with valued constituents and meet the business objectives. 2) When the HR professional lives the firm's values as stated. 3) When the HR professional understands and works with evidence-based contributions to meet the business strategies and objectives (Becker et al, 2001). Previous case study by Antila and Kakkonen (2008) showed several attributes that an HR professional could strive for to establish a more trustworthy relationship with internal constituents. For the HR professionals to secure a strategic interference in crucial decisions they have technical and professional knowledge, the experience of the business they work in and hence, work proactively and take initiatives. The technical expertise can also be seen as a value-added competence because measurements and visible results are of high value for the top management and managers (Toulson & Dewe, 2004; Ulrich 1997).

In previous research by Aldrich et al. (2015, p. 119), they explored different factors that contribute to the credibility and trust of HR professionals by examining Senior Business Manager and HRBP views by ranking nine factors that shape their credibility identified in the literature. The nine factors below show how Senior Business Managers ranked in order what they considered gave credibility and trust as an HR professional.

1. "The business manager's trust in, and personal empathy, with the HRBP
2. The HRBP's knowledge of the external environment
3. The track record of the individual HRBP in delivering HR services and their part in business plan execution
4. The track record of the HR function in delivering HR services to the business manager
5. The HRBP's technical knowledge of HR practices and procedures
6. The HRBP's knowledge of the internal environment
7. The availability and effective use of valid methodologies and metrics to analyze the impact of HR initiatives
8. Membership of a professional body
9. Academic qualifications"

Becker et al (2001) also argued that personal credibility is the first step to gaining trust from internal clients. After personal credibility is established, they can demonstrate their competencies. After Aldrich

et al (2015) presented their study, they argued against Becker et al (2001) and stated that HR professionals' credibility comes from their delivered results, competencies, and character. HR professionals need to provide what internal clients are asking for, as well as show technical "know-how" factors and understand the external environment (Aldrich et al, 2015).

2.3 The impact of HR perceptions

Many researchers have focused on studying employee's performance and job satisfaction when it comes to HR practices (Jiang, Hu, Liu & Lepak, 2017). However, it has recently been noticed that more research is devoted to understanding how employees perceive HR practices and how they, depending on how these practices are communicated, are receiving these practices (Jiang et al, 2017).

In previous research Den Hartog, Boon, Verburg and Croon (2013), studied how, and what impact managers' implementation and perception of HR practices affect employees' perception in the Netherlands. Because managers usually are the ones who implement the HR practices, they could be seen as the moderators of the relationship between manager-perceived and employee-perceived HR practices. They examined how managers' communication qualities were and how these could impact on the mindset of the receiver, namely, the employee. Even though managers have a hugely influential part of employees' perceptions and experience of HR practices, researchers have identified that they are not the only source. Employees and co-workers can on a daily basis within the same work environment to be given access to different HR information and influence employees through social interactions (Nishii & Wright, 2008). So, to understand how employees perceive HR and their practices it is of great importance to understand the perception of co-workers and managers (Jiang et al, 2017). In research by Jiang et al (2017), they identify how employees' perception of HR practices is influenced by managers and co-workers. They argue that the strength of the influence that the manager or the co-workers has on the employee depends on how effective connection the holder of information has with the employee. The relationship between co-workers' and managers' HR perceptions are likely to relate to the perception held by the employee, and there are at least three reasons for this. First, employees usually have a closer interaction with their co-workers and managers. The employee is in a position at the workplace where their surrounding is around co-workers and managers who provide a context that easily can form the perceptions and experience. Employees might also consult with their co-workers or managers when uncertainty arises around HR practices. These interactions can also lead to similarities in HR perceptions of the employee, manager and co-workers. Second, even if employees do not have a direct experience of the HR practices, they can see how these implements, and how other employees applies to these practices by interaction with co-workers and managers. Third, managers and co-workers can form employees perception by focusing on a particular HR practice. If managers or co-workers for example frequently discuss employee development or training activities, it will inspire the employee to

pay more attention towards information about these HR activities than to those who are not being discussed in the same extent (Jiang et al., 2017; Den Hartog et al., 2013)

2.3.1 Employees' perceptions of HR

Employees' perception of HR practices is also dependent on their earlier and personal experience. This also leads to differences in individual employees' perceptions of HR practices. Employees' perceive their work environment and reality differently, and this also leads to that, not all employees will interpret the implementation and communication similarly (Nishii et al., 2008). However, misunderstandings can also occur between the perceptions of employees and managers, which can have different effects on the HR outcomes. It is not unusual that employees and managers share the same view of HR practices, yet, these differences can raise problems (Nishii et al., 2008). According to Gerhart, Wright and McMahan (2000), the perception of the employees might have higher weight because they are more linked to the practices compared to managers. If HR only measure the experience from managers, it will lead to an underestimation, as well as if they only measure the views from employees it will be an overestimation in regard of the role of HR for employee outcomes. Nishii et al. (2008) agree and stated that it is essential to measure the views from both partners to get a factful result.

It has also been shown in theoretical arguments and empirical findings that there exist more factors than managers' and co-worker's perception and communication that have an effect on employees HR perception (Lepak & Boswell, 2012). Previous findings have shown that various factors of demographic dissimilarities to managers and co-workers have an impact on employees' perceptions of practices (Nishii & Wright, 2008). Demographic dissimilarity refers to employees e.g. age, gender, education level and organisational tenure compared to managers and co-workers (Liao, Chuang & Joshi, 2008). These dissimilarities are also affecting how much interaction an employee has with the co-worker and manager and thus, how much credibility and influence they have over the employees' perception (Jiang et al, 2017).

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter summaries the chosen theories used to support the analysis of this study. The purpose of this section is to present these selected theories: the definition of individual trust and organisational trust, including the importance of communication to support trust, and Social Exchange Theory (SET).

3.1 The definition of individual trust and organisational trust

To identify how HR functions tackle challenges and tensions in relation to managers and employees, it is relevant to study theories related to the individual and organisational trust. This section starts with describing individual trust, followed by the organisational trust.

Trust is the individual's belief that another party will keep their promise (Hardin, 2002). According to Hardin (2002), individual trust is the individual's perception of the other individual's credibility, which is based on previous experience and expectation of the relationship with the other individual. Hardin (2002) also describes that trust depends on the individual's perception of the importance for the other individual to keep their promise. If the individual believes that the other party will gain something by keeping their promise, trust is more likely to be kept and earned (Hardin, 2002). As stated by Hardin (2002), for trust to be maintained, it needs to be in the individual's interest to keep their promise. The definition of trust on an individual level is therefore according to Hardin (2002), not about the given or apparent, it is about the reasons that individuals have to trust others or not. There are no guarantees of trust. Trust is solely based on an individual's expectations (Hardin, 2002).

A similar emphasis on more or less established expectations can be found when we look at organisational trust. Kramer (2010) defines organisational trust as the expectation of the organisational functions to deliver expertise related to their specific functions, as such as an HR function is expected to know what applies for personnel matters. Individuals as employees have expectations of the organisation and its management. Even if there is nothing that confirms this, the employees' have organisational trust and believe that their salaries will be paid out every month on the same date (Kramer, 2002).

Organisations must understand that trust is based on both individual and collective trust, and individuals act in a way that is expected of them based on their social sphere around them (Kramer, 2010). The organisational trust also relates to individuals' belief in the outcome of the trust, and individuals need to feel that it is a positive factor to maintain trust towards their organisation for their own or the collective gain (Kramer, 2010).

To strengthen trust in the organisation, the working relationship between the different functions is an essential factor to understand how these relationships affect each other. Trust between functions in an organisation is the awareness that all employees in all functions are needed for the organisation to succeed (Jones, 2012).

3.1.1 Trust and communication

Trust is described as fragile according to Hakim (2002) and Kramer (2010), trust is something that needs to be built up, earned and retained. Communication is a fundamental part of the process of creating and maintaining trust (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2010). Communication, both external and internal, is a crucial success factor for an organisation (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2010).

Poor communication in an organisation can cause performance problems since communication is necessary for collaboration between individuals and groups in different departments to achieve internal efficiency (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2010). Internal communication is the flow of organisational information to and from employees and the employer, and employees expect that internal communication reaches all employees (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2010). In addition, internal communication includes that employees trust that the organisation accepts their thoughts, feelings and ideas without ignoring any individuals (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2010). Effective communication from managers can lead to increased trust, better conditions and more employee confidence. Communication should also be applied in the right way to the right group for the information to be received correctly (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2010). According to Noor (2014), research shows that two-way communication, a dialogue between individuals face to face, is the most effective communication channel, as misunderstandings are reduced and individuals feel more integrated into the organisation. Noor (2014) also states that effective communication leads to a better reputation for the organisation, since employees have created a positive attitude towards the organisation.

3.2 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) is used to analyse the expected social exchange in relationships and has become a useful theory to apply in workplace relationship studies (Blau, 1964). Thus, SET was selected for this study to support the analysis of the relations between HR, managers and employees in Company X and how this can impact on trust towards the HR function. According to Blau (1964), it is the economic and social relations that create obligations of the trust in the exchange of giving and giving back. The commitments are within the limit of legal regulations, and individuals are aware of the commitments in a social exchange because these are based on norms (Blau, 1964).

