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Emotion Regulation Methods of Finnish IT Leaders

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine what emotion regulation (ER) techniques Finnish IT industry leaders use when faced with stressful and demanding leadership responsibilities and requirements at work. This study has a qualitative research design. A combination of snowball sampling and sequential sampling methods was applied. New interviewees were added up to saturation (n+1), and a total of eight Finnish IT- leaders were interviewed in Finland in 2015 through semi-structured interviews that were recorded, and transcribed verbatim.

Country Legislation and culture play big roles in forming leadership requirements and behavior, hence affecting the entire work environment and culture. Finnish IT leaders use a great variety of ER strategies at work depending on the situation at hand, including reappraisal, deep acting, surface acting, suppression, displaying naturally felt emotions, but also cognitive and physical strategies, e.g. prayer, self-reflection, sports, and music. Even if leaders are expected to be honest and to show their emotions, this needs to be done in a constructive way, concentrating on work related goals.

None of the respondents reported using mindfulness and the likes as means to cope with stress, or in order to better themselves in ER tactics. Finnish leaders could benefit from further training in emotional intelligence and ER, benefiting themselves as well as improving employee satisfaction and the work environment. Further studies on ER in connection to meditation, prayer and spirituality in a leadership context could be conducted.

Participant and observer biases might have affected the study results, as well the fact that research was carried out by a single individual. This study could be replicated by using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, both in Finland and abroad.

Keywords: Emotion regulation, Leadership, Finnish culture, IT industry

Preface

Background to Study and Self-reflectivity

I am a Finnish, Christian and Caucasian female, in my 30es. My cultural background is a bit mixed, as I have grown up in a Finnish-Swedish environment in the South-Western Finland. I have been intrigued by human behavior all my life and have been “studying” people with a “psychological eye” to see if they are trustworthy or not since early childhood.

During my studies at Norsk Hotelløgskole, Stavanger, I learned briefly about emotional intelligence in class, and this woke my interest for the study field. As looking for a topic for my thesis, I came across the subject of emotion regulation (ER). I saw it as a very interesting topic and emotion regulation skills as something that could be very useful to possess also in my personal life. After I had gained more knowledge in the topic, and after discussing with PhD candidate Annie Haver about her research work, I decided to do my study on ER skills of Finnish IT leaders since there numerous IT companies in Finland, and because Haver had already previously studied the ER of Norwegian Hotel managers.

Thanks

First of all I want to thank my children Erik, Simeon and Kinyi for giving me the courage, inspiration and motivation to continue my studies, and our Heavenly Father for giving me the strength to carry out the task of completing my studies. I want to give a warm Thank You to Torvald Øgaard for his help, support and friendliness during my studies at Norsk Hotelløgskole. I also want to thank my supervisor Trude Furunes for her help during the thesis writing process. I owe a special Thanks to Annie Haver for her encouragement and advice concerning my thesis work at the beginning of this thesis writing project. Of course I am also very grateful to all the people who found time for participating in this study as interviewees. I am

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Emotion Regulation Methods of Finnish IT Leaders

The world seems to be in a constant process of change, as it is characterized by high competition, fast economic-, technological-, environmental- and political changes and uncertainties. Competition in the labor market and between companies is also hard in a globalized world and this sets high requirements on workers, often causing stress and producing a negative effect on them.

Lilius (2012) explains that the IT industry is difficult to define as it is a dynamic industry and consists of many different products, including e.g. IT services and different software products. Globalization, technological changes etc. reshape industries and companies all the time. Globalization has also broken down the old industry clusters or value chains into pieces geographically, making national clusters obsolete. IT industries are greatly influenced by the changing needs and behaviors of their customers and new substitutes constantly threaten the existing products (Lilius, 2012).

Company leaders have a lot of responsibilities towards different stakeholders and they are most likely to experience a lot of stress because of the high demands on their job outcomes (Haver, Akerjordet, & Furunes, 2014). They daily encounter many emotionally stressful events and need to be able to use different emotion regulation strategies in order to be able to cope with their demanding work requirements. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage one's own and others' emotions, and to learn and adjust behavior in order to fulfill organizational goals. It is crucial in the Emotion Regulation process. Company leaders use different Emotion Regulation strategies in order to gain control of their own emotions, to express appropriate emotions to their team members, and to encourage and support them. By doing so they also create adaptable and healthy organizations and enhance their company's competitive advantages (Haver et al., 2014).

Meditation, mindfulness, brain exercises etc. are popular topics in the Media these days all over the Western World. New companies that provide training in these fields are being set up frequently, at least in Finland. It seems crucial for many employees and jobseekers to find ways to learn how to better themselves in order to find work or possibilities to advance in their careers. Taking part in training and exercises may also be a fashionable thing to do, a means to prove that one is making “personal progress”.

The purpose of this study is to examine how Finnish IT leaders are able to regulate their Emotions at work in stressful times. Examples of interview questions that were used are: “What happens if you show true emotions at work?”; “How do you regulate your emotions?” and “Do you practice mindfulness, yoga etc. in order to learn to regulate your emotions?”

This study has a qualitative research design. Eight Finnish IT leaders were interviewed during the time of March-April 2015 in Southern Finland, through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were recorded, and later transcribed.

A combination of snowball sampling and sequential sampling methods were applied in order to find informants who would be willing to participate in the study. The initial contact with the interviewees was gained through means of electronic communications; emails and messages on social media. New interviewees were added up to saturation ($n + 1$), meaning that when no more new knowledge appeared, only one more interview was conducted. The requirements were that the informants should be Finnish citizens, they should work in the IT industry in a managerial position, and hold a degree in higher education.

Theoretical Overview and Positioning

There has been a lot of research done on emotional labor performed by service providers but not much is known about leaders’ emotion regulation (Haver et al., 2014). The first ones to empirically study what emotion regulation strategies leaders in the hospitality industry use in order to persevere were, as reported, Haver et al. in 2014. My own study,

made in a different country, within a different cultural context, and within a different industry, can further add important information to the field. Results can be used to improve management education by preparing students for handling their future (Haver et al., 2014), and also for current managers in order for them to find new tools to excel in their work.

Finnish Culture

Finnish culture and Finnish organizational culture is described here, as it is used as a framework for analyzing the study results. As I found very little empirical work written on Finnish culture, I decided also to use the website “This is Finland” by Finland Promotion Board as an information source in my work. It includes [in my opinion] good and relevant information for this work.

As Peltokorpi, 2006, explains organizational behavior reflects the national culture, defined as a system of values, beliefs, and assumptions that distinguishes one group of people from another. National cultures are collective constructs and are neither about genetic nor about individual behavior. They are incrementally acquired cultural knowledge that is relatively permanent and is used in understanding social behavior (Peltokorpi, 2006).

Some researchers point out differences among the Nordic countries, but cross-cultural researchers often group Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden together because of their geographical proximity, religion, language (except Finnish language), work-related values, and leadership styles (Peltokorpi, 2006).

