Empowerment of Front-Line Employees in the Construction of an Employee Handbook

Tiina Känninen

The Norwegian School of Hotel Management

Department of Social Sciences

University of Stavanger

Master's in Service Leadership in International Business

August 2020 – June 2022

Universitetet i Stavanger

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT

MASTER'S THESIS

STUDY PROGRAM: Master's program in Service Leadership in International Business	THESIS IS WRITTEN IN THE FOLLOWING SPECIALIZATION/SUBJECT: Human Resources IS THE ASSIGNMENT CONFIDENTIAL? No

TITLE:

Empowerment of Front-Line Employees in the Construction of an Employee Handbook

AUTHOR: Tiina Känninen		ADVISOR: Åse-Helen Bakkevig Dagsland Einar Marnburg
Student number: 261308 ………………	Name: Tiina Känninen ……………………………	

Abstract

This multiple case study investigates the importance of empowering front-line employees in the construction of an employee handbook. The study researches this by discussing training, leadership styles, empowerment, and leader-member exchange theory. The study was conducted as a multiple case study. Four semi-structured interviews with eight participants were conducted among the students at the University of Stavanger, the Norwegian School of Hotel Management, who are working on the front-line of hospitality. The data collected was analysed with narrative analysis. Even though an employee handbook is considered crucial in the induction of employees, it is not currently implemented in the process and the employees are missing structure and guidance in their employment. Due to the missing structure, front-line employees create their own guidelines, and own handbooks, to operate efficiently. Findings suggest that the front-line employees need to be included in the decision-making processes affecting the front-line operations and duties. Additionally, the main finding in the study suggests that the front-line employees need to be included in the construction and updating of an employee handbook and the company's induction training. The front-line employees hold a vast amount of information regarding the ever-changing environment of the hospitality front-line. Empowering employees is crucial in ensuring service quality and commitment to the organization and the leader. The employees require an authentic leader, who understands the importance of using transactional leadership when enforcing rules and equality among the employees. A leader is desired to be fair, equal, accepting, and attentive.

This thesis presents a new perspective on the construction of an employee handbook with the help of front-line employees and proposes to include them in the decision-making processes of the leaders.

Keywords: employee handbook, induction training, empowerment of front-line employees, leader-member exchange theory, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, authentic leadership

Table of Contents

List of Figures and tables

Foreword

Empowering front-line employees is a key factor in being a successful leader in a team that creates experiences and memories for guests. Training and empowerment are crucial aspects when a leader wishes to have a team that is committed and enthusiastic and hopes to exceed all expectations. My interest in becoming a mentor and a trainer for new employees in hospitality inspired me to conduct this research.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors Associate Professor Åse-Helene Bakkevik Dagsland and Professor Einar Marnburg for guiding, challenging, and encouraging me through the writing process. I value their assistance and discussions, and the creativity they brought to my research. Secondly, I thank all the participants without whom I would not have been able to conduct this study: Thank you for volunteering and taking the time to participate. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my friends and family, who helped me, listened to me, and took me out for walks and drinks to ensure I would remain sane and in good health. Not only through the thesis, but during my two years of studies.

"Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist."

-Pablo Picasso-

Introduction

This thesis explores how well the knowledge of front-line employees is utilized in improving already existing processes and creating new ones. The aim is to discover if the front-line employees feel empowered and if they are respected and valued as information sources. Furthermore, the research assists the leaders to discover the knowledge bank they have in their possession. This research looks into how important the employees consider the induction training to be and what are their expectations regarding it.

Previous studies on the creation of employee handbooks mostly concentrate on the managerial side, and what is considered important according to the HR departments, thus, this multiple case study introduces ideas from the front-line employees, who are often considered to be the key elements in customer satisfaction and organizational strengths (Schuckert et al., 2018). An employee handbook is a guiding light for the employees' daily tasks and procedures, among legalities, values, and goals of the company (Bauer et al., 2020) and, hence, this thesis suggests that employees should be implemented in the creation process.

Background

As the researcher has a vast amount of experience in the hospitality front-line, the study was close at heart. The researcher has operated at the managerial level and has been part of a team conducting induction training for new employees. According to the experience of the researcher, the training period seems to be an everlasting discussion, and issue, in hospitality. Furthermore, as the researcher desires to move towards training and teaching in the field of hospitality, it was interesting to study the subject with the students at the University of Stavanger.

During the years of working on the hospitality front-line, the researcher has noticed issues in leadership, communication, and empowerment. Even stripping the employees of the power, they might have in making independent decisions and forcing the employees to inquire permission for the simplest tasks from the managers. It has been noted how this diminishes motivation and performance.

Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to find out whether the leaders understand the vast amount of information and innovation the front-line employees hold; If the leaders fully understand the potential in the front-line employees and their ideas and innovations. The primary purpose of this study was to discover how empowered the front-line employees felt, and if the knowledge they hold should be implemented in the creation of an employee handbook.

The research questions this thesis presents are as follows

- What kind of information do front-line employees consider crucial in an employee handbook?
- Does the information reflect on what is currently deemed beneficial by leaders and what is embedded into induction training practices?
- Do employees feel empowered by leaders?

The research questions handle topics of an employee handbook, training, and empowerment, as they are all closely connected: Employee handbook is considered an important aspect of induction training (Arthur, 2006) and through proper and thorough training the employees feel empowered (van Assen, 2021) and can operate independently at the front-line.

The current literature on the employee handbook suggests HR to cocreate one with the higher-level managers and does not mention seeking input from the front-line employees (Bauer et al., 2020; Lawson II, 2006; Smith & Harris, 2014). The input front-line employees may have regarding the subject is not discussed. However, empowering the employees in front-line is a rising subject discussed in multiple research: Namasivayam et al. (2014) discuss how empowerment increases the organizational commitment of the employees in addition to customer satisfaction and, according to Raub and Robert (2013), it further affects the service quality due to the innovations front-line employees have. There is a vast amount of literature regarding the empowerment of front-line employees, and these are further discussed in the Literature chapter of the thesis.

Despite the amount of literature regarding empowerment and the creation of employee handbooks, there was not to be found any literature or previous research regarding combining these factors. Thus, this thesis has decided to research if the combination of empowering the front-line employees could be of benefit when creating and maintaining an employee handbook.

Outline of the thesis

Firstly, a thorough literature review is concluded. Theory on subjects of training and leadership, empowerment, and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is discussed based on the already existing research. Secondly, the methodology of the study is explained. A profound explanation of why a qualitative study was chosen and how the sample was gathered is stated. Further, the research quality and ethics are discussed. Thirdly, the results of the qualitative interviews are analysed and explained to the reader, followed by a discussion, where the theory and findings are drawn together. Limitations of the study are discussed. Lastly, conclusions are provided, where the research questions receive an answer, and a summary of the research is provided. Additionally, managerial implications are provided and suggestions for future research are given. Finally, the reference list and appendices are displayed.

Literature review

A literature review gathers important theories related to the research subject in order to provide a framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Here is this literature review of training, employee handbook and its creation, differing leadership theories, empowerment of the front-line employees, and leader-member theory is discussed to build a dialogue.

Training

As Bauer et al. (2020, p. 621) state human capital is the most valuable asset a company has, and thus investing in training employees is the best decision the company can make. Training of employees must be well organized and structured as it lays the path for the employee's career and the organization's success (Cadwell, 1988). The first impression can only be given once, and when the impression of the company is professional, organized, and well presented, it delivers a perception of a reliable and valuable working environment for the new employee (Cadwell, 1988).

As new employees embark on a journey to employment with eager minds, the training can either crush their interest and enthusiasm or take advantage of it (Arthur, 2006; Cadwell, 1988). According to Cadwell (1988), the training does not only guide the employees with legal matters but also plays a crucial part in advising on the work environment and culture and, therefore, helps the employee to become a part of the team. Becoming part of the team is a key part of implementing new employees into the working environment; the onboarding process helps the new employee to understand the culture, knowledge, and attitudes of the working environment and assist in finding their own roles within the community (Bauer et al., 2020). This onboarding and socialisation of the new employee is an important part of the training and Bauer et al. (2020) state that it would be beneficial that this onboarding is done by a specific person, whom the new employee may rely on and turn to if facing questions throughout the process from hiring to becoming valued part of the team.

The training of new employees must be properly structured and designed to fit the company's objectives and the special requirements of the employee tasks (Bauer et al., 2020). When conducted properly, the training can reduce employee turnover and thus increase productivity and service quality and create valuable employees for the company (Bauer et al., 2020; Cadwell, 1988; Jaworski et al., 2018). Furthermore, if the training process is not structured properly, the employees are left to learn independently, which is time-consuming and creates room for mistakes and misinformation (Cadwell, 1988). Additionally, a structured training process helps the employee to understand expectations and responsibilities, and, therefore, reinforces the decision that they have chosen the correct employer (Cadwell, 1988). According to Cadwell (1988) and Smith and Harris

(2014) structured and consistent processes enhance equality and fairness among employees. If the employees are treated and trained unequally it may considerably diminish the employee morale and increase the turnover of employees (Arthur, 2006; Guerin & DelPo, 2019).

In addition to the onboarding, also the training process should be systematically conducted by designated trainers, or professionals, as this further creates more structured training and enforces equality (Jaworski et al., 2018). The large turnover percentage in the hospitality industry is blamed mainly on poor training of the employees (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013; Jaworski et al., 2018) as most of them are part-time employees or seasonal workers and thus the employer does not consider the training valuable, or worthy on the time it requires (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013). However, the employees being only seasonal makes a structured induction even more important; Well-structured induction and ready material make the training process of seasonal-, and part-time employees efficient and prompt and the employees are ready to work according to expectations in no time (Cadwell, 1988). When the seasonal-, and part-time employees are given a good impression through efficient training, the possibility of them returning in the future increases and lessens the need to train brand new employees in a long run (Cadwell, 1988).

After the training process has been concluded, it is important to assess its effectiveness to evaluate what aspects need to be further developed and what has been successful (Bauer et al., 2020; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). According to Bauer et al. (2020), it is crucial to assess the training processes, and feedback needs to be gathered from the new employees, either by observation from afar or through discussions and questionnaires. Hence it is argued, that including the employees in the creation of the employee handbook could be viewed as important to better the training processes and access more valuable information from the front-line workers.

In the process of training a new employee, an employee handbook is argued to play a meaningful part and can be used as an effective tool (Arthur, 2006, p. 299; Lawson II, 2006, p. 3). With the handbook, the trainer has a clear structure to follow during the induction and thus makes the process less time-consuming (Cadwell, 1988; Lawson II, 2006; Zeuch, 2016) but it needs to be remembered that there is more included in the training than just reading and understanding the employee handbook.

Employee handbook

According to previous researchers (Lawson II, 2006; Smith & Harris, 2014) if a company wishes to have clear communication from employer to employees, then an employee handbook is vital to have. Policies and guidelines in the handbook define what is mandatory to follow – policies –, and what is not compulsory – guidelines (Zeuch, 2016). Policies include everything that cannot be compromised, such as legal issues and security, whereas guidelines include issues such as behaviour and processes in everyday situations (Zeuch, 2016).

Within the policies and guidelines, an employee handbook should consist of multiple different aspects. A welcome statement from the managerial level is desirable with the vision and mission statement to help the employees understand what direction the organization is moving. It should contain employee benefits and legalities regarding working hours, annual holidays, a variety of leaves, and other legal issues related to working. Additionally, expectations from the managers and the responsibilities of the employee need to be clearly stated to avoid misunderstandings (Bauer et al., 2020; Minton-Eversole, 2020; Smith & Harris, 2014; Zeuch, 2016). According to Bauer et al. (2020) occasionally the handbook sets guidelines for the employee appearance including how to look, what is the correct outfit, and what type of enhancements are allowed, and Bauer and Erdogan (2015) further argue that these appearance issues can be related to safety matters and, thus, become policies. These safety matters can cover basic customer-, and employee safety, and more dire danger situations. Additionally, social media usage is often added as it is gaining more and more attention in a personal and professional environment and can be considered a safety matter for hospitality employees and customers (Bauer et al., 2020).

It is considered important to state that the employee handbook is not to be taken for an employment contract (Lawson II, 2006; Levesque, 1993; Smith & Harris, 2014). Nevertheless, a handbook should be proofread by the lawyer of the organization to ensure a handbook is in line with the local legislation (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Minton-Eversole, 2020; Zeuch, 2016) because even though the handbook is not to be considered as an employee contract, it is used to settle disputes inside the organization, and, thus, all parties need to be aware of the legalities and benefits stated in it (Bauer et al., 2020). Therefore, it can be argued, that the employees must ask for clarification if something is not fully understood, as a handbook acts as a legal document to protect both employee and employer (Arthur, 2006; Bauer et al., 2020).

An employee handbook does not need to describe everything in detail, but it provides directions for the employees to follow (Smith & Harris, 2014). An employee handbook needs to be updated regularly to ensure that it is customized to fit the organization's goals and culture (Minton-Eversole, 2020; Smith & Harris, 2014) and these updates need to be clearly and promptly communicated to all employees of the organization (Minton-Eversole, 2020; Zeuch, 2016).

According to many researchers, it is not HR’s sole responsibility to create and maintain a handbook, but it is important that an employee handbook is created in cooperation with other high-level managers (Lawson II, 2006; Minton-Eversole, 2020; Smith & Harris, 2014). When creating a handbook, the HR personnel needs to be careful not to construct it incomprehensibly but to make it understandable for the front-line workers (Minton-Eversole, 2020; Smith & Harris, 2014). Often a handbook is created from a generic base received online and, thus, does not represent the culture of the organization and is mundane to read (Bauer et al., 2020; Minton-Eversole, 2020). The emphasis should not be placed merely on the legalities, but it is important to communicate the company’s brand, culture, and history for the employee to understand the working environment and become part of it (Bauer et al., 2020; Minton-Eversole, 2020; Zeuch, 2016).

