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The effect of COVID-19 on human resource management in Finnish municipalities

Focus on telework, recruitment, and internal communication

ABSTRACT:

In 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic started to change working life permanently. It gave rise to a technological leap and made telework more common around the globe. The pandemic also influences human resource management, amongst other effects. This study attempts to find what impact the pandemic has had so far on three aspects of human resource management: telework, recruitment, and internal communication. Literary review of the topics and the pandemic's effect on them is provided. Six Finnish municipalities are chosen as the subject of the study. Change management is used as an additional framework for analysis.

The study takes a qualitative approach and empirical data was gathered to address the research question. Data collection occurred via six half-structured interviews. The respondents are human resource directors from six different Finnish municipalities. The interviews were held via video. The collection of data is done confidentially. The identities of the interviewees are not revealed in the thesis.

The findings of this study indicate that telework, which increased drastically due to the pandemic, influenced HRM in every organization. In four of the six organizations, all employees who had the capability to do telework were transferred to it. The two other municipalities described their form of telework as hybrid-work. Municipalities internal communication moved to digital platforms due to telework and digital communication increased drastically, and face-to-face present communication decreased the most. The results reflect that telework challenged current leadership practices. New practices regarding telework, and internal communication will continue in the municipalities. The recruitment process became more digital on some level in every municipality. One commonality that all shared was that job interviews became mostly or completely digital.

KEYWORDS: human resource management, telework, recruitment, internal communication, change management, COVID-19

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TIIVISTELMÄ:

COVID-19 pandemia alkoi muuttaa työelämää pysyvästi vuodesta 2019 lähtien. Se toi mukanaan digiloikan, ja etätyöstä tuli yleisempää ympäri maailmaa. Pandemialla on myös ollut vaikutuksia henkilöstöjohtamiseen. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus on selvittää vaikutuksia, joita koronaviruspandemialla on ollut tähän hetkeen mennessä kuntien henkilöstöjohtamiseen. Tutkielma keskittyy tarkastelemaan seuraavia henkilöstöhallinnon osa-alueita: etätyötä, rekrytointia ja sisäistä viestintää, sekä sisältää kirjallisuuskatsauksen aiheisiin. Kuusi suomalaista kuntaa valittiin tutkimuksen kohteeksi. Muutosjohtamista käytetään myös yhtenä teoriakehyksenä analyysissa.

Tutkimus on kvalitatiivinen ja dataa kerätään empiiriseen osioon puolistrukturoiduilla haastatteluilla. Haastateltavana oli kuusi henkilöstöjohtajaa kuudesta eri kunnista. Haastattelut pidettiin videon yhteydellä. Aineiston keruu toteutettiin luottamuksellisesti. Haastateltavien henkilöllisyydet eivät tule esiin tutkimusraportissa.

Tutkielman tulokset osoittavat, että etätyö vaikutti henkilöstöjohtamiseen jokaisessa organisaatiossa. Neljä kuntaa kuudesta siirtyi etätyöhön kaiken kykenevän henkilöstön voimin pandemian puhjettua, ja kaksi kuntaa siirtyi hybridityöhön. Kuntien sisäinen viestintä muutti sähköisille alustoille, jolla oli vaikutuksia johtamiseen. Sähköinen viestintä lisääntyi voimakkaasti, ja kasvokkain viestintä, jossa ihmiset olisivat fyysisesti läsnä toistensa kanssa, väheni kaikista eniten viestintämuodoista. Tuloksista voi päätellä, että etätyö haastoi johtamiskäytäntöjä. Uudet käytännöt etätyössä ja sisäisessä viestinnässä tulevat jatkumaan kunnissa. Rekrytointiprosessit sähköistyivät kaikissa organisaatioissa ja muutoksen yhteinen piirre oli, että työhaastattelut muuttuivat suurilta osin tai kokonaan digitaalisesti järjestettäviksi.

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1 Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) emerged at the end of 2019 and its impact can be seen in the continuous change that is experienced by actors spanning from nations to individual employees (Collings et al., 2021). Today, it is the biggest challenge for global health (Azizi et al., 2021). The World Health Organisation (2020) stated on 11 March 2020 that the COVID-19 outbreak is a global pandemic. Five days later, the Finnish Government declared a state of emergency due to the virus outbreak. Since then, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (later referred to as FIOH) and the Finnish Government have implemented restrictions and recommendations to alleviate the effects of the crisis. The recommendations include making arrangements for reducing close contact at work, working remotely, and other measures to avoid risk factors (see, Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2021, for more detail). The Government also instructed that communication at work is essential during the pandemic and should be supported.

According to Collings et al. (2021), attention globally shifted to workplaces and personnel who were coping with the pandemic's impact. The field of human resource management (HRM) evolves continuously with its environment (Dessler, 2009). The consequences of the virus are complex and unprecedented for leaders in organizations, according to Collings et al. (2021). The authors describe that human resource (HR) leaders especially are in the center of managing organizations during the pandemic, as the crisis is inherently humane one. They suggest that HR leaders' actions in managing the pandemic are likely to direct how HR functions are going to evolve in the next decades.

The effect of COVID-19 to HRM is likely to be significant. Collings et al. (2020) describe that some organizational routines were irrevocably changed in the span of a day. Although the unexpectedness has caused many difficulties, many try to find innovative ways to keep operating (Diab-Bahman & Abrar, 2020). In a few months, the pandemic had altered working life by creating challenges for human resources at workplace (Butterick & Charlwood, 2021).

The drastic adjustments in social and work environment caused by COVID-19 are likely to change how an employee's experiences person-environment fit (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). According to person-environment fit theory, the suitability between an individual and the environment can define individual's physical and mental health, as well as behavior and motivation (Van Vianen, 2018). Carnevale and Hatak (2020) state that this change in work conditions may pose the most significant challenge for HRM.

The Association of Finnish Municipalities (2020) predicts that during the next five years from 2020 working at home continues as well as work keeps changing and causing challenges to leadership. They also estimate that job insecurity will remain. It is likely that the crisis will affect organizations in the long-term, even though not much is known yet (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

Overall, the pandemic has changed how people work, live, and interact (Mangia, 2020). This situation can be a chance for positive development for businesses and governments (Saliola & Islam, 2020). They can use it to develop their existing procedures (Tursunbayeva, 2021). The shift to from usual work to telework was already happening before the pandemic (Mangia, 2020). Overall, the pandemic ''has been a big reset'' to the processes of HR (Tursunbayeva, 2021, p. 78), and work after the Covid-19 pandemic will remain forever changed (Mangia, 2020).

The Finnish Government is starting to open the society by decreasing the restrictions on October 2021. Before, FIOH (2021) has recommended that close contacts are to be avoided at workplaces to lessen the probability for infection, for which teleworking provides an effective solution. During October 2021, Finnish Government has begun to implement a hybrid strategy for opening the society. As the Government regularly assesses the necessity of restrictions, there is currently less need for them when the vaccination coverage is sufficient in the population. This is the guiding principle of Finnish Government for managing the situation. (Finnish Government, 2021.)

2 Research question and objectives

The aim of this study is to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic affected human resource management in Finnish municipalities. Three different parts of HRM were chosen as the focus of the study: telework, recruitment, and internal communication. Additionally, the aim is also to investigate how the crisis was managed on these areas. To develop an understanding about the pandemic and its implications on the aforementioned areas, the research question of the study is:

"How is Covid-19 affecting telework, recruitment, and internal communication of an organization's human resource management?''

There are theoretical and empirical objectives for the study. The theoretical part of this thesis provides the theoretical framework to the study. The theoretical objectives for this study are to present relevant terminology, review existing literature in the field of change management, HRM, internal communication, recruitment, and telework, as well as literature related to coronavirus' effect on HRM. The empirical objectives include the following: identifying the effect of the pandemic on HRM on the three focus areas, telework, recruitment, and internal communication. Change management further provides perspective for the empirical analysis and gives an additional framework which works as a lens through which the results are analyzed. The analysis is performed on data gathered from interviews.

Earlier studies have researched the pandemic's effect of human resource management, but there are less studies about what effect the crisis had on Finnish municipalities' human resource management, and especially on their telework, recruitment, and internal communication. The contribution of this study may provide more insight on how human resource management is evolving in Finnish municipalities in response to the pandemic. Nevertheless, coronavirus' effect on HRM is a much-researched subject. Still, research gets outdated as the pandemic progresses and new factors emerge, and the subject needs additional research, especially from context of Finnish municipalities.

There are delimitations for the study. The topic, corona's effect on HRM, is broad. There-fore, only parts of HRM were chosen. To narrow the scope of the study further, focus will be on the Finnish public sector – municipalities and their HRM. However, analysis about every Finnish municipality will exceed the needs of this paper, so six municipalities were chosen, and their HR directors were interviewed.

2.1 Main concepts and definitions

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT – ''An integrated approach, which ensures the effi-cient management of human resources'' (Hall et al., 2010, p. 444)

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – ''Controlling changing situations, which aim to maintain an organization's efficiency and the well-being of its people despite a changing environ-ment'' (Kantola & Viitala, 2020, p.70)

TELEWORK – Work, which happens somewhere else than in the normal place of work (Helle, 2004, p.13)

RECRUITMENT – The acquisition of human resources, which contains actions that enable an organization to hire the individuals they need (Viitala, 2021, p. 71)

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION – ''The flow of information and communication in an or-ganization or work community'' (Juholin, 1999, p. 13)

2.2 Outline of the study

The study consists of seven chapters, which are shown in the table 1. The purpose of the first chapter is to introduce the topic of the study. Here, the background of the study is

presented, which creates context for topic. The second chapter explains the research question and objectives, as well as scope of the study and an outline of the study are provided. The next chapter gives a literature overview of central change management theories and describes change need and change communication. Change management is used as a framework from which the results of the study are analyzed.

The fourth chapter is a part of the literary review and provides an overview of HRM, including telework, recruitment, and internal communication. Additionally, the pandemic's effects on the topics are included. The fifth part, methodology and research design, describes how research is undertaken in this thesis, including the methodological approach, data collection and analysis, as well as evaluating the trustworthiness of the study. In the sixth chapter, interview results are analyzed, and the results are evaluated from change management perspective. This is followed by the final chapter, summary and conclusion, which summarizes the findings as well as gives ides for future research.