Tixier (1996) has studied Nordic countries and their cultures. According to her Finns see themselves as individualistic, and respect the individuality of others. This means people are expected to solve their own problems. The society is very liberal but rules are in fact internalized, limiting moral flexibility. Discipline is respected and modesty highly valued (Tixier, 1996). Despite liberality there is still mistrust of foreigners caused by little tradition

of immigration in Finland (Finland Promotion Board, 2015). The divorce rates in the country are high. Finns are highly patriotic, even if Finland is a member of EU (Tixier, 1996).

Finns are viewed by outsiders as cold, distant and reserved people that have a hard time communicating, a people that does not seek contact (Tixier, 1996). Even when an organization's tone is informal and the organization itself skews young, communication is more formal in Finland than in other Nordic countries. When addressing older people it is considered polite to use a different, polite conjugation. Importance is attached to the titles of a known hierarchy. Titles are very common in the written form and politeness also consists of not always referring to someone by their first name (Tixier, 1996).

According to the Finland Promotion Board, 2015, the stereotype that Finns are reserved and taciturn does not retain the same validity as it used to, especially with the younger generations, who constantly speak on their mobile phones, and are fast to answer emails as well. Finns do however have a special attitude towards words and speech. Words are taken seriously, unnecessary small talk is avoided. A Finnish proverb says: "Talk is silver, silence is golden", meaning if you don't have anything wise to say, you would be better to stay quiet. This is why Finns rarely enter into conversation with strangers and are curiously silent in the metro, the bus or the tram. However, a visitor will have no trouble in getting advice on a street corner since the hospitality of Finns easily overrides their customary reserve. People are also held to what they say or promise. "Take a man by his words and a bull by its horns," says a Finnish proverb. Finns also have an enormous capacity for listening and silence. Silence is seen as a part of the communication process. Being interrupted is poorly tolerated and considered to be really bad manners (Finland Promotion Board, 2015).

The Finn is said to show no emotion and the perfect day for a Finn is said to be one in which nobody is encountered (Tixier, 1996). For a Finn nature is also important. A summer

cottage with a sauna by a lake is the dream of every man. It is the place where he can be himself, without taking into consideration anyone else; he can go fishing, swim, and barbeque, pick mushroom and berries in the forest and regain his strength after the work week. The sauna is a place for relaxation and purification and exists also in many private homes. Modesty and harmony is also valued in Finland. For many people, relaxation on the weekend also means getting drunk (Tixier, 1996).

Finnish Managerial Culture. Riivari & Lämsä (2014) have studied Finnish organizational culture. They see it as important in creating and improving ethical behavior and shaping ethical values in the work place. Especially top managers' moral behavior (rightness, justice and fairness of their acts and communication) is important to organizations and their long-term success. Finnish organizations display well thought out rules, official codes of good and ethical conduct. The principles of ethical behavior are generally known to all in the work place (Riivari & Lämsä, 2014).

Legislation against sexual orientation discrimination was introduced in Finland in 1995 and an act respecting equality between men and women in 1986. There are also rules against discrimination based on age and religion (Mor Barak, 2005). There is a high degree of equality between the sexes in all the Nordic countries (Tixier, 1996). As described by the Finland Promotion Board, 2015, a relatively high number of women hold advanced positions in politics, academic posts, and also in business in Finland. Finns are accustomed to politically correct language in which traditional masculine terms are replaced with gender-neutral ones (e.g. 'chairperson'); or the third person singular pronoun is offered in both forms (he/she) when they exist. In Finnish the latter problem does not exist as the third person singular pronoun *hän* covers both genders (Finland Promotion Board, 2015).

In Finland, work and social lives are clearly separated and inviting colleagues over after work is rare. Work ends at a certain time, and it is considered to be okay to leave

unfinished work until the next day (Tixier, 1996). Separating work and leisure time is also according to research a tool in reducing stress and burn-out caused by work (Kultanen, 2009).

Finland differs from other Scandinavian countries in leadership style, as managers are used to "pulling the shots". It is an autocratic environment, where order and organization is valued. The mentality is said to resemble the German, British or North American styles. Power distances are important and hierarchy exists and is respected, but without a lot of formality. Subordinates are used to receiving orders, even if leadership is now moving towards the Scandinavian style (Tixier, 1996).

PhD Timo Kultanen, a specialist in the area of management training believes that Finnish leaders are still far from the Swedes when it comes to a so called consensus leadership style, and this is because they are low on emotional intelligence. In order to learn about human nature, of employee needs and skills, and in order to develop their own interpersonal skills, Finnish leaders need training in emotion intelligence (Kultanen, 2009, 2015).

According to research done by Løkke and Eskildsen (2007) Finland has got the highest absenteeism of all of the Nordic countries. Absence causes high costs to employers and society as 5-10% of workdays are wasted due to absenteeism on a yearly basis. It is however difficult to define absence as today's work habits increasingly include telecommunication and work in virtual offices. The main reason for absenteeism is dissatisfaction at work, leading from factors such as management style, work characteristics or co-worker relations (Løkke & Eskildsen, 2007). Many see leaders ultimately responsible for dissatisfaction at work as they are the ones who create the values and culture at work (Kultanen, 2015).

Løkke & Eskildsen (2007) further describe that women are more absent than men. This might however be explained by the fact that they take better care of their health than

men do as they are more aware of their physical condition. Men often deny their health problems. Women are also the ones that usually take care of sick children at home, adding to the absence rates (Løkke & Eskildsen, 2007).

Henley (2013) points out that parents in Scandinavia have a chance to take paid parental leaves after a child is born in the family. The shared parental leave policy aims to help women return to the workplace, and men to become more involved in caring for new babies and strengthening their bond (Henley, 2013) According to Kervinen (2015) 25% of Swedish fathers take parental leave. In Finland the number is only 10%. A reason for this is according to many that legislation in Finland has not yet caught up with the Swedish one on this point. The numbers will rise, once this is corrected (Kervinen, 2015). According to statistics collected by the [Finnish] National Institute for Health and Welfare (2015) the number is steadily growing in Finland. Highly educated husbands to highly educated wives are the ones that most commonly stay on paternity leave (National Insitute for Health and Welfare, 2015).

Earlier research in Finland shows that constructive critique or feedback improves individual results. It helps to correct mistakes, to recognize and correct problems and to clarify goals. Hence it can improve work motivation (Kultanen, 2009). Simström (2009) points out that research done year after year shows that what is lacking the most in Finnish companies is leadership. Productivity, innovativeness, and work atmosphere is decreasing, whereas stress and fatigue is increasing. Reasons to this are poor leadership and poor management. Leaders hold considerable knowledge of the work organization, they are service minded, optimistic and self-confident but they lack in their ability to control conflicts, to co-operate and work in groups, to be able to encourage employees and to help them excel (Simström, 2009).