There can be found a lot of benefits to a well-created and maintained employee handbook. With the assistance of a handbook, the employees do not need to search for answers to simple questions, but the information is easily reachable for everyone in the company and thus saves time (Lawson II, 2006; Smith & Harris, 2014; Zeuch, 2016). A handbook defines employee responsibilities and employer expectations and thereby creates fairness among the employees (Levesque, 1993; Smith & Harris, 2014; Zeuch, 2016) and additionally, it assists the managerial level to maintain a consistent quality within the frontline employees and justifies disciplinary actions when required (Lawson II, 2006; Smith & Harris, 2014). Levesque (1993) and Smith and Harris (2014) state that by enforcing equal treatment among employees the employee handbook assists in reducing employee turnover and diminishing possible internal lawsuits. Furthermore, it is argued that one of the main goals of a handbook is to provide consistency and fairness and avoid misunderstandings and dissatisfaction (Lawson II, 2006; Smith & Harris, 2014; Zeuch, 2016).

However, according to Minton-Eversole (2020), a handbook also has some disadvantages; The handbook reduces flexibility within the company and forces the employees to follow certain procedures and regulations; the managerial level needs to be enforced to act according to the regulations in the handbook and to implement required procedures and punishments if the procedures and expectations are violated; Additionally, there is a possibility to overregulate the employees and, thus, create an ineffective and overly disciplined environment.

Leadership

Throughout the century new ways of leading people and new leadership styles have been emerging plentily (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). What leadership style to use depends on many factors; Company's life cycle requires different styles at different times, employees require a different kind of leadership during their employee career, and, additionally, the varying situations in a working day in hospitality call for different kinds of leadership style (Normann, 1975; Patterson, 2015; Schuckert et al., 2018; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). However different the leadership styles might be there is always one mutual aspect: an effort to influence the other by guidance or structure, in order to gain a desirable outcome from the situation (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Patterson, 2015; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). As in everything, there are two sides to being a leader; one has to decide whether to use the power of the leadership status to gain loyal followers and employees, or to exploit the power and use forceful commands and discipline to attain the desired outcomes (Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

There are direct and indirect forms of leadership. In direct leadership, the leader is in straight contact with the subordinate, either face to face or via messages and reports. Indirect leadership occurs in multiple situations; when the leader from a higher level is showing an example of how to conduct oneself in certain situations and the lower-level employees decide to mirror the behaviour and actions; Indirect leadership occurs in form of manuals and handbooks, where the management has set visions, mission, and goals to the employees; Additionally, shared culture and values at the working environment are considered to be part of indirect leadership (Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

From the multiple different leadership styles, this thesis handles three: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and authentic leadership. The transactional leadership style is often used in a more mature and stable working environment (Dai et al., 2013). Du et al. (2021) and Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2015) argue that when training new employees, the leaders prefer to use a transformational leadership style, but Schuckert et al. (2018) has shown that that authentic leadership style should be emphasized. However, it is also stated that the best outcome is often received when combining different leadership styles (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). According to Dai et al. (2013), transactional-, and transformational leadership styles complement each other, and adapting leadership styles according to situations is beneficial. Furthermore, Yukl and Gardner (2020) reinforce this by stating, that all the leadership styles play an important part in making profit for the company and gaining loyal employees. Hence, it is seen that leader needs to be able to adapt to different situations and understand the differences in leadership styles.

Transactional leadership

The base of transactional leadership is rewarding the employees once they have reached the goals and accomplished the tasks the leader has requested (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). There can be found two types of transactional behaviour: Contingent rewards and management by exception (Dai et al., 2013; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Contingent rewarding refers to when the leader is setting clear goals that need to be accomplished in order to gain the rewards and using different incentives to make sure the employee is motivated to work towards the goals (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). These rewards do not need to be physical, but psychological rewards are used as well (Dai et al., 2013). Yukl and Gardner (2020) state that there are two ways of managing by exception: active and passive. In the passive form, the employees are punished if they stray from the preferred model of performance, whereas in an active form the leader is constantly looking for faults in the systems and creating more and more rules to enforce the desired way (Yukl & Gardner, 2020) and thus becomes extremely controlling and descriptive (Patiar & Mia, 2009). Hence, active management by exception is considered to create fear of failure and diminish the feeling of being competent as the monitoring of the processes is constant (Hetland et al., 2011).

The relationship between leader and employee in transactional leadership is not a lasting one that would build mutual trust and loyalty, but rather it is brief and temporary (Dai et al., 2013). Hetland et al. (2011) argue that transactional leadership and its behaviour do not take into account the needs of the employees but only concentrate on the benefits for the company. This is enhanced by Du et al. (2012) who state that transactional leaders focus mainly on effectiveness and profitability. Further, Patiar and Mia (2009) state that transactional leadership does not offer the employees any possibilities to participate in the decision-making processes in the working environment and, therefore, lowers their working morale and innovativeness. Hence, it is suggested that in the hospitality industry the transactional leadership style is not beneficial as it may lead to poor customer service due to the restricted regulations in behaviour (Dai et al., 2013; Patiar & Mia, 2009). However, as the company's main goal is to make profit (Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007), a transactional leadership style can be considered an important part.

Transformational leadership

Through charismatic traits, the transformational leader tries to motivate and encourage the employees to change their habits and actions inside the organization in order to reach the desirable goals (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Patterson, 2015; Schuckert et al., 2018; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). The leader tries to do this change by appealing to the employees' emotions and morals and modifying the employees' core values and beliefs (Mendonca, 2001; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Through the modification, the leader and employee end up sharing the same ideology and this creates a feeling of mutual values and further motivates the employee to operate even better (Yukl, 2012).

According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), there are four transformational behaviours. Intellectual stimulation where the issues at hand are perceived from another point of view and seeking new innovating results from another angle. In individualized consideration, the leader sees the employees as individuals and provides each motivation and encouragement designed for their special needs. Inspirational motivation places the emphasis on the good of people and creates mutual goals and tasks. Idealised influence regards the behaviour of the leader where sacrifices are made to gain benefits for the followers and thus attaining their loyalty (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Du et al., 2012; Yukl & Gardner, 2020)

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) criticise transformational leadership to be unethical and manipulative as it appeals to employees' emotions with charm rather than logic and reality. And they further state that it is said to ignore the employees' own emotions and value beliefs, as the leader manipulates them to match the organizational values and goals (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Additionally, the transformational leader constantly tries to get the employee to perform beyond their limits (Dai et al., 2013; Yammarino et al., 1998) and, thus, could be argued to cause burnout and over-achieving.

Authentic leadership

There are multiple ways to define authentic leadership (Ilies et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Yukl & Gardner, 2020) but drawn from the many concepts Walumbwa et al. (2008) define authentic leadership as

> a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development. (p.94)

According to this definition, there are four main behaviours. Self-awareness refers to the leaders' understanding of their own core beliefs and values and how this affects their view of the world. It also depicts how the leaders have positive self-esteem that cannot be easily shaken. Internalized moral guides the leader in the decision-making process, and even if it differs from the values and guidelines of the company, the leaders understand and accept the differences. Balanced processing illustrates how the leader is able to receive both negative and positive feedback and evaluate and improve their behaviour and actions based on the feedback without being insulted or getting defensive. The leaders understand the importance of being open to critique without it affecting their self-esteem. Relational transparency refers to the true and authentic leaders, who do not present themselves in a false way to gain personal profit but presents themselves openly and truthfully even if it diminishes profit for themselves (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

An authentic leader is a person who is highly self-aware, confident, reliable, and aims constantly to educate not only themselves but also the followers, by enforcing an interactive atmosphere where everyone’s ideas are taken into consideration (Ilies et al., 2005; Leroy et al., 2015). According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), an authentic leader encourages the employees to be creative, accept the different ways to depict the surroundings and tasks, and are able to modify their own point of view accordingly.

It can be said that authentic leadership is based on truth and credibility, where the leader is gaining the trust and loyalty of his or her employees by being honest and transparent (Leroy et al., 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Yukl & Gardner, 2020) therefore makes it desirable for the employees to mirror the behaviour and actions (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Through being present and involved in the employees' daily tasks, issues, and problems, the authentic leader builds employee trust and commitment to the work and the organization (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Furthermore, it is argued that by being authentic and creating a positive atmosphere in the work environment the leader also affects positively the employees' well-being (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Leroy et al., 2015; Rego et al., 2012).

According to Avolio and Gardner (2005) despite the leader being authentic and transparent, they might still fail in gaining the trust and loyalty of the employees, due to not sharing the same values or beliefs, to begin with. Furthermore, Cooper et al. (2005) and Yukl and Gardner (2020) consider authentic leadership to be rather similar to transformational leadership and thus call for the need for more refining of what attributes define and differentiate the leadership styles properly.

Empowerment of front-line employees

Front-line employees are claimed to be the "face of the organization" (Schuckert et al., 2018, p. 777) and can be argued to play a key part in the organization's success due to the daily customer interactions they encounter (Schuckert et al., 2018; Turkmenoglu, 2019; Yilmaz, 2015). It is further stated that the front-line employees are key elements in obtaining and maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty and, therefore, responsible for the organization's competitive advantages (Schuckert et al., 2018; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015; Turkmenoglu, 2019; Yilmaz, 2015). It is essential for the company to be able to respond rapidly to the changes and nuances in the atmosphere (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011) and therefore, front-line employees need to be encouraged towards creating new innovating procedures to confront the customers and drive the service delivery towards superiority (Schuckert et al., 2018; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015) as they are more aware of the possible requirements the customers may have than leaders (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015). Since no interaction is similar to another, front-line employees require flexibility so that they may excel in their daily tasks and, therefore, empowering the front-line employees is considered important in order to be successful (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011, 2015).

Empowerment of employees refers to involving the employees in a decision-making process along with the leaders (Turkmenoglu, 2019; Yilmaz, 2015) without the leader losing their leadership status or respect (Yilmaz, 2015). Empowering the employees increases the employees' organizational loyalty as well as motivation and satisfaction with their work (Turkmenoglu, 2019; Yilmaz, 2015) and thus the employee becomes more innovative and creative (Rego et al., 2012; Schuckert et al., 2018; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015). According to Luoh et al. (2014) when the employees have restricted influence on the decision-making, they feel unmotivated, meaningless, and are not willing to seek solutions to the problems they face. Hence, it could be argued that the transactional leadership style affects empowerment negatively. Schuckert et al. (2018) state, that an authentic leader seeks input in the decision-making process also from the front-line employees, and, therefore, encourages empowerment and creates meaning for the employees.

According to Turkmenoglu (2019) empowering the employees is also beneficial for the organization; When empowering the employees, the leaders have more time to concentrate on other manners, and, therefore it can be considered cost-effective. Additionally, he further states that when front-line employees have the authority to make decisions on the spot, the customer service experience gains a more positive note, as the customer is not forced to wait for the manager's approval, but the employees can solve the possible negative experience instantly (Turkmenoglu, 2019). However, Auh et al. (2014) reminds that the leader needs to make sure all the front-line employees feel empowered in order to maintain a consistent service quality

By empowering the employees, the employer is giving them autonomy to be innovative and resolve issues in new ways and thus improving the service quality (Luoh et al., 2014). This innovativeness is a key element in service excellence and the competitive advantages of the organization (Luoh et al., 2014; Rego et al., 2012). In order to harness the innovative minds of the employees, proper training is required (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; van Assen, 2021). Employees need to have a clear job description, expectations, and goals, and within certain limitations, the employee is allowed to act with autonomy (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011) and therefore it can be seen what an important part the employee handbook plays. Additionally, the way leader interacts with the employees has a great part in how innovative the employees are (Rego et al., 2012; Schuckert et al., 2018). In case the front-line employees do not feel trusted, valued, or empowered, they are not comfortable discussing possible issues and problems with the leaders (Hassan et al., 2019). The leader needs to be encouraging and support and promote an open and accepting atmosphere in a just and equal manner (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Open communication within the company plays a vital part in an innovative atmosphere as, the employees are able to discuss and contemplate ideas together (Shalley & Gilson, 2004) and this further indicates the importance of authentic leadership. Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011) further argue that the employees ought to participate in creating, exploring, and maintaining even the company’s vision, to motivate them to work towards the mutual goals. The effect of the innovation by a front-line employee may vary from minimal to substantial (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). However, even small changes in the everyday tasks might help the work to flow better, and, thus, increase efficiency (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

However, there are also downsides to empowering the front-line employees. According to Turkmenoglu (2019), if the organization's upper management is not aware of the autonomy at the front-line, the managerial level might have a hard time understanding the power structure. It is further stated that the leader needs to be aware of the training status of the employees in order to make sure power is not distributed to personnel who are unqualified to make decisions and or lack competence (Turkmenoglu, 2019). This is further amplified by Hewagama et al. (2019) stating that if the employee does not have proper training, then empowerment is futile and may result in a poor service experience for the customer. Therefore, it can be concluded that the leader needs to distribute power according to each individual's strengths (Turkmenoglu, 2019).

As the empowerment of employees is based on the individual's attributes, it is argued that authentic leadership is beneficial, as it does not solely consider the organization's benefits (Schuckert et al., 2018) whereas a transformational leader is often considering the benefits of the organization and guides the innovative process towards its benefit (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015).