Furthermore, the general findings of SET by Blau (1964) are defined in Cropanzano & Mitchell's (2005) interdisciplinary review. Cropanzano & Mitchell's (2005) define SET as a useful theory for understanding organisational behaviour and how commitments in workplace relationships can be developed by the trust. According to Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005), organisations can, by meeting their employees' expectations, create a positive work attitude. To meet employees' expectations, managers must be aware of these and be able to encounter them. However, managers expect that employees give them something in return when meeting their needs. When employees and managers accept this exchange, a relationship is created by the mutual commitment of trust (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

According to Blau (1964), SET is used as a base to set rules of the social relationships created in a workplace and how managers in an organisation can use these to create a sense of work attitude and obligation of their employees. Blau (1964) identified how relationships could become an exchange of expectations and obligations. The employees can feel pressured to produce a positive attitude or commitment in the organisation, hence, this can also lead to a negative reaction for some employees. The SET model shows that it is the organisation that decides whether the social benefit is received positively or negatively, as this depends on the work environment (Blau, 1964).

Blau (1964) discussed trust as a part of the relationships defined in SET, in which trust for the organisation can create a result of favourable social exchanges. Gouldner (1960) agrees that trust is an important aspect to take into account in SET because if employees believe that the organisation will provide favourable exchange in continuously working, supporting and developing, this will in turn increase the employees' trust in the organisation.

4. Methodology

In this chapter, the research design of the study will be presented in detail, followed by an introduction of the case company. Following, a descriptive section of potential respondents, the survey, and the procedure behind these will be presented. In conclusion, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations, and risks with the approach will be analysed and discussed.

4.1 Research design

The study draws on a single Nordic company, targeting a specific part of the company where HR, managers, and employees work together. To answer our research question, we explore perceptions emerging in their daily practices, allowing us to get a deeper understanding of views on HR. To answer our research question, we explored perceptions arising in their daily practices, which allowed us to get a deeper understanding of opinions on HR. According to Walcott (1994), qualitative methods are most suitable for studies that have an explorative approach because the researcher can capture other essential factors and issues that can occur during the interview. The qualitative research design enabled us to understand feelings, perceptions, attitudes, and other factors that led to different behaviours and events, as well as the interplay between these phenomena (Hakim, 2009). The qualitative approach provided us with a deeper understanding of the interactions and perceptions of HR, managers, and employees.

We used an abductive approach in this study, which means that we had an open mindset even if theory-guided us through the analysis. Our research was formed and responsive by new information and different techniques. An abductive approach allowed us to be more explorative and not only focus on the evidence from literature nor only from the empirical findings (Björklund & Paulsson, 2012). This approach was most beneficial for us due to it is a connection to the explorative and formable approach. Nevertheless, to explore the respondents' perceptions and thoughts, a semi-structured interview guide was used and structured from previous research and theories, drawing on opened-ended questions and providing us to do follow up questions and depart from our interview guide (Hakim, 2000).

4.2 The case company

The case company, from now on called Company X, is a Swedish registered medical technology company. Company X is a multinational company, existing in over 40 countries with approximately 10.000 employees around the world. The HR function at Company X consists of four HR professionals. The HR manager, one professional that works full-time with salaries and another professional that works part-time. The one who works half time with salaries also works with rehabilitation and work

environment. The last professional works as an HRBP with a broad spectrum of HR activities: professional development, recruitment, requirement profiles, assist managers, advertisements, administration in general. The HRBP has a close collaboration with the HR manager. The HR manager reports to the CEO at the city's site and is responsible for all the operations at this site. The department works more operatively than strategically and has today around 47 managers to support and approximately 600 employees on site. Due to the fact that this company is a knowledge-based organisation where you expect that people have demands on HR, this company provide an interesting case for our investigation of trust.

4.3 Selection of respondents

The selection of respondents is essential to get a suitable and trustworthy variety, and this is only possible by ensuring that the respondents are suitable for this subject. This could be in terms of position, experience, and responsibilities (Flick, 2014). As our research was to explore and identify how the HR function tackle demands on trust concerning managers and employees, hence, to understand how managers and employees perception are towards HR, our criteria for the respondents was that they would have direct or indirect interaction with HR. Another criterion was also that the manager had employees.

Access to the case company was gained through close contact with a person who works as an employee at the company. The HR manager permitted us to contact a broad spectrum of key constituents in various departments. We considered if contact was to be made directly from us, as it could be regarded as unsuitable for making the first contact with an employee. However, in this case, we saw it as an advantage to have support from someone within the organisation (Bryman, 2016), even considering that this was the first time this organisation had an external collaboration in which someone analysed a specific department within the company. This led to the contact with the HR manager in the organisation who we thereafter had an ongoing and the only collaboration with during the whole process. The HR manager could be interpreted as a gatekeeper who facilitated us with access to the organisation and essential information (Bryman, 2016).

After the first meeting with the HR manager, we had the opportunity to explain how the interviews would be conducted and which constituents we would need to interview based on our research question. The respondents in the study were then chosen in collaboration with the HR manager to get the most appropriate respondents. However, it is essential to state that potential bias may have occurred due to the HR managers influence. To limit the possibility for biases, we chose only to have contact with the respondents during the interview process.

The research was focused on how managers and employees perceive HR in regard to trust, and if this could impact their communication. The different constituents serving as references for this research were, therefore, HR, managers and employees. The total amount of interviews was 14. Namely, 6 managers, 3 HR professionals and 5 employees were interviewed. Additionally, to get a broad and purposeful sampling of respondents, 6 managers from 6 different departments were interviewed. At the end of every interview with the managers, they were asked to come with suggestions on 2-4 employees in their department. With this sampling strategy, the purpose was to be able to have a heterogeneous sampling of respondents within different departments and positions. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 virus made it difficult for both us and the employees to attend both in-person and through the phone. However, we had the opportunity to have a reasonably heterogeneous sample in the sense that we had different employees from three various departments and levels, which led to both strategic and operational insights.

Figure 1: Sample

Respondent	Business	Profession
1	HR	Manager
2	HR	Salary
3	HR	Salary
4	Stock and Inventory	Manager
5	Stock & Inventory	Employee
6	Stock & Inventory	Employee
7	Stock & Inventory	Employee
8	Project	Employee
9	Support	Manager
10	Infection	Manager
11	Infection Control	Employee
12	Production	Manager
13	Quality Control	Manager
14	IT	Manager

4.4 Data Collection Process

The procedure for the data collection started with an interview with the HR manager. After the interview, the HR manager contacted potential respondents that could be available for interviews at the office. Meanwhile, the preparation of an interview guide was started by analysing previous research and theoretical framework. Besides working on the interview guide (Appendix 2), an information sheet was made for all respondents to take part in a couple of days before the interview day. The HR manager sent out an e-mail to all potential managers who then further contacted their employees. So, the data collection was made stepwise.

When we had the information of all respondents that would take part in the study, an information sheet was sent out by e-mail to all respondents. The information sheet (Appendix 1) informed the respondents of who we were and the aim of the research, how the interviews would be conducted and when the interviews would take place. Many respondents answered quickly on the information sheet and showed a significant interest in the study. Due to COVID-19 virus, we chose to hold the interviews through Skype, Teams or through the phone. The choice of having these types of interviews was ensured by the respondents who agreed with this because of the uncertainty regarding COVID-19 virus. The interview started during week 10 and the setting for the interviews varied. Some of the respondents' locations were in non-soundproof environments, and some held in soundproof offices.

4.4.1 A semi-structured interview

A qualitative method with the approach of a case study with semi-structured interviews fitted this study the most because we needed to explore the relations between HR, managers and employees. Our reasons for choosing a qualitative method were threefold; firstly this method is based on individuals reflection and understandings. Secondly; it puts lights on the interaction between the researcher and respondents. Thirdly; it provides some structure for the interview at the same time as it is open for exploration depending on the responses from the respondent and it provides some opportunity for comparison across interviews (Aspers 2011).

The interviews were conducted with three groups; HR, managers, and employees. We designed the interview guide (Appendix 2) to suit these three groups and structured it on the purpose of the research questions. The interview guide was best suited to this study, as we, as researchers, had the opportunity to organise the interview questions on our own. The semi-structured interview also gave us the options to have open-ended questions with open-ended answers. This enables us to develop and understand the respondent's answers during the interviews, within the main topic (Hakim, 2000).

The risk of designing the interview guide beforehand, according to Asper (2011), can be that the questions will come from the answers that the researcher wants to achieve, which can affect the interview guide. With this in mind, we knew one who worked at Company X that helped us with further contact, but we did not have any previous conversation or perception about the organisation before starting the research at Company X.

4.5 Data analysis

To get a deeper understanding of the data, a thematic analysis method was used. To answer our research questions, it was of great importance for us to have a descriptive study where the respondents could create a narrative of the subject. According to Hayes (2000), thematic analysis is a method to use when the writer wants to identify different meanings of the data. The purpose of thematic analysis is to get familiar with the dataset. We started our analysis by transcribing our interviews with the consent from the respondents. After the interviews were transcribed, we read through the material and extracted the information and meanings relevant to the purpose of the study (Hayes, 2000). It was not unusual that similar answers and opinions occurred between the constituents. To get familiar with the dataset, we re-read the material several times. When it came time to code the material, we chose to read through the transcripts individually to try and avoid biases. Afterwards, we saw the various codes that had emerged and went through and discussed them. In the final phase of the coding, we chose to sit together to find distinctive themes by going through similar parts of the transcription. Subsequently, we went through the different themes that had developed and refined and grouped them. Later, we analysed them in the forthcoming chapter entitled Results.