In Finland Power is derived from accomplishments (Tixier, 1996). Interest in a task, and the promise of a career are important motivators for people. Everyone focuses on the task to be accomplished and the manager maintains a low profile. It is the project that succeeds, not the person who is in charge of it. Punctuality is of most importance and being late upsets people a lot (Tixier, 1996).

Further, according to Tixier (1996) Finns are reliable and keep their word in business relations, even to the extent that they might be considered naïve. Also the spoken word is seen as legally binding and can cause problems in international interactions. Finns also take time before arriving at a decision and negotiations require a lot of patience. The stages of implementation are, on the other hand, more rapid. Finns don't like taking risks and generally like that which conforms, is structured and controlled (Tixier, 1996).

Disagreement or perplexity is expressed through silence rather than by raising the tone (Tixier, 1996). If a disagreement is expressed, it is done in a very direct way, with neither excessive diplomacy nor spite. Communication is generally simple, well targeted and direct, without any insinuations. At the same time, Finns can be very prone to react when a piece of information proves false. Messages are generally short and clear and this precision avoids misunderstandings and helps gain time. Bureaucracy is said to stand in the way of innovativeness. (Tixier, 1996).

Finland and Geert Hofstede's Model of Workplace and Culture

Geert Hofstede has developed an internationally known and much used model about culture, but it has also been criticized for not being accurately constructed (McSweeney, 2002) and structured (Fang, 2003). The Model is based on data collected from IBM workers between 1950 and 1973 (Baskerville, 2003).

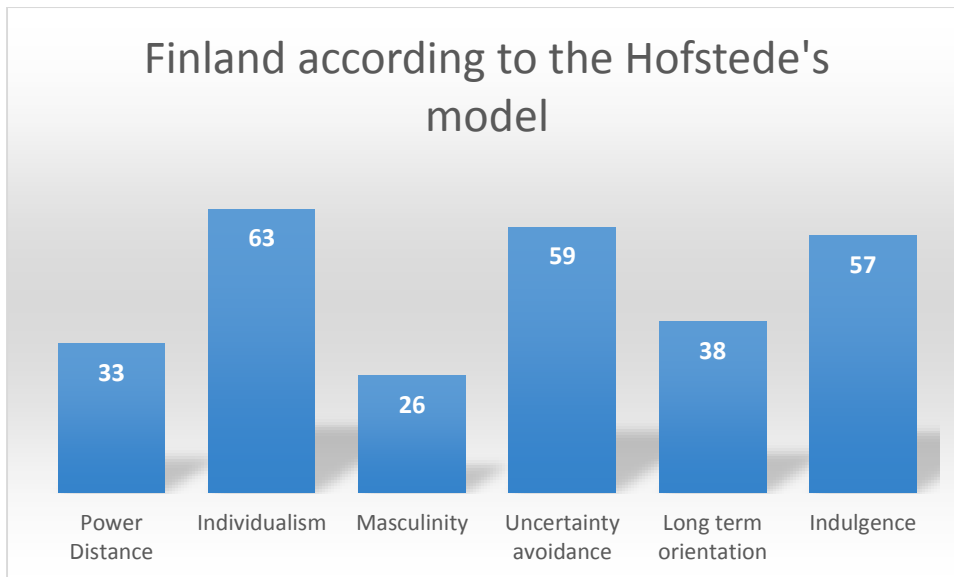


Figure 1. Cultural norms in Finland according to Hofstede. The five dimensions of culture are power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long term orientation. Figure 3. Is adapted from the webpage by the Hofstede Centre, 2015, available at <http://geert-hofstede.com/finland.html>, accessed 28.5.2015.

Power distance deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal. It is by definition: “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (The Hofstede Center, 2015) Finland scores low on this dimension (33) which characterizes the style as being independent with equal rights to all. Power is decentralized and managers count on the experience of their team members. Hierarchy is used for convenience only as superiors are accessible, and seen as coaches. Management is supposed to facilitate and empower the workers. Employees are expected to be consulted in decision making. Control is disliked, and attitudes towards leaders are informal, on a first name basis. The communication between people is direct and participative (The Hofstede Center, 2015).

Individualism is about “the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members” (The Hofstede Center, 2015). Do people define themselves as “I” or “We”? In individualist societies people are supposed to look only after themselves and their direct

family, whereas in collectivist societies people belong 'in groups' that take care each other. Finland is an individualistic society, with a score of 63. Individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. Offences cause guilt and loss of self-esteem. The employer-employee relationship is based on mutual advantage. Hiring or promotion decisions are to be based on merit. Management is the management of individuals (The Hofstede Center, 2015).

Masculinity: A high masculinity score shows that the society is driven by competition, achievement and success (The Hofstede Center, 2015). Success is defined by the winner or best in field. This value system starts in school and continues throughout the organizational lifespan. A low score (feminine) means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. Quality of life is the sign of success, and people with a different mindset are not seen as admirable. The fundamental issue is what motivates people; do they want to be the best (masculine) or is it important that they like what they do (feminine). As Finland scores 26 on Masculinity it is considered a feminine society, where managers strive for consensus, people value equality, solidarity and quality, and where status is not shown. Conflicts are resolved by compromises and negotiation. An effective manager is a supportive one, and decision making is achieved through involvement. Free time and flexibility are favored and the focus is on well-being. As a comparison: Norway scores 8 and is thus the second most feminine society in the world after Sweden. (The Hofstede Center, 2015). Even if both Finland and Norway are seen as feminine societies, it is clear that the difference between the two countries are quite big.

Uncertainty Avoidance is the way that a society deals with an uncertain future, do they try to control it or not and how much anxiety does it cause for members (The Hofstede Center, 2015). Finland scores 59 on this dimension and is thus a high uncertainty avoiding culture. These kind of countries maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are also

intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas, meaning that innovation may be resisted.

Security is important. There seems to exist an emotional need for rules, e.g. “time is money”, which leads to people having an inner urge to be busy and work hard, to be precise and punctual (The Hofstede Center, 2015).

Long Term Orientation describes how the societies maintain some links with their own past, while dealing with the challenges of the present and future (The Hofstede Center, 2015). Different societies prioritize these two goals differently. Normative societies (score low on this dimension) for example, prefer to maintain time-honored traditions and norms and view societal change with suspicion. The opposite encourages thrift and efforts in modern education. They see it as a way to prepare for the future. With a low score of 38, Finnish culture is classified as normative. People have a strong concern with establishing the “absolute truth”, and they exhibit great respect for traditions. Finns focus on achieving quick results and are not concerned with saving for the future (The Hofstede Center, 2015).