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory

LMX theory suggests that a leader has a diverse dyadic relationship with each of the employees (Bauer et al., 2020; Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). A high LMX relationship takes time to build up, as it is based on mutual trust, loyalty, and similarities in personal values and beliefs (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). The core of the exchange lies in the leader assigning correct tasks that match the employees' strengths, empowering the employee, rewarding success, and holding transparent and authentic conversations between the leader and the employee (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). In exchange, the employee provides the leader with strong working morale, commitment to the work, loyalty, and assistance (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). When the leader has a high LMX relationship with employees, it eases the workload as the leader is able to delegate some of his duties to the trusted person (Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

However, the leader is not able to build a high LMX relationship with all of his employees, but merely a few selected ones (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). A high LMX relationship with the selected few might diminish the motive and loyalty of those, who have lower LMX relationships (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Yukl & Gardner, 2020) and these employees might feel less valued and not respected by the leader, and, hence, it is important that the leader also shows individual interest in the work of these individuals (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

According to Yukl and Gardner (2020) maintaining a high LMX with employees can be time-consuming, as it requires the leader to maintain communications and transparency throughout the employment. Additionally, the leader needs to be consistent in the treatment of the employees and is not able to use power and influence, but needs to hold open and transparent discussions, even when the time is not on their side.

Yukl and Gardner (2020) argue that the leader takes the first initiative in building a high LMX relationship. However, Bauer et al. (2020) and Xu et al. (2019) further build on and state that when the employee is proactive, the employee has a possibility to affect the LMX relationship and its beginning; By implementing new procedures and methods to increase the productivity of the organization the employee can be noticed by the leader in a favourable light and affect positively the LMX relationship. Additionally, Shalley and Gilson (2004) confirm that the proactivity and innovativeness of an employee affects an already existing LMX relationship positively as well.

When the leader is attentive and holds open communication with the employees, the employees become more creative and therefore, further enhance the LMX relationship (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Leaders who have set clear goals and thrive for achievement are likely to appreciate initiative from the employees (Xu et al., 2019). It is further argued that leadership training should include training on how to accept, evaluate and value employees who are initiative and innovative (Xu et al., 2019).

How empowered the employee feels, affects the LMX relationship; If the employee is feeling unmotivated and without the possibility to make independent decisions, they are seeking higher levels of LMX relationship (Harris et al., 2009). Consequently, if the employee feels motivated and empowered, a high LMX relationship is not necessary as fulfilment and motivation have already been received through empowerment (Harris et al., 2009). This further enhances the statement by Atwater and Carmeli (2009) that leaders should direct the high LMX relationships to employees who are unmotivated and struggling with creativity and innovativeness, as each employee has different needs. Through the high LMX relationship, the leader will motivate the employee towards more motivated and innovative behaviour (Garg & Dhar, 2017).

Methodology

In order to conduct research, a structured and creative plan is required, and it is crucial to find the correct data collection method to suit the research question (Neuman, 2014). Qualitative and quantitative research methods both collect data, but in different forms; Whereas the quantitative method seeks to collect precise data that can be generalized to the larger population, a qualitative approach often seeks to understand phenomena or a case more broadly from the perspective of individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Neuman, 2014). Both methods are reliable when conducted properly, but both methods do not fit all research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative research design

As the aim of the study was to gather information regarding a phenomenon, rather than numbers and figures, a qualitative approach was chosen (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research tries to understand the questions why, and how, by, for example, researching why people behave and perform daily tasks in a certain way (Walsh, 2003). According to Maxwell (2013), qualitative research aims to understand the world from the point of view of the participant and understand their perspective. Additionally, as Tomaszewski et al. (2020) state, qualitative research does not try to predict any outcomes, hence, a qualitative approach gives the researcher room to evolve with the study, and it does not require a linear path set to stone (Neuman, 2014). It is necessary to be able to grow with the research and pay attention to what data is valuable and which questions need to be sharpened (Maxwell, 2013). However, as the research evolves constantly, replicating it is considered highly difficult and rare (Neuman, 2014). Qualitative research was deemed correct, as the phenomenon studied has not been comprehensively addressed in previous studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), but the emphasis has been put on the managers and HR personnel. As Walsh (2003) states the researcher aims to challenge how managers make decisions and how they run their organizations.

There are multiple different ways to collect data in qualitative research, but one aspect of combining these methods is that the data collected is mostly descriptive or visual (Neuman, 2014; Saldaña, 2011). According to Neuman (2014, p. 112) the collected data should be examined and rearranged in a way that tries to depict "an authentic voice, and in a manner to remain true to the original understanding of the people being studied". This research has been conducted as a case study.

One of the limitations of qualitative study is, that the data collected is individual data, and cannot be converted to the general population (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, it is argued that as a qualitative approach is about interpreting words and visuals, it is not reliable, as many factors are affecting the interpretation (Graue & Trainor, 2013). However, it is considered to be a beneficial factor for this research, that an in-depth understanding of the subject and attention to detail is achievable (Patton, 2015).

The qualitative data will be gathered in a form of focus group interviews conducted face-to-face. And thus, data does not merely rely on the recorded interview, but the participants' attitudes and behaviour can be analysed as well (Brinkmann, 2013).

Case study

There are multiple definitions of what a case study is (Graue & Trainor, 2013; Yin, 2018). But for this study, it is beneficial to understand what Tomaszewski et al. (2020, p. 3) state: "case studies can be used to illustrate, test, or extend a theory, or assist other educators to analyze or shape their own practices". This statement fits the field of the study where the aim is to understand how the employers can use and benefit from the knowledge of the front-line employees in construction of the employee handbook and, therefore, training. Yin (2018) states that multiple-case studies can be considered more trustworthy than a single-case study, as the replication of the study brings more validity to the analysis process, and therefore, the study becomes more trustworthy. A multiple case study was used, as it assists in finding whether similarities among the participants exist (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

Sample

According to Graue and Trainor (2013), one of the main critiques of qualitative studies is the limited number of participants in the study, and therefore the selection process is crucial. Due to the limited amount of interviews, the participants needed to be chosen carefully and on purpose to fit the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In order to fit the study, it needed to be carefully evaluated whether the participants have enough experience to answer the required questions (Graue & Trainor, 2013). People who are about to embark on a journey to a hospitality career, or have recently done so, were the population for the research. The participants in the study were recruited among the students of the bachelor's degree in Hotelledelse at the University of Stavanger (UiS), Norwegian Hotel School (NHS). When entering new employment training is considered important (Bauer et al., 2020) and therefore it can be assumed that the students have in recent years experienced training and onboarding. Based on the training the employees are expected to perform on the front line. As the employee handbook is considered a key element in the training process, the new employees can be argued to evaluate what was beneficial and what they perceived missing from their training process where the handbook was assumably used as a guideline.

Additionally, those students who are yet to embark on their hospitality careers could be considered to hold valuable information for the thesis, as they have clear and undisturbed perceptions of the training processes through their studies at the UiS. The concerns these students have could be argued to be vital to include in the training, for them to operate comfortably at the front line. These concerns might include aspects the managers have not considered of importance as they are already experienced and have managed and worked in hospitality for a time. Furthermore, the importance of empowering front-line employees in the construction of an employee handbook and creating new procedures and processes will be discussed with the students, in order to discover whether they feel comfortable in being empowered and what type of leadership they consider most beneficial.

The research was conducted in the NHS building at UiS as a form of a discussion based on the interview questions. The researcher acted as a mediator to guide the discussion to the right track, and to be able to further understand the meaning and nuances among the students. The aim was to create five groups consisting of five participants. However, due to the limited number of volunteers modifications were made.

The sample received consisted of 8 participants from the bachelor studies at NHS at UiS. These eight participants were divided into pairs to have a conversation without too much interference from the interviewee. All the participants had some or a lot of experience in hospitality ranging from small independent hospitality establishments to larger chain corporations. These fours pair were as follows; the first pair consisted of participant A: a female of age 21 with four years of experience in hospitality, and participant B: a female of age 30 with 10 years of experience in hospitality. The second interview consisted of two males. Participant C was a 35-year-old who held 10 years of experience in hospitality and participant D was a 37-year-old with seven years of experience in hospitality. The third interview was held among a female and a male participant. Participant E, a 23-year-old male held two years of experience in hospitality, and participant F, a 24-year-old female with three years of experience. Lastly, the fourth interview consisted of two female participants: Participant G was a 24-year-old with two years of experience in hospitality, and participant H was a 26-year-old with three years of experience.

The research faces limitations regarding the sample group as it can be assumed some of the students participating might not plan to stay in hospitality but have interests in other fields of work. To avoid sample errors, the sample group has been carefully selected. Additionally, people are more eager to answer if the subject is of interest (Fowler, 2014) and this lessens the possibility of participation of those, who are not employed in the hospitality field or on the verge of their careers.

Data collection

Qualitative interviews

A qualitative interview was chosen, as it provided the participants a possibility to voice their own experiences and understanding of the world (Kvale, 2006). In qualitative interview research, there are many ways to discover the required data (Graue & Trainor, 2013). According to Brinkmann (2013), a semi-structured interview takes into account the possibility to change and modify the questions better than a structured interview, and, therefore, provides a possibility to modify the discussion along the way. An interview guide was created together with questions to discuss topics related to the research (Brinkmann, 2013; Graue & Trainor, 2013). Hence, the interviews in a focus group were conducted in a semi-structured way in order to discuss the matter with the students in a way that allowed them to voice their experiences and concerns freely, but with guidance to remain in the frame of the research. To reach the desired discussion, open-ended questions were used (Brinkmann, 2013). A semi-structured interview ought to not last more than one hour, as it can be considered straining for both the participant and the interviewer (Adams, 2015). Thus, the interviews were planned to take approximately 30-60 minutes to hold the interest of the participants.

Patton (2015, p. 630) reminds us that “the quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer.” Hence, it is important that the researcher was deeply concentrating on the situation and noticed nuances and group dynamics in order to find relevant data for the study. This importance is further emphasized as the study was conducted as cross-sectional, referring to a one-time data collection point in time, (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) due to time limitations, and only one opportunity to reach valued data per focus group was provided.

Group discussion could be deemed to be more relaxed and freer than individual interviews (Brinkmann, 2013). Brinkmann (2013, p. 26) argues that group interviews are generally better when the aim is not to receive descriptive data of an experience but to have the participants discuss, argue, and justify their opinions. Therefore, as the aim was to receive insight into what the employees consider regarding the employee handbook and training, a group interview was decided to fit the study better than individual ones.

Approaching informants

The recruitment of participants started by visiting various lectures for the bachelor students in the first-, and second years. A two-slide PowerPoint presentation was created to assist the researcher in recruitment. This PowerPoint was shared via the university's online platform Canvas by the professors who allowed the researcher to visit their lectures. Additionally, the professors reminded and encouraged the students to take part in the study after the presentation was held. The students were motivated, for example, by stating how they would be able to see how to execute interviews and gain insight into what kind of theses research there was a possibility to create. After this, a flyer, to be shared on social media platforms, such as Facebook, was created in order to attract more participants. The flyer was distributed to the online platforms by bachelor students known to the researcher. Additionally, the same flyer was shared to the NHS Facebook platform to gather master students as well, due to the few volunteers from the Bachelor student side, and to reach a larger audience.

The volunteering bachelor students were further encouraged to lure their class-mate to take part in the interviews. However, the number of volunteers remained depressingly low. After the first interview, the participants were excited about the experience and continued to encourage their classmates to participate in vain.

Preparation for the interviews

In preparation for the interviews, many aspects needed to be taken into consideration; Firstly, it was important to find a date and time that suits all the participants' timetables in a way that they were refreshed and did not feel pressured; additionally, the space for the interview needed to be where all felt comfortable, and no distractions were present so that the concentration as placed on the matter in hand (Saldaña, 2011). Combining different schedules from master students and bachelor students was challenging and, thus, the participants were contacted multiple times to locate a time suitable for all.

It is paramount that when conducting the interview, the participants are treated with courtesy and respect (Graue & Trainor, 2013; Saldaña, 2011) as they are the experts the researcher is seeking the input from. Information regarding the subject and generic question of the demographics of the participants were sent beforehand in order to concentrate on the limited time for the questions and discussion.

The interview questions were prepared in English in a comprehensive everyday language that can be seen in the Appendices. Appendix A presents the questions prepared for the experienced participants and Appendix B the questions for the inexperienced. The questions for inexperienced were not used in the end, as all the participants had experience in the field of hospitality. To reach validity the questions must be interpreted correctly (Fowler, 2014; Sue & Ritter, 2007) and thus clear and simple wording is required (Adams, 2015; Fowler, 2014). Hence, the language used needed to be modified for the people who are not yet in the hospitality industry, and thus do not necessarily understand the professional words used in everyday operations. Additionally, since the language in which the interviews were performed is not the native language of the researcher, certain errors may occur without careful contemplation. Luckily, if any clarifications were needed the participants were encouraged to ask the researcher. All the questions presented in the research needed to be connected to the subject and the correct questions needed to be asked in order to reveal the relationships (Rea, 2014; Sue & Ritter, 2007).

Prior to the interviews, all equipment used was checked to be in order and working. Made sure the recorder was functioning and the data was safely stored. A conference room on the 3rd floor of NHS was reserved with the assistance of the supervisor of the thesis. On the day of the interviews, the researcher arrived timely to greet the participants and ensure they were able to locate the interview room. The room was opened in advance by the supervisor to ensure a smooth and unproblematic entrance. While settling into the interview room certain guidelines regarding Covid-19 were kept in mind and a safe distance to all was kept. This was repeated for all the interviews to ensure consistent quality and equal treatment of the participants.

Data analysis

Analysing qualitative data requires it to be categorised according to certain patterns and themes (Neuman, 2014) as the human mind is not able to analyse a vast amount of data simultaneously (Walliman, 2017). But, as Flick (2014) states, in addition to verbal data received, it is also important to pay attention to issues that are not mentioned or are avoided. In order to make sure that no data is lost in a qualitative study, the analysing procedure needs to be started right after the data collection (Graue & Trainor, 2013; Walliman, 2017). However, Brinkmann (2014) argues that the analysing of qualitative data already begins during the interviews by trying to understand the statements and discussion. Hence, it is relevant to include the researcher’s notes in the analysis in addition to the recorded interviews. According to Graue and Trainor (2013, p. 44) by transcribing the data from audio to literal data the researcher gains “strong insight” and “cognitive ownership” over it. However, they continue by stating that not all of the interviews required transcribing, but the researcher can concentrate on the most important aspects that are directly connected to the research (Graue & Trainor, 2013). Hence the interviews were written down by listening to the tapes and transcribing the parts that were considered the most relevant. General small talk before or after the discussion was not transcribed.