4.6 Data quality

The reliability of qualitative data can be challenging to manage. It is not possible to guarantee that the interview answers will be the same if another individual interviews the same respondent, or that the respondents are not affected by external factors. However, we tried to tackle concerns for reliability by drawing on a semi-structured interview that allowed us to follow up answers from respondents and enabling them to elaborate their views on different topics. The reliability of the study had also been possible to test if other researchers would be able to replicate our study. In our case, however, this is difficult because ethical reasons have urged us to keep respondents and the organisation anonymous. According to Dalen (2008), reliability can increase if the validity is high, in order to achieve increased validity it is necessary that the transcription of the interview is done in a concrete way, an understanding of the respondents' language and an objective ability to feedback the respondents' response (Dalen, 2008).

Validity is an ongoing process throughout this research process. According to Creswell, (2009), validity shows whether the study can be measured based on what is intended to be measured in the study. Problems that may arise with the validity of qualitative research are the influence of the researcher's interpretation and preconceived meaning. To increase the validity of the study, some validity strategies have been addressed. We made two pilot interviews before starting the interviews for the study, recorded the interviews, which made it possible to go back to the respondents' answers, and, the interview questions were in the same language to minimize the effect of wrong translation or interpretation of the interviews. By using semi-structured interviews, we have also enabled respondents to increase credibility in their answers; this approach has made it possible for both respondent and interviewer to open up questions and provide elaborated answers (Creswell, 2009).

4.6.1 Limitations and Risks

Limitations that arise in this study was to target the right respondents and get a similar volume of interviews from different positions from Company X. It was also a limitation to find previous research and based on their research, not create a preconceived understanding of our study. To avoid limitations, the mapping and planning of the study were essential. The motivation to use a qualitative method and not a quantitative is that according to Wolcott (1994), a qualitative approach is a useful tool for collecting data and creates an understanding of the social phenomena based on the interpretation from the respondent. To succeed with an investigation of the concept of social phenomenon and interpret it, the researcher needs to create an interaction with the respondent about the phenomenon, where the focus lies on understanding the subjects' viewpoints. The researcher must be objective and ensure that the researcher does not affect the interpretation of the phenomenon with her or his own opinions (Wolcott, 1994).

As our research questions were on studying social individuals in social groups, the qualitative method can provide a more in-depth answer about the respondent's own experience than the quantitative approach (Yin, 2014).

During our research, the world underwent a pandemic caused by the virus, COVID-19. Because of this, we had to limit our meetings with our respondents. The interviews were therefore done from distance. In the form of information to the respondents, recording and transcribing, this has not been affected by COVID-19 virus.

4.7 Ethical considerations

In this research, ethical considerations were followed under the whole research process; the liability, honesty, respect, and the responsibility as a researcher, in aspects to be able to create excellent and safe relations as well as strengthen the legitimacy (Vetenskapsrådet, 2018). Four requirements were followed to protect respondents during the research processes, the ethical obligations, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement, and the use requirement (Vetenskapsrådet, 2018). In addition, it was kept in mind that informants could be affected by the expectations of the organisation (2002). This study focused on analysing HR, managers and employees who work at Company X. It was crucial that the respondents were aware of the principles and requirements for us to get scientific relevance from their answers (Hakim, 2000). We informed the respondents of the process in advance. Given the anonymity, we changed the names of the respondents and the company. The change of names did not affect the outcome of the result.

In order to be ethical, the respondents were informed of the purpose of the research. What the intent of the study was and that they would be anonymous during and after the research. The respondents were also notified that they could contact us at any moment under the research if they had questions or wanted to add and change something in their interview.

5. Results

In this chapter, the findings of the interviews are presented and described as well as the various themes that emerged during the coding of the interviews. As mentioned in the method chapter, our empirical findings are drawn from one Nordic company where three constituents, managers, employees and HR, are interviewed and their responses analysed. The findings are presented from fourteen interviews with quotes from all respondents, which allowed a comparison of similarities and differences between the respondents. The findings are divided into three parts, managers, employees and HR, to provide transparency.

5.1 Managers

We start the result section by analysing how managers approach the HR function. To get a clear understanding of managers' perception of the HR function and their thoughts of how HR's as a functionary role should be according to them.

5.1.1 HR is a support to the managers

When we asked the managers about their perception of HR, their answers were similar. All of the managers had the same perception of the function and meaning of HR. In particular, all managers mentioned the word support function in relation to HR. For instance, one manager stated, *“For me, HR means /.../ HR is a support function for me and my work with my team (M1)”*. According to the managers, the support function of HR is the most crucial function to assist them in their daily work tasks. To the question of how HR is perceived in Company X, everyone except one answered that HR works as expected, as a good support function, which was also perceived as the general opinion from other managers in the organisation. The manager who thought differently expressed that HR is a function with few employees to the number of managers to support. This manager stated, *“They are a small group of HR and have many managers. Of course, they are busy periodically /.../ so it can sometimes be a little difficult to get in touch with them (M5)”*. Overall, managers have the same opinion of expectations and perceptions of HR, and the only diversion was one manager's statement that was related to HR capacity.

5.1.2 Administrating rather than driving the development

Strategic capabilities were revealed as something that managers thought lacked in the HR function and they described HR as a rather passive function. For instance, to questions regarding recruitment, the managers pointed out that HR helps with the recruitment process depending on the manager's own

initiative and that there are systems to follow. Still, nothing that is completely controlled, one manager stated:

“There is a system on how to work with recruitment that I experience as ok.. but I have been working in larger companies where the recruitment process is significantly more structured (M2)”.

The managers’ experiences of the recruitment process remained inconsistent. The managers stated that HR is not in particular leading any strategic development. A common answer by the managers was, however, that there exist meetings for the managers, where internal training and conversations take place. One manager stated:

“I don’t consider HR, so far, to be particularly driving in professional development, but on the other hand they are managing the administrative development, and by that I mean if you do an education HR is not involved until I submit a paper or an e-mail that now this person has done this education (M2)”.

Furthermore, the managers had a shared view that HR does not offer any internal development in relation to their teams or employees. Thereby, the managers had the same opinion that internal developments should be more prioritised by HR and it should not only be available for managers.

The managers answered differently if HR is working on retaining valuable employees. Two managers had the same opinion, one of these managers stated: *“They do it I am sure about it, but I do not notice I /.../ if you don’t look for HR by yourself, you do not notice them much (M6)”.* What emerged from these two managers’ answers, was that although they considered HR working on retaining valuable employees, they could not give clarity on how HR works with it. The remaining two managers thought that there is no effort invested in retaining valuable employees or that HR has the capacity to needed to work on this. For instance, one of these two managers stated: *“When it comes to retaining staff, I don't think they are particularly involved at all (M5)”.*

Although the perceptions of HR’s effort in retaining staff are different between the managers, it reveals that there is a lack of visibility from HR’s side on their work in retaining valuable employees.

5.1.3 The invisible function

When the respondents were asked if there exists trust towards HR, the managers’ answers varied depending on the specific question. When managers were asked about when they turn to HR and what tasks they often need help with, they commonly referred to situations when they had employee issues.". One manager stated, *“I can discuss with HR about employee issues, should we give a warning or should*

we not give a warning (M3)". Similar statements were mentioned by several of the managers. Thus, in matters of discussing employees' issues, the managers trust consulting HR. From the statements, the underlying cause for the repeated answers was that it is difficult for the managers to keep in track of all the laws and rules regarding employee issues.

To the question, if the managers feel trust towards HR, one manager stated that they do and described that HR had followed the COVID-19 development well and informed the staff internally, therefore acted creditably. The rest of the managers have a different opinion and that they do not feel trust towards HR concerning development, for them and their staff. One manager stated, "*What I miss is developing the group and developing the company to become more developed together as a team (M4)*".

All managers had the perception that HR is not involved in work related to the managers' career development. The managers stated that HR would not be able to help them in career matters as desired, and therefore they would not consider it relevant to consult HR with such topics. Two of the managers also stated that there is even less focus on employees that is not in a management position. One of the managers stated:

"Many people do not know about it, and HR can do more, so people know about it, they are not visible, then professional development is something that can lead to employees being able to contribute more (M2)".

According to managers previous statements, they do not feel confident that HR can help them in career matters. Furthermore, the managers consider that it also exists a lack of career path and development for their employees.

When we asked the managers if HR need to strengthen their trust, all managers, except for one thought that HR needs to strengthen their trust. As one manager stated, "*When it comes to showing rest of the employees that they can go into HR /.../ that is a point I do not think they are so forward and clear about*" (M5). In general, the managers had a joint view of HR not being visible enough to give the employees a perception of HR being essential to support their development.

5.1.4 Being open and communicative

Regarding HR's communication capabilities, managers' perception differed. Three of the managers thought that the communication worked well and that HR is available in their communication. Furthermore, these three managers are confident that HR's network and meetings available for managers lead to better communication between them. One of these managers stated:

“The door is always open into HR, and you can always go in there, and they always walk around the departments /.../ so it's probably up to yourself as manager if you want to have open communication with them (M3)”.

This statement shows that the perception of HR's communication is that it is accessible for managers. However, it is up to the manager to what extent they want to have communication with HR. One of the managers that thought differently stated:

“On our intranet, there is news from HR, but it is the same there, you have to go in and look at it. That's how the intranet is structured today, that you have to actively go in and choose which parts of XXX you want to see news from, so if you haven't clicked in that, you want to see HR you do not see any news from them (M6)”.