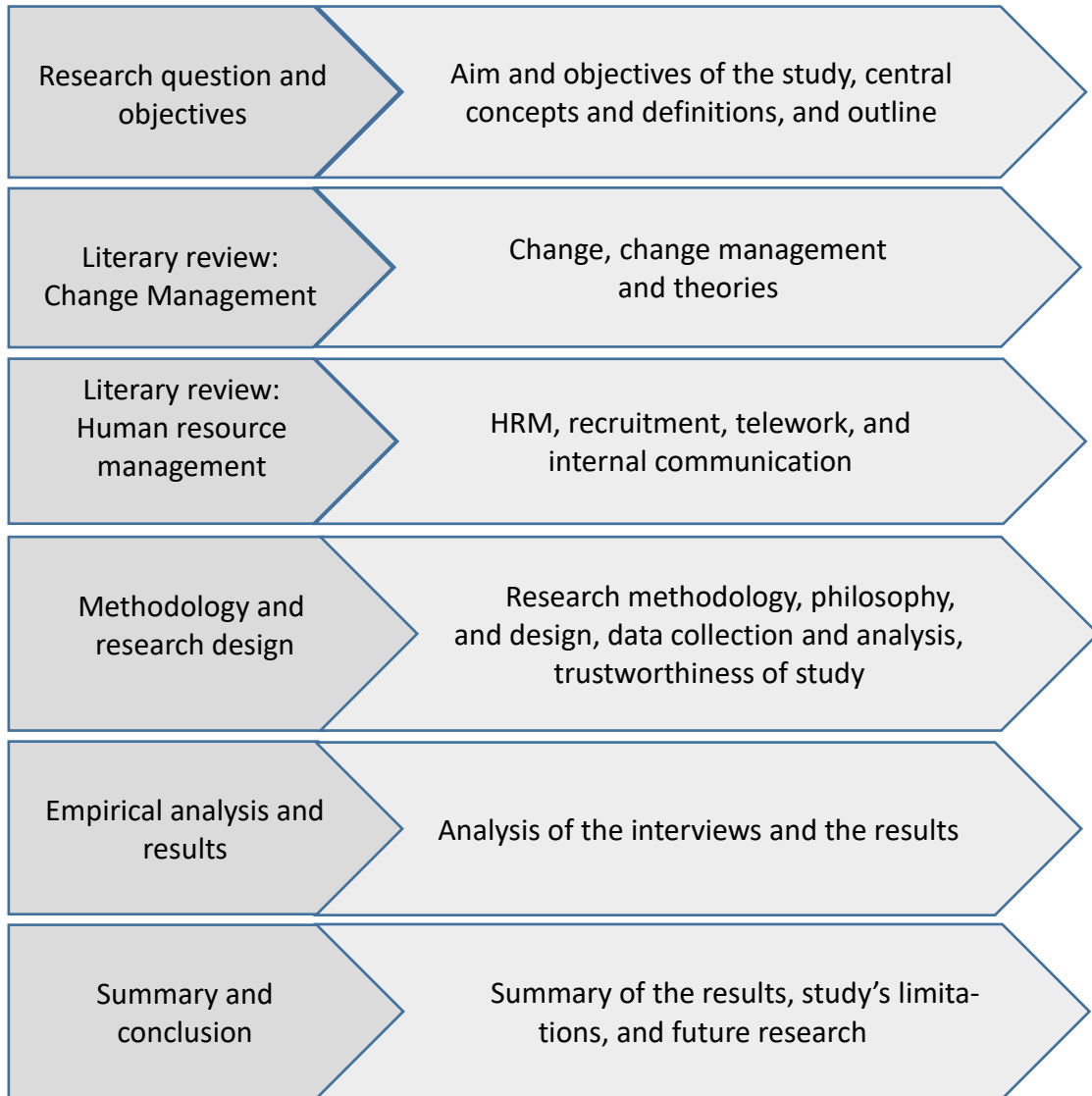|	
Research question and objectives	Aim and objectives of the study, central concepts and definitions, and outline
Literary review: Change Management	Change, change management and theories
Literary review: Human resource management	HRM, recruitment, telework, and internal communication
Methodology and research design	Research methodology, philosophy, and design, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness of study
Empirical analysis and results	Analysis of the interviews and the results
Summary and conclusion	Summary of the results, study's limitations, and future research

Figure 1. Outline of the study

3   Change management

In a dynamic environment, organizations need to be able to adapt fast if they want to survive (Brown & Harvey, 2006). Whether public or private enterprises, they will be evaluated on how well they manage change (Paton & McCalman, 2008). However, managing change is complex (Andriopoulos & Dawson, 2009). Predictions of the future give some direction, but future events are dynamic. However, effective management can help in forming a picture of the future, which in turn can help the organization's survival prospects (Paton & McCalman, 2008).

According to Hall et al. (2010), the role of leadership in managing change involves preparing groundwork or foundation for changes that can possibly happen in the future and creating organizations more capable in handling change. Leading a change requires adapting management skills into the situation. There can be barriers for change, and commonly these barriers involve the organization's personnel and organizational culture. (Viitala, 2004.) Organizational culture refers to practices, which have turned into routines in an organization (Viitala, 2014). In some instances, a change situation requires more of an authoritarian approach from the manager, and other times a longer period is required for employees to embrace the situation. Thus, a leader managing change must have the sensitivity to recognize what kind of an approach is the most fitting in every situation. (Viitala, 2004.) According to Viitala (2021), change management is successful when the implemented change has more benefits than disadvantages to the organization.

Change management can offer a framework on how organizational change is managed through the different stages of a change process. It provides a plethora of models, methods, and approaches (Creasey et al., 2014). Initially, a common understanding of the situation is needed, and the change must be justified for personnel to put in effort for it. Leaders and managers on their part, will have to develop their skills on an individual level. (Viitala, 2004, p. 89.)

3.1 Change

All organizations are in the process of changing, and the nature of changes varies (Andri-opoulos & Dawson, 2009). The authors describe that a change may consist of small de-velopmental activities and incremental changes that are implemented on normal proce-dures, and of bigger, transformational changes. However, according to Viitala (2020), usually, the time estimated for the change is too short. Further, changes can also be treated like projects, which start and end at certain points. However, changes emerge depending on many factors, such as the situation and the environment. Changes are complex as they have no clear ending or beginning. (Viitala, 2020.)

Viitala (2020) divides changes into planned changes or unplanned changes. Change is planned when an organization has a need for something, and the leadership is aiming to develop something in an organization. Changes that are unplanned are a result from un-expected and emergent events, where no amount of preparation or foresight could have been used to revealed them. When encountering unplanned change, change manage-ment is reactive, and aims to restore a balance in the working environment. In this situ-ation, the organization's capacity for fast action determines the success. Usually, the changes in organizations are unplanned. (Viitala, 2020.)

3.2 Change management theories

Kurt Lewin's three-step model for change and force field theory of change

One of the most central theories about the process of change was introduced in the 1950's by Kurt Lewin (Lanning et al., 1999). This was called the three-step model for change (Hallin et al., 2021). In accordance with Lewin, behavior in organizations was a push and pull between two forces. One force was change resistance, i.e., those who re-sisted the change, and the other force was those who supported change. (Dessler, 2009,

p. 209.) Lewin's theory portrays change as a three-step process, which consists of un-freezing, change, and refreezing (Lanning et al., 1999).

As mentioned above, the first step is freezing, and the second step is change. During the first step, 'unfreezing', a change is prepared. Old habits, routines and systems are questioned and dissolved, as well as a shared vision is created. (Lanning et al., 1999.) The goal for this phase is to create a common understanding in an organization as to why a change is necessary and show what would happen if a change was not undertaken, describes Hallin et al. (2021). According to the authors, this can be done for instance by using negative psychological affirmation, e.g., showing that the current actions of people are not enough for reaching set organizational goals. Lewin argued that in the beginning of a change, this shattering of status-quo is necessary for creating space for change (Burnes & Bargal, 2017, p. 94). The second step is change, where the change is implemented and actual shift in structure and procedures happens, e.g., training (Hallin et al., 2021). During the second phase, the employees start putting new approaches to use, which are necessary to achieve the new goals set in the first phase. The first and second step together describe how the change is planned and implemented.

The final and third step of change is refreezing. It involves making the new custom or habit official and incorporating it to the organization's day-to-day routine (Lanning et al., 1999). This step includes changes in the organizational culture, which entails shifts in organizational structures. These shifts in structure support behavior, that is in line with the new common vision. During this step, the organization's new customs have stabilized. (Hallin et al., 2021, p. 49.)

Lewin introduced an additional theory concerning change, which is force field theory of change. According to the theory, there are two opposing forces inside an organization, which strive to control how a change will happen. One of the forces aims to make an organization to resist the change, and the other force oppositely aims to accomplish that change. (Jones, 2010.) The forces against the change may also try to act against the

change (Jabri, 2012, p. 13). If the forces are equal and balanced, an organization does not experience change. However, to achieve change, the forces that support the changes must be increased, which is the managers' task. In addition, managers may try to find ways to lessen the resistance for the change or do this and the former at the same time. One or more of these strategies will take over the state of inertia in the organization where the forces were balanced and make a change happen. (Jones, 2010, p. 299.) In other words, Hussain et al. (2018) describe that during the change, support can be given to the forces aiming for change, or support can be decreased from the forces resisting it, or ''the combination of both forces for proactive and reactive organizational change through knowledge sharing of individual willingness with the help of stimulating change leadership style'' (p. 123). One or more of these strategies will take over the state of inertia in the organization where the forces were balanced, and initiate the change (Jones, 2010).

Kotter's eight-step change model

Kotter's (1995) eight-step change model shows how to lead a change incrementally by steps. Hallin et al. (2021) describe that this change management model is considered as a standard work in change management literature. The first step includes recognizing opportunities and problems, which is achieved by researching the market and discussing about opportunities and crisis factors that are recognized. The second step involves creating a powerful group, which has the needed power to make the decisions about the changes. It is important that the group is encouraged to work as a team. The third step entails creating a vision, which gives direction to the change. This step also includes the creation of strategy that aims to accomplish the vision. The fourth step involves spreading information about the vision through every possible channel at the same time as spreading the strategy. After the first four steps, a decision-making group has been made to lead the change by example at this stage.

In the middle of Kotter's (1995) eight step model, the human resources of an organization are authorized to act in a way which is directed by the vision. At this time, the obstacles for a change are removed, such as structures and systems which do not support vision, as well as people are encouraged to take risks and produce new ideas and ways of working. Next, in the sixth step, fast and visible development activities are undertaken, and innovative and effective employees are noticed. The seventh step focuses on enforcing the change and continuing development activities. The rest of the obscuring obstacles are expelled, and people who can help achieve the vision are trained, hired, and encouraged. Further, new ideas are taken in, and new actors for change are put into work. The final step is establishing the change. To conclude the change process, methods to develop the leadership are created, and the results of the change actions and their connection to success is provided.