Narrative analysis is used to understand the data. This has been deemed suitable for the study, as it concentrates on the experiences the participants have lived and how they interpret the lived experiences (Walliman, 2017). According to Neuman (2014) in the narrative analysis, the data is allowed to talk on its own and does not require many concepts or theories. Additionally, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) further emphasise this by stating that narrative analysing does not concentrate on coding and categorizing the data. In the narrative analysis, the researcher concentrates more on what is said, rather than how the participant said it (Walliman, 2017). This is important for the study as the aims to provide the participants a voice to share their experience of the usefulness of the training process and employee handbook. Additionally, the expectations and concerns of the new employees are not yet lived experiences, but demand a space for discussion and contemplation, and thus are narratives and fit for the same analysis.

Research quality

In recent years, qualitative research has gained more trustworthiness and authenticity than previously (Patton, 2015). According to Morse (2015) in the 1980s Guba and Lincoln defined criteria for determining trustworthiness (rigor) in qualitative research with dependability (reliability), credibility (validity), and transferability (generalisability). She further states that these strategies in defining quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research are still universally used (Morse, 2015) and this is further enhanced by multiple authors, who use the same definitions to define quality in qualitative research (Amin et al., 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Graue & Trainor, 2013; Patton, 2015). Additionally, reflexivity will be discussed.

In validity, the researcher aims to make sure that the research represents the actual phenomena as well as possible (Morse, 2015) and the validity of the study is linked to the validity of the researcher (Patton, 2015). The phenomenon needs to be logically and recognisably explained

(Morse, 2015). However, one of the main challenges in obtaining validity is the process of obtaining and analysing verbal data, as it is obtained by observation and interaction and interpreted by the researcher who has their own ideologies (Morse, 2015). In order to reach validity for the study, the results of the research were sent out to the participants to ensure all data was correctly understood and analysed. This ensured the truthful interpretation of the lived experiences.

Due to the researcher's own ideologies, it is important to understand reflexivity; Reflexivity of the researcher is connected to two issues: the researcher's past experiences and how these shape the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, it is crucial to understand how these affect the data collection and analysis procedure. Understanding these issues assist in making the research more trustworthy and credible (Wesam, 2014). As there is only one researcher conducting the study, there is a danger of error in interpretation (Kvale, 2006). The researcher's background as a hospitality front-line employee, and as a trainer of new employees, affected the choice of subject. However, when the researcher is aware of the danger and takes precautions to separate their own values, beliefs, and lived experiences from those of the participants, a certain amount of reflexivity is achieved. It could be even argued, that having a similar background to the participants created a welcoming and safe environment due to the mutually shared experiences.

Reliability refers to how the research can be repeated and will the same results be obtained (Morse, 2015; Neuman, 2014). In qualitative studies, no numeric tests or statistics exist to prove reliability (Morse, 2015) but it required careful documentation of each step taken so that the procedure can be followed by others (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Morse (2015) argues that reliability and validity in qualitative studies are intertwined. The path of the research was well documented; it was made transparent and understandable. Consistency was held during the interviews and the limitations of the research were made clear.

Generalisability speaks of how the research results can be generalised to other individuals and situations (Neuman, 2014) and in qualitative studies, the aim is to generalise through deconstruction and abstraction (Morse, 2015). However, it is argued that in qualitative research replication is “unnecessary and undesirable” (Morse, 2015, p. 1213) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) further state that the value of qualitative research lies in the specific place, time, and participants and thus makes it hard to generalise to other points in time. By conducting a multiple-case study and repeating the interviews the research aimed to obtain generalisability. But as mentioned previously, the qualitative research does not aim to generalise the data obtained to larger population, and thus, less emphasis was given to generalisability.

Research ethics

From the start of the thesis, it has been pivotal to consider all critical aspects; these include the author, participants, and future readers of the thesis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As Walliman (2017, p. 43) states, research “is only valuable if it is carried out honestly” and thus it is crucial to conduct the research with integrity. It is vital that the author does not plagiarize other researchers or doesn’t fabricate the research results and this way reports the findings truthfully and responsibly (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). Additionally, it is important to understand and admit the limitations of the study (Yin, 2018) and not to be afraid of depicting results that might contradict the wished outcome (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Even though complete subjectivity can never be reached, the intentional falsification of data must be, at all levels, avoided (Walliman, 2017).

The aim of the research needs to be clearly stated to the participants and there ought to be no pressure to participate in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mauthner et al., 2002). The students were introduced to the study on the premises of the classroom and participants in the zoom with the assistance of PowerPoint presentation that provided a clear idea of what is to be expected. This included statement of confidentiality for the students to understand their anonymity. The students were provided contact information for the researcher, in case of possible further questions and interest in participation. Before the research, a written consent form was requested from the participants chosen for the study. The consent needs to be written to avoid future misunderstandings (Kvale, 1996).

It is crucial to consider the protection of the students participating in the study, and this includes confidentiality and anonymity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mauthner et al., 2002; Walliman, 2017). Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) assessed the research in order to make sure that all processes of collecting, accessing, and evaluating the data are done according to legalities. To ensure data protection, merely the researcher and the supervisors had access to the collected data. Additionally, the data was stored in an encrypted external hard drive.

One key aspect is to consider the stress the interview situation may cause the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015) and the researcher needs to be aware of ethical conduction to which level the participants can be encouraged to answer certain questions (Kvale, 1996). In a multiple-case study, the questions need to be carefully constructed so as not to be too sensitive, due to the many participants in the discussion. The atmosphere needed to be comfortable in order to gain truthful responses and discussion.

Results

This chapter depicts the results of the interviews in this multiple case study. The analysis is separated into four headlines according to the discussion and questions presented to the participants. The separation assists in analysing gathered data more thoroughly by categorising it (Neuman, 2014) as this helps the mind to understand and process a large amount of information (Walliman, 2017).

Handbook

The discussion of handbooks started slowly: Half of the participants were not familiar with the concept of handbooks, nor had even seen one during their years of employment. Hence, a variety of suggestions were displayed. One participant suggested that an employee handbook could contain information regarding culture and guidelines on how to perform daily business and also the core values of the company. Two participants discussed how an employee handbook holds information about the business, safety regulations, and instructions, on how to conduct customer service. Further, it was assumed by one participant that a handbook would be more about specific details and instructions, whereas another one considered it to hold more general information and viewed it as a place where to easily find a smooth pathway to the multiple documents holding detailed information on different procedures. Additionally, it was mentioned how a handbook consists of the vision of the company and the goals it wants to reach. Three of the participants had a vast amount of information and experience in using and operating with a handbook contrary to others. One participant was taught that a handbook "it's the best colleague and it's your best friend" (H), to whom you can always lean when having questions about anything related to the work, the working environment, the system, or generally whatever might come to mind. Participant H "was told that everything you need to know, you can find it here".

All the participants mentioned a handbook to be a useful tool at the beginning of the employment: "when you are a new employee, I think it would be useful" (B).

> My perception is typically part of the onboarding process when a new employee starts working in a workplace, and the workplace or the management have made a handbook like the standard rules, policies, methods, how to do the job that you were given. (E)

The statement was supported by a participant who had recently gone through training with a handbook that was still used to back up daily duties and was described as a "best colleague" (H) and a "safety blanket" (H). Additionally, participants who had not used a handbook in training understood the importance and the help it provides when used regularly from the beginning.

Contrary to the statement, "you do things automatically after a while and you know how others react to different situations . . . you wouldn't look it up in a handbook" (B), only two participants stated how a handbook can be a useful reminder for older employees how to conduct operations that are not necessarily present in every day operations. Therefore, the two participants argued it to be a useful tool not only for the new employees but the seasoned ones as well. Here it can be seen, how having an employee handbook from the start helps the employees to implement it to constant use during the employment as it becomes a habit to verify and ensure certain procedures from it.

It was stated that not all workplaces necessarily have an employee handbook: Based on experience, it was argued that smaller places do not hold an employee handbook or standards, and this is usually a problem as everyone does as they please. It was mentioned, how larger corporations normally have more structured rules and, therefore, rely on a handbook, whereas smaller establishments allow more leeway and freedom, and do not enforce the use of a handbook. Some of the participants felt, that the structure and consistency of larger corporations were better. However, according to others, not having a handbook may be beneficial for the smaller establishments as they are not as controlled and, therefore, are able to make changes to the procedures faster.

Referring to past experiences the trainers had mentioned an employee handbook multiple times but did not actually produce a handbook for the new employees. This drove the employees to create their own ways of performing their daily duties: “Lot of people they do their own way and you as an employee are often told that this is actually how we are supposed to do, however, I have a better way” (E). It was agreed among the participants that this creates confusion as the new employees suddenly have multiple ways of operating: the inefficient company’s way and the employees’ way that is more efficient but not according to the rules. Participant A mentioned; “or you write your own [handbook]. I have a thick one” referring to having built her own handbook from her experience and discussions with other employees, as the company-wide was unknown to her.

Having a handbook and not following the company’s regulations, may cause confusion in the leadership and management level

> one leader may expect you to do what he or she thinks is the best way to do it, but then other leaders are used to follow the handbook can be a bit surprised when you've done something that's not according with the handbook. (E)

But this was stated to be a leadership problem, and not the handbook's fault. It was discussed how it is possible to counter resistance when implementing new procedures with a handbook. Few of the participants felt that updating an employee handbook constantly and making sure the procedures were followed and respected was an important part of the leadership. Additionally, a wish was expressed, that the leaders would have taken more responsibility to remind the existing, and new employees, about the importance of an employee handbook after the first introduction.

Training

There was a general feeling of frustration and disappointment when asked how the induction training was experienced. There was a yearning for more structured and planned training. A mutual agreement was that in smaller establishments the training period was more constructed and well implemented, whereas in the bigger corporations the induction training was ignored or conducted in an unstructured way. The participants perceived this to be due to the vast amount of employees and high turnover that has become the norm in the larger companies.

Frustration was expressed over leaders not taking their time to train their employees, but rather leaving the training to the other employees, who are not as experienced either and have not received proper training due to the same behaviour. There was frustration because the participants were forced to learn from multiple different employees without clear written instructions.

> I was taken good care of, but I felt like when I asked to see if I could just read about this, and they were like "No! We don't have time because while you're gonna learn how to do things you also need to do your job" (E)

Further, "I felt like it could have been structured a lot better because it was just a bit like random" (H), and one of the participants stated that she was following different employees and hoping to do something rather than just observing. It was stated, how some started their employments during a busier season, and thus, they felt as if they were just hurled into the action, trusted to learn while working at the same time.

According to a few participants following multiple persons during induction would be rewarding as it would provide different aspects, but at the same time when following just one person through the induction, the new employee could build up “mutual trust and you could feel a bit safer than with tossed around with different people” (C). Participant H agreed that she preferred to have one person to follow and instruct through the whole time, and even after the induction this person was available for questions. Participant H “was being told that, if you don't know the answer, before you ask, find it in the handbook” and she felt this allowed her to be more independent and learn to cope on her own even though she was able to lean back to her trainer when needed. However, this reduced the human interaction and, thus, diminished participant H’s feeling of being part of the team, as she was left to learn alone on the front-line.

Despite the negative experiences of most of the participants, one felt that she was being well looked after during the induction training, even though she was trained by different people: “I got to see how people did their job before I actually did it myself. And then slowly taking on more and more responsibility” (F). She was presented with a handbook, and this handbook helped the trainers to guide her through the training process and then assisted F to operate as an independent worker. The help received from a handbook and written guidance was emphasized by other participants

> They [the leader] gave me the paper [instructions] and when I did it the first time everything was perfect. And that made me think like, okay, maybe it doesn’t work for everyone, in terms of being a new employee, but for me I think that when you’re gonna try to teach other people maybe it’s actually a good idea to actually, if you don’t have a handbook, to sit down because then you force yourself to actually think “okay, what are all the steps that you need to do in order to complete this task”. (E)

The assistance from the handbook was further emphasised by feeling more confident after receiving a written employee handbook after months of working without it. It was depicted how everyone in the team saw the work to be more efficient and structured after this and the leader started to incorporate written training in the verbal on-the-go style used previously. Further, it was stated that an employee handbook should not be merely given to be read at home, as people value their free time, and do not wish to spend the evenings reading an employee handbook, but there needs to be sufficient time to go through the handbook at work.

According to some, an employee handbook and induction ought to also include the culture and silent knowledge of the workplace

> Because when I came there, they were standing like this [shows a rigid pose], and then I thought maybe that’s the way I should as well. So, I was always in front of the guest standing like this [mimics the pose]. But then we were writing an exam and we chose my hotel, and then we had an interview with them, and they told us, like, you should always be, like, yourself. And I was thinking that oh f*, I had misunderstood the culture totally. (A)

This created the feeling of not being part of the group and feeling uncomfortable for not being valued as an individual. It was stated that “you shouldn’t put yourself in a role but to be yourself. Then you can be the best for the guest also“ (B). When the participants felt not belonging or fitting into the culture of the work environment, they started to seek out a new employer where they would feel more comfortable.

Furthermore, participants called out for a leader that would take the time to engage with the new employees and help them understand the tasks, so in the future, the new employees may rely solely on a handbook and the lived experience with the trainer. The participants were in agreement on how important it is to combine verbal and non-verbal training as every person is an individual and, thus, learns differently. “It is important that you have handbook, but you also have, like, the training process” (C). Those who had had the combination of the two were more satisfied with their training than the other participants.