In summary, the intranet is only accessible for white-collar workers, and they need to actively decide if they want to get access the information or not.

The managers have a mutual view on how communication flows in the organisation, and regarding communication within their teams, it is the managers' responsibility to hand on the information from HR. However, there was a common observation of how well this communications flow is working. One manager stated:

“There is this ring game you played when you were little where you say a word, and then you see what comes out in the end, and it's the same for adults too. They say this, and say this and this and then I pass it on and say it to my team, but then I maybe do it differently and then my team can perceive it differently (M2)”.

This statement demonstrates that communication from HR first goes through managers and then to the remaining employees. That is communication trickle down through the organisation to the remaining employees. The managers consider this to be a problematic approach since information is easily changed along the way. Nevertheless, one manager, supposed that HR does not have the capacity to be able to communicate to the entire organisation, the manager stated: *“It is difficult for HR to reach out to all 450 employees or how many we are on the site. It is very much up to me as a manager to also convey what I get to myself, so to speak (M1)”*. This statement, as mentioned in previous sections, indicates that there is a perception by managers that HR does not have the capacity they need to deliver the support as expected by an HR function. The reason that occurs is that the HR staff is too few to the total number of employees in the organisation. This is considered being a problem since all blue-collar workers do not have access to the internet or email and HR do not have the opportunity to reach out orally to the entire organisation.

5.1.5 The unsystematic system - a challenge for HR

When the managers were asked if they considered that there are challenges and tension, all the managers had the same opinion of challenges. One manager stated:

“HR is there, but they will not actively search for you with lamps, but you can search for them yourself, and when you do, they will help you, and it usually goes quickly, but you may have to push them little maybe (M6)”.

According to this statement, the HR function is once again perceived as an invisible function at Company X. One manager also said that there is a challenge with the internal system, that these are not being followed systematically. The manager stated:

“Yes challenges exist yes if I give an example then it is about the performance appraisals everyone has their types of performance appraisal, and they do not have a given system, so everyone does it differently, it should be the same whatever who holds in the performance appraisals, the condition must be the same for everyone (M2)”

The interpretation of this statement is that the unsystematic use of the system can lead to managers' unequal way of performing tasks for their employees. When we asked the managers if they believe that there is any tension between them and HR, all managers except one answered that no tension exists. The manager that consider that tension exists stated:

“It is the corporate structure basically, the corporate culture I would say. How the company is built far back and what you prioritize and what you work with, and there is everything related to the company culture (M6)”.

To summarise, we once again asked managers what they expect and demand from HR. Their statements are in line with previous statements, that it is essential that HR is a support function for both the managers and their employees.

5.2 Employees

Before understanding what trust looks like and how it can impact on the communication, one must understand what HR means for the employees. Having a clear understanding of the constituents' perception of and their thoughts about the functionary role of HR in the organisation can also help to shed light over what constituents expect from HR.

5.2.1 An invisible HR function for blue-collar workers

When the employees were asked about HR's functional purpose and meaning generally for the employees, the answers differed. However, they still had a common thread. Most of the employee respondents stated that the meaning of having an HR function was to ensure well-being at the workplace as well as working with, employees' development and safety. One employee framed HR duties such as:

“/.../ it is really the ones who will take care of my well-being at work and be a part of the work and structure of how everyone should work together really. That you have the right conditions and that everyone has the same conditions (E2)”.

This quote shows that employees' perception of the HR function is to give them a safe and stable work environment while giving them the right tools for development. According to the data, it seems to be important that HR operates as a support function, but also a strategic partner who can structure the work in the best possible way for the employees and the organization. As we can see from the interviews, most of the respondents understand HR as a function especially directed for the employees and their surroundings. Only two respondents stated that HR was a function for both the employees and the company in general.

Yet, one participant who stuck out from the rest of the respondents stated: “I am not very active and have not had much contact with HR. I know very little actually (E1)”. This statement is in line with the remaining respondents' perception of what HR is doing at Company X today. In terms of HR duties, all respondents could not explain what the HR function worked with at the company. Some respondents stated that they never had talked to HR and knew little about their work. According to this statement, the HR function seems to struggle with integrating and informing the employees about the HR role in the organization. It also occurred during the interview that some employees did not have had an introduction to HR during their first day.

This could be the result of different factors. If the introduction is in the hands of the manager, one factor could be that their direct manager does not communicate with HR. However, if it is HR's duty to integrate new employees, it seems that their small team consisting of only four HR professionals supporting 47 managers can have a hard time doing their job. It is not strange that this can fall between the cracks and that they do not have the possibility or time to give an appropriate introduction. Similarly, one employee also responded: “Ehm /.../ I'm not very involved in their work. I never see them because I don't usually have that much trouble”. This statement consists of different factors: non-involvement, invisibility and trouble. According to this participant, it seems that you only interact with HR when

something turbulent has happened instead of thinking of them as general support. In sum, all respondents mentioned that the HR function was commonly invisible to employees.

When it comes to their understanding of their managers' perceptions of HR, most of the respondents claimed that they had close contact with HR. In most of the contexts, it is clear that HR has the managers as one of their closest stakeholders: *"He works very closely with them and they have very good cooperation, what I heard anyway (E2)"*, another employee also stated that: *"They have a lot to do, especially on all the extra assignments, as summer jobs, everything needs to be done, they only have time to do what needs to be done (E3)"*.

These statements show that from the perspective of the employees, their managers and HR have a good collaboration. From the interviews, it also seems that some managers have closer and more ongoing contact with HR regarding different assignments about their department, and sometimes about employees. This is a big distinction from how they perceive their colleagues' perception of HR. HR priorities are, according to the employees, focused on the managers and their collaboration, rather than direct and visible support for the employees. An employee explains:

"I feel that you don't talk about HR at all, they feel invisible, they focus on the managers and it feels like they support them a lot, which we ordinary employees does not see and hear /.../ they don't eat with everyone else and they sit far from where we work (E3)".

This quote shows the lack of HR visibility and employee support, however, not one of the employees personally stated that this was needed or was missing in this regard. Yet, based on the interviews with the employees another side is reflected. It seems that the employees are in need or wishing that HR could be more visible and support them more than they are doing today.

5.2.2 Experiencing a lack of HR engagement with professional development

Strategic capabilities were clearly revealed as something that the employees lacked in the HR function, and also something they felt could change. In terms of professional development, most of the respondents claimed that they did not know if HR worked with it, in addition, one employee did not think that it was HR's responsibility to do so. Referring to the COVID-19 crisis that recently struck the company, one employee stated: *"We should have had a day for professional development, but it did not happen because of everything that happens with the virus. But I do not know if HR had to do with it (E4)"*. This statement clearly shows that it is not fully visible, the manager or HR, who is in charge of such activities.

When it comes to HR's capabilities regarding recruiting, retention and attraction, most of the employees discussed that when they have had job losses at one department, they have been informed whether there existed placement at another department in the company. This demonstrates that HR to some extent is showing the employees that they have opportunities to apply for a career in another field within the organisation, and in that way also value internal recruitment. However, several respondents stated that HR did not do much to promote this type of reallocation of staff, they did not brand such opportunities as attractive and the lack of development was brought up. One employee expressed:

“So-so, I actually think that there are many people who stay that can change placement within the company, but I don't think that they work with much development at all, I think they would have gained more by showing that “we are here for you”. Because all staff are resources, the more you care for them, the more they get out of their staff (E3)”.

It seems that the employees seek more professional development and engagement from HR, even if they notify them about internal work opportunities. When evaluating the data, it seems to be a lack of commitment and visible support from the HR side. Most of the employees have worked at the company for several years, for the ones interviewed, the longest has been in the company for 31 years and the shortest for 16 years. This can also be one reason for their attachment to the company. Even though they lack development and engagement, they feel loyal to the company in general.

In terms of HR's importance and where they could improve themselves, four main areas stood out: communication, presence, professional development and work environment. For the ones who work shift and had a heavy workload, the work environment was most important: *“/.../ a good environment and a good workplace both physically and mentally (E5)”* were things that they expressed could be better. Some employees expressed their concerns about discrimination and slandering that they felt should be on HR's table to handle or work on to prevent it. To state that this should be on HR's table is to some extent right. However, this should be a collaboration between HR and the managers. In addition, the employee is responsible to communicate the situation to their direct manager or HR to enlighten the problem. Nevertheless, if the employees do not consider HR to be a function directed for them, they might choose to not contact them.

HR's visibility is a theme that comes up in different contexts, but in regard to what they could improve, all respondents considered it to be the same, in their presence.

“/.../ in general, I believe they need to be more visible. It would also be good if they were better at this with ex-jobs and summer jobs. There is such a demand, but it is a black hole. We need to get in young and develop skills, it is a big company, but they cannot compare with those who

have a real development program, there may be, but I do not know, you probably miss a lot due to their non-visibility (E3)”.

This quote also expresses a lack of communication. It does not have to be from the HR side. However, the statement of not knowing if such activities exist in their company sheds a light over the bad communication and problems with the information stream. When asked which area you could see HR improve, another employee stated:

“I need more information, overall, I have not got any information at all, I started as a staffing employee and then employed. I have not received any introduction or information. I don't know anything about HR or have not heard anything about HR (E1)”.

Their view of HR strategic capabilities towards the employees shows that there exists a defective part. It can be about lack of information, lack of communication or wrong target group. Either way, somewhere in the line the piece of information out to the employees disappears or is misinterpreted.