Flamholtz and Randle's management systems model for leading change

Flamholtz and Randle (2008, pp. 20-21) developed a management systems model for leading change. The model suggests that change occurs in four steps. The first step is planning, the second is starting, followed by letting go and the final step being completion. During the first step, the need for change and potential barriers for change are identified, and nature of the change, as well as a plan is developed. The second step involves implementing the plan, which includes creating enthusiasm and holding individuals responsible for results. The next step is embracing the change in the organization, where old habits are let go of, managers aim to manage resistance, and monitor that the change is happening as planned. The final step occurs when the goal of a change process that was planned in the first phase has been achieved, and the organization has entered a 'new state'. In the end, the results and the successfulness are evaluated.

Prosci's ADKAR model and three-step methodology

Prosci's ADKAR (awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement) model describes an individual's 'journey' during the change (Hallin et al., 2021). The model outlines five dimensions that an individual needs to reach the goals of the change (Prosci, 2021). Prosci's study (2018) is considered a benchmark for good practices in the field of change management, as their most recent study encompassed 1 778 organizations from 85 countries (Hallin et al., 2021, p. 69).

In Prosci's ADKAR model, the focus in managing change is on the individual's perspective. Thus, organizational results are only realized when individuals have been driven to change (Prosci, 2021). Management and leaders need to plan activities, which are implemented through phases, which follows specific steps according to ADSKAR. Initially, individual is made aware of the change, and made to desire it. Then individual is made knowledgeable of what he or she needs to change in behavior to meet the organizational goals, and then their ability to put the knowledge in practice is needed. Finally, the final step includes reinforcing the individual's altered behavior. (Hallin et al., 2021.)

Prosci's three-step methodology chain describes the overall change effort. The start of a change begins with phase one, where an organization prepares for change by defining change management strategy, preparing change management team, and developing leadership model. The second phase involves developing change management plans, and actions to implement the plan. ADKAR's dimensions add the individual employee's perspective to this phase. The third phase reinforces the change with the help of feedback, resistance management and corrective actions. Prosci's three-step methodology chain linked with ADSKAR creates the Prosci methodology.

Discussion

There exists critique for all the models. Jabri (2012) describes that Lewin's model is a generic model for organizational development, and there is some critique against it. This critique is directed to the model's emphasis on the last stage, where change is treated

as discontinuous. Furthermore, even though Lewin's theory establishes the main steps, specific situations need more information during the phases of the steps, according to Hussain et al. (2018).

To achieve change successfully, in accordance with Kotter's theory, is to divide development processes into tasks and aims that are completed in a specific order (Lanning et al., 1999, pp. 17,19). Otherwise, without obeying the specific order, according to Kotter, the change will not be successful. However, Lanning et al. state that the steps on the process may be intertwined, and one step may have started before the previous had ended, for example. Nevertheless, Hallin et al. (2021) describe that the model gives helpful instructions, as well as useful information to upper-level management regarding the requirements needed for achieving successful change. Still, Kotter's model only concentrates on key areas of development processes, leaving other parts out. (Lanning et al., 1999.)

Creasey et al. (2014) describe that best practices do not automatically mean that the change process is successful. In their own study, Prosci (2018) reports that when a project uses a structural approach in managing people during change, over 90 per cent of those projects are more likely to achieve the goals. However, Creasey et al. state that best practices increase the chance of achieving the desired results.

Lewin's three-step model for change, Kotter's eight-step model and Prosci's combined methodology all describe that the steps of the change management are to be carried out in their respective order. According to Hallin et al. (2021), Kotter's eight-step model mainly describes the overall efforts needed for change, whereas Prosci's three-step methodology chain provides also the former, but includes the individual perspective provided by ADKAR.

Flamholtz and Randle's model (2008) leans toward a practical approach to management theory. They state that the model is more operational than Lewin's because it includes developing, implementing, and monitoring performance, as well as and comparing it to

a formal, usually written plan for managing change. The authors describe that their approach gives a model which is more operational when a change is implemented, whereas Lewin provides the necessary steps from moving form inertia to change.

In change management literature organization is often portrayed as a technical system. for change management the focus is on planning, implementing, and monitoring. Change management research shows evidence that change processes are continuously in motion. This is caused by the limited information that an individual or groups always has available when making decisions. Thus, they cannot know what a change may cause. Usually, circumstances change during a change process. Additionally, different change models highlight that a change process has steps or stages, which go incrementally forward and are measurable by time. However, a change continues to progress and exist between the steps or stages. (Viitala, 2020.)

3.3   Change communication

Change management is closely linked with communication as change operates via communication or contains communication (Jabri, 2012). It is beneficial to show enthusiasm through communication and explain how the change impacts advantageously on different stakeholders. There needs also to be awareness about why the change is happens, how it will impact the employees, and what is expected from them. People in an organization need to be aware why a change is necessary through communication. (Grieves, 2010.)

Proactive communication prepares for situations beforehand and is a tool for controlling change. According to basic laws of communication, everyone modifies a message that they receive based on their own experiences, and the interpretation can be anything. Proactive communication is a process, which is interactive and often happens via face-to-face communication. The purpose of proactive communication is to achieve an understanding about where an organization is going and discuss it, as well as give everyone

a chance to understand what their role is in the change. (Juholin, 1999.) Change communication is usually reactive, according to Juholin (1999). Reactive communication consists of commenting about a change and explaining the change afterwards. Juholin describes that an organization is usually knowledgeable of the change via informal communication channels.

It is necessary to create a continuous flow of information in change communication. This makes it possible for the work community to be aware of current issues. Usually, in change situations, where reactive communication occurs, discussions and explanations take place after the happened event. In this situation, informal communication channels are faster than formal ones. Reactive communication usually by itself cannot satisfy the need of information by employees, and its weakness is its late timing. (Juholin, 1999.)

In a change situation, a message needs to be fair and accurate. Many studies describe that fair and accurate communication is experienced as useful, even when hearing negative news. This type of communication has also the effect of producing safety. In a changing situation, the communication coming from an organization's leadership and managers is crucial. One of the manager's and leaderships' important tasks is to spread understanding about the change and keep employees informed. (Juholin, 1999.)

4   Human resource management

There exists ambiguity about the universally accepted definition of HRM, which led to the division of soft and hard HRM variants (Beardwell & Clayden, 2007, p. 5). The hard side is focused on quantifying the number of employees needed, and planning on acquiring the employees (Hall et al., 2010). From the perspective of hard HRM, employees are not seen different from other resources which are available to an organization (Hall et al., 2010; Viitala, 2021). These include the costs, contributions, and requirements, which can be quantified, and organizations can modify them to achieve certain aims and objectives (Hall et al., 2010).

As opposed to the rational approach of hard HRM, soft HRM highlights the human nature of human resources, as shown in figure 2 below. From the perspective of soft HRM, the main concern of HRM is the way in which people are managed (Hall et al., 2010).
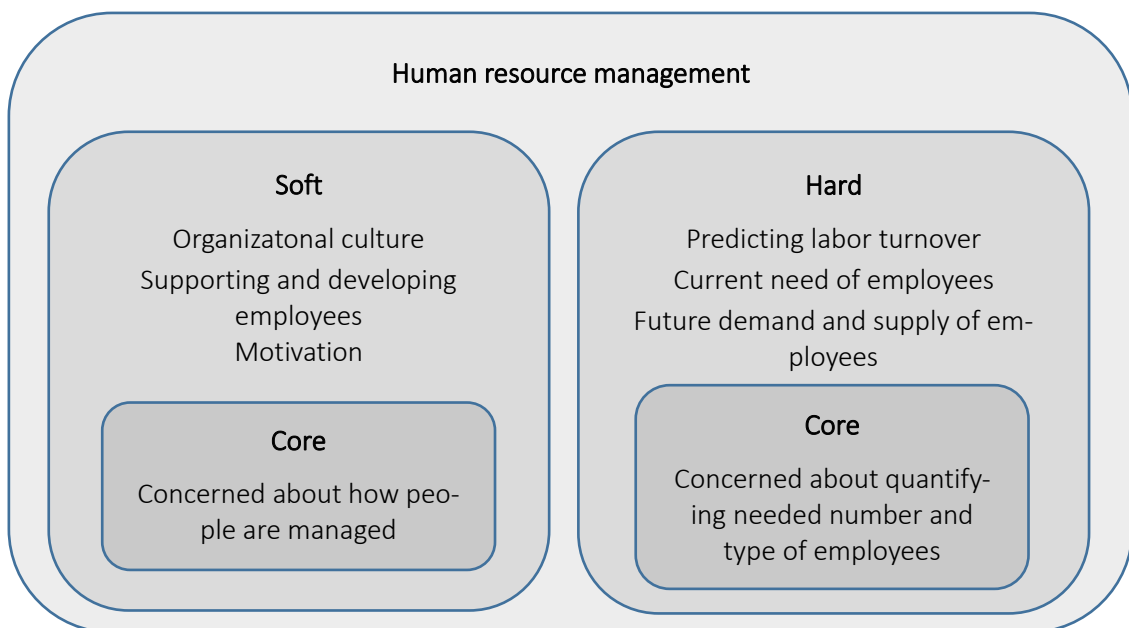

Figure 2. Soft and hard human resource management

Therefore, in soft HRM, their needs and development are prioritized to increase their motivation and commitment to an organization (Hall et al., 2010). Through this

perspective, it is believed that when personnel have more freedom and can have an impact in an organization, they in turn show more effort to make the organization successful. Soft HRM sees the personnel in an organization as an asset, not as an expense. (Viitala, 2021.)

Armstrong and Taylor (2020) state that HRM can be seen as a philosophy about governing employees at work. The authors describe that HRM is operated by HR system, which focuses on employing, developing, and managing people in organizations. The purpose of HRM, according to Armstrong and Taylor is to improve the effectiveness of an organization via its employees. Noe et al. (2007, pp. 4-5) describe that HRM is critical to the success of an organization, because human capital has specific valuable qualities, such as rarity, originality, as well as the lack of good substitutes. According to Azizi et al. (2021), the human resources are the most important asset of an organization.

Many aim to explain HRM functions by dividing them under the main tasks of HRM. Dessler (2009) includes the following processes into main HRM functions: acquiring, training, appraising, and compensating workers, as well as handling workers' labor relations and matters of fairness, and their health and safety. DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) divide HRM functions into four parts: staffing, training, maintenance, and motivation. In other words, the authors describe these as hiring and preparing employees, and keeping and stimulating them. The functions of HRM can vary depending on the size of the organization, e.g., there may be HRM specialists in a larger operation, and HRM generalists in a smaller setting (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2007). HR departments may also offer administrative and other services, and their functions are not limited to the above mentioned.