When starting a new job with previous experience in the same department, it was stated, how participants felt taken for granted and were assumed to know everything. However, there was a feeling that it was not beneficial as the new place “is totally other hotel with own rules” (A). Furthermore, participants felt that due to the prejudice their training was lacking. It was stated that this prejudice was the reason they were forced to present a lot of questions about operations and procedures not taught to them. It was mentioned that this may cause problems in the work environment, as the employer might consider that due to the vast amount of questions the new employee was less skilled than believed. This might cause rumours regarding the incompetence of the new employee among the other employees. However, the participants emphasised that this was due to the unstructured training because “then all of a sudden comes all these you know questions ... because you haven't been trained in it” (H).

There was emphasis on the importance of structured training and a healthy working environment where everyone is working towards a mutual goal and, thus, ought to be able to discuss all occurring situations with colleagues to further find solutions together as a team. The fear of making mistakes when one should already know how to handle different situations brought up the need for a handbook due to the lack of unstructured training and avoiding seeming incompetent in the eyes of the colleagues and guests. The participant who had constructed her own handbook stated she loans it to new employees, so they can understand the mistakes she has made and, thus, avoid making the same mistakes and learn how to handle certain situations.

Autonomous

The same theme emerged in a discussion about being able to be autonomous as with the training; there is a clear difference between bigger hospitality chains and smaller establishments. Strict regulated big chain corporations make it more difficult to be autonomous according to the participants, whereas in smaller establishments they felt more comfortable making their own decisions and discussing issues with their leaders. According to the participants "coming back again to if the hotel is bigger, then it's much harder to talk with your manager" (B) and in a smaller establishment "your boss is not far away" (G). When a leader was perceived to be closer to the employees, it was easier to hold daily conversations about procedures and issues arising. However, there was a concern, that in smaller companies the management might seek out people who think and act similarly and, thus, only listen to these people without considering opposing opinions from other employees that might hold value and innovation. This would lead to favouritism and exclusion of other employees who think differently.

Being autonomous happened only within the front-line department: "you always have the ability affect things around you but not maybe so much above you" (C). Participants discussed how they have gone to their leaders with issues in hand, and they had listened, but no further actions were ever taken, nor explanations provided why nothing happened. All participants expressed their desire to hear about the decision-making processes from the leaders: The participants felt as if the front-line employees did not know what the leaders were discussing before a decision on a new process was made. The desire to be informed was clear: "they wouldn't even talk like the decision making downwards in the organization (C)" and "if the leaders of the departments have a meeting, write a report, send it to the employees so they know the issue has been raised" (F).

Leaders not listening to the employees and their ideas and innovations lessened the feeling of being autonomous and forced the participants to act according to the guidelines given them during their training period. If any were given. It was stated how this unrespectful way of treating employees diminished the motivation to provide the guests good service and you started "not giving a s*" (H). Furthermore, the decisions made were not according to what would have improved the work: "there's so many other, like, areas that could have been touched upon that would make more sense. It would not only, like, better, but also would make people happier" (H). The participants were displeased that they were not consulted as “we are standing in the reception so we know ... we all know how we would do something different, and they [leaders], usually if they work higher up, they don’t” (A) and wondered if it was “cause when you know too much maybe you need to do something” (E).

When the participants tried to bring their innovative improvements forward to the leaders, they stated being dismissed: “because every time you would try and take it further, it would be shut down immediately, or you would be told that you’re stupid for even bringing it up” (H). However, it was implied, that the longer you worked in one establishment you became more respected as a worker and gained the possibility to change the small things, but still within the strict guidelines. The participants expressed a wish to be more attentive leaders in their future, where they would listen and appreciate the front-line employees’ experiences and ideas and value their opinions because “if you as a front-line worker are actually empowered to be able to have the necessary tools, and then… Yeah, I think that’s great for the guest. And it makes you more confident.” (F)

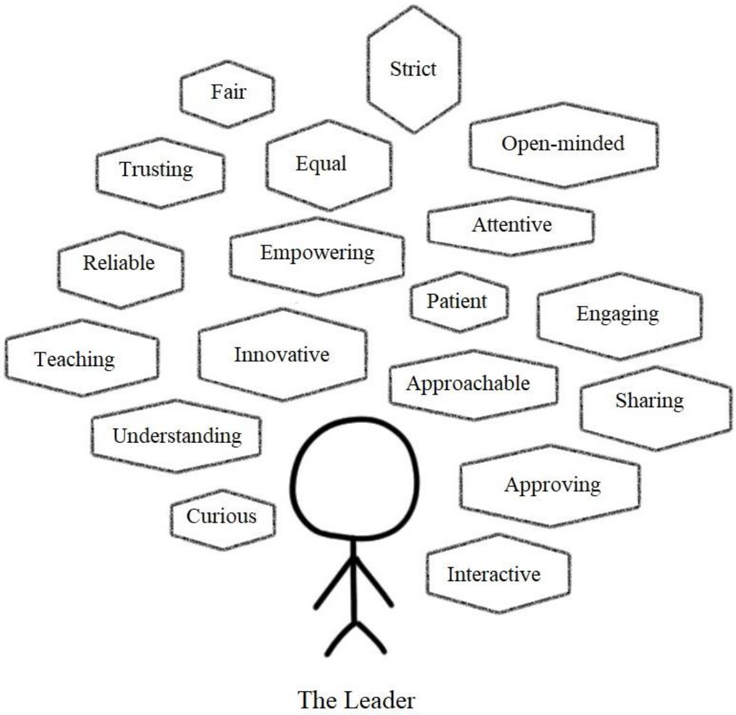
Regarding the leaders and being autonomous it was stated that the participants felt that there is always a regulated way of operating, and the way of the employees; as the conversation between the front-line and the leaders were not open and welcoming, the employees had built their own way of operating that was different from the guidelines and the regulations stated by the leaders. These differences were not to be discussed out in the open but kept silent from the leaders as it was not their way of handling and operating. There was a fear of the leaders finding out that the employees were not following the rules.

What is expected from the leader?

The participants had plenty of different value points for a leader. These adjectives gathered from the interviews are displayed in figure 1. These adjectives are explained in more detail in this chapter.

Figure 1

Preferred traits of a leader



When discussing what are the expectations from the leaders all participants were appreciative of openness and willingness to listen and discuss: “sharing of the information of the hotel in general. Sharing and being open to having a discussion” (F). Fairness and treating employees equally were important aspects for the participants. Further, it was extended the openness and listening to not only issues related to working, but also issues within the working environment and conflicts that might occur with other employees. According to the participants, these would need to be treated fairly, without favouritism.

The desire to know that the employee has been heard and understood by explaining why some ideas are refused, or why some ideas are not feasible was required. By giving an explanation the leader is also teaching the employees new knowledge about why some issues cannot be handled in a way that would better the procedures.

> And for me it's important to feel comfortable asking “Okay, I can do this, why are we doing this? Why should I do it? Or why is it necessary?” Not that I am ... being stubborn!! But, but, just because I'm wondering and I would like to know. And that it's also a great learning for me to know why I am told to be doing something. (G)

Further, it was stated that if there is “someone who cannot teach you anything, then you lose motivation, then you don't feel, like, ‘I really want to do my best for the company here’” (H), and then according to the participants, the employee goes and finds somewhere where the questions, knowledge, and innovation is more appreciated.

All the participants felt passionate about valuing front-line employees’ ideas and initiatives. There was a call for the leaders to understand that they might hold an old perspective on looking at the service procedures and, therefore, it would be crucial to have discussions without prejudices with the front-line employees. The participants thought that a leader should “ask questions, always be a bit curious” (E) and “also make sure to get some feedback from the employees” (E).

> I think as a leader putting yourself out there to have the time to actually talk with your employees is the most important, to show that you are there. ... So, [the leader] needs to really be in each of the departments and talk to the front-line employees to know that everything is fine. (F)

The discussion further emphasized that a leader should be able to teach their employees and understand that “you're better with your employees” (H) and not be arrogant with your knowledge as there might be multiple questions, especially at the beginning of the employment.

However much the participants valued openness and discussions, they also expected a leader to be strict, and follow the set rules. It was stated that a good leader is someone who “is strict, but not one that cannot take suggestions” (H). This was emphasised by reminding that even though rules are appreciated, a leader must know how to bend them in order to allow room for creativity and problem solving.

> I think some creativity and some deviation from the manual can also introduce a lot of empowerment in the sense that the employees are able to use their own creativity to solve the problems. So, I would say while standardised for is really good, if it is too comprehensive, too big and introducing, like, everything, how to act and everything, I think everything will be worse. (F)

They called a leader to remember that “too much rules they kill the inspiration” (D) but without the rules, the working environment would become chaotic and unstructured. According to the participants, a leader’s example of leading the team and interacting with it could either kill the spirit and innovation or lift the employees higher and create a motivated and fun working environment. An empowering leader trusts their employees to do their best and not create favouritism and closed circles that chase away the employees who feel left out.

Discussion

This chapter discusses the results of the research connected to the already existing theory, and hence, the discussion follows the literature review headlines even though in a different order. Firstly, the findings related to the employee handbook are discussed, followed by the training. Then the discussion moves forwards to leadership and lastly to empowerment. Finally, limitations to the study are stated.

Employee handbook

As vital as an employee handbook is for a company (Lawson II, 2006; Smith & Harris, 2014), it is baffling to realise how underused it is in the hospitality industry. The interview participants together held a vast amount of experience in the hospitality industry and had only seen so many handbooks. Therefore, the participants had a divergent ideas of what a handbook could consist of. According to participants, it describes how the employee should look, act, and present themselves according to the goals of the company. Some of the participants felt that an employee handbook could be more detailed in explaining the guidelines on how to execute certain procedures and how to operate the systems in the working environment. Few of the participants agreed upon it being more of a shortened guidebook where one can find shortcuts to more detailed descriptions and instructions. As Smith and Harris (2014) stated, an employee handbook is to provide the employees with guidance on how to be and act in the work environment and this agrees with the participants' perceptions. Despite not having seen a handbook, the participants had some idea of what it should consist of. This could be argued to be due to the recent studies in UiS and participating in lectures that handle HR issues and employee handbooks. However, consistency was lacking in the answers, and a variety of suggestions were made.

It is further argued that an employee handbook needs to be updated to ensure that it follows the current guidelines and goals of the organization and fits in the organization’s culture (Smith & Harris, 2014) and these changes need to be communicated to all employees clearly and timely (Minton-Eversole, 2020; Zeuch, 2016). Contrary to the theory the participants described an employee handbook to be an important part of the induction period, and thereafter indifferent. This was countered only by two of the participants by noting that an employee handbook is good to be remembered when conducting procedures that are done rarely: “it's sometimes impossible to remember everything” (G) and then it would be good to look back to a handbook rather than disturb colleagues on their free time. This then indicated that even though the participants had an idea of what an employee handbook is, they did not realise its full potential and advantages.

It was stated that it is the leader’s responsibility to ensure all employees are aware of the regulations stated in the handbook and ensure the implementation of new procedures and processes that are reorganized. Only one mentioned a team leader taking the time and updating the already existing handbook and informing the employees of the updates. Despite only one leader updating a handbook and informing the employees, the participants agreed that it is the leader’s responsibility to keep the team up-to-date. According to the participants, if this step is overlooked, it could be interpreted as poor leadership and resistance against the company policies, which then further creates more confusion among the employees and the leaders. Therefore, it can be seen how leaders are failing their employees by not enforcing and implementing company-wide procedures. This could be due to the lack of communication within the company, which is further discussed in the coming verses.

Furthermore, structure was called for in how the changes and policies are implemented and advised upon. As the participants have no or little experience in using an employee handbook, it can be seen how they are not aware of its benefits in everyday working life; they call out for structure and guidance but still consider a handbook to be indifferent after the induction period. As the participants have not seen an employee handbook during their induction period, it could be argued that an employee handbook might exist and might be updated, but none of this is communicated directly to the employees. If a leader is using only indirect leadership with the new procedures and updates the handbook without discussing or informing the employees with direct emails or discussions, the employees cannot be aware of the changes made. This indicates the need for transactional leadership, where the leader implements and enforces the new regulations and makes sure that the processes are followed properly (Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

Only one of the participants used an employee handbook regularly as it was implemented in the participant's induction. Further, another participant, who received a handbook late into the employment, stated that it feels that if a handbook would be implemented into the employees' work cycle from the beginning, it might be used more regularly, and employees would rely on the handbook more as it would be a norm. This shows how some of the participants understand the usefulness of an employee handbook but are still not operating with one as it is not embedded in the work from the start. It could be further argued that due to the lack of an employee handbook in the induction period, most of the participants felt their training to be unstructured and "just a bit, like, random" (H). An employee handbook is said to bring more structure and clarity to the communication between the company and the employees (Bauer et al., 2020) and the training process of new employees (Cadwell, 1988), and this indicates clearly, how the leaders have failed in implementing the required and desired structure from the get-go.

As Arthur (2006) and Bauer et al. (2020) state, it is crucial to encourage the employees to ask questions and clarification if there are some aspects in an employee handbook they do not understand since it is there to protect the company as well as the employees in case of any disputes. This was not mentioned among the participants, and therefore, it could be concluded, that they were not aware an employee handbook acted as a legal advisor in addition to other purposes. This could be seen as a major fail from the company’s side because they could be viewed as not having informed their employees of all their rights. When issues such as safety regulations and restrictions, for example, social media usage related to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are overlooked, it may cause serious damage to the hotels' reputation and create safety hazards to all employees and customers.