Indulgence is defined as: “the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses” (The Hofstede Center, 2015) It is based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called “indulgence” and relatively strong control is called “restraint” and cultures can, therefore, be described as indulgent or restrained. The relatively high score of 57 indicates that Finland is an indulgent country. People in such cultures are generally seen as optimists, they exhibit a willingness to realize their impulses and desires, meaning “enjoying life” and “having fun”. Leisure time is of importance, as well as having the option to spend money and act as they wish (The Hofstede Center, 2015)

The Finnish IT Industry. After Finland’s IT boom in the 1990s, the new millennium meant new challenges, uncertainties and bankruptcies for many companies in the industry (Ruohonen, 2005). The “organizational culture of friendship” or “family idyll” has been questioned and has been broken down as funds in the businesses have decreased and the work

atmosphere has become more and more insecure. The changed work requirements also demand changes in the leadership style into a more professional leadership direction (Ruohonen, 2005) from being a technical “engineer culture”. The often young leaders in the industry are trained in logical expert work and would hence need more leadership training (Pystynen, 2012).

Lilius, 2012, points out that Finnish IT enterprises, as well as their customers are more and more dependent on global ecosystems platforms, applications and services. This results in more IT decisions being made outside of Finland and leads to Finnish IT companies seeking growth by expanding into new markets (Lilius, 2012). Ruohonen, 2005, sees that the companies are going from a product oriented to a service oriented direction. This is also said to be more beneficial economically. Customer needs need to be met and new service solutions need to be created in order to succeed (Ruohonen, 2005).

Literature Review

Emotional Regulation Defined

Emotions arise automatically, or after analysis, when something important to us is at stake, e.g. when we encounter a snake or when we hear someone talking negatively about a friend (Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010). Emotions trigger a set of behavioral, experiential, and physiological response tendencies that together influence how we respond to situations. In some situations the emotional responses might be unwanted, and this leads to the need of emotion regulation. It is important in both perceptions of failure and experiences of failure, and to buffer self-efficacy in order to recover faster from negative events (Gooty et al., 2010).

A relational approach to emotion regulation emphasizes both the individual and the environment (Campos, Walle, Dahl, & Main, 2011). There is also a relation between the

person experiencing the emotion and the object of that emotion. This is often another person with his/her own goals and specific behavior. He/she creates in turn either contradictory or harmonious feelings in others. Every variable can be simultaneously a cause/ effect or influence/ outcome. Emotion regulation is hence a process where an individual tries to "balance" or coordinate his/her own (similar or opposing) needs with the needs of others. Each person can have many goals and this, at times, makes regulatory conflicts great. The primary setting for emotion regulation is in a social context - how the emotions are regulated in the presence of other people or within the person when conflicting goals exist (Campos et al., 2011)

Depending on the context people can choose between many different options when deciding on how to respond to a situation (Campos et al., 2011). The same behavior can have a different meaning depending on the context, e.g. a smile can mean happiness or derision. This depends on the relationship of the people involved. A person enters social settings with pre-existing goals, expectations and behavior models. Even after a situation is "exited" it can have effects on the individual. Hence emotion regulation can be seen as a continuous process. Emotion regulation involves balancing between present and future pleasure and goal pursuits, in order to serve both short and long term goals. E.g. a student may choose an unpleasant activity (to study) instead of a pleasant activity (to relax) in order to reach a long term goal (to graduate). "Adaptive" emotion regulation depends on the goals of the individuals studied. What is more "effective" depends on the goals that one wants to achieve (Campos et al., 2011).

Emotion regulation is by definition: "*the processes by which we influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express them*" (Gross, 2002, p. 2) It includes both conscious and non-conscious strategies that are used to either increase, maintain, or decrease one or more components of an emotional response (Bosse,

Pontier, & Treur, 2010). The components in the process are: the experiential component, which is the subjective feeling of the emotion; the behavioral component, which is the behavioral response, and the physiological component, which consists of heart rate, respiration etc. (Bosse et al., 2010). According to Gross (2002) there exists a limitless number of emotion regulation strategies.

Emotion regulation is either altering the response to the stimulus, or the perception of it by either up-regulating or down-regulating the emotion in question, as not to have a too high or a too low emotional response level (Bosse et al., 2010; Diefendorff, Richard, & Yang, 2008). Altering the response to the stimulus is called "*response-focused regulation*". This is a conscious attempt to inhibit one's current stream of emotional experiences (covert, overt, or both) once the emotion has already been generated (Diefendorff et al., 2008; Gross, 1988; Haver, Akerjordet, & Furunes, 2013).

Regulation before the emotion is triggered, altering the stimulus or perceptions of it is called "*antecedent-focused regulation*" (Diefendorff et al., 2008). Antecedent focused regulation is further divided into 4 categories: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, and cognitive change. *Situational selection* means deciding to approach or avoid specific stimuli, e.g. people or places. *Situational modification* means changing the situation at hand, as to give it the preferred emotional impact, e.g. by asking a fellow worker to help with the work load in order to avoid complaints from customers. (Diefendorff et al., 2008; Gross, 1988). *Attentional deployment* means trying to focus or concentrate on other things than what provokes negative feelings, or positive refocus on something nice. This can mean for example to look at a family picture in order to forget about a negative customer (Diefendorff et al., 2008).

Cognitive change patterns are about reinterpreting situations in order to change their meaning, and hence the impact of the situation on oneself (Diefendorff et al., 2008). *In*

perspective taking the person tries to imagine himself "in the other persons shoes", *in cognitive re-framing* he/she tries to think of how things could be even worse and in *reappraisal* he/she tries to see or interpret the situation differently in order to decrease its emotional impact. An example of this is e.g. to think of difficult customers as being children in need of help, or to re-frame a negative experience as a learning experience (Diefendorff et al., 2008; Gross, 2002) *Suppression* is about inhibiting ongoing emotion-expressive behavior (Gross, 2002)

According to Gross (2002) Emotion regulation is neither inherently good nor bad. It is used as people increase, maintain, and decrease both negative and positive emotions. This is often times done consciously, such as *deciding* to change an upsetting topic, but it can also occur unconsciously, such as when we *shift attention* away from something upsetting (Gross, 2002).

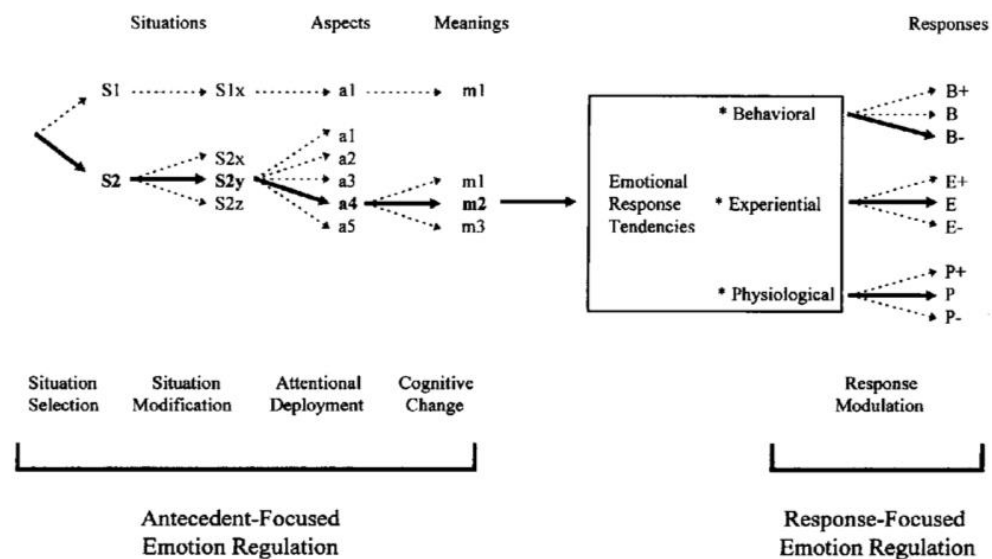


Figure 2. Emotion Regulation Model by Gross. According to this model the emotion regulation process goes from antecedent focused to response focused emotion regulation, focusing on reappraisal and suppression. Emotion can be regulated at 5 points in the emotion generative process: selection of the situation; modification of the situation; deployment of attention; change of cognitions; modulation of experiential, behavioral, or physiological