5.2.3 Trust as an existing and maintained key factor despite challenges

When the respondents were asked about the trust towards HR, they answered differently. Some of the respondents discussed with HR if they had a problem with their salary or complaints in their department, and some never went to HR, instead they discussed issues with their direct manager. Most of the employees also stated that they did not believe that HR could help them in their current career due to lack of professional development, but also lack of other developments that could help them in their career: *“I would love to know more about how it is constructed and /.../ have a better education. But this was 10-15 years ago since I wanted it, and it has still not come (E2)”* a colleague also stated that: *“I do not believe that, I believe that I need to do it myself (E3)”*. These quotes express an impression of distrust towards the HR’s possibility to cultivate employees, but also a general doubtfulness about HR’s abilities. However, they seem to have another attitude toward the payroll department. Nevertheless, the payroll department will always be an area that affects the employee monthly, which means that they have more contact with that department compared to the remaining HR department.

In terms of dimensions crucial to trust in HR, we may identify three themes: communication, presence and labour law. Their lack of communication and visibility is a general area of improvement that most of the employee has expressed in different parts during the interview. Regarding labour law, one employee expressed that if they wanted to be seen as trustworthy they need to *“abide by laws and regulations and not negotiate something written in the law, then they are on thin ice (E2)”*, this also came up earlier whereas a colleague stated: *“We had many benefits before. But all that is gone, and it*

is /.../ sometimes /.../ then when they removed it, they did not tell us why they did it (E1)”. It appears to be a challenge regarding the communication streams out to the employees. The employees also seem to be unaware of who, the manager or HR, is supposed to communicate different information. The question is whether the information is stationary between HR and managers or if the information does not come out at all.

When they were asked about how the collaboration between HR and their direct manager benefit their work as employees, they mostly thought that their manager was the one who could benefit them and not their collaboration per se. One employee answered that HR is doing a good job finding competent people for the right place, but at the same time...

”I think my manager meets my needs, but not HR. I believe HR can be seen and heard a little more, but also interact more with us employees in order to understand the working environment and get information on what can be improved (E5)”.

Numerous respondents thought that HR needs to be more visible and active for the employees. However, some of them also mention that they are more visible now than they were a couple of years ago, but they still have a long way to go. Although many point out that the employees do not trust in HR, most of the respondents state that they would go to HR if something serious had happened about their work situation. One reason for this could be the managers' trust and cooperation with HR, which could have a positive impact on the employees' view.

5.2.4 Feeling involved and updated through their direct manager

Despite the general feeling of bad communication according to the employees, they still feel that an area where HR is communicating more is when new human capital is needed. One employee mentioned that: *“/.../ they send good information in good time through mail or through the manager (E5)”. The managers’ role of further communicating the information that they had received from HR was according to most of the employees appreciated, “/.../ when he gets information and received from HR that it must go out immediately, then it goes out immediately (E2)”. This statement depends upon which manager the employee communicated most with either through meetings, face to face or through e-mail. There also exists intranet, however, there are two different intranets divided between the managers and employees. Here, some of the information could disappear due to some of the employees don’t have access to a computer and must then rely on their co-workers or manager to pass the information further. Regarding further communication, one employee expressed: “both yes and no. I would like there to be a structure in some way and also where you have to document what you have come up with (E6)”. This quote points to the importance of structure and to reaching out to everyone in the organisation so that*

everyone is on the same path. Again, well-structured communication is an important way for HR to build trust.

5.2.5 A general feeling of improvement opportunities

When the interviewees were asked if there existed any tensions or challenges between HR and their manager, all the employees expressed that their cooperation seemed to be good and close. When it came to what they expected and demanded from HR the answers were different depending on which department the interviewee came from. However, the overall theme still was HR's presence and communication. One employee stated:

“They should be better at working with career development, better at taking care of summer jobs and more. Would also be nice if they were more visible. If there is a department that has it tough, then they should appear there and confirm it (E3)”.

Some of the employees also pointed out that it is better now compared to earlier, but they still see a lot of improvement that needs to be done in different areas that should be on HR's table. This is a general theme that streams through the whole interview and the different topics of it. It is clear that the employees are lacking many parts that they consider that the HR should work with. However, it is noticeable that HR has close and solid cooperation with the managers, which is obviously their main stakeholder. At the same time, it is interpreted through the various interviews that the employees have no idea who is responsible for different activities, information and more. This may also be one of the reasons why the function is being called into question.

5.3 The HR function

In this section, the result of the HR function is being analysed. To get an understanding of how HR perceives themselves and thus, how they view managers' and employees' perception of them as a function. In this way, we get a holistic view of where it could be misunderstandings and ambiguities between the three constituents.

5.3.1 A visible HR function for white-collar workers

When HR professionals were asked about what they considered HR to be, the answers were similar. Most of the HR professionals believed that HR should work as a support function for both the managers and for the employees. This support function should help the constituents in the organisation with different challenges and questions they have regarding their work and other factors such as

rehabilitation, psychological issues that have an impact on their work and more. One HR professional stated:

“For me, HR means to support. Support for the managers. I would actually call it a support function, but if I can add, it is not only to support the managers, you are also there to support the staff (H1)”.

This quote describes HR as not only a function directed to the manager’s but also the employees. The question is to what extent they consider themselves to be a support function to the blue-collar workers when it appeared in the interview with the employees that they were relatively invisible. It can also be an interpretation depending on the type of HR professional. An HR professional who works with salaries probably has more contact with the employees compared to an HR professional who works as an HR partner.

However, when the HR professionals were asked how they believed that the employees perceived the HR function, they did not believe that the employees knew what they worked with. This is contradictory to what they believed was the HR role as a support function towards the employees and the managers. One HR professional stated: *“/.../ in fact, HR should assist the constituent from the beginning until the end (H2)”*. This does not seem to be the case today. However, one HR professional did not agree about HR function’s role to be a support function to the same extent for the employees as for the managers:

“I believe a general view is that we are relatively invisible to the broad crowd. We only have time with those that we have to take, and many do not understand that we have a way of working, where we target managers. We have 47 managers on this site and we work through the managers in 9 cases out of 10. So /.../ I probably have a pretty big blind crowd of people, those who have an idea and know something about us, I actually have no idea what they think about us (H3)”

This statement is in line with both the employees and managers thoughts on the HR function. In their interviews, the HR function is emphasized as a support function aimed at the managers rather than the employees, and this quote is proof of that.

In comparison with how the HR professionals perceived employees’ view of the HR function, the HR professionals believed that the managers had a good perception of the presence of the function. They changed the HR manager approximately one year ago and the HR professionals’ experience that the managers view of them has improved. This also came up in the interviews with the managers and they could see that the HR function had developed and become more value-added.

Regarding the HR professionals’ perception of the collaboration between HR and managers, all of the HR professionals reason that they had stable cooperation with the managers and that managers often

ask for advice. It seems to be, according to the HR professionals, that the HR function has changed much in terms of presence and communication towards managers. The HR professional also mentions that the culture changed for the better when they got a new HR manager. One HR professional also stated: *“I believe there are many managers who feel that it is open doors, and that is how we want it to be /.../ then maybe not everyone feels the same (H3)”*. There are always some managers who do not feel the same, and that is the case with most things. However, the interviews emphasize that most managers believe that it has become a better atmosphere when it comes to HR and the managers’ collaboration, but also HR’s presence.

5.3.2 HR as support and operational function rather than a strategic partner

In terms of recruitments and terminations, managers only use HR as a support in the different processes. Managers own the recruitment and have regulatory documents that they have to follow when recruiting or terminating employees. HR’s role here is to assist managers along the way with activities, such as creating a profile of demands, personality tests, interview support and more. However, it is the manager's job to complete good recruitment and termination and to ask HR for support when they feel that they need it. When they were answering questions about their work with professional development, the HR professionals all expressed that they mostly work with the managers, and not the with individuals, namely, the employees. HR can on the other hand help assist with events linked to the development training:

“We may administer who is to sign up /.../ and above all, we work with the verifying because we are certified and have to make sure that some have gone through some educations. We issue educational certificates for having completed education and then we register it. We need to have evidence of this /.../ if we get an audit (H3)”

However, HR can order joint education for everyone to take part in and then work with all the practical factors. It is clear that HR has the managers as their main stakeholder within the company, and that much of HR’s work is distributed to the managers. HR is only a support function and a sounding board. It is also clear that HR acts as an operational function and that the strategic part, in this case, is minimal.

When the HR professionals were asked how they work with the company’s external and internal strategies, they stated that they had a hard time finding time to work with these. It is more often than they work with their global strategies rather than the ones on their site. One HR professional stated:

“We have a staff system called success factors and, in this scheme, we work with recruitment, performance management and pay review in the same system but in different modules. Which means that we work in a global system that, regardless of where the managers belong, which

country they are in, we work in the same system. In this way, we work with common global HR processes and strategies (H3)''.

Even though they work more with their global strategy, when time allows them, they also try to make own contributions by attending different school events and labour days, and in that way work with their employer branding. Since they are only four HR professionals who work in the HR department, it is no wonder that they do not have time to work fully with the strategies for their site as well as the global strategies. At the same time, it appears through the interviews with the managers that they still manage to do a lot despite their smaller workforce.

When it comes to areas where the HR professionals believed they could improve themselves, five areas came up: professional development, performance management, leadership development, discrimination and the psychological environment.