In the yearning for structure and more consistent instructions, participant A had drawn her own handbook that she further used for the training of new employees. This is a clear indication, that in the need for structure the rules and regulations are created by the employees themselves. As a handbook is argued to be part of the communication between the leaders and the employees (Bauer et al., 2020; Lawson II, 2006), it could be discussed how the employees creating their own handbooks and procedures can create confusion among the departments. If the procedures and regulations created by the employees are unknown to the leaders, there might be disorder in the process of how everything is conducted, and discrepancies in the expectations and responsibilities. These discrepancies are normally avoided by creating a handbook that offers instructions and expectations for each job title (Levesque, 1993), and this assists in maintaining consistent quality in the work efforts (Lawson II, 2006). And, hence, it can be argued further that a handbook is crucial to have and be present in the everyday life of the employees to have a mutual company-wide understanding of how everything is supposed to be operated.

Being creative and developing handbooks and operational procedures indicated how innovative and imaginative employees can be. When there is a need for structure, and it is not provided by the leaders, or the company, employees will build it up themselves and make the best of what they know. This resourcefulness could be harnessed if the leader would be paying attention to the front-line employees and their daily duties. If employees are able to develop an employee handbook that is used for the training of new employees without their leaders' knowledge, it indicates how ignorant the leaders truly are and how little they know about the resources they have in their hands.

Training

As the participants in the study had little to no experience using an employee handbook the discussion revolved mainly around the induction training received. The training was considered to be unstructured and greatly lacking in information.

All the participants, except one, were together in the desire to have one designated trainer. According to one participant, an employee handbook was well implemented into her training and, thus, she did not mind being taught by multiple different people, as all employees who participated in the induction followed the clear steps the handbook provided. Other participants, who described being tossed around with different employees, did not have a handbook to rely on, and, therefore, it could be argued, that they described the training to be confusing and unstructured: “if you get tossed around a lot, I wouldn’t feel that safe or happy” (C). According to Jaworski et al. (2018), the training of new employees should be conducted by one employee, who has experience and education in how to train, as this further establishes a structure and enforces equality among the employees and, according to one participant, also increases trust and commitment. Among the participants, the call for one designated trainer could be argued to be due to the previously experienced unstructured training with multiple trainers and without a proper handbook to bring structure and clear steps. Having the past experience of being tossed around and having a confusing training led to a desire for a change and a yearn to have a designated person to guide one through the many phases of being a new employee; to have one person they could rely on and a person who understand what issues have been discussed and what procedures still need training and teaching. Furthermore, it was described how receiving a handbook, later on, drew together the verbal induction and the clear written instructions and, therefore, improved the work effort and efficiency. This emphasises the importance of an employee handbook in a training process in addition to the designated trainer and verbal teaching.

Furthermore, the participants considered combining verbal and non-verbal training to be important, as all people are individuals and require different ways of teaching and training: “it is important that you have a handbook, but you also have like the training process … with a supervisor or an experienced person there, and then you have the handbook as a guide” (H). This is further highlighted by Schuckert et al. (2018) understanding that all employees are different and, thus, have individual attributes that make them an important part of the organization. Here it can be argued that authentic leadership comes to play, as it understands the individuality of all employees (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Being trained with only an employee handbook helped one of the participants to be an independent and rely on the handbook, but on the other hand left multiple questions unanswered, because there was no one to explain the instructions: The handbook was in the spotlight in the training, and no stress was placed on the human touch and contact with leaders and co-workers. Furthermore, some of the participants were annoyed how the training of new employees is pushed on personnel who have no proper training themselves. Here it can be further seen, how important it is to have a designated, knowing trainer, preferably a leader who is able to answer even the trickiest questions. All this demonstrates the need for human interaction in the induction process in addition to the handbook, which brings structure.

The participants stated the need to ask multiple questions at the beginning of the employment, during the induction process, and afterward. Asking questions was deemed to be due to the unstructured training and the prejudice towards the previous work knowledge. The trainers expected the participants to know everything and to be able to operate independently if there was experience in hospitality from previous employments. The trainers did not realise that the work culture, expectations, and procedures are different and vary from one employer to another, even if the systems are operated similarly. As the induction of the participants has already been judged to be mediocre and conducted by an untrained trainer, it does not come as a surprise. Further, it could be discussed whether the work experience the interviewees had affected the questions asked – due to their previous knowledge in the field they might have been aware of the issues that may arise and, thus, were able to present the questions needed to operate independently. And even though the participants felt that asking questions themselves was a good idea, there was a fear of being judged to be less intelligent. This fear of being judged led the participants to make more individual decisions and learn themselves. Leaving the employee to learn on their own leaves room for mistakes and misinformation and decreases productivity (Cadwell, 1988; Jaworski et al., 2018).

Altogether, this proves the importance of having an employee handbook to guide the employees through verbal training and beyond, and to ensure all employees, no matter the experience, would receive the same base knowledge and training. This would ensure consistent quality within the working environment and give more coherent customer service. Furthermore, not only would a handbook ensure the quality of the training, but this indicated the importance of an educated trainer to guide the employees through the induction.

Learning the culture of the work environment and being part of the team on a deeper level was not achieved by the induction of any of the participants. As Bauer et al. (2020) state, onboarding and socialisation are important parts of the training, and as depicted by the participants, it is highly ignored. The need to include the culture of the workplace in the training was desired by all. As depicted, understanding the work culture and values took a great time, as they were not implemented in the induction. This left the participants feeling confused and frustrated and created a feeling of uncertainty about the right working environment. Hence, it can be seen how important it is to teach silent knowledge of the work environment from the start. It is crucial to make the employees feel comfortable and valued from the beginning to ensure they feel part of the team and, thus, wish to stay and give their best to the company. Investing in all parts of the training is crucial to maintain the human capital the company has in the employees (Bauer et al., 2020). After learning about the culture and being able to relax at work, the motivation and confidence of the participants increased. Allowing employees to be themselves, or clearly instruct how to conduct business properly and according to the values of the company, was deemed important. The culture of the company is often learned through indirect leadership, where the leader teaches by being an example to the employees (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). As it can be seen from the lived experiences of the participants, the leaders have not been present and, thus, not acted as examples, it is no wonder the participants have felt unsure regarding the culture; there was no role model to observe and mimic.

However, even though the participants all yearn for more structured and well-planned training, they depicted the disadvantages of too structured and regulated training and working: To have a too comprehensive employee handbook that is expected to be followed precisely may lessen the innovativeness of the employees and crush their morale. Following a handbook might reduce flexibility within the company (Minton-Eversole, 2020) and force the individual employees all into a similar mold. This was expressed to be undesirable, and the participants hoped for a regulated work environment where own ideas and innovations were also welcomed and appreciated. The need to learn and grow as an employee, to create and innovate, was deemed to be important. If the ideas and innovations were not appreciated, it would force the employees to search for another place of employment, where they would feel more valued. This innovativeness, as mentioned above, could be harnessed to take part in the construction of an employee handbook as employees are anyway creating their own routines, and as stated, know what is actually happening and what could be improved. This applies to the induction training: It is important to receive feedback on how the training was perceived by the new employee to ensure better quality induction in the future (Shalley & Gilson, 2004), and as can be seen, the participants would have had a lot of feedback to give to the leaders regarding their induction. The feeling of frustration and annoyance towards received induction was present in the interviews.

Hence, it can be seen that a handbook and regulations are important to the work environment in order to have structured training, but enforcing these regulations too strictly may cause employees to search for an employer who appreciates their innovativeness. Further, as one participant stated, having a good, solid base from the training, helps the employees to modify their knowledge for different situations. If one does not have a solid base, difficult situations may feel overwhelming, and readjusting the knowledge is not possible.

Furthermore, the participants depicted the unstructured training to be partly due to the busy seasonal time they started. It is said that unstructured training is often provided for seasonal workers, and part-timer employees and this increases the company's employee turnover (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013). As all the participants are full-time students at the UiS, it could be asked, if not being a full-time employee could have affected their induction training. However, this should not affect the training, as the seasonal-, and part-time employees should be trained as properly as everyone else. If the training process would be performed in a structured matter, it would decrease the required training period and the employees, whether they are part-time or full-time, would receive a compact training, that is not time-consuming, but efficient. Furthermore, it would decrease the turnover of the employees as depicted by the interviewees.

Leadership in hospitality

To understand that different people require a different kind of leadership style is not always easy for leaders. Furthermore, it seems to be the understanding, that if all employees are provided similar training they will do equally well (Cadwell, 1988). However, this was countered by the participants understanding that all employees are individuals and, hence, they learn in different ways. Even though what was being taught would remain the same, the learning style would need to be adapted to the employee's way of learning. Thus, they called out for a leader to require both positive and negative feedback from the trainees already during the training to understand what aspects were functional and what were futile. This feedback was also discussed by Bauer et al. (2020), by stating that it is a crucial part of the induction and socialisation process to understand where the company can do better and what points in the induction were successful.

The feedback process goes beyond the training and socialisation, it goes to everyday operations and leadership. However, it seemed that this feedback process has not been implemented in the working environments of the participants. The participants wondered if this would be due to the fear of having to act upon the known negative aspects. As the famous saying goes "ignorance is bliss" and if one does not know what is happening, you can easily turn a blind eye to it. This was further enhanced by a tale of a leader, who would act busy when being at the front-line to avoid communicating with the employees by always seeming busy and not taking any contact with the employees when present at the front-line. This indicates how leaders do not value the front-line workers and consider their opinions to be not worthy.

The communication between leaders and employees was an emotional subject for the participants and they had strong opinions regarding the matter. The participants saw this to be the greatest issue in the working environment: Leaders are not hearing what employees are saying. Communication operated mainly from leaders downwards to the employees and communication upward was prevented. As the participants feel as if they are not able to trust their managers, or rely on them to take care of the issues at hand, it could be understood, that the leadership style is transactional (Dai et al., 2013). Patiar and Mia (2009) state that a transactional leader does not offer the employees a possibility to affect the decisions made by the management nor encourage open discussions and constructive criticism. It is stated clearly by many researchers that this leadership style is not suggested to be used in hospitality (Dai et al., 2013; Patiar & Mia, 2009) but still it can be seen from the interviews, how this style is still dominating the industry. Furthermore, it was clearly indicated that the communication style was transactional, as the leaders did not explain the decisions further, but merely stated the changes. The participants expressed a desire to be explained why procedures are changed, or why certain issues cannot be handled in the way they hoped. This would require authentic leadership, where the questions are approached in an educative manner and, therefore, increase the willingness to obey and grow with the leader.

It was mentioned multiple times in the interviews, how large chain organizations tended to have less open communication between the leader and the employees, whereas in smaller establishments the communication flow was perceived to be more alive and respectful in both directions. This was argued to be because of the multiple levels of management in larger organizations. The participants discussed how the larger corporations have to go through more layers to achieve the desired outcomes, whereas the smaller establishments do not have such a hierarchy to battle through. Due to having less hierarchy, leaders in smaller establishments were considered to be closer to the employees. However, this could be argued to be due to the leader's personality and leadership style, rather than the size of the organization. Leaders can, through small actions, give a perception of being present and attentive no matter the size of the organization. It could be argued that small details, such as keeping an office door open instead of closed, could create a different atmosphere of inclusion and openness.

What the participants were yearning for was a leader that would be fair and not practice favouritism. In LMX theory, the leader builds different kinds of relationships with the employees, with some more close ones and some more distant (Bauer et al., 2020). This, according to the participants, creates a working environment where the selected few are considered to be in the inner circle of the employers, and the other employees' ideas and issues are disregarded. Further, this lessens the motivations of those who feel left out. Hence, it can be seen how even though having a strong LMX-relationship with certain employees build mutual trust, motivates the employee, and empowers them (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015) it lessens the motivation of others and creates unfairness among the employees (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Here it can be seen how important it would be to try and maintain an LMX-relationship with all the employees, and not practice favouritism. Even though it is considered time-consuming (Yukl & Gardner, 2020) it increases the motivation and innovativeness of the employees (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). In larger corporations where the teams consist of many employees, it can be difficult, and more time-consuming than in smaller establishments, and this further endorses the participants' depiction of how smaller companies have been more successful in empowering and supporting the employees. However, despite there being more employees, there are normally more middle-managers, and this evens out the stress from the high position leaders to create a strong LMX-relationship with all. It could be argued that each leader needs to create a strong LMX-relationship with their immediate subordinates, who then are able to empower and innovate the next ones. Here it is argued, that even though there are more employees in a larger company, due to the number of middle managers, empowerment and inclusion can be achieved if so desired.

Once employees feel innovated, motivated, and empowered by their leader, they do not require a high LMX-relationship anymore (Harris et al., 2009). This indicates, that if leaders concentrate on building an LMX-relationships from the beginning of the employment, assist, listen to, and help employees through the induction training to become the best version of themselves, they will feel valued, and appreciated, and therefore, empowered. This was clearly what the participants were seeking. After a certain level of an LMX-relationship is achieved, an employee does not require as much of the leader's time as previously and if this is achieved early on in employees' employment, it would save time in the long run. Hence, it is argued that if leaders in larger corporations would engage in employees’ training, and build mutual trust and empowerment from the beginning, the creation of a high LMX-relationship would become less time-consuming and help the employees to become empowered, innovative, and independent quicker.

To achieve an LMX-relationship a leader needs to understand that all employees are individuals and, thus, have individual attributes that make them valuable (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015). Therefore, it can be argued that transformational-, or authentic leadership is called for. As Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) say, a transformational leader sees employees as individuals and understands their strengths and weaknesses. But, additionally, an authentic leader accepts the differing world-views and enforces an interactive atmosphere (Ilies et al., 2005) whereas a transformation leader urges and lures employees to follow the leader's worldview and ideology (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). As can be seen from Figure 1 an authentic leader is exactly the type of leader the participants were calling for. They hoped to have someone who listens and is present and does not judge them even though they might have differing views on procedures or practices. The participants wanted to feel valued and equal to their peers, and, hence, an authentic leader would be ideal. Furthermore, the participants were yearning for a leader that would listen and understand that they also have a lot to give to the company, their ideas are valuable, and they know what would be best for the work. An authentic leader is a person who believes in growing together with the employees and understands that they are not standing above them, but together with them (Leroy et al., 2015) and this was precisely what the participants were calling for.