The employees are an important interest group, who are interested in the organization and need to be aware of what happens in the work community (Juholin, 199). According to DeCenzo and Robbins (2007), HRM may also have an employee relations function, where activities include maintaining open communication in the organization among the organizational members. In other words, the purpose of HRM communications is to

serve the internal constituents, who are the employees. These activities of HRM communications include keeping employees up to date about what happens in the organization and informing them about procedures and policies that have impact on them. (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2007.) According to Viitala (2014), the prevalent practices of HRM reflect the external environment of business, and the surrounding society of that time.

HR staff usually is responsible for the hiring process. A reason for this can be that an organization must make sure that its employment practices are in line with legal requirements and having the HR staff being responsible likely ensures it. Additionally, it is convenient to have HR staff handle the hiring when their usual responsibilities include the first contact with applicants and storing their information. (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2016.) Usually, the people who take part in the recruitment process in the organization are the manager who is recruiting, a representative of HR, and a close colleague, according to Kaijala (2016, p. 60), but the number of employees or parties needed also depends on the type of position that is being filled.

Organizations' human resource departments encounter changes in their environment at an increasing pace, which creates difficulties in predicting the future (Viitala et al., 2014). There is a need not only to adapt, but to prepare for any future challenges (Viitala, 2014). HRM faces challenges when predicting external events, which makes it difficult to plan the amount of employees recuire (Hall et al., 2010, p. 443). However, new trends can provide a fresh point of view on how we think about human resource work (Viitala et al., 2014).

HRM and the pandemic

The pandemic may be an opportunity to raise the status of HR, describes Collings et al. (2021). During the pandemic, the value of good quality HRM has increased, claims Viitala (2021). Zotova (2021) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed systemic human resource management. According to Zotova, the cause of this is that the crisis has

changed approaches to employment, workplace organization, forms of work activities and the technology used in work activities.

The pandemic has left an impact on HRM. Generally, the pandemic disrupts work in organizations through infecting employees with the virus (Azizi, et al., 2021, p. 5). According to Agarwal (2021), HRM professionals face a lot of pressure, because they need to teach their workforce new skills quickly. During the crisis, HRM also needs more personnel. Additionally, HRM faces a bigger workload, weakened morale, as well as more complexity in work because of the integration of digitalization and technology. Furthermore, the line between working life and personal is more muddled, which is why organizations need to take the personal life of their employee into account when designing HRM practices. Today's HRM frameworks and HRM theories only take into consideration the organization, not matters outside the organization. (Agarwal, 2021, pp. 5, 7.)

4.1 Telework

Telework is work, which occurs at an optional place rather than at the usual place of work (Salli, 2012). Usually, an employee doing telework can choose a location where they do telework, as well as the time when they may start and stop working. An individual may do telework as an entrepreneur or in an employment relationship. (Helle, 2004.) It can be done partly at the normal workplace, and partly at home, or by only working remotely. Telework is not meant to be additional work to regular work. (Salli, 2012.)

The characteristics of telework include generally discussed factors. Usually, telework means that an employee works at home or at another location, either partly or all the time. Commonplace telework includes work arrangements that are not reliant on a certain time and place and the usage information technology. Traditional housework is rarely included in the scope of the telework-definition. E-work is defined as working in an information network, and this term can include telework, because telework commonly involves information work. (Helle, 2004, p. 42.)

Information and communication technology has made it possible that telework can be other than home-based (Heikki, 2006). Information and communication technology are often used in telework, as they make working remotely possible despite a different location and time (Helle, 2004, p.13). In addition, advances in transportation in addition to a more developed telecommunications technology have also played a part (Heikki, 2006, p. 79). In many instances, an increasing amount work can be done as telework (Helle, 2004).

Telework provides a means to organize work, and its premise is that it has no effect on the employees' position. The place of telework can vary, and it can be almost anywhere, where the proper tools and connections for telework are available. Excluding a few instances, the rules and regulations of 'normal' work are applied to telework in Finland, except the ones about employers' working spaces. (Salli, 2012, pp. 95, 97.) Telework can happen in home offices, at customer sites, while travelling, at work centers close to home where there are other employers' workers, or in satellite offices. The place of work can change according to the needs of the employee. (Heikki, 2006, p.79.)

Telework has become more commonplace, according to Helle (2004). Most work does not require a specific place or time where the work itself must take place. However, Helle describes that telework usually fits certain types of work the best, such as when work tasks are done independently, for example in the upper levels of an organization. However, Thulin et al. (2019) argue that contemporary telework has experienced major changes, which includes the spread of telework into new groups as workers with more routine jobs, other than just those with highly advanced and flexible work tasks, can try teleworking. Telework has therefore become more prevalent in the lower levels of an organization.

There are at least four forms of telework, that are usually the most recognized, according to Helle (2004). The first is telework, which is done at home, partly or full-time, or at

another location chosen by the employee. The second is teleworking at centers meant for telework, where the office spaces are shared and include employees from other employers. There is also mobile work, and lastly doing telework as an entrepreneur, for example as a freelancer. This shows the spread of possibilities, which are enabled by telework.

Telework has requirements for both employee and organization. Helle (2004) describes that there are several important aspects that organizations must consider when starting to use telework as a work format. These aspects include the following: there are no prejudices about where and how work is most efficiently produced, trust exists between the employee and the employer, communication is open and working properly, and there is evaluation about the work result. Also, work is overseen, and work organization is rethought, as well as there exist transparent principles in human resource management and telework. Furthermore, in addition to necessary information-technological systems and capabilities of an organization that are required for telework, employees must have know-how on how to use the information and communication technologies. When considering all the aspects, which need to be taken into account, telework does not fit everyone. (Helle, 2004, pp. 14, 50.)

Advantages and disadvantages of telework

There are many benefits to telework for an employee. Teleworking provides flexibility and freedom in working time and work arrangements, the possibility to mix work and free time better, as well as have more peace and autonomy when working (Helle, 2004). This can increase an employee's satisfaction (Azizi et al., 2021 p. 7). Autonomy comes from the control employees have over their work tasks and working time. Moreover, telework gives individuals an opportunity to develop job description, and their well-being at work likely increases, and they have more free time. Commuting times and commuting costs are also decreased. (Helle, 2004, pp. 14, 17.) Teleworking can give rise to sense of belonging to the organization, as well as reduce stress (Azizi et al., 2021 p. 7).

Additionally, some studies have shown that teleworking helps women continue working at the same time as having a balance between work and private life (Tursunbayeva, 2021, p. 81). Overall, when telework is planned well, it more likely to be successful (Helle, 2004).

On the other hand, there are disadvantages for an employee. These include decreased social contacts and disconnectedness from the work community, an overwhelming amount of work, and blurred lines between free time and work. There may also be problems in data transfer and communication technology, and issues in safety and health when working. A teleworking employee may be excluded from wage and career development. In this case also, planning decreases the possibility of disadvantages for an employee. (Helle, 2004, pp. 14, 20-21).

Telework provides various benefits for the employer. The benefits may include increased flexibility and efficiency, according to Helle (2004, p. 22), as well as contributions to productivity (Tursunbayeva, 2021, p. 81). The organization's attractiveness is increased as an employer, and their image is enhanced, as well as less resources are required as there is no need to provide working spaces for employees who are doing telework. The well-being of workforce is increased, and it gets easier for the employer to gain committed employees. Further, recruitment can take place from a broader area, and work arrangements, job descriptions and leadership methods are developed. (Helle, 2004, p. 22.) Overall, telework can have a significant positive impact on an organization.

As similarly for the employee, telework also has drawbacks for the employer. According to Helle (2004, p. 25), there are increased costs from part-time telework when more equipment is needed, and there are more data security risks, as well as more technical difficulties. Further, it is increasingly challenging keeping organization and work arrangements in control, and controlling information and tacit knowledge, as well as overseeing employees becomes more difficult. (Helle 2004, p. 25.)

Telework and the COVID-19 pandemic

Telework and other flexible work arrangements are becoming more significant (Stei-delmuller et al., 2020). However, not long ago an assumption existed that the employer directs a worker to a fixed place of work (Heikki, 2006). Before the pandemic, according to Wang et al. (2021), organizations were not prepared to facilitate remote work and most of the employees had barely any experience in it. Still, it became routine very fast because of social distancing during the pandemic, a part of the workforce has been removed from workplaces (Tursunbayeva, 2021). Telework has become a necessity in many places since the beginning of 2020 (Zotova, 2021).

The pandemic has brought changes to teleworking in Finland. The Finnish government has recommended telework as a method to maintain physical distance (Sarkkinen, 2021). Before, rare few did telework in Finnish municipalities, but now teleworking has become common (Association of Finnish Municipalities, 2020, p. 28). A Finnish study conducted in May 2021 found that most Finns would prefer to continue teleworking after the crisis (Sarkkinen, 2021).

However, telework, as a way of work, is not perfect, even during the pandemic. Wang et al., (2020, p.1) recognized four general challenges for individuals in teleworking during the pandemic. These included work-home interference, procrastination, loneliness, and ineffective communication. Nevertheless, teleworking increases employees' sense of responsibility and autonomy, as well as decreases the number of sick days taken, a study in Finland found (Sarkkinen, 2021). The pandemic has caused challenges for workers' mental health, e.g., stress and fear (Madero Gómez et al., 2020, p. 405, 415). Viitala (2021) describes that the successful management of the pandemic includes actions which have helped employees to survive the crisis mentally.

The impact of teleworking during the pandemic has been significant to HRM. According to Zotova (2021), the whole range HRM work should be shifted to fit telework. The author suggests that this means transformation in HRM, as telework creates new features

in working itself, in training employees, and work safety, as well as in arranging the place of work, to name a few. HR managers had to help their workforce to adapt and cope. When nonessential businesses were closed, even workers who were well-adjusted to teleworking were unable to find other workspaces than their home. The shift to telework, including other altered working conditions, are perhaps the most significant challenges for HRM. (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020, pp. 183-184).

4.2 Recruitment

Recruitment is a basic part of HRM and the main method of ensuring labor in the organization (Muscalu, 2015, p. 351). The aim of recruiting is to acquire a fitting employee, which produces sufficient activity for the organization (Muscalu, 2015). In other words, HRM via recruitment controls that there is a necessary amount of labor to achieve what is needed in the organization (Viitala, 2021). The success of recruitment depends on the effectiveness of job analysis tasks (Rashmi, 2010). Job analysis tasks include identifying and gathering data for specific job (Singh, 2008). Hall et al. (2010) states that recruitment becomes more important when employees need to work autonomously and be flexible, or when it is hard to directly control employees.