responses. Figure 2. Is found on the *Psychology in Action* webpage, in Emotional Control: Strategies we use for regulating our emotions, by Torre, 2011, available at <http://www.psychologyinaction.org/2011/04/08/emotional-control-strategies-we-use-for-regulating-our-emotions/>, accessed 6.3.2015. Copyright 2015 by Psychology in Action.

Interpersonal Emotion Regulation. "Emotions often serve as social magnets, drawing us towards others, in search of or desiring to help" (Zaki & Williams, 2013, p. 808).

Emotional Regulation consists of different kinds of attempts to try to change either positive or negative trajectories of emotional experiences, in order to reach different goals. Many people do this with the help of others: by e.g. calling their friends in order to receive support and/or advice from them. Such interpersonal emotional regulation is important in reducing stress and in order to intensify positive effect. People often try to ease other's troubles by empathizing with them, acting pro-social and supportive. This is very important in times of trouble. These experiences build people's emotion regulation capabilities throughout life (Zaki & Williams, 2013).

Intra and interpersonal regulation exist in a continuum, and it is thereby difficult to distinguish between the two (Zaki & Williams, 2013). The same processes might be awakened by just by thinking of others, or in real encounters with them. Intrapersonal regulations (e.g. reappraisal) can occur both when being in company, and when being alone. Modulation of affect in social situations can happen even without any specific goals in mind and is tied to interpersonal regulation; many people seek contact when facing difficult or threatening situations as the mere presence of others help them to regulate their emotions. They are most likely to share emotions with people who they believe can help them. Sometimes the sharing helps regardless of the response received, as the process itself promotes self-regulation (Zaki & Williams, 2013).

Intrinsic emotion regulation means to contact another person in order to receive help with the process whereas extrinsic emotion regulation is about a person trying to regulate another one's feelings e.g. by giving advice (Zaki & Williams, 2013).

Response-dependency is common in intrapersonal emotion regulation; sharing good news with others intensifies positive effect only if it is met with enthusiasm (Zaki & Williams, 2013). Social sharing can soften negative effect only if it is met in a supportive way. Sharing experiences and opinions with others increases the likelihood of future long-term support and connections between the people involved (Zaki & Williams, 2013).

Empathy means understanding another person's emotional state, and sharing it. It is motivated by regulating the other person's feelings (Zaki & Williams, 2013). Pro-social behavior is e.g. situational specific emotional support, comforting messages, diffuse support which is not associated with a specific event, or practical support, e.g. providing resources. The one who provides the help usually feels good and happy inside, irrespective of the act's consequences to others. Hence, the reason for wanting to help another person in distress can also be in order to feel better personally (Zaki & Williams, 2013).

Emotion Regulation at the Place of Work - Emotional Labor by Hochschild

Diffendorf et al. (2008) explain that most of the research on ER is from Social Psychology research, which has focused on the relationship between people and groups. Hochschild introduced in 1983 the concept of "emotional labor", which is very well known today within Hospitality studies. It refers to the idea that employees need to hide their true feelings in front of customers. Emotional displays were, according to her, managed by either surface acting ("faking in bad faith") or deep acting ("faking in good faith"). The first one is about hiding one's true emotions and displaying the ones desired by the work organization, the latter one changing one's emotions so that they match the desired ones (Diefendorff et al., 2008).

Emotion Regulation at the Workplace and Consequences on Health. Emotions are basic features of human biologic functioning and learning to regulate them is a major developmental milestone in growing into adulthood (DeSteno, Kubzansky, & Gross, 2013). Negative emotions and situations lead to the need of emotion regulation, as negative effect brings forth more physiological, affective, cognitive and behavioral activities and provokes more cognitive analysis than positive or neutral effects do (Diefendorff et al., 2008). Negative emotions can lead to anger, anxiety and depression, and often seem to directly contribute to disease onset and progression via neurobiological alterations that occur with emotion experiences. The best evidence is in relation to cardiovascular disease (DeSteno et al., 2013).

Haver et al. (2013) point out that suppression and reappraisal have different outcomes. They both operate from conscious to unconscious regulation of emotions. By using *reappraisal* people change the way they feel by changing the way they think about a situation. In this way they reinterpret stressful situations as more positive, which leads to greater self-esteem and life satisfaction (Haver et al., 2013). Studies find that reappraisal is often more effective than suppression as it decreases emotion experience and behavioral expression, and has no impact on memory (Gross, 2002) Reappraisal is though difficult to carry through, as it requires a higher degree of consciousness and personal effort (Haver et al., 2013).

Suppression means masking one's inner feelings by mitigating an unwanted emotion (Haver et al., 2013). Suppressors focus on changing their emotional displays, not their true feelings. Suppression is associated with less desirable consequences such as stress, feelings of inauthenticity, decreased interpersonal functioning and reduced well-being (Haver et al., 2013, 2014). According to Gross (2002) Suppression decreases behavioral expression, but fails to decrease emotion experience, and actually impairs memory. It also increases physiological responding for the suppressors and their social partners (Gross, 2002).

Reappraisal and Suppression strategies are often conceptualized as deep acting and surface acting in organizational contexts (Haver et al., 2013). Both strategies involve expressing a publicly observable and accepted facial and bodily display. Surface actors fake or hide desired emotions according to norms of behavior. This can cause negative psychological effects, such as increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and lower job satisfaction. These in turn lead to undesired work outcomes. Deep acting is the process of modifying inner feelings to express appropriate emotions. Naturally felt emotions are the expressions of authentic or genuine emotions. Both deep acting and naturally felt emotions lead to an increased sense of personal accomplishment and to desirable work outcomes (Haver et al., 2013).

Emotional Regulation and Leadership

Emotions are an important part of us and emotion regulation is often required at work (Haver et al., 2014). According to research subordinates are very fast to pick up their leader's emotional expressions at work; everything a leader says or leaves unsaid, does or leaves undone has an effect on them and on their and their group's work outcome (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2014)

Haver et al. (2014) point out that leaders differ in their abilities to regulate their emotions. Some choose more effective strategies than others. The effectiveness of leaders in terms of emotion regulation depends also on their context; a particular regulation strategy can be adaptive in one work situation and maladaptive in another. This leads to the importance of creating good work relationships and positive teamwork, all demanding conscious emotion regulation techniques (Haver et al., 2014).