However, even though the participants were looking for an understanding and engaging leader who allows freedom in decision-making, they hoped to have clear rules and guidance. According to the participants, when the guidelines are known, it gives the employees room to move and make decisions according to those instructions. The findings by Schumacher and Komppula (2016) further enforce the need for written guidance in daily tasks to feel more empowered. Further, when one knows the rules, it is easier to understand how they can be bent in different situations.

The participants said that a leader needs to be a person who uses power when needed. A leader would need to be strict, and equal in enforcing regulations and make sure that the rules are followed. It was stated that it would be wonderful to have a leader who is friendly but still commands authority as the leader. Therefore, it is argued that the combination of all leadership styles is preferable. Further, it enforces the statement from Yukl and Gardner (2020), that mixing all leadership styles and being able to adapt to the differing situations in the company's and employee's life cycle is a crucial attribute for a leader. Here it is argued that even if a leader is practicing a transactional leadership style, they can still rule as a kind and empowering person. Being empathetic does not diminish the power the leader possesses, and thus, there is a fine balance between enforcing the rules, and punishments if they are not followed, and being humane and understanding.

Empowerment of the employees

Empowering the employees is a tricky subject when discussed with the participants. Clearly, the common feeling was that if working in a smaller establishment, where the leader is closer to the employees, the front-line employees felt more empowered, innovative, and valued. Whereas in a larger corporation, where there were more steps and people between the employees and the leaders, the interviewees were feeling ignored and not empowered. However, even from the experience of the larger chain business' the interviewees depicted how they were able to be innovative to a certain level in their department with co-workers. This being still quite strictly regulated. The older participants depicted, how after the induction period they would try to get their voices heard and improve inefficient procedures. It was stated that being stabile and letting procedures be conducted inefficiently, was not for them, but they'd rather speak their mind and voice their concerns despite the possible backslash.

To be able to be autonomous was considered important by everyone. When depicting the feeling of not being valued and not receiving motivation from the leaders, the participants described the need to look for another employer. Here it can be seen how empowering the workers could decrease the turnover of employees. This empowerment of employees begins in the training process: by giving a structured and organized picture of the company from the beginning, the employer provides a picture of a reliable and valued working environment and this increases commitment (Cadwell, 1988). Furthermore, it was explained, that when feeling too restricted and regulated and not receiving any encouragement from the leader, work effort started to diminish, and it affected customer service. As the front-line employees are argued to be the key elements in the customer satisfaction and responsible for the competitive advantages of the company (Schuckert et al., 2018; Turkmenoglu, 2019; Yilmaz, 2015) one could assume that the management would want to keep them motivated to shine in customer contact.

It was declared multiple times through the interviews, how leaders were not listening to the employees regarding what issues should be addressed, and in what ways the working environment could be improved. As stated, the front-line employees know what procedures are not conducted efficiently, as the employees are the ones performing the daily duties. Furthermore, it was stated how leaders were fixing issues that did not require fixing and ignoring issues that had been problematic for years. It was clear from the participants' stories, that leaders are not aware of what is considered crucial on the front-line. The common argument to enforce this was that leaders are not listening but making the decision on their own.

One part of empowering the employees is including them in the decision-making process (Turkmenoglu, 2019) and this is clearly what all the participants wanted from the employer. It is argued that the creation of an employee handbook does not solely lie in an HR department, but other departmental heads need to be included as well (Lawson II, 2006), and based on the findings in this study, it could be further argued that the front-line employees need to be included in the creation process and in keeping the handbook up-to-date. As stated earlier, the front-line employees know best what is actually required and considered good knowledge to be in a handbook from their point of view. Hence, it is argued that co-creation of the handbook should not be happening merely on the managers and HR personnel but require feedback and assistance from the front-line employee side as well. Furthermore, including the front-line employees in improving the induction could create a more efficient training process and would ensure correct aspects are included in the induction.

Additionally, by including the front-line employees and making them feel like a part of the team, motivation would be increased, and the employees would become even more innovative and creative (Rego et al., 2012). This further indicates how important it would be to practice an authentic leadership style as it encourages empowerment (Schuckert et al., 2018). This was emphasised by the experiences had with the leaders when ideas were brought to their knowledge: "every time you would try and take it further, it would be shut down immediately, or you would be told that you're stupid for even bringing it up" (H). This indicates how important it is for leaders not to lift themself on a pedestal, but to understand that they are better with the team surrounding them. The participants called for understanding, that the leaders do not know best, that the leaders' points of view on certain matters might be outdated and old-fashioned, and thus, it would be crucial for them to listen and understand what the employees are saying.

Furthermore, it can be seen that when leaders are not paying attention to what the front-line employees are saying and asking for, they lose control. In the interviews, it was stated multiple times, that employees had created their own way of executing tasks and duties. Employees' way of conducting the business was more efficient and structured, but it was forced to be done in secrecy, as the employee handbook commanded a different way. Even if there was not an employee handbook provided for the employees, they still operated discreetly. Participant A had even constructed her own handbook to ensure she was able to help and guide the new employees, unlike what had happened to her. If the employees would have felt empowered by the manager, they could have expressed their concerns and created united guidelines for the whole department to follow. However, as they were not listened to by the managers, they empowered themselves to act as would be best for them and the customers. Even the smallest changes in the performed tasks on the front-line may improve the flow and increase efficiency (Shalley & Gilson, 2004), and therefore, even though the issues might sound minimal, leaders need to be present, accepting, and attentive to the ideas evolving in the front-line.

If employees do not feel empowered, they might seek out a high LMX-relationship with their leader (Harris et al., 2009) and because the LMX-relationship is built on mutual trust, commitment, and discussions, the importance of being present is highlighted even more. Once the high LMX-relationship is achieved, where the employee feels trusted and empowered by the leader, the maintenance of the relationship is not time-consuming anymore, as the employee does not require close relationships anymore (Harris et al., 2009). This further indicates that the LMX-relationship should be built from the start of the employment, during the induction training. Once the new employees have reached a certain level of empowerment and trust from the leader, the leader can rely on the team to be independent and efficient and concentrate on their duties, and delegate tasks forward (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009). However, as Raub and Robert (2013) remind us, the leader needs to be careful, that despite the independence, the employee must not feel left alone, and still required communication and support from the leader.

Furthermore, the LMX-relationship should be directed toward those employees, who are not feeling empowered and are lacking in motivation. An authentic leadership style, where the leader is listening and understands the employee as an individual is required (Harris et al., 2009). It could be considered difficult, to be fair and equal towards all, but at the same time build strong relationships with all the employees to motivate them and empower them.

But it is not only the leaders’ responsibility to create and maintain the LMX-relationship. If the leader is attentive and creates an open and accepting atmosphere, the employees can affect the status of the relationship (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). When H depicted how she approached the leaders with her ideas and innovations it shows the effort to create a closer and trusting relationship with the leader. However, as it was shot down and dismissed without further discussion, H’s motivation, and desire to be the best version of herself was diminished. Controversy, when G was able to discuss her ideas and innovations freely with her leader, she depicted feeling comfortable and valued, even as a front-line worker, and, thus, she felt more empowered and able to do her job well. This is yet another proof of how important an open and accepting environment is for the employees. It could be stated that once the employees stop communicating upward towards the leaders, there is a reason to get worried. Once the communication stops, it indicated that the employees have given up, and might be seeking a new employer where they might feel more comfortable.

Limitations

The research had multiple limitations. First of all, gaining participants to interview turned out to be nearly impossible. There could be multiple reasons why the students at NHS were not willing to take part in the interview. COVID-19 pandemic was still an ongoing issue in Norway, Stavanger, and it could be assumed the students did not feel comfortable taking part in a face-to-face interview, even though all safety measurements were in place. Taking part in an interview during one's free time could affect the willingness to participate. The benefits received from participation might not have been sufficient; If a monetary or another participation gift could have been given, it might have attracted more participants. Furthermore, the students could consider the subject not of interest, as it is close to what they have been recently studied. Lastly, it could be wondered if the recruitment was not efficient and interesting to the students, or if the fact that the researcher was unknown to them affected the decision to not participate.

Time was a great encumbrance. Due to the time limitations, the study had to be modified and executed with merely eight participants. The study could have been expanded to include already graduated students, who might have had a good insight into the training and handbooks if more time to recruit volunteers would have been available. Due to the small sample, there was no room for disclosing any participants or choosing whom to interview, but all volunteers were included. Hence, the original plan to have volunteers without any experience was not achieved and all the volunteers, despite their age or experience, were included in the study.

Thirdly, language could be argued to be a great challenge. As none of the participants, nor the interviewer, spoke English as their mother tongue, some information might be lost in the translation. The questions were formed in the best possible way to ensure they were understandable to all. However, there is no way to fully ensure that the participants interpreted the questions, or the discussion with each other, perfectly. Furthermore, it can be said that when transcribing the interviews and looking back to the moment, there might have been some confusion as to what the main point of the discussion was, and it could be even questioned whether the participants were discussing the same issues.

Lastly, the study needed to be modified to consist of only people with previous experience in front-line operations. It would have been interesting to compare answers from participants who had not yet had any experience in operation: It could be wondered whether new employees would be able to inquire about the same questions as they do not possess the same knowledge? Or would it affect the training process if the new employee would have zero knowledge from the front-line before?

Here it can be seen that the study had many limitations, and the desired sample was not achieved. A preliminary interview was not performed due to the limitation in the sample, and it could be argued that it would have helped to make the interviews more comprehensive, had the questions been tested first.

Conclusions

Next short answers to the research questions are provided and afterward, a summary of the whole of the research is presented. Lastly, managerial implications are discussed and suggestions for future research are provided.

Research questions

The first research question is as follows:

- What kind of information do front-line employees consider crucial in an employee handbook?

The findings were along the line of the previous theoretical implications that were presented in the literature review section. Even though not all the participants were familiar with using an employee handbook during their employment, they had a somewhat clear picture of what it should consist of. One reason for this could be drawn that all the participants were attending the same university, and thus, might have had lectures regarding HR policies and employee handbooks. However, the contradicting idea among the participants was, that some of them considered an employee handbook to be precise and detailed, whereas few of them depicted it to be more guidelines for more in-depth instructions and processes.

- Does the information reflect on what is currently deemed beneficial by leaders and what is embedded into induction training practices?

An employee handbook was vastly ignored in the induction training of the participants. Merely two participants had used an employee handbook during the induction process, but they deemed it beneficial. However, there was a call to have an employee handbook implemented in the induction training by all the participants as it would bring structure and clarity to the process. Information received during the induction period did not suffice and left the participants to learn independently.

It can be concluded that the participants considered an employee handbook to be a good assistance in the training period, as it holds details regarding many aspects of the company, its culture and values, and also safety regulations. The issues in an employee handbook were considered valuable learning points but were not discussed or taught during the induction period. Furthermore, the employees in charge of the training of the participants dismissed the official procedures and created their own way of conducting daily operations. This indicated that the information at the managerial level was not up to date and sufficient to operate at the hospitality front-line.

- Do employees feel empowered by leaders?

There is an indication of the need for more empowerment. In smaller hotels, employees were more empowered than in the larger chain corporations. There is a need for improvement and a call for being more understood as the key players in hospitality, and therefore, for being more empowered. To feel more empowered employees would need to be listened to and included in the decision-making processes affecting the front-line induction training, an employee handbook, and, in addition, improving the working environment and procedures.

Conclusions of the research

This study has focused on the front-line employee side of the usage of an employee handbook and its construction process. As an employee handbook is argued to play an important part in the induction process of new employees, this research has also discussed how employees feel about their received induction and its usefulness. Further, a proper induction enforces empowerment and independence of the front-line employees and, thus, empowerment was included in the study.

The research has shown that despite the previous studies on the importance of an employee handbook, its usage is in reality minimal. Therefore, it could be argued, that the discussion was concentrated on the induction training process that was lacking. It can be seen that there are many things to improve in an induction period of employees. The usage of an employee handbook has been greatly disregarded, even though there is a vast amount of theoretical implications of its positive effects on induction. Employees are seeking more structured and organised training and yearn to have more instructions on how to operate at the hospitality front-line. The current training processes are not enough to empower front-line employees to act as the best versions of themselves.

Participants wished for a leader that would listen to their employees and understand that employees are aware of the issues that are facing the hospitality front-line. According to the previous studies, the creation of an employee handbook requires cooperation between the HR department and the managerial level, but according to the main finding of this research, it is argued that front-line employees should be included in the process as well. In addition to including the employees in the creation of an employee handbook, this study suggests, that the front-line employees need to be additionally included in the improvement of an induction process and other procedures.

Furthermore, this study has shown the importance of authentic leadership but reminds of the value of transactional- and transformational leadership. A leader needs to enforce the rules and be strict, but remember the humane side of employees being individuals, while trying to motivate them to be the best versions of themselves without manipulation. There is a call for an involved leader who can be trusted, holds open communication, and enforces regulations when needed without arrogance and dominance.

Through authentic leadership and strong LMX-relationship employees would feel more empowered and confident in their decisions, and, therefore, their commitment to the company and the leader would increase and this would diminish the turnover of the employees. The customer interactions would improve, and the experiences created by the empowered front-line employees would take the company’s competitive strengths to the next level.

The research supports the already existing theoretical implications but adds to them by including the front-line employees in the decision-making processes and to the construction of an employee handbook and improvement of induction training.