Recruitment strategy contains the principles and general policies which concern recruitment in an organization (Viitala, 2021). Recruitment strategies aim to attain better candidate pools for the recruitment in the organization and convince an applicant to apply to the organization (Elearn, 2009). The strategy describes what kind of people are wanted for the job, what channels are employed, and what factors are used to attract fitting candidates. It can also state who are responsible for recruitment, whether to use Internet, as well as when, where, and how services for recruitment are bought outside the organization. Recruitment strategy can be changed according to unique recruitment situations. (Viitala, 2021.)

The recruitment effort must be connected to human resource planning (HRP). HRP is a process where an organization makes sure it has the necessary human resources to deliver certain level of output in the future (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2016). Generally, a recruitment process starts, because an employee leaves, or the scale of operations increase, and the current number of employees is not enough (Viitala, 2021). Usually, strategic human resource planning is formed on a three-to-five-year basis. HRP is significant, because it is important to try to prepare for future changes in the organization's environment and its effects of competences. (Kaijala, 2016.)

Noe et al. (2007) describe that recruiting involves decision-making in three areas for all organizations. These include such decisions as where to recruit from, what the personnel policies are, as well as what behavior and characteristics the recruiter has. Personnel policies are the decisions about how an organization does its HRM, as well as how it fills empty job vacancies, which will have an impact on the nature of the vacancy. Further, many personnel policies hold significance to recruitment, for example about where the organization does its recruiting from. This may involve decisions on whether to use existing employees to fill vacancies or acquire talent from outside the organization, and what kind of an image the organization portrays in advertising, as well as including the matter of job security or the right to terminate employees. (Noe et al., 2007.)

E-recruitment is recruitment done by electronic means. The term e-recruitment can be used broadly for all activities that are done via Internet and different electronic means, which include online recruitment and e-recruitment systems. (Holm 2010.) Today, internet is the main channel from which human resources are acquired. Digitalization has changed the recruitment, as now employers and potential employees meet at markets which are directed to them, as well as artificial intelligence is used to enhance finding potential passive employees. (Viitala, 2021.)

The recruitment process

According to Viitala (2021), the recruitment process contains five main steps. The first consists of making a recruitment plan, which describes what tasks and requirements are needed from the new hire. During the next step, information is collected about potential employees. This is called short-listing. The third step consists of interviewing the individuals which show potential for the job. The following step includes evaluating the candidates to decrease the number of individuals. The criteria involved in evaluation may concern such factors as job experience, attitudes, interests, and personality, for example. (Viitala, 2021.) Additional testing may also be performed with the individual's consent (Parnila, 2017, p. 41). The final step of the recruitment process involves making job offers (Viitala, 2021). However, in this thesis, the orientation is also counted as a part of the recruitment process.

Sources of recruitment are identified during the recruitment process (Muscalu, 2015). Where an organization tries to reach individuals depends on what kind of applicant it will reach. Choosing the sources of recruitment is a part of an organization's recruitment strategy. The total labor market encompasses the entire planet, and organizations only reach potential candidates from a small fraction of the entirety of job market. (Noe et al., 2007.)

Sources of recruitment can be internal or external, or both. Via external recruitment, an employee seeks to find applicants for a job from outside their own organization. Internal recruitment occurs when an employee searches for a job inside the organisation he or she works in. (Hall et al., 2010.) Internal and external recruitment have both advantages and disadvantages. Usually both recruitment sources are used because it gives a better opportunity to attract possible candidates (Noe et al., 2007).

Internal recruitment has its benefits and drawbacks. Its benefits include that it can be a source of motivation for employees as they support career development (Viitala, 2021; Muscalu, 2015). Internal recruitment can increase employee commitment and spread skillfulness, while also being cheaper than external recruitment. However, recruiting

internally means that familiarizing the employee to new tasks takes the employees time, which can lessen productivity. Furthermore, internal competition for the new job opening may have negative effects on the atmosphere. (Viitala, 2021.) Internal recruitment allows the employer to observe and evaluate the individual's performance and potential (Muscalu, 2015).

External recruitment has some advantages over internal recruitment. External methods bring new and different ideas to the organization. Additionally, this recruitment source may possibly attract more applicants. (Hall et al., 2010.) External sources of recruitment can include Internet job postings, college recruiting events, and newspaper ads, for example (Noe et al., 2007). DeVaro (2020) describes that new individuals are less likely to be affected by unproductive influences from other employees, because the new hires are not involved in organizational politics. Even though external recruitment has risks, they also have ''strong upside potential'' (DeVaro, 2020, p. 1).

Recruitment and the pandemic

The pandemic has caused various changes to recruitment. Pandemic has brought challenges to recruitment processes, for example. As all work, also meetings, performance reviews, and job interviews are done digitally, there are now technological difficulties present. These difficulties would be eliminated if the tasks were done in-person. (Itzchakov & Grau, 2020, p. 4.) According to Aziz et al (2021) there are more costs to hiring new employees. A study found that small firms have almost completely stopped hiring new personnel. Firms in general have put out less postings for jobs that require high skills in comparison to low-skill postings. This disproportionate halt on hiring high skilled personnel is called downskilling. (Campello et al., 2020, pp. 1, 25-26). Azizi et al. (2021) has noted that there is underemployment during the pandemic. Underemployment means that an individual is working in a job ''that is inferior by some standard'' (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011, p. 962).

Many changes have been happening in the Finnish municipalities regarding recruitment. There is a new kind of competition for potential employees on demand, as work is no more dependent on a physical place. Therefore, it is a concern for future in the municipality sector about how they can attract good employees due to this location independence. The competition caused by location independence may require that in the future municipalities show more flexibility regarding the employee's life situation, for example. (Association of Finnish Municipalities, 2020, pp. 4, 9, 43). Without measures to ensure that they can compete with other employers in the location independent competition, municipalities may not be able to attract good employees in the future.

4.3   Internal communication

Hall et al. (2010) defines communication as the act of ''sending and receiving messages between two or more individuals, groups or organizations'' (p. 454). Commonly, organizational communication is divided into internal and external communication (Kauhanen, 2012, p.172). Internal communication is an extensive phenomenon, which affects every part of an organization. Internal communication handles the exchange of information and knowledge, togetherness, culture and sharing experiences. Communication in a community depends on the community's culture, which is created by changes happening in its environment and common experiences. (Juholin, 1999, pp. 13, 15.)

Internal communication is a necessary part of leading and managerial work, and information management, as well as processing the information (Juholin, 1999). The purpose of internal communication is to keep the employees up to date and informed about several different matters including organization's aims, strategy, changes, shareholders, and financial situation (Joki, 2018). It is also meant to increase the work's efficiency and flow. Internal communication has a decisive impact on the organization's external image, and employee commitment (Juholin, 199; Joki, 2018). The following figure 3. shows the goals of internal communication in order of importance, according to Argenti (1998, p. 201).

Goals of Internal Communication	
The most important ↕ The least important	• Create a sense that employees are the most important asset • Improve morale, foster goodwill between managers and employees • Inform employees about internal changes • Explain compensation plans • Increase employees' understanding of the organization • Transform employee behavior • Increase understanding about current issues that affect employees • Encourage employee participation in community activities

Figure 3. Goals of internal communication

The image of an organization impacts the organization's existence and success (Juholin, 1999). Further, internal communication has connections to creating a beneficial working environment. The working environment influences employee attitudes and motivation, which reflects on customer satisfaction, and thus has an impact on organization's success. (Kauhanen, 2012, p.172).

Juholin (1999) has divided internal communication into written communication, electronic and computer-based communication, and face-to-face communication. Written communication includes internal bulletins, letters, staff newsletters, and noticeboards. Electronic and computer-based communication consists of online writing, email, phone, fax, intranet (the internal data network of an organization), TV, radio, and phone news. Face-to-face communication supports personal interaction and is held through coworkers, networks, department or team meetings and negotiations, job orientation meetings, informal and formal meetings, as well as meetings that are subject to formal requirements. (Juholin, 199, pp. 141, 148-159). Face-to-face communication happens when an

oral message is being passed between individuals (Hall et al., 2010, p. 449). Face-to-face communication happens in the whole community, in departments, or on an individual level (Juholin, 1999, pp. 141).

Some channels of communication are more valuable than others. Juholin (1999, pp. 141, 159) argues that face-to-face communication is the most valuable form of communication. Commonly, even a large amount of communication channels does not increase communication satisfaction nor make communication more effective, Juholin describes. Further, Joki (2018, p. 194) agrees that no other channels of communication replace the conversations between employees and managers.

HRM communications should operate as mean for assisting effective communications in the organization, DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) argue. According to them, the HRM department keeps track of recruiting, employment and turnover statistics, and shares this information with employees when requested. Also, determining how internal meetings can be managed, organized, and supported for the purpose of increasing effectiveness can be a strategic issue of HRM department (Engström, 2019, p. 30). However, HRM communications are not the main source nor the only source of information in the organization, but they must do their efforts to ensure that the managers know properly about new programs that relate to HRM and know how to communicate when asked, as the manager's position would require having accurate data (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2007, p. 47).

HRM function in practice involves employee relations. This includes ensuring open communication for everyone in the organization. DeCenzo and Robbins (2007, p. 46, 53) describe that effective communication programs include allowing feedback and accurate information sources. Allowing for feedback is a system that is created to assess flow of information and cultivating the feedback. For example, information can be gained from a survey, or a communications audit program. The way that information is produced can be different in various organizations. (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2007.)

DeCenzo and Robbins (2007, pp. 44-45) include three elements into building HRM communications programs. These include top management commitment, effective upward communication, and determining what to communicate. Top management communication includes namely the support of the leadership for the internal program and determining what to communicate, which mainly revolves around filtering only pertinent information. Effective upward communication is, for example, legislation that may add new HRM requirements, which the leadership needs to be aware of. Effective upward communication consists of effective information flow from employees to top management.

Juholin (1999, p. 216) divides internal communication into four ways during exceptional circumstances. The first way of communicating involves retreating from a situation without a will to comment, and the second includes answering when asked. The third one describes a way of communication, which actively sells its own explanation about the situation. The fourth way consists of addressing the issue when the first signs appear and giving existing information, as well as additional information when it becomes available.

Internal communication and the pandemic

The COVID-19 crisis has significantly altered the way individuals communicate (Itzchakov & Grau, 2020; Bailey & Breslin, 2021). For example, a lockdown has forced communication to happen virtually (Bailey & Breslin, 2021, p. 4). Virtual communication has many issues, which have become prevalent during the pandemic. Individuals may face confusion when audio and video are not synchronized, or internet connection is lost, for example. (Itzchakov & Grau, 2020, p. 4.) This hinders internal communication.