Gross et al. (1997) have studied the stereotypes that suggest that people become less emotional when they age. Studies conducted in America with different populations suggest that older individuals may in fact be better at certain forms of emotion regulation than

younger ones, or they can at least be said to be better at matching their regulatory efforts to environmental exigencies (Gross et al., 1997). Gooty et al. (2010) explain that women are usually considered to be more "gifted" emotionally and this is why women leaders with accurate emotion perception lead to high follower satisfaction. Male leaders, who possess the same skills, are on the other hand seen as being more persuasive than their female counterparts (Gooty et al., 2010).

According to Haver et al. (2013 and 2014) and Gooty et al. (2010) an essential part of being a good leader is knowing how to relate to employees and motivating them to do well at emotional events at the place of work. In order to reduce potentially adverse outcomes the leader needs to be able to recognize, understand and deal with emotional states in him/herself and in the employees. This is done by empathizing with the employees, and by avoiding confrontational mood states, e.g. annoyance, and confrontation mood matching, meaning responding to anger with anger. Empathy helps leaders and followers to connect and develop a shared identity. A good leader is also able to judge when a specific emotion regulation strategy suits the situation at hand, and to be able to make good decisions even at stressful situations. By doing so, he can enhance his company's competitive advantages and organizational outcomes. (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2013, 2014).

Haver et al.'s (2013) research shows that leaders showing negative emotions at work cause their subordinates to feel frustration and disappointment, leading to decreased well-being amongst them. Leaders can also create dissonance by showing negative emotions while presenting a positive message simultaneously (Haver et al., 2013). According to Gooty et al. (2010) the most common source to subordinate anger is management actions. This is being reappraised by the employees, e.g. someone else is to blame for the situation; someone is blocking them from achieving their goals; the situation as unfair. Anger affects negatively effective problem solving and decision making. Pessimism, on the other hand, leads to low

control, low action readiness and doubt over one's own or others' actions. Both anger and pessimism affect planning (Gooty et al., 2010). Affective events at work can lead to different kinds of emotional responses which can affect the workers behavior, and some of them can even be counterproductive (Thiel, Connelly, & Griffith, 2012).

It is also important to note that the need for emotion regulation might also originate from situations outside work; they can e.g. be caused by problems at home (Diefendorff et al., 2008). Haver et al.'s (2014) and Thiel et al.'s (2012) study results show that leaders can help their followers to cope with negative emotions by emphasizing and enhancing their enthusiasm, by displaying optimism, and resilience, and by showing them confidence and pleasant emotions. Excited, enthusiastic, and energetic leaders can create a positive emotional environment, which energizes their subordinates and reduces stress (Haver et al., 2014; Thiel et al., 2012).

Positive emotions together with a mindset of positivity also help leaders to choose correct strategies in order to regulate their actions at negative events (Haver et al., 2014). It is also a key factor in building resilience and good relationships with followers, in becoming more creative, knowledgeable and healthy. The positive mindset is shown as curiosity, openness, kindness, appreciation and authenticity. Leaders' emotional competencies play a crucial part in how they are able to handle long working hours, how they overcome frustrations, and how they are able to maintain confidence in order to reduce stress. Leaders who express and display positive emotions are seen as better leaders, no matter what kind of feedback they give. This is how subordinates' well-being is enhanced in a long-term perspective (Haver et al., 2013; Haver et al., 2014).

Emotion Regulation and Emotional Intelligence

Leaders cannot perform Emotion Regulation efficiently if they do not possess Emotional Intelligence (EI), considered the ability to perceive, learn, and adjust behavior in

order to fulfill an organizational goal (Haver et al., 2013). A Study by Mayer et al. (2004) shows that subordinates appreciate high EI in their superiors. Good leadership creates a positive job atmosphere and makes the employees more loyal to the leaders and to the company. High EI also contributes to higher job performance and effectiveness, and hence increases a company's results. (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Salovey & Grewal, 2005; Simström, 2009). A study by Liu (2010) shows that intrinsic religious orientation correlates positively with emotional intelligence. Liu suggests thereby that knowledge of employees' religious orientation might help managers in selecting emotionally intelligent employees (Liu, 2010).

Mayer et al.'s (2004) research on EI shows that people of higher EI are usually agreeable, open and conscientious. They are likely to prefer social occupations to enterprising occupations. EI is also important in work with direct customer contact. Empathy is also a central characteristic of emotionally intelligent behavior. People who relate positively to one another experience greater life satisfaction, and lower stress. E.g. the empathy of an advice giver determines to a big degree whether the advice is perceived as good or not. Empathy also motivates altruistic behavior (Mayer et al., 2004).

Goleman (2014) explains that besides empathy, self-knowledge and self-control are important aspects of Emotional Intelligence. In order to perform well, people need to be at a good inner state. People in a good mood are more creative, better at solving problems, more flexible and in every way more efficient at making decisions.

A bad mood has its own benefits according to Goleman (2014): people are able to pay attention to even boring details, they are more skeptical and less trusting in other's opinions, ask more questions and draw their own conclusions. This might be good while e.g. signing a contract. Anger also creates energy, which focuses attention on removing obstacles that are standing in the way of what we want to accomplish. The downside with negativity is of

course that it is unpleasant not only to the person feeling it, but also to those around. Being in a pessimistic mood, it is also easier to give up when things go wrong. The mood can create a negative attitude towards everything and distort people's sense of judgement (Goleman, 2014).

Goleman (2014) further defines self-control as controlling one's emotions, being aware of one's goals, adaptability and an ability to take initiative. We cannot control what kind of feelings we feel, when we feel them or how strong they are, because the feelings are signals from the brain. We can however decide how we react to the feeling and how we express it - this is what self-control means (Goleman, 2014).

What often causes stress at work is according to Goleman (2014): lack of respect and scorn, unfair treatment, disrespect, feeling of not being heard, and unrealistic timetables. Prolonged stress can lead to clinical symptoms as anxiety, depression or post-dramatic stress disorder. When feeling stressed it is important to learn how to understand what is going on by recognizing the feelings/signals of stress, and then learn to let go of it, e.g. by saying "I am overreacting". Empathizing with the person who has caused the feelings or meditation techniques might also help at easing stress (Goleman, 2014).

Research on self-regulation of mood by Thayer et al.(1994) shows that exercise appears to be the most effective mood regulating behavior, however the best strategy to change a bad mood is a combination of relaxation, stress management, cognitive, and exercise techniques. Men and women use different strategies for changing bad moods and how they self-regulate energy and reduce tension. Men are more likely to seek pleasurable activities and distraction, or a second strategy of direct tension reduction that includes the use of alcohol and drugs. Women on the other hand use passive mood management or social support, ventilation, and gratification (talk to someone, emotional activity, food, and smoke) for energy enhancement and tension reduction as well (Thayer, Newman, & McClain, 1994).