Managerial implications

Throughout the research, it is transparent, that there is a clear need for more structure and discussions. A leader should make sure induction training for new employees is conducted in an efficient and structured matter, in a way that suits the individual employee. The training should consist of verbal and non-verbal advising and should be conducted by a person who is an educated trainer preferably the leader. New employees should be provided an employee handbook from the beginning, and the company should provide employees time to read it during their induction to ensure that it is read through. Employees should be asked questions and should be encouraged to ask questions in return. An employee handbook needs to be more implemented in the induction training and everyday operations of front-line employees to create guidelines and regulations.

Leaders would need to take more time to discuss issues and improvements with employees without prejudice and judgement. Leaders need to understand that they might not be aware of all the issues in the ever-changing front-line, and thus, front-line employees need to be empowered to execute their daily tasks effectively. Furthermore, front-line employees need to be included in the construction and updating of an employee handbook that should be implemented in the daily operations. As the participants say, they know best what is happening, and the leaders need to listen attentively. As a handbook acts as guidelines to the whole of the organization, it needs to be up to date and distributed to all to avoid confusion and discrepancies.

A leader should actively use an authentic leadership style with hints of transactional-, and transformational style. Leaders need to enforce the regulations and be strict when situations so require but also be able to step down to the level of the employees and respect their opinions and innovations. Fairness and equality need to be enforced, and no favouritism should be present inside the team.

Leaders need to be able to adapt to different situations and understand what is required at that time. Employees need to feel empowered and trusted in order to respect and value not only the leader but also the whole organization. By creating an empowering and accepting environment a leader will increase the commitment and this diminishes the turnover of the employees and, thus, increase the profits of the organization.

Further, the research states that employees feel more ignored in larger corporations, and, thus, leaders in bigger establishments need to pay especially close attention to the issues mentioned above.

Suggestions for future research

This study is a beginning to further implement front-line employees in the creation and updating of an employee handbook. Future research regarding front-line employees participating in the construction of an employee handbook would need to be done with a larger number of participants and a variety of experiences. This research was left to be minimal and thus, not many varying opinions were discovered. Further, it would be beneficial to receive volunteers for different universities, as it would reveal how the studies affect the ideas and conceptions of the students and employees. Additionally, it could be intriguing to investigate the managerial side of induction training and the usage of handbooks in the daily processes. Furthermore, the study indicates the need for more research on how the employees perceive the current training processes and how employers need to improve the induction.

References

Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews. In (pp. 492-505). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19

Amin, M. E. K., Nørgaard, L. S., Cavaco, A. M., Witry, M. J., Hillman, L., Cernasev, A., & Desselle, S. P. (2020). Establishing trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative pharmacy research. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy, 16*(10), 1472-1482. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2020.02.005

Arthur, D. (2006). *Recruiting, interviewing, selecting & orienting new employees* (4th ed.). AMACOM.

Atwater, L., & Carmeli, A. (2009). Leader–member exchange, feelings of energy, and involvement in creative work. *The leadership quarterly, 20*(3), 264-275. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.07.009

Auh, S., Menguc, B., & Jung, Y. S. (2014). Unpacking the relationship between empowering leadership and service-oriented citizenship behaviors: a multilevel approach. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 42*(5), 558-579. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0370-0

Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The leadership quarterly, 16*(3), 315-338. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001

Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior. *The leadership quarterly, 10*(2), 181-217. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00016-8

Bauer, T., Erdogan, B., Caughlin, D. E., & Truxillo, D. M. (2020). *Human resource management : people, data, and analytics*. SAGE Publications.

Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (2015). *The Oxford handbook of leader-member exchange*. Oxford University Press.

Boella, M. J., & Goss-Turner, S. (2013). *Human resource management in the hospitality industry : a guide to best practice* (9th ed.). Routledge.

Brinkmann, S. (2013). *Qualitative interviewing*. Oxford University Press.

Cadwell, C. M. (1988). *New employee orientation*. Crisp.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data : complementary research strategies*. Sage.

Cooper, C. D., Scandura, T. A., & Schriesheim, C. A. (2005). Looking forward but learning from our past: Potential challenges to developing authentic leadership theory and authentic leaders. *The leadership quarterly, 16*(3), 475-493. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.008

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, D. J. (2018). *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Dai, Y. D., Dai, Y. Y., Chen, K. Y., & Wu, H. C. (2013). Transformational vs transactional leadership: which is better? A study on employees of international tourist hotels in Taipei City. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management, 25*(5), 760-778. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-Dec-2011-0223

Dienesch, R. M., & Liden, R. C. (1986). Leader-Member Exchange Model of Leadership: A Critique and Further Development. *The Academy of Management review, 11*(3), 618-634. https://doi.org/10.2307/258314

Du, S., Swaen, V., Lindgreen, A., & Sen, S. (2012). The Roles of Leadership Styles in Corporate Social Responsibility. *Journal of business ethics, 114*(1), 155-169. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1333-3

Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Fowler, J. F. J. (2014). *Survey Research Methods* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Garg, S., & Dhar, R. (2017). Employee service innovative behavior The roles of leader-member exchange (LMX), work engagement, and job autonomy. *International journal of manpower, 38*(2), 242-258. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-04-2015-0060

Graue, M. E., & Trainor, A. (2013). *Reviewing qualitative research in the social sciences*. Routledge.

Guerin, L., & DelPo, A. (2019). *Create your own employee handbook: A legal & practical guide for employers*. Nolo.

Harris, K. J., Wheeler, A. R., & Kacmar, M. K. (2009, 2009/06/01/). Leader–member exchange and empowerment: Direct and interactive effects on job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and performance. *The leadership quarterly, 20*(3), 371-382. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2009.03.006

Hassan, S., DeHart-Davis, L., & Jiang, Z. (2019). How empowering leadership reduces employee silence in public organizations. *Public administration (London), 97*(1), 116-131. https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12571

Hetland, H., Hetland, J., Schou Andreassen, C., Pallesen, S., & Notelaers, G. (2011). Leadership and fulfillment of the three basic psychological needs at work. *Career development international, 16*(5), 507-523. https://doi.org/10.1108/13620431111168903

Hewagama, G., Boxall, P., Cheung, G., & Hutchison, A. (2019). Service recovery through empowerment? HRM, employee performance and job satisfaction in hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 81*, 73-82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.03.006

Ilies, R., Morgeson, F. P., & Nahrgang, J. D. (2005). Authentic leadership and eudaemonic well-being: Understanding leader–follower outcomes. *The leadership quarterly, 16*(3), 373-394. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.002

Jaworski, C., Ravichandran, S., Karpinski, A. C., & Singh, S. (2018). The effects of training satisfaction, employee benefits, and incentives on part-time employees' commitment. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 74*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.02.011

Kvale, S. (1996). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. SAGE Publications, Inc. .

Kvale, S. (2006). Dominance Through Interviews and Dialogues. *Qualitative inquiry, 12*(3), 480-500. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800406286235

Lawson II, J. W. R. (2006). *How to Develop an Employee Handbook* (A. M. Association, Ed. 2nd ed.). AMACOM.

Leroy, H., Anseel, F., Gardner, W. L., & Sels, L. (2015). Authentic Leadership, Authentic Followership, Basic Need Satisfaction, and Work Role Performance: A Cross-Level Study. *Journal of management, 41*(6), 1677-1697. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312457822

Levesque, J. D. (1993). To Write or Not to Write: Do You Need a Personnel Handbook? *Nonprofit World, 11*(3), 14-16. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=13237832&scope=site

Luoh, H.-F., Tsaur, S.-H., & Tang, Y.-Y. (2014). Empowering employees: job standardization and innovative behavior. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management, 26*(7), 1100-1117. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-03-2013-0153

Mauthner, M., Birch, M., Jessop, J., & Miller, T. (2002). *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications Inc.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design : an interactive approach* (3rd ed., Vol. 41). Sage.

Mendonca, M. (2001). Preparing for Ethical Leadership in Organizations. *Canadian journal of administrative sciences, 18*(4), 266-276. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1936-4490.2001.tb00262.x

Mendonca, M., & Kanungo, R. N. (2007). *Ethical leadership*. McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.

Minton-Eversole, T. (2020). How to Build a Better Employee Handbook. *HRMagazine*, 1-1.

Morse, J. M. (2015). Critical Analysis of Strategies for Determining Rigor in Qualitative Inquiry. *Qual Health Res, 25*(9), 1212-1222. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315588501

Namasivayam, K., Guchait, P., & Lei, P. (2014). The influence of leader empowering behaviors and employee psychological empowerment on customer satisfaction. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management, 26*(1), 69-84. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-11-2012-0218

Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Basics of social research : qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education, Limited.

Normann, R. (1975). *Management for Growth*. Aldus.

Patiar, A., & Mia, L. (2009). Transformational leadership style, market competition and departmental performance: Evidence from luxury hotels in Australia. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 28*(2), 254-262. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2008.09.003

Patterson, A. (2015). *Leader evolution : from technical expertise to strategic leadership* (1st ed.). Business Expert Press.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods : integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Sage.

Raub, S., & Robert, C. (2013). Empowerment, Organizational Commitment, and Voice Behavior in the Hospitality Industry: Evidence from a Multinational Sample. *Cornell hospitality quarterly, 54*(2), 136-148. https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965512457240

Rea, L. M. (2014). *Designing and conducting survey research: a comprehensive guide* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Rego, A., Sousa, F., Marques, C., & Cunha, M. P. e. (2012). Authentic leadership promoting employees' psychological capital and creativity. *Journal of business research, 65*(3), 429-437. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.10.003

Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.

Schuckert, M., Kim, T. T., Paek, S., & Lee, G. (2018). Motivate to innovate: How authentic and transformational leaders influence employees' psychological capital and service innovation behavior. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management, 30*(2), 776-796. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2016-0282

Schumacher, S., & Komppula, R. (2016). A case study on service recovery: Frontline employees' perspectives and the role of empowerment. *European journal of tourism, hospitality and recreation, 7*(2), 117-127. https://doi.org/10.1515/ejthr-2016-0014

Shalley, C. E., & Gilson, L. L. (2004). What leaders need to know: A review of social and contextual factors that can foster or hinder creativity. *The leadership quarterly, 15*(1), 33-53.

Slåtten, T., & Mehmetoglu, M. (2011). What are the Drivers for Innovative Behavior in Frontline Jobs? A Study of the Hospitality Industry in Norway. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism, 10*(3), 254-272. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332845.2011.555732

Slåtten, T., & Mehmetoglu, M. (2015). The Effects of Transformational Leadership and Perceived Creativity on Innovation Behavior in the Hospitality Industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism, 14*(2), 195-219. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332845.2014.955557

Smith, K. J., & Harris, L. M. (2014). Drafting an Effective Employee Handbook. *Employment relations today, 41*(1), 71-79. https://doi.org/10.1002/ert.21446

Sue, V. M., & Ritter, L. A. (2007). *Conducting online surveys*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Tomaszewski, L. E., Zarestky, J., & Gonzalez, E. (2020). Planning Qualitative Research: Design and Decision Making for New Researchers. *International journal of qualitative methods, 19*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920967174

Turkmenoglu, M. A. (2019). Investigating Benefits and Drawbacks of Employee Empowerment in the Sector of Hospitality. *International Research Journal of Business Studies, 12*(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.21632/irjbs.12.1.1-13

van Assen, M. F. (2021). Training, employee involvement and continuous improvement - the moderating effect of a common improvement method. *Production planning & control, 32*(2), 132-144. https://doi.org/10.1080/09537287.2020.1716405

Walliman, N. (2017). *Research Methods: The Basics* (2nd ed.). Taylor and Francis.

Walsh, K. (2003). Qualitative research: Advancing the science and practice of hospitality. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 44*(2), 66-74.

Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Wernsing, T. S., & Peterson, S. J. (2008). Authentic Leadership: Development and Validation of a Theory-Based Measure. *Journal of management, 34*(1), 89-126. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206307308913

Wesam, D. (2014). Reflexivity in research: Promoting rigour, reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International journal of therapy and rehabilitation, 21*(12), 560. https://doi.org/10.12968/ijtr.2014.21.12.560

Xu, A. J., Loi, R., Cai, Z., & Liden, R. C. (2019). Reversing the lens: How followers influence leader–member exchange quality. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology, 92*(3), 475-497. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12268

Yammarino, F. J., Spangler, W. D., & Dubinsky, A. J. (1998, 1998/01/01/). Transformational and contingent reward leadership: Individual, dyad, and group levels of analysis. *The leadership quarterly, 9*(1), 27-54. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(98)90041-8

Yilmaz, O. (2015). Revisiting the impact of perceived empowerment on job performance: Results from front-line employees. *Turizam*, *19*(1), 34-46. https://doi.org/10.5937/Turizam1501034Y

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications : design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Yukl, G. (2012). Effective Leadership Behavior: What We Know and What Questions Need More Attention. *Academy of Management perspectives*, *26*(4), 66-85. https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2012.0088

Yukl, G. A., & Gardner, W. L. (2020). *Leadership in organizations* (9th ed.). Pearson.

Zeuch, M. (2016). *Handbook of Human Resources Management* (1st ed.). Omprint: Springer.

Appendices

Appendix A

Research questions for participants with experience

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS- EXPERIENCED

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Work experience

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

1. What comes to your minds when I ask what is an employee handbook?
2. In what kind of situations do you find an employee handbook useful?

TRAINING

3. How did you experience the induction training you receive when starting the job?
4. How would you have wanted it to be?

EMPOWERMENT

5. In what ways you can be autonomous at work?

LEADERSHIP

6. What do you expect of your leader?

Appendix B

Research questions for participants without experience

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS- NO EXPERIENCE

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age
2. Gender

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

1. What comes to your mind when I ask what is an employee handbook?
2. In what situations do you use the employee handbook?

TRAINING

3. What kind of training would you expect to receive when starting a job in hospitality?

LEADERSHIP

4. What would you expect o your leader?

EMPOWERMENT

5. Explain in what ways you would want to be autonomous at work?