HR professionals felt that professional development was one of their weakest areas. They experienced that there were great opportunities for improvement when it came to systematic work with the area and investing in future talents. In performance management, the great burden was to confirm in what way the individual made a good or bad performance. The HR professionals also felt that they needed to become better at creating career paths and development opportunities for employees such as engineers who might not want a managerial position but a role as a specialist. Both professional development and performance management are areas that have been in demand and questioned by both employees and managers. Another area that also was noticed in the interview with the employees was discrimination. HR also considered improvement was needed when it came to diversity, equal treatment and inclusion.

There are large areas that need to be worked on continuously. If HR starts to work with the psychological work environment, they have also started the improvement regarding discrimination. What is considered to be positive is that both HR, managers and employees point to the same areas that need improvement. This shows that HR is observant and aware of what they need to work on more. However, they felt that they were stronger when it came to the physical work environment.

When we asked the HR professionals which areas they believed managers saw as most important to them some differences came up. Some HR professionals thought that managers believed that all areas were as important because they always got different questions. One HR professional stated: *“/./ some managers ask about everything and they probably believe that it is easier to go to HR because then they directly find where they should go or how they should do (H2)''.* Another HR professional was more concrete regarding what managers might see as most important:

“I believe that the first and foremost want help with labour law, difficult labour law where it is about disciplinary matters and salary matters. I believe that the managers are better at the working environment, where they probably feel more control and can use other sources of information to understand it. So, it is probably salary, labour law and trade union issues. It's probably these three parts. Rehab too (H3)”.

One reason why HR professionals feel differently might be that they work in different HR areas and therefore receive different questions from the managers. However, the interviews show that HR has quite a good understanding of what the managers believe are the most important areas for them. Three managers expressed that recruitment was the most important area. Another manager expressed labour law and one expressed that the work regarding discrimination and inclusion were the most important HR area. All of the managers also expressed that HR as general support were of great importance for them to manage their job.

5.3.3 HR experiencing lack of time - HR duties delegated to managers

When we asked the HR professionals in what situations the managers consulted them, different areas were brought up: recruitment, ongoing salary errands, labour law and errands regarding trade unions. They also expressed that managers consult with them regarding difficulties with their employees and rehabilitation. When it came to employee consultation, they saw that it tends to be regarding administrative tasks such as salary, specifications, recipe, medical certificate and more. Here too, HR professionals' perceptions differ when employees consult with HR. If the employees usually go to their manager when it comes to purely HR areas, it can be questioned if they do not have the confidence in HR, or if they feel it is better to go to their manager with such matters and let the manager take it to HR. Given that HR is relatively invisible to employees, it may be a reason why they choose to go to their manager in front of HR.

To get an understanding of how HR promotes and shows their importance in the company, we asked which streams they use. Here too, they explained that most of the streams went through the managers and their management network. Through the management network, managers from different sites could meet up and learn from each other. However, employees do not have a similar network. An HR professional expressed:

“We have three different main tasks, governing, supporting and service, which can be analyzed through the managers with different messages throughout the organization. The managers are our most important target group because when we reach these 47 managers, we reach 600-700 employees in turn (H3)”.

It is obvious that the managers are their biggest target group and given that they are such a small HR department, it is probably most effective to focus on the managers who can then pass on the information to the employees. The disadvantage of this, however, is that the employees do not receive the attention and responsiveness they desire. This is also in line with how HR attracts, recruits and retains valuable employees. When asked how they work with this, one HR professional replied: *"We do not see it as ours /.../ thus, as much else, we do not see it as our first task to meet every employee in a good way, but it is up to each manager to drive the business in a professional manner (H1)"*. As previously mentioned, much of HR's tasks or tasks that HR and managers can collaborate on are delegated to the managers. However, it was revealed through the interviews that they considered themselves to be better at the termination dialogues. In these conversations, they could come up with improvement suggestions. An HR professional expressed:

"We are bad at termination conversations. But having termination conversations is very good at capturing what people think when they have quit, and then they usually tend to be more honest. The organization can learn /.../ we become a learning organization (H3)"

Regarding a learning organisation, the question was asked how the HR professionals believed they could help managers and employees in their career. Career development and career path was something they thought they could be better at. However, they expressed that their time was not enough to work with that type of counselling today. They also stated that more work regarding internal recruitment was desirable. Internal recruitment was also something that was brought up in interviews with managers and employees. One HR professional stated:

"It may not be something that we promote, internal mobility more that we try to always /.../ we have external services and then we also try to let it be internal applicants. We try to encourage and remind managers that - if we have 20 applications and 2-3 are internal, then we should try to meet them internally whether that person is qualified or not because then we will meet them and show them that attention when they have applied to a service. If it is not the service they are suitable for, you can still encourage them to search further internally, instead of getting tired of the company and search outside (H3)"

When they were asked if they in first hand wanted to recruit internal the HR professionals answered that they did not have a first-hand choice. The best would be to have a mix of external and internal recruitments. If they only recruited internally the company would not have an exchange of knowledge in the same extent. In addition, if it only would be internally the company would stagnate.

In terms of what could increase their credibility one HR professional stated:

“By striving to always deliver competent /.../ answers. Being very well educated. Being very genuine and professional probably means that ... I mean you meet us in some context and you are well-behaved and well-behaved, which includes being cared for and respected, but also, for example, getting a competent /.../ it does not have to be the answer you want, but you get a competent answer to the question. I believe that can significantly increase credibility. And then of course to increase visibility (H3)”

It is obvious that the HR function has something to prove to the employees, which according to the interviews with the HR professionals is something of which they are aware. The managers, on the other hand, have greater confidence and trust in the HR function, but there are also some parts they believe that HR can be improved themselves.

5.3.4 The communication flow stops between HR and managers

When it comes to HR's on the perception of the communications capabilities, the answers were similar. All managers stated that the most common way of communication is through email or the intranet. Email and intranet are only accessible for white-collar workers at Company X and is not a communication channel for blue-collar workers. One of the HR professionals stated:

“We have the intranet, and it is mainly for the managers and officials who then have the computer as a working tool, out to the production workers, we have screens that are in the production and a personnel manual hanging there. You take a lot through the employee's managers so they can pass it on (H2)”

Based on this statement, communication appears to be handled immediately between HR and managers, and not through HR and employees. Communication from HR with the intention to reach all employees first goes through the manager and is then orally passed on to the employees by their managers. With this communication approach, HR cannot be sure that all employees look at the screens in the production, and that there is a limited amount of information on the screens, the managers become their line of communication.

HR has the same opinion as the managers, that the communication channels can be improved. HR has the impression that the information distributed in the organisation, does not always reach the managers' employees. HR also stated that they would like to see that the intranet is used by more of the managers. However, HR is not mentioning how the communication flow to the managers' employees could be improved. One of the HR professionals stated:

“Yes, I think so, but it is clear that there is always something that you feel that does not go out with the communication. By that, I mean that in the next stage, the manager may not communicate what you intended. I often think that it works fine. But sometimes I feel that I communicate something to the manager, and then they do not always communicate with their staff. I believe that I have done what I can because everyone does not have email, and because I have quite a lot of employees, there is, unfortunately, no alternatives to go out and talk to everyone (H1).

This perception repeated in several parts during the interview questions. That the problem of communication capabilities lies in the fact that the information is not fully accessed to the entire organisation. The general view by HR is that the communication between HR and managers is perceived to work well.

Although HR has no direct contact with the employees in Company X, HR’s perception is that there is good communication between HR and employees. Furthermore, HR is confident that this also the employees’ perception.

5.3.5 Everyone does not know what HR is working with

When we asked the HR respondents if there exist challenges and tension, the HR’s expressed the same opinions. The managers may not know all the rules or systems to follow. Therefore, HR considered that many questions that arise from the managers to HR might have been able to find in other ways first. One HR professional stated:

“It is again that we support, we should not do things for them, just saying that there are other roads to look at the information before running and asking us, so maybe one can look at the intranet (H2)”

The general opinion from HR is that they work closely together and because they are a smaller team, it is easy to discuss and manage challenges and tensions together. What also emerged from the HR’s statements are that it is only one of HR’s that mentions that HR should be there for the entire staff. One HR stated: *“We should care a lot about the whole staff, appear a lot, make sure everyone is well /.../ it's probably pretty general expectations. I think many who have not been in contact with us do not know what we are doing (H3)”*. HR, in general, had a more focus on the relation and expectation of the managers in their answers than the blue-collar workers.

6. Discussion

In this chapter, we will present and discuss our study in order to answer our research questions. The three different constituents, HR, managers and employees, will be compared and analysed with the result and discussed together with the help of theory and previous research. We will first discuss which demands and expectations managers and employees have on the HR function. Second, we will discuss challenges and tensions that emerge in the relation between HR, managers and employees, and finally, discuss how HR manage these tensions.

6.1 The demands and expectations between HR, managers and employees

The first research question in this study is formed to identify the demands and expectations that managers and employees have on the HR function at Company X. It is valuable for HR to know if they are meeting these perceptions and expectations with their current work.

One of the findings is that the managers consider that the HR function should be available to support them and their teams. However, HR had, in general, no focus on the employees in their answers. The employees had a general idea of what HR functions should be working with, although they stated that they had not had the opportunity to create their perception of what the HR function at Company X is working with. The employees considered HR as an invisible function. According to Nishii et al (2008), if HR is only focusing on either the managers' or employees' expectations and demands, it will lead to that one of the departments cannot create any trust in HR since this department will not get their expectations met.