A recent study made in Finland by Kettunen (2015) also shows that improved physical fitness is in fact associated with lowered stress levels and higher mental resources amongst healthy, working adults. Exercise interventions at work can hence be recommended to improve employees' psychological health, and ability to work (Kettunen, 2015).

Method

Research Design

This study has a qualitative research design and was informed by Eight Finnish IT-managers. The interviews were semi-structured, and lasted between 40 and 65 minutes. The interviews were carried out as discussions, but all covering largely the same questions. Most of the interviews were conducted face to face, two via Skype. Skype interviews were conducted by request, due to the interviewees' busy work schedules. All of the interviews were first recorded with a recording device and later on transcribed verbatim.

Qualitative research design was chosen since it is especially responsive to local situations, conditions and stakeholder's needs (Yin, 2011). It is useful when desiring to study a limited number of cases in depth, recording both feelings, attitudes and behaviors. Data collection and data analysis of qualitative data is time consuming and includes the researcher as a primary research instrument. The research done was unfunded, and a single data collection method was chosen because of this monetary restraint together with a time constraint led to only one data collection method being chosen (Yin, 2011).

As Yin (2011) explains, the qualitative interview follows a conversational mode, and the interview itself will lead to a kind of social relationship. The relationship is not scripted and there is no questionnaire containing a full list of questions, but they differ according to the context and setting of the interview. The method of semi-structured personal interviews was chosen as it gives both the interviewee and the interviewer possibilities to ask follow up questions and to get clarifications on issues in order to understand views and perspectives

better, and to gain deeper understanding in the topic researched upon. Learning to conduct personal interviews was also of personal interest to the researcher of this work.

Sample and Sampling

As the Finnish It industry is pretty small, the original plan was to use a snowball sampling method in order to find interviewees for the work. Neuman (2011) explains snowball sampling, or chain referral sampling as a method used in interconnected networks of people and organizations. Each person is connected with another one through a direct or indirect linkage. Each interviewee is asked to name people to be interviewed next (Neuman, 2011). The first interviewees were found through the referral of the interviewer's friends. The interviewees gave names of people they thought could be interviewed next. However only a few of these referred people were available for the study, and so the interviewer had to look for people to interview through other means (sequential sampling).

Neuman (2011) explains Sequential sampling as a method of gathering new cases until the reaching a saturation point where no more information is gained. New informants are added up to saturation plus one more (N+1) (Neuman, 2011). I used the social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) and company web sites in order to get in touch with preferred kinds of people for the interviews. Hence the sampling method was a mixture of Snowball- and Sequential sampling methods. 4 out of 8 interviewees were found by a referral from a friend and 4 by contact gained via electronic communication.

Criteria for selecting interviewees were that they were working in the IT industry in a Managerial position and that they were Finnish. Hence the interviewees all worked within the IT industry, and had a degree in higher education; either a Bachelor's or a Master's degree. The most common field of study was in Business administration. Seven out of eight interviewees were male, one female. One interviewee was at the moment working in China, the others in Finland. One interviewee was also at the moment on sabbatical leave from work.

They interviewees were between 35 and 52 years old, had from 4 to 22 years of managerial experience, and from 4 to 300 subordinates, reported as direct or indirect subordinates. Some of the leaders also reported that the amount of subordinates varied depending on the work task. The interviewees work ranged from Project Manager to Company CEO.

Data Collection

The Author collected the data based on a semi-structured interview guide, which was inspired by Haver et al.'s (2014) work. The interviewee asked questions to the interviewees in order to gain understanding of their working lives and emotion regulation strategies. Six out of eight interviews were conducted in Finnish, two in English. They lasted between 40 and 65 minutes each. The interviews were held at different locations in Espoo and Helsinki, Southern Finland. Most interviews were held at company premises, but one was also at a church and two at the interviewer's home. One of the 2 Skype interviews were also conducted from the researcher's home. The interviewees were encouraged to share their personal experiences of their use of emotion regulation strategies at work, and about emotional situations they might have encountered there.

Interview guide. The interview guide was inspired by questions in the work of Haver et al (2014). Two males in their late forties helped in reading through the interview guide and by giving feedback on how easy they were to understand. The first one was a MBA Computer Systems student at Laurea, University of Applied Sciences, Vantaa, Finland, and the second one A "Technology marketing professional" from Espoo, Finland.

Research Question. The purpose of this study was to examine how Finnish IT leaders are able to regulate their emotions at work in stressful times. The interview questions used in this work were inspired by Haver et al.'s 2014 work, studying the Emotion Regulation Strategies of Norwegian Hotel Managers (Haver et al., 2014). The full interview guide is titled Appendix B and can be found on at the end of this work.

Analytical Process

According to Yin, 2011, The Analytical process includes 5 phases: Compiling, Disassembling, Reassembling, Interpreting and Concluding Data. It can be described as a cycle of work, where the phases in the cycle don't always happen in time order.

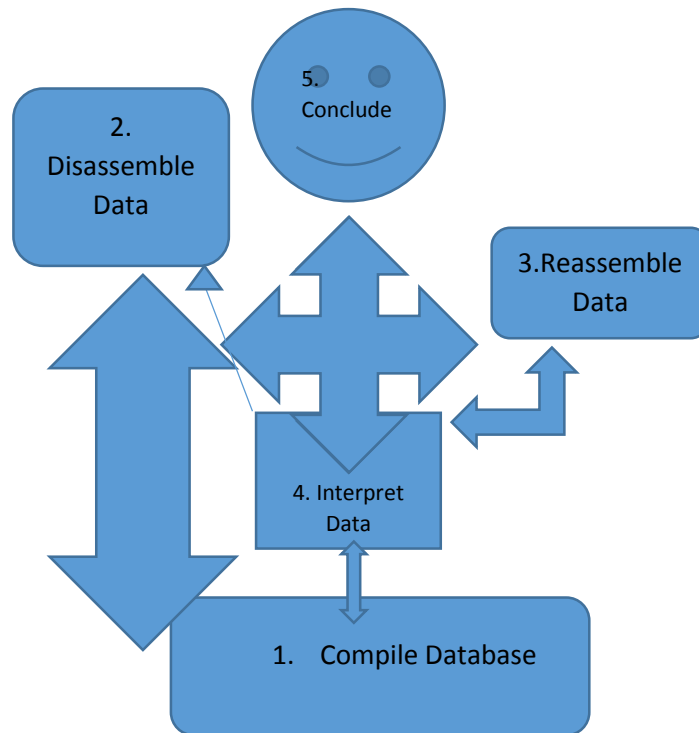


Figure 3. The Five Phases of Analysis and their Interactions. This Model shows how the research does not always happen in a specific order, but the researcher can go back and forth in his/her analysis work, or “jump” from one stage to the other. This figure is adapted from Yin 2011, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, The Guilford Press, New York. Copyright 2011, The Guilford Press.