On an organizational level, the pandemic's effects are broad. The pandemic can cause rumormongering, and fear, which need to be managed in the organization (Azizi et al., 2021, p. 5). According to Dinari et al. (2020), organizations who have a leader who

communicates, among other things, are the best off. A study found that consistent communication increases well-being for employees during the pandemic (Argwal, 2021, p. 8).

5 Methodology and research design

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a systematic overview of the methods, research design and data collection technique that are used in this thesis. The methodological approach is portrayed in a ''research onion'' introduced by Saunders et al. (2009, p. 108), shown below in figure 3. It shows, starting from the outermost layer, research philosophy, research approach, strategy, time horizon, as well as technique and procedures chosen for this thesis. Next, the following chapter includes the research philosophy and approach, and the second chapter uncovers the research strategies, methodological choices, and time horizon of this study. In the final chapter, the techniques, and procedures to collect and analyze data are explained.
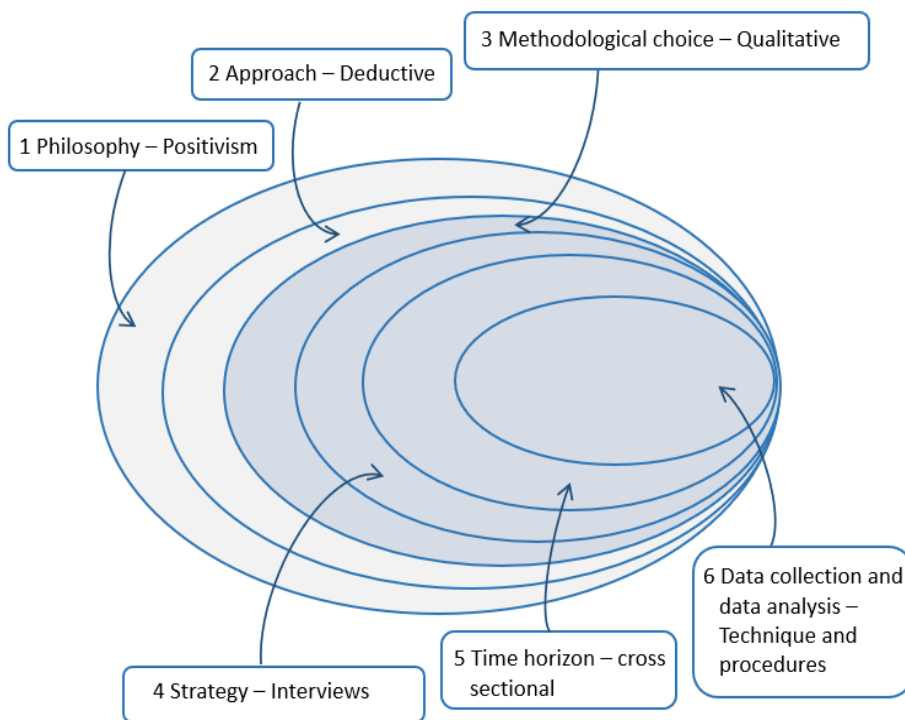

Figure 4. Research design and methodology of the study (adapted form Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108)

5.1   Research methodology and philosophical approach

The research philosophy consists of assumptions on how an individual perceives the world, according to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 108). They elaborate that research philosophy is reflected on research strategy and within it, in the methods that are used in the research. Saunders et al. also add that it is beneficial to be aware of the assumptions, because if unchallenged, they influence thought process and behavior.

Ontology and epistemology form two major branches in research philosophy and they both have different aspects, which have an effect on the thought process when doing research. Ontology studies the nature of reality, which includes questioning researchers' assumptions about the surrounding world. Ontology contains two positions, subjectivism and objectivism, which are largely accepted by researchers. Objectivism holds that social entities are separate from social actors. Subjectivism, on the other hand, focuses on the subject, whose perceptions and following actions create social phenomena. (Saunders et al., 2009.) This study takes a subjective view.

Epistemology is concerned about what is acceptable knowledge from the researchers view. The collected data can be measurable and analyzable facts, for example presented in a statistical form, or the data may involve people's feelings or attitudes which are studied as social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 112-113). It handles methods, validation, how an individual knows things, and the reliability of senses (Walliman, 2010, pp. 16-17). Positivism applies methods from natural sciences to analyzing reality (Bryman, 2015, p. 24). In this thesis, the research philosophy is positivist.

The second layer of the onion portrays the research approach. There are several possible research approaches. Deductive approach includes developing a theory, as well as a hypothesis, for which a research strategy is formed to test it. Qualitative or quantitative data is utilized in this approach. Inductive approach, on the other hand, focuses on collecting data in the beginning of the study, and making sense of the data, as well as forming a theory from the data analysis' results. Overall, research approach gives more

understanding about research design. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 124-126). For this study, the research approach is deductive, as literary review and research strategy are formed before gathering data via interviews.

5.2 Research design

Research design is an overall plan of research, which determines how a researcher will undertake finding the answer to a research question. Research design is influenced by research approach and philosophy. The research question influences what strategy, collection technique, and analysis procedure is chosen, as well as the time horizon which the study holds. These are the next parts shown in figure 1, following research philosophy and approach. The research design has clear objectives, and examines possible constraints, which always exist to some extent, such as time, location, access to data and money. (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 136-138).

Data collection techniques can be qualitative or quantitative. Quantitative data collection generally involves numerical data or data analysis procedure (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151). On the other hand, qualitative data collection handles data, which is non-numerical, and aims to explain how the world is through an individual's perspective (Merriam, 2002, p. 1-2). The methodological choice for the thesis is qualitative, shown in figure 1.

The fourth layer of the research onion unfolds the research strategy that is employed in a study, and the fifth layer describes the time horizon. In this study, the focus of the research strategy are interviews. The time horizon of a study varies from ''snapshots'' to covering event that occurred over a specific time frame, according to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 155). The authors name the former cross-sectional and the latter longitudinal. The time horizon for this thesis is the snapshot of the effect the pandemic has had on HRM (telework, recruitment, and internal communication) at the time when this thesis is written in fall 2021. The main constraint for the study is limited amount of time.

5.3   Data collection and data analysis

According to Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad (2010), one method of collecting data is through observation**.** This can happen via viewing or listening, for example through an interview. During an interview, the interviewer is directly in verbal communication with the interviewee (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009, p. 204). Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, pp. 208-209) name structured interview, semi-structured interview (theme interview), and open interview as possible interview methods, which differ from each other by, e.g., the level of planning that goes into forming the interview questions. Interviews may bring a large amount of detailed information to a study, as well as secure correct understanding in the interview situation (Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, 2010, p. 101).

This study uses semi-structured interviews. This is the technique of data collection, which covers the last layer (figure 1.). Semi-structured interviews include pre-planned themes, as well as interview questions which may change from interview to another. Further, the questions may be asked in different order from interview to interview, and additional ones can also be asked. (Saunders et al., 2009.) Semi-structured interviews are flexible and ensure that all necessary themes are covered adequately (Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, 2010, p. 105).

Six HR directors were chosen for the interview from different Finnish municipalities. The municipalities all had more than 40,000 inhabitants. Each six had a separate interview. The interview questions were sent to the individuals before the interviews. The questions were divided to three themes: telework, recruitment, and internal communication. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, but the interviewees were also given the choice to do it in English if they wanted. The interviews spanned between 1 hour and 1 minute to 38 minutes.

5.4 Trustworthiness of the study

The trustworthiness of a study refers to the quality of the data (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001, p. 185). The research's trustworthiness is reflected on how well the methodology is explained (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009, p. 323). Thus, the openness of the research process is shown. Many steps were taken to ensure a good quality of gathered data. The interviews were recorded with two devices to make sure that everything that was said was heard correctly. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001), the quality of interviews is better if the recordings of interviews are transcribed as fast as possible, especially if the researcher him- or herself does both interviewing and transcribing. I did both; the interviews were transcribed via a device from word to word on the same day as they occurred, and the transcribed text was checked manually with recordings to make the text as accurate as possible.

Validity can be used to measure a study's quality. The term validity refers to the extent to which the observed information accurately reflects on what it was meant to study (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010, p. 93). Through validity, one can find whether results and interpretations fit together (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009, p. 232). In this study, the interview questions were formed carefully with the research question in mind. The questions were divided thematically. In each section, easiest questions were asked first. The questions were also made to be as simple as possible and some of them included explanations to clarity what was meant. However, only a small number of individuals were interviewed. A bigger sample size could give a broader view of the phenomenon.

Dependability refers to the study's consistency and reliability (Moon et al., 2016). It evaluates whether a study could be repeated with the same results. This study only shows a snapshot of the pandemic's impact, in this specific time, and portrays what has occurred so far. Thus, the respondents may have more information in the future if they were interviewed again. The coronavirus has also affected municipalities in different ways, which is why getting similar results might prove challenging, as well as the small number of respondents is the main limitation.

Ethicalness is a part of the trustworthiness of a study. Ethicalness of a study means that the study obeys ethical principles throughout and causes no harm to its subjects (Puusa & Juuti, 2020, chapter six). The ethicalness of this thesis is shown in the following matters. The participation of the interviewees was voluntary, and they were informed that they could end the interview at any point, if they choose to do so. They also gave permission to record and transcribe the interview, as well as to have quotations in this thesis, which were not connected to individuals. The individuals' anonymity was maintained.

6 Empirical analysis and results

6.1 Telework

Five managers describe that teleworking was not common in their respective organizations before the coronavirus outbreak in Finland, and one said that it had been very rare. However, one organization out of the six seemed to have a greater familiarity with telework in their planning of office spaces in comparison to other municipalities. For example, their new office spaces were underway, for which the planning had started before the pandemic. They contained the spaces for only 60 per cent of the employees if all of them were to be physically present at their workplace. An HR director from another organization pointed out that the possibility of teleworking was given to the employees before the pandemic, but there were issues which prevented its common use.

> *''[It was] routine that we came to the office, and maybe we were little careful of course about if the work could be done as telework. And also what does it mean, do people think that you laze at the workplace, home, or wherever you do the telework. It was like, that we set those boundaries in our own heads, and this was the interpretation. Of course, there were possibly also some managers who did not react as positively as others. This kind of difference existed and of course when we talk about all work in the organization, not all work can be performed as telework.''*

Telework became more common in every municipality after the COVID-19 pandemic spread to Finland in 2019. All six municipalities had instructions for telework before the pandemic, which explained the rules of telework in their respective organizations. Everyone who was able to do telework was instructed to do so in four out of six municipalities. One of these municipalities' HR director described that they moved to almost perfect telework during the worst of COVID-19, in the beginning of spring 2020 to summer 2020, where telework occurred during all five days of the work week. Similarly, in another municipality, all who could do telework had to do so five days a week. However, in one municipality, the level of telework later varied depending on the infections in their area. One HR director described their transfer as the following.