The result section reveals that both employees and managers consider the HR function at Company X to be comprehensive in its work of creating and maintaining trust with the managers. Consequently, the staff HR is currently not focusing on, will continue to consider HR as invisible. For the HR function in Company X to be visible for all, they can create an awareness that all functions in the organisation are needed and essential and that this is known by all. According to Jone (2012), if all employees become aware of this, the organisation's will benefit by strengthening the trust in the organisation.

Overall, it can be concluded from the result that all managers have the same opinion and consider HR to be a function with the purpose of supporting them and their employees. It appears to be somewhat contradictory, however, that HR does not live up to the expectations and demands regarding the managers' employees (team) in terms of accessibility, communication, and development. Therefore, the individuals, as mentioned, have not had the opportunity to establish their own individual trust.

According to Kramer (2010), this means that there is a lack of individual trust and the trust for the HR function is controlled by the collective trust. The risk when there only exist collective trust is that if anyone in the collective sphere creates a negative perception of the HR function, others will also rely on this negative view (Kramer, 2010).

It can also be confirmed that the employees and HR do not have a close work relation. The employees feel forgotten and unnoticed by the HR function. At the same time, HR defines that it is the managers' responsibility to ensure that the employees feel needed. Company X has an organizational structure where the managers are the link between HR and the employees. Kuvaas et al (2010) determine that it is of great importance how the manager implements methods to ensure that the employees perceive that they are a part of the information, connection and relationships to other departments in the organization. Hence, based on previous research by Kuvaas et al (2010) and the findings of this study, the current method in Company X might have room for improvement.

In conclusion, to be able to build trust, all three functions must be aware of the others' expectations and demands, and to be able to meet these expectations and demands in relation to social exchange (Blau, 1964). The absence of social exchange between the functions at Company X seems to be the case. According to (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), social exchange can further strengthen the trust in an organisation. To achieve social exchange, in addition to being aware of the other functions' expectations, these expectations must also be encountered in both directions, by giving something and getting something back (Blau, 1964).

6.2 The challenges and tension between HR, managers and employees

The second research questions attempt to map out what challenges and tensions that emerge in the relation between HR, managers and employees. The first finding to be discussed is the HR functions role and presence at Company X. It appears to be clear in the result section that the HR functions primary constituent is the manager. The HR professionals explain in different parts of the interview that their communication channels out to the employees are through their direct manager, this is also in accordance with Truss et al, 2002 research about HR's most valuable constituent. However, it is not fully clear for managers nor the employees how the HR function works. Lack of communication and invisibility is an ongoing subject in the interviews with the employees. Even though managers are the HR functions primary stakeholder that should communicated further information out to the organisation, this approach should be informed. The results section reveals that both employees and some of the managers do not know about this approach, which leads to tensions and uncertainty especially from the perspective of the employee. This also increases the misunderstanding of who

(managers or HR) should communicate what, and who is in charge of which activity. According to Mulkeen (2008) and Kaufmann & Kaufmann (2010), communication must be applied in the right way to the right group, in order for the information to be received correctly. Given the narratives from the employees, it is shown that they feel confused and, in some contexts, forgotten when it comes to interaction and communication with HR. In general, when it comes to communication, it seems that the tasks are unclear or not set between HR and the managers. Which forms a negative perception of HR in the employees. HR and managers must have good cooperation for the business to function and be effective. At Company X, the relationship between HR and managers, which Ulrich (1997) mentions in his research, is a cornerstone of their work. Many of the HR tasks also appear to be delegated to the managers according to the results section (Truss et al., 2002). However, it is of great importance that HR and or managers provide the right information to employees to avoid irritation and tension. It can also be argued that the employees have a better view of their manager compared to HR, despite their close cooperation because their manager is more visible and is the one who gives them the information. Moreover, the lack of HR visibility and communication impacts on the trust that the employee has for the function. Kramer (2010) discussed organisational trust as the expectation of the organisational functions to deliver expertise related to the specific function. The employees and managers shared a lot of the perception of what an HR function's most important tasks are. Although the managers had both operational and strategic views compared to the employees who had a more operational view of the function. As Kramer mentions, there is a given perception of the role of the HR function and this also means that there is a certain expectation that they will live up to that role. HR at Company X today has a challenge in that employees do not fully believe in the function as they do not consider themselves receiving the support or visibility of the HR function. This is also in line with Jone (2012) who believes that trust is created between functions by having an awareness that all employees are needed for success. In Company X, the HR function fails when it comes to proving this.

Concerning trust, the majority of the employees expressed that they rather would turn to their direct manager with difficulties than to HR. They also did not believe that HR could help them in their future career due to a lack of professional development. However, this was also something that the HR professionals saw as an improvement is for them. An employee gave a story of an incident that happened between him/her and an HR professional years ago. After that event, the person generally has a hard time believing in HR. This is in relation to what Truss et al. (2002), CIPD, (2007) and Antila and Kakkonen (2008) discuss in their research. They argued that an HR professional is evaluated from the perspective of the entire HR functions reputation. In this context, the authors discuss that if managers see the HR function as ineffective and time-consuming, it influences on the individual HR professional's attempt to build trust. We also believe that this can be on the opposite way, the HR function can be evaluated from the perspective of an HR professional's reputation. In the context of Company X, their research can be applied to employees who in this case see the HR function as invisible and non-

communicative. Which creates dissatisfaction and uncertainty of both HR function, but also the HR professionals.

Another challenge from managers' point of view is the HR processes, strategies and clarity. Most of the managers expressed that HR needs to work on developing the same systems and processes for all managers. Today, managers worked differently with, for example, system appraisals. This means that the managers evaluate their employees according to different conditions. Through the interviews, it was clear that working with the managers and thus influencing the Company's X strategies could increase their trust for the function. Besides, clarity and local strategies were a challenge according to the managers. They stated that HR sometimes ended up in an intermediate position and thus could not make effective decisions. They also felt that more hands-on support was needed from the function and more work on the company's internal and external strategies. These are factors that could increase HR credibility and trust of managers. Both managers and employees want evidence-based proof of HR's work, rather than responsiveness and intuition (Aldrich et al, 2015; Sesil, 2014).

Concerning the HR function's reflections on challenges between HR, managers and employees, it is clear that most of the HR professionals are aware of what can create these tensions. HR professionals feel that rules are not being followed and that their support function can be abused. Abused in the sense that they become the performers themselves instead of a sounding board. In sum, it is obvious by analysing the results section that HR provides much greater support to the managers. Their challenge and what create tension between the various actors is the imbalance of support and visibility. Although HR at Company X is a small department that should be a support to 47 managers and several hundred employees, they need to work with the balance levels so as not to create any more hidden tensions that exist with the employees today. These findings are in line with Gouldner (1960) social exchange theory where the organisation need to provide a social exchange to increase trust. Thus, communicate how the various functions should work to prevent misunderstandings and confusion (Mulkeen, 2008; Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2010).

6.3 What is done to tackle challenges and tensions

The last research question of this study is concerned with how HR manages challenges and tensions that emerged between HR, employees' and managers'. By analysing the result, we have found three outcomes that help tackle these tensions. As noted by the findings, there exist some needs from the HR function, which according to the employees' and managers' can promote their work and strengthen the trust.

First, HR had the problem of visibility and communication towards the employees. Most of the findings suggest that HR should be more visible for the employees and that they today spend much of their time on managers'. The result shows that HR has failed with this, despite its own awareness of it. This also means that employees' trust in HR is lacking. An internal communication where all employees are allowed to share the information and clarity of the role of HR would prevent this (Mulkeen, 2008; Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2010). However, HR is trying to get better at termination dialogues where they can capture employees' opinions and reintroduce them into the company. In a way, they would create a learning organisation.

The second one, managers needed clarity and related systems and processes to be able to give the conditions for all employees. According to Jone (2012), the working relationship between different functions is of great importance to strengthening the trust, but also the communication. As mentioned in the findings, HR work continually with the management network where all managers from different functions can meet up and discuss question marks and get an exchange from one another. As important as it is for HR to manage these tensions, it is important for managers to highlight them for HR to give them a chance to manage them. Another need is that HR effectively capture these difficulties that exist. HR works with surveys, however, these are only directed to managers. With these surveys, HR gives managers' an opportunity to inform HR of the challenges they face linked to HR. Through the management network, HR can deliver their expertise by educating managers of their area (Kramer, 2010), while being able to capture and work more personally with the various managers. Yet, HR fails to give employees' the same opportunity.

The third relates to the internal system used by the HR function. To be able to reach out with information to the managers at Company X, HR support managers with the intranet as a portal so that they can find information on their own. Their intranet has essential information, such as the recruitment process, guidelines for employees, e.g., which is beneficial for managers. The findings from the result show that HR has failed with this, despite their awareness of it. HR itself is aware that the intranet is not being used as desired and that it is up to the managers themselves to use it. HR and managers need to compromise and collaborate in their daily work (Ulrich, 1997). Overall, if the intranet and systems had become more structured and more transparent, managers would have used it more frequently, instead of asking HR. HR could then use that time on other essential parts, such as the operational tasks.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, we will present the most important findings of the research. The focus of the study was to explore and identify how HR functions tackle demands on trust concerning managers' and employees. Therefore, the study was to understand how managers' and employees' conditions were towards HR and their expectations of the function. To answer this, we will use our findings to answer our research questions. We here chose to answer our research questions one by one. First, the study explored the demands of managers and employees. Second, what challenges and tension that emerges between the three constituents and last, how HR tackle this tension.