*''Coronavirus pushed all, whose work was like information- or office work, to tele-
work. We had a very strict policy about telework when the pandemic started. And
the instruction started from the point that everyone who can, except these jobs
which could not have been done as telework, will do telework. So we pushed people
into telework very forcefully. In that way, we managed to get professions which did
not do telework to do it, for example secretaries, which previosly were thought to
be jobs where there were doubts regarding whether or not they could succeed. And
they themselves doubted so. But maybe it as also reflection of stagnation in
thinking on managers part also, at least in some points. It is now that we have
managed to spread the possibility of telework very far.''*

Two HR directors mentioned that their organization used a hybrid-model for work, which
was a mix of telework and being physically present at the office. The employees who
were at the office worked in their rooms without making contacts as per the rules and
attended e.g., meetings via internet. Another interviewee described that full time tele-
work occurred in spring and summer of 2020 for those in their organization that were
capable of doing so, but then their municipality moved to the hybrid model of work.

In a municipality, where hybrid-work was the form of work, the HR director cited the
reason for not moving to wholly telework was the IT capabilities of the organization.
These did not allow all tasks to be moved to telework. The other director of an organiza-
tion, which used hybrid-work since the beginning of the pandemic explained that some
employees' homes were not fit for telework.

*''In our own department, we had few individuals who did not do telework at all.
Maybe they attempted, but they did not do it. For example, it was difficult to orga-
nize the work station at home, or there were too many people at home due to te-
lework that it would not have been peaceful.''*

All HR directors stated that telework has changed HRM in their organization. One HR
director described that managing performance required a new type of leadership. It was
also suggested that the practices of leading had probably changed, and that leading
should also change in response to the director him- or herself and employees doing tel-
ework. The director admitted that there is much to do to develop leading from a distance
but had found that one can have a good leadership even though it is done remotely. An

example of this was that an information event, which was held for a great number of people and before the pandemic was conducted via the attendants being physically present at the same place. Now, it was transferred completely to an online format, and interaction happened there successfully. Other three HR directors mentioned that the skillsets of managers differ. Some are natural in leading telework, while others have struggled. New leading practices ensued, which brought forward more challenges.

> ''We anyway have been doing work while being present [at the office], so these new leadership practices must be developed so that we can lead the performance and the skills. On the other hand, it has required a lot of self-direction form employees. Like leading oneself, leading the job performance. This monitoring of aims and the interaction and leading the performance has changed drastically in a different matter.''

All respondents mentioned that there is much to develop regarding leading and telework. In one municipality, training was postponed or stopped due to financial reasons that came from managing the pandemic in their municipality. In three other organizations, training was provided for managers on how to lead telework. Another HR director stated that they were just beginning to think how to address the issue that telework causes challenges to leading in supporting and interacting with the employees. One of the directors, whose organization provided training, described that leadership has new requirements, and more opportunities for freely speaking are needed, for example. Several others also mentioned that communication in leading was very important. Furthermore, a director elaborated that everyone has the right to good leadership in their organizaton, but managers can also face difficulties in using technical devices in a new way, which in turn can have an effect on the employees' work.

Teleworking can cause difficulties in some occasions that require quicky flowing interaction between many parties, described one director. When conversations, encouragement and creativity are needed in situations, as well as ideas are thrown around, people are likely to speak over each other. In a video meeting, it is challenging to make sense of this kind of conversation. Contrarily, when the individuals are together and occupying one room, this is easier.

There are no issues in overseeing the employees' work, all the HR directors agreed. Everyone pointed out that employees are trusted in their organization to complete their assigned tasks. Still, one director mentioned that there has been an instance where an individual did not do the assigned tasks while doing telework, and was unable to tell about it to the manager. However, this was the case of only one employee in their work community, and the rest of the employees seemed to have no such problems. Nevertheless, in two organizations, devices are used to record the working time during telework. Another HR director said that they do not care about the time at all. What mattered for every HR director was that the result of the work. One just must trust the employees.

> *''It is clear that one does not know what the people are doing there. One only has to trust that they are doing the right things. And especially in their workstation, there usually, daily are no signs, which could prove whether today's work is done or not. Some are working on things which are finished after three months, and then we see if the task is completed or not. Then we only have to trust that right tasks are being done there. Well, it is not as if we could oversee people better at the office about what they are doing when they are sitting in front of their computers.''*

The directors expressed concern regarding the well-being of employees. It is the responsibility of a manager to take care of his or her employees' well-being. Teleworking was seen to increase employees' well-being; saving time in commuting and travelling between workstations, creating a better work-life balance, giving more flexibility and peace while working, as well as the employees' efficiency seemed to increase. Still, teleworking causes challenges to the well-being. It is difficult to tell if an employee is tired, for example, stated one director, or that enough breaks are taken, according to another. There needs to be more support and interaction stated most directors. For one organization, the term self-direction was starting to have more negative connotations.

> *''In the beginning self-direction was seen as a positive matter from the employee's perspective, but now the tone of the voice seems to be leaning more towards that we want more management. And also that there is anyway a lot of responsibility in self-direction and not everyone is willing to accept that responsibility, but they want for the manager to take those responsibilities.''*

All respondents stated that telework in some form will continue in their organizations in the future. One of the directors described that a change happened in their organization regarding people's attitudes towards telework.

> *''[There has been] a leap in attitudes. One good example is that before corona, if someone had taken part of some conference in a way that they have headphones in their ears and he or she would have been walking, they would have been easily labeled as a slacker. That this person is not at work now at all. But now it is quite okay, it is quite natural and that you could attend a meeting while driving a car or a bike or something. So this is completely new, this type of line of thinking. Maybe a kind of understanding about a work which is independent from place, it has developed very much.''*

The municipalities are reacting to unplanned changes from their enviroment, and thus change management is reactive. Telework increased in all the organizations, and the directors took different measures to adapt their employees' to the changes, for example training their workforce in how to work from a distance. Further, adopting telework in a greater scale than during the time before the pandemic was also one major step to manage the change in municipalities.

The municipalities have seemed to reach the 'refreeze' phase of change management, in accordance to the Lewin's three-step theory, as now new practises in leading telework have already had time to settle in some organizations since the beginning of the pandemic. It seems that the 'unfreezing' phase happened when the pandemic struck Finland, and the municipalities had to acknowledge that a change was needed. There was not much resistance or barriers to this change, because the municipalities were ensuring the continuity of their operations via telework.

However, even if were some phases of the pandemic which were clearly more visible, it does not mean that change is not happening outside it, as Viitala (2020) critiqued Lewin's theory. According to Viitala, a change has no end and no beginning, and multitude of chages happen at the same time. This could be shown in the ever-evolving nature of the pandemic situation, which sets the degree of telework for many municipalities.

6.2   Internal communication

Internal communication has changed in all organizations according to all respondents. Digital communication generally became more common in all municipalities. Out of all forms of communication, the digital communication format that was most popular in the beginning of the pandemic was email, according to the HR directors. Thus, after the initial rush, the emails lessened for the five HR directors. However, the exception to this is one director, who still personally receives a lot of emails from personnel.

> *"[…] Now people are asking things which would not have been asked before, suprisingly there is a link, to what seems to be somekind of freezing of initiative. That people are asking, from the perspective of human resource management, we have a lot of guidelines and operations models […] it feels like they have been somehow forgotten, these rules and instructions, which remain completely unchanged. Now there is a lot of checking and people ask through email if this thing still like this, and is this what we do, as if covid has changed all operation models even though that is not the case."*

In this organization, there was a great need for internal communication at the beginning of the pandemic, and a significant need for internal communication still exists. For example, the director feels that even though there is nothing to say, it needs to be stated that there is nothing further to say, and in this way show that interaction happens on both sides. The HR director assessed that the reason for the continuous need of information was the lack of face-to-face physical contact. Further, employees' own informal communication group emerged in response to the pandemic on a social media platform. In the organization, emails, digital background briefings and the internal network of the organization (intra) were used to spread information. From a change management perspective, accurate and fair messages during a change produce safety. Informal communication channels are fast when communication is reactive, and it needs to be considered whether information from the leadership arrives timely.

However, this was not the case in other municipalities. In contrast, one HR director stated that employees were satisfied with their organization's internal communication. In this

organization, crisis communication started from the beginning of the outbreak. A new site in intra was created, a digital weekly fact sheet for personnel was made, and weekly video- background briefing was arranged for managers, as well as a board was formed for the abnormal situation. Regular communication, which holds the same form was deemed important, is the key, according to the municipality's HR director.

The other four municipalities fell somewhere in the middle. Each had their own practices in internal communication. In half of the municipalities there was background briefing to a significant number of employees and/or managers. Since the start of the coronavirus crisis, the briefings were held online, and likely will not be returning to the previous format where physical presense was required. The remotely held background briefing began to draw a bigger number of attendees in one municipality.

The results indicate that face-to-face informal communication - through physical meetings at the workplace – decreased sharply in every organization. Half of the HR directors described that the popularity of an internal network of an organization grew. Meetings are held digitally with video in all of the municipalities, with only rare expections. The number of personal meetings increased drastically from the start of the pandemic for one HR director.

Four out of six respondents thought that the pandemic increased the efficiency of internal communication. One of them described that while the information flows more efficiently, there are expectations that messages are answered to more quickly than before the pandemic. The fifth HR director stated that there was no increase in the efficiency, but the pandemic has given opportunities to use new information technology, as well as brought forward ideas on how to develop internal communication. In the municipality where there still is a great need for internal communication, the efficiency of internal communication decreased.

Four of the six directors estimated that the importance of internal communication has increased since the pandemic, one stated that it had not, and the other one did not know. Some issues arose since the beginning of the pandemic regarding the internal communication. Telework pushed the communication to a more digital format. Due to this, the municipalities faced various challenges. A gap in communication seems to have formed between the manager and the employee, as the manager is perceived to be farther away from the employee. Thus, the manager or director might not be contacted as easily by the employee about trivial matters as before. Further, there is less free conversation happening in remote video meetings compared to meetings pre-covid. However, there are exceptions. Two directors observed that in some situations employees were more talkative and willing to open to the person on the other end of the online video meeting.

A question arose regarding the equality of individuals in online video meetings. The Teams- communication platform, the most common platform for video meetings in the municipalities, had difficulties managing the sudden surge of users in in the early beginning of the pandemic, not all attendants' cameras could be held open during video meetings during that time. Nevertheless, the issue has since been solved. Three HR directors agree that communication seems to be more equal in small video meetings where every party attends the meeting remotely rather than in hybrid meetings, where some of the individuals are in the same physical place and join via a same camera. In one organization, instructions were given to everyone to keep cameras open during video meetings between a small number of people, if it is within the capabilities of the attendants' technology. The next HR director also strived for keeping the cameras open more frequently the smaller the meeting. In the third organization, a recommendation for keeping cameras open existed, but it varied in smaller meetings, where it was decided whether to keep them open or not. These three with another two HR directors also recognized that the hybrid meetings were especially challenging, because it requires more skills. They agreed that in meetings where all joined via video or were physically present the individuals seemed to be more equal with each other.

There were several issues about hybrid meetings, according to the five directors. In one organization, hybrid meetings are still new, and the prevailing opinion is that either everyone attends the meeting remotely or is physically present in the same space with each other. In two organizations, it was thought that the host of the organization needs to pay special attention that the teleworkers experience in the meeting. The next HR director stated that holding a hybrid meeting requires special skills. There was attention brought also to the equipment used in these meetings.

> *''[…] That [the taking part of the activity equally] is not really happening in practise, so it is not occurring. There they are [teleworkers] then taking the role of the listener more, to which the reason can be the not very well-developed equipment. For example, there is no good cameras which could record that conference room where we are to the who are with us remotely, and like the reception of the speech can also be bad.''*

However, one HR director was not asked about equality as this matter only surfaced in later interviews and was not originally included in the interview questions. Nevertheless, they were aware that a hybrid meeting requires attentiveness from the host to the ones who are attending the meeting remotely and brings its own challenges. Further, the host of the meeting must think on how to proceed in the situation differently.

> *''We also cannot prohibit these kind of hybrid meetings because then anyway it could happen that a huge number of people could not ever do telework when there are so many of these meetings. It is like this that when someone chooses that he or she does not do telework, then everyone would have to be physically present ina a meeting for these few people. Yes, we really need to learn to lead the experinece in hybrid meetings if we want to make that work possible.''*

All directors estimate that the new practises of internal communication will remain in their organizations. In all organizations, new communication skills were gained. Also, the digital world became more familiar.

> *''It is always like this, that we learn form crisis, lets say that. When corona came, we just had to arrange internal communication, which was very plentiful and occurred least like weekly. Of course through it we thus learned also faster means, no*

doubt about that. It developed and gave. And overall, we learn. This digital word has become more familiar to everyone, which is the biggest opportunity we have had here.''

As there is a greater need to communicate with the employees, and the change management theory which could be reflected on this theme is Prosci's ADSKAR (2021). The model centers around the individuals needs of an individual during a change, which can be applied here when there are indicators that it is important that the employees can interact in a changed situation, and the internal communication is more dependent on the employee's initiative. When individuals realize what the change is for their own part, they could be made to desire it, as in the phase of ADSKAR. This could make the individual a better part of the internal communication during the changes, because new challeges are posed by the internal communication after pandemic. For the leadership, the changing situation required that internal communication was moved to the new, digital format. This caused many challenges, which the directors recognized them and strived encounter.

6.3   Recruitment

There seems to be changes in the recruitment process caused by the pandemic, according to all HR directors. In all municipalities, job interviews became more digital, i.e., they were done via video. In the light of change management, organizations were already made capable for handling this change due to technology, such as the Teams- platform.

The interviewers' task also became more digital. For five of the organizations, the job interviews are held via internet for the most part or completely. However, out of the five municipalities, it was also mentioned that in two of them, the most central hirings are held while the interviewee and the interviewers are physically present with safety measures, such as masks and distance. For one municipality, the job interviews are held only partly online.

An organization, which did all job interviews digitally, also completed less hirings than planned due to the pandemic. Thus, some work was left undone in their organization. However, this was a short-timed effect, as the hiring situation normalized after the summer of 2020. They also added recorded answers from the interviewee to the recruitment process.

> ''[...] With video job interviews, we have started to use a different method, which works in a way that questions are presented beforehand and we hope that people answer to those with videos, after which our unit which does recruitment can watch these videos when they are able to. So in a way, that the living picture is seen, but not while being present at the same time, with no questions being asked there.''

Another organization, which started to hold interviews online, proceeded to have orientation online for the new employees. In the beginning of the pandemic, some of the planned hires were pushed to a later date if it they weren't absolutely necessary. Further, such things as technical skills and resilience were added to job descriptions more often as a skill or characteristic that was appreciated for the position.

> "[…] We saw that IT skills were appreciated for specific occupations for a long time, and it likely even became more significant and then we had a kind of like this 'eureka' experience that the skills can be needed in almost any job there is. Maybe it and also the skills to lead yourself together with change, and how you react to and live with change. I will say that their appreciation, like the appreciation of resilience, is growing.''

One organization moved the whole recruitment process online due to the pandemic. The interviews, personnel assessments, and orientation have been made remotely. The pandemic supported the implementation of a digital orientation system. In the organization, for example, a new person was hired and telework equipment were brought to his or her home. This was the extent to which a manager saw them while physically present. However, there were challenges in adopting this digital style of recruitment, which were overcome when the results became apparent. This process shows that there were some

barriers for change, which was in managers' uncertainty about changing the routines of the organization.

> *''It was then in the beginning, like and for managers it feels kind of unfamiliar to work with the recruitment process digitally. It was like can we really interview the people only online and we don't see them physically, and how are the cerfiticates and everything checked online. So it really affected the recruitment process and about how we see people. On the other hand, it has also maybe increased trust in this that we can do something like this because we have successful experiences with it [digital recruitment process]. We have made good hires during this period like this.''*

In the above-mentioned e-recruitment process, digital orientation caused the biggest challenge for HRM. The reason for this was the difficulty in realization in orientation, as well as in making the new employees feel like a part of the work community. The digital orientation became more natural for the new, teleworking employee, when all the other workers were also teleworking, according to the HR director. The creation of the sense of belonging in their organization is independent from whether everyone does telework or is at the office. However, a basic recruitment process had likely become cheaper, they estimate, because recruitment is done more efficiently and takes less time.

One HR director stated that the management of the recruitment process has not changed. However, another said that pandemic has speeded up the development of enabling data flow between information systems. The purpose of this is to decrease the manual work stages, for example in the recruitment process, when information is transferred from the recruitment system to the personal information system of the municipality.

It seems undetermined whether there is a surge of new applicants for municipalities in general influenced by pandemic from a geographically wider area. Two out of the six HR directors haven't observed that there are new applicants from a broader area. However, according to a third director, this was likely to be true. A fourth HR director said that this was the case in their organization and some cost pressure from wage competition

seemed to be happening. In another organization, the director said that there were new applicants from a wider area, but whether it happened because of the pandemic or from their own efforts, which aim for increasing the attractiveness of their organization, is unclear. There was no answer to this question from the sixth HR director.

7 Summary and conclusion

Telework has increased sharply in Finnish municipalities in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This corresponds with the results indicated by Association of Finnish Municipalities (2020). It has some straightforward as well as complex effects on human resource management. For five out of six organizations, telework was not a common occurrence and in one organization, it was very rare. All the municipalities had a telework guide or instruction regarding telework before the pandemic. Their policies regarding the start of telework were similar, as they were strongly forced to change their routines in response to the actions of Finnish government, and in a short amount of time. Telework will continue in the municipalities and there is no going back. This is also in accordance with the findings of Tursunbayeva (2021).

The personnel were transferred to telework in four out of the six municipalities. The remaining two municipalities would also have moved to a more complete telework in their organizations, but there were issues regarding the technological capabilities of the organization or lack of alternative workspaces, the employee's home being the only possibility. The lack of alternative workspaces, other than home, was also reported by Carnevale and Hatak (2020). As teleworking was not successful at home, some employees had to come back to their municipality offices and work there with modifications. The two municipalities described their form of telework as hybrid-work.

Telework influenced HRM in every organization. The results indicate that there was a broad spectrum of effects. These concerned the directors and managers, who were simultaneously doing telework themselves, as well as leading the mostly, partly or completely teleworking personnel. Further, the level of telework changed for some during the pandemic, but there was no data collected on the implications that the varying levels of telework had for leading. This could be an avenue for further research, which could be used to gather clearer results about the effects of telework on HRM in municipalities. Additionally, a greater sample size could be used to increase dependability of the research, which this qualitative study lacks.

The results indicate that telework challenged current leadership practices in the organizations. In response, some organizations noticed that skills of managers were not enough, and thus their capabilities were refined in some way, for example, by the leadership - including the HR director, via giving instructions about beneficial practices, or by training, or through some other way. Additionally, most of the employees in the six organizations had new needs for leadership, which in turn caused challenges for HRM.

There were no issues about trust regarding the management of employees who did telework, and if there was a very small amount of overseeing, it concerned the measurement of work hours. This was an interesting observation considering that teleworking was uncommon before the pandemic crisis. What had been holding municipalities back from utilizing telework to a greater extent before covid? The responses of the six HR directors show that employees in general do complete their assigned tasks while teleworking. The results of work would reveal in time whether an employee finished his or her tasks, which was the significant fact for HRM, in addition to the employees' welfare.

Municipalities' internal communication moved to digital platforms due to telework. Digital communication increased drastically, and face-to-face present communication has lessened the most, according to the findings. After the increased need for information in the beginning of the pandemic filled HR directors' emails with messages, one director continues to face the significant demand of messages from employees asking for guidance. All the directors acknowledged the challenges in hybrid meetings and estimate that new internal communication practices learned during the pandemic will remain a part of their organization from now on. Four of six respondents thought that the pandemic had increased internal communication's efficiency and importance in their organization.

The themes of internal communication and telework were intertwined, which sometimes made it harder to lead the interviewee to the right direction, but this gave an

abundance of rich answers to the interview questions. However, this study could have also contained a questionnaire, which would likely give more definite answers. This would made it possible to give the research more depth, especially regarding internal communication HRM, as well as given more time to ask more elaborative questions in the interviews. This could have made the study more systematic. This can be also another possible route for future research.

In all organizations, the recruitment process changed in response to the pandemic, but the findings are indecisive in whether HRM in recruitment changed in general. Among the municipalities, one stood out among others in regards of recruitment processes. During the pandemic, their whole recruitment process was completely turned into e-recruitment. Job interviews were held completely digitally via video in four organizations, and for the most part in two organizations, in response to COVID-19. In Itzchakov and Grau's study (2020), the results also found that interviews were also held online due to the crisis.

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