1. What demands do managers and employees have on the HR functions?

It was clear that the demand from managers was that HR should work as a support function in their daily work. It appeared that managers, in general, perceived that HR succeed as a support function. However, a common factor among managers was that they felt that there were too few HR professionals in the relation of numbers of employees. Consequently, managers experienced that even if HR was a good support function for them, they felt that they needed to remind them of the employees. That could be a stressful feeling as they knew that HR had a lot on their plate. From the employees' point of view, they demand that HR ensure well-being at the workplace as well as working with employees' development and safety. However, the employees perceived that their demands were pushed to the sideline or were forgotten. The employees mostly had an immoral impression of HR because of a lack of visibility.

2. What challenges and tensions emerges in the relation between HR, managers and employees?

There were both hidden and clearer challenges and tensions among the various constituents. At HR, the challenge turned out to be that managers did not always manage their tasks and that they saw HR as a practitioner rather than a sounding board. The managers, however, felt that the most significant challenge was to work with HR practices in the same way to give their employees the same conditions. In addition, Company's X strategies were considered a challenge, which is part of the above challenge to work similarly on different HR practices. From the employees' perspective, the challenge and understood tension was the lack of visibility and communication from HR. These challenges and tensions affect the constituents in different ways. However, there is a common factor that is affected by these challenges but perhaps in this case mainly on the employees, the trust.

3. *How do HR manage this tension?*

HR is more involved with the support and cooperation with the managers. The more they engage in this cooperation, the more they risk leaving the operational questions, that is, the personnel matters. This also contributes to their invisibility among employees. It is important that HR maintains strong cooperation with the managers who can also contribute to their strategic work. However, new trust issues are created. It is important for HR to find a balance between the managers and the more operational issues. Their work with the management network and survey is a beneficial tool for lifting challenges and contributing to what Kramer (2010) defines as organizational trust, but also individual trust. With regard to employees, it is sufficient that HR tries to capture employees' views during the termination dialogues. Nevertheless, it is equally important that they understand employees' needs and expectations during their whole employment cycle. HR, and in some cases in collaboration with the managers need to clarify both responsibilities and communication flows to the employees. In this way, they prevent ambiguities and misinterpretations. Thus, their work of creating a good relationship and manage challenges and tensions that exist between them can begin. What is strongly evidenced by our findings is that HR needs to prove themselves by actions rather words.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

Suggestions for further research on this subject are to execute a comparative study. The same character of research, however, in several knowledge-based companies with similar structures as in Company X. This can provide a more measurable result for how the different constituents could work to sustain their trust. One area that particularly was noticed and a line of argument in this study was the communication between HR and the employees. An interesting study for further research would focus on exactly where the communication is insufficient, is it the communication between managers and employees or between HR and managers.

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Appendix 1 - Information Sheet

ORGANISATIONAL TRUST IN HR

Exploring managers and employees demands & expectations of the HR function

WHO ARE WE?

We are two master students from the University of Gothenburg in the field of Strategic Human Resources Management and Labour Relations. Maria is from Trollhättan and has a background in Business Administration, and Hanna is from Kristianstad and has a background in Behavioral Science and Sociology.

WHAT IS OUR AIM?

The purpose of this study is to identify how the HR function tackle demands on trust concerning managers and employees, hence to identify expectations that exist on the HR function. The aim is to understand how managers and employees conditions are towards HR in multinational medical-technical company

HOW & WHEN?

We will hold interviews when convenient for HR personnel, managers and employees at the company's office or through internet-based communication. The participation is anonymous and will take between 30 min - 1 hour.

WHO WILL PARTICIPATE?

YOU of course!

We are dependent on you to make this thesis feasible and truthful. With some help from you and your colleagues, we will have the right tools to finalize our thesis. We look forward to meeting and/or talk to you!

The interviews can be held in Swedish or English
if you have any questions, feel free to contact us at any time
mariamakassykarlsson@hotmail.com & hanna_guss@hotmail.com

Appendix 2 - Survey

EMPLOYEES

Background

- How old are you?
- What is your job role?
- Which department do you work in?
- For how long have you been working at Company X?
- Can you give an overview of what your team is doing?

Perceptions

- What does HR mean to you?
- Can you give an overview of what HR is doing at Company X?
- What is your perception of HR?
- How do you perceive your managers' perception of HR?
- How do you perceive your colleagues' perception of HR?
- What is your perception between the HR, managers and employees relationship at Company X?
- Which HR activities do you understand/perceive better than others?
 - Why do you believe it is so?

HR's strategic capabilities

- How do you believe HR work with professional development?
- How do you believe that HR attracts, recruit and retain valuable employees?
- Do you believe that it exists areas where HR could improve themselves? Which areas and how?
- Which HR areas are most important for you and your work?

HR's trustworthiness

- When do you or would you consult with HR?
- How do you believe that HR could help you in your work career?
- How do you believe that HR market their importance and strengths at Company X?
- How do you consider that your manager and HR meets your needs?
- In what way do you perceive that your manager and HR work to improve your work at Company X?
- How do you believe that managers and HR affect your work attitude?
- Do you believe that your manager and HR encourages and draws attention to your work?
 - If yes, in what way?
- Do you trust HR regarding difficulties that can appear regarding your work?
 - If yes, in what way?
- How do you believe that HR could increase their credibility and trustworthiness?

Communications capabilities

- How does HR communicate important information regarding human capital to all employees at Company X?
- To what extent do you consider that line managers are good at further communicate what has been said in meetings to the rest in their department?
- What are your perceptions of who reports to HR?
- How does your manager communicate further information she/he received from HR?
 - Do you think she/he is good at communicating further information?

Challenges and tensions

- What do you expect/demand from HR?
- Do you perceive that it exists tensions between manager and HR?
- If so, in what aspects?
- What do you think creates this tension?
- How do you think these are managed?
- What do you expect/demand from HR?

MANAGERS

Background

- How old are you?
- What is your job role?
- Which department do you work in?
- For how long have you been working at Company X?
- Can you give an overview of what your team is doing?

Perceptions

- What does HR mean to you?
- How well informed are you about the HR department?
- Can you give an overview of what HR is doing at Company X?
- What is your perception of HR?
- How do you perceive your managers' perception of HR?
- How do you perceive your colleagues' perception of HR?
- How would you explain the working relationship between HR and the managers?
- Which HR activities do you understand/perceive better than others?
 - Why do you believe it is so?

HR's strategic capabilities

- How close do you work with HR regarding recruitment and redundancies?
- How do you believe the HR work with professional development?
- How do you believe that HR attracts, recruit and retain valuable employees?
- Do you believe that it exists areas where HR could improve themselves?
- Which areas and how?
- Which HR areas are most important for you and your work?

HR's trustworthiness

- When do you consult with HR in your work?
- How does HR work with Company X strategies and both internal and external challenges?
- How do you believe that HR market their importance and strengths at Company X?
- In what way do you believe HR can help employees in their work and career?
- How do you believe that HR could increase their credibility and trustworthiness?

Communications capabilities

- How do you believe that HR communicates with other departments in the organisations?
- How do you believe that these communication channels work?
- How do HR work to increase these communications capabilities?
- Can you explain how the communication is between HR and the rest of the organisation?
- How does HR communicate when new human capital is needed?
- How do you communicate further information from HR to the employees in your department?
 - Do you believe that you are good at communicating the information further?

Challenges and tensions

- How would you explain the work between HR and the managers?
- What challenges and tensions exist between HR and the managers today?
- How are these managed?
- What do you think creates this tension, if such exist?
- What do you expect/demand from HR?

THE HR FUNCTION

Background

- How old are you?
- What is your job role?
- Which department do you work in?
- For how long have you been working at Company X?
- Can you give an overview of what your team is doing?

Perceptions

- What does HR mean to you?
- Can you give an overview of what HR is doing at Company X?
- How do you perceive the employees' perception of HR?
- How do you perceive managers perception of HR?
- How would you explain the working relationship between HR and managers?
- Which HR activities do you believe/perceive that managers and employees have a better understanding for?
 - Why do you believe it is so?

HR's strategic capabilities

- How does HR work with recruitment and redundancies?
- How does HR work with professional development?
- Do you believe that it exists areas where HR could improve themselves?
- Which areas and how?
- Which HR areas do you believe managers see as most important for them and their work?

HR's trustworthiness

- When do managers consult with HR?
 - Is it something special or a usual support/challenge they need to consult with HR?
- When do employees consult with HR?
 - Is it something special or a usual support/challenge they need to consult with HR?
- How does HR work with Company X strategies and both internal and external challenges?
- How does HR market their importance and strengths at Company X?
- How does HR attract, recruit and retain valuable employees?
- In what way do you believe HR can help managers and employees in their work and career?
- How do you believe that HR could increase their credibility and trustworthiness?

Communications capabilities

- How do you communicate with other departments in the organisations?
- How do you believe that these communication channels work?
 - How do HR work to increase these communications capabilities?
- Can you explain how the communication is between HR and the rest of the organisation?
- How do HR communicate when new human capital is needed?
- How do you communicate HR-related issues and implementations to the managers?
 - Do you feel that the manager is good at communicating further information she/he has received from you to his employees?

Challenges and tensions

- What challenges and tensions exist between HR, managers and employees?
- What do you think creates this tension, if such exist?
- How are these managed?
- What do you think managers expect/demand from HR?
- What do you think employees expect/demand from HR?