My Content Analysis consisted of the following steps: The research work started with the conducting a few interviews. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed verbatim, either the same or the following day. The analyzing and comparison process started already after the first interviews were conducted by looking for similarities and differences in the

answers. The interviews were broken down in Excel data files for further use. After the last interview all data files were organized into tables and graphs to be used in the final written work and the final piece of the analyzing process was done by drawing conclusions from the research work.

No Computer Software for analyzing the data was used, since it had required more resources in form of time to learn the use of the Software, possibly also monetary resources, and mainly because the analyzing work is still done by the researcher herself (Holliday, 2002).



Figure 4. Map of Finland. Finland is situated “between” Sweden and Russia, also bordering Norway. Cities of Helsinki and Espoo are found in the South of Finland. This map is copied from the website Destination 360, available at <http://www.destination360.com/europe/finland/map>, accessed 28.5.2015. Copyright 2015 Destination 360.

Ethical Considerations

All the interviewees were voluntary and unpaid participants in the study, and they were informed about the research's reasons and aims before the interviews were carried out. They were also told that all their answers are considered confidential, and that they can withdraw from the interview at any time. These issues were explained to the participants in written during the initial electronic communication, and verbally at the beginning of the interviews. The Interviewees were also most likely aware of the practical ethical principles of Research described by Myers (2013): truthfulness, thoroughness, objectivity and relevance, and none of the Interviewees seem to be very concerned about it as no-one asked for further information or clarification about these matters (Myers, 2013). Honesty is also regarded as cornerstone of Finnish culture, which probably also affected the communication.

The data was processed and analyzed in a way that the individuals interviewed or companies involved cannot be identified.

Results

Obtained Sample

The sample was obtained through a combination of snowball sampling and sequential sampling and informants were contacted via means of electronic communication. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and the obtained sample consisted of eight Finns working within the IT industry with managerial duties. All of them had a degree in higher education, the most common field of study being Business administration. Seven out of eight interviewees were male, one female.

They interviewees were between 35 and 52 years, yielding an average age of 46 years. The interviewees worked with diverse management responsibilities, ranging from Project Manager to Company CEO. They had held their current job position from 1 to 5.5 years and reported between 0 and 300 (direct or indirect) subordinates. Many reported that the amount of subordinates varies depending on different tasks/teams given at different times.

G E N D E R	A G E	EDUCATION	POSITION	SINC E (Yrs.)	MAN. EXP. (Yrs.)	SUBORD INATES
M	52	M.Sc., Business administration/ Accounting, Tampere University, Finland	CEO	3.5 YRS	22	300
M	43	Bachelor in Economics/ University of Washington/ Economics, USA	Chief Operating Officer	1 YR / On sabbatical	15	5 Direct, 200 indirect
M	48	Bachelor in Business Administration /Computer Sciences, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki	Service manager, project manager	1	4	4-20 (depending on the team)
M	49	Bachelor of Business Administration/ International Operations, Mercuria Business School, Vantaa, Finland	CEO/ Currently doing master's	4 yrs.	20+	110
M	35	Bachelor's degree in International Business/ economics & Chinese, Griffith university, Australia	Managing director (own business)/ assistant project manager as consultant	5 yrs.	5 YRS	depends on the team
M	45	Master of science in Chemistry, University of Joensuu, Finland	Head of Finland Country Human Resources	2	14	4 direct, indirect 50-100
F	45	M.Sc., Business administration/ Högskolan I Växjö, Sweden	CEO	5,5	10	250
M	50	Bachelor's degree/ Computer sciences, University of Helsinki	Production manager	4	4	No direct subordinates/ Depends on the team

Table 1. Background information of the Obtained Sample. In this table the respondents' gender, age, education, position in the company, tenure in the current work (in years), length of managerial experience (in years) and amount of subordinates can be seen.

Measurement Validation

“A valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world (or laboratory) that was studied” (Yin, 2011, p.78).

According to Neuman (2011) reliability cannot be calculated exactly but has to be estimated instead. As the method used in this research was personal interviews, participant biases or transient personal factors such as mood or fatigue might have affected the respondents' answers, they might have e.g. misunderstood the questions or altered the truth because they felt ashamed of telling the truth about certain issues to the interviewer. The interviewer might also have misunderstood the answers given by the respondents. Also the interviewer's visible characteristics, including race and gender might affect respondent answers. All these factors affect the inter-rater or inter-observer reliability (Churchill, 1979; Neuman, 2011).

Here, what helped in receiving more valid answers was that the interviews were semi-structured. Thereby the same questions were asked in all interviews, and both the interviewer and the interviewee had a chance to ask follow-up questions and clarifications when needed. Also the fact that the interviewees and the interviewer came from the same cultural background helped in understanding the cultural “meaning behind the words”. Finnish culture is also a culture of openness and honesty, where direct and straightforward questions give rise to direct and straightforward answers, adding to the face validity of the work.

According to Neuman (2011) different interview settings might also have affected the answers and hence affected the repeatability and reliability of the work in a negative manner.

Looking for negative cases during the data analyzing process and converting the findings into graphical forms adds to the data's readability according to Yin (2011).

Myers (2013) explains that providing enough detail about the research process and including direct quotations from interviews helps the readers to see for themselves how the conclusions were reached. Verbatim quotes give face validity and more credibility to the work (Myers, 2013).

Further, the research method and the interview guide used were inspired by the peer reviewed article written by Haver et al (2014), adding to the ease of evaluating this work (Myers, 2013).

Study Findings

Each of the eight respondents in this study have given a wide range of different answers or examples to the interview questions. Each of these have been taken into consideration in the data interpretation process. Below I try to synthesize the responses and illustrate the work with quotes.

“The bigger the Leader, the bigger the Servant”- Views on Leadership. The respondents had very similar views on the traits of a good leader. A leader is supposed to be positive, energetic and authentic, with his own typical style. It is also important that he is honest, but at the same time he needs to know how to hide or control his/her feelings when needed. By displaying these traits he creates trust and transparency in the company, and by doing so leads it to be successful.

“A good leader knows how to motivate his workers and inspire them. He directs them in the right direction by asking the right questions, but lets them make their own realizations because this makes them to be more excited about their job. He is also honest and trustworthy, so that the workers feel that they can talk to him.” (Male, 45)

“A leader must not lose his temper. He needs to be correct and display the values of the place of work.” (Male, 50)

“From the point of view of leadership, if the leader panics without reason, the entire organization panics. So in that sense you cannot show all your emotions.” (Male, 52)

A good leader is also a good communicator and a good listener. His communication style is straightforward. He communicates clearly about possible risks, uncertainties and rewards. It is also of great importance that he gives constructive feed-back.

“He [the leader] is good in giving feedback, positive feedback is more important than negative, even if you need to tell if something is not going perfectly” (Male, 48)

The leader role is more about supporting the workers, and providing them with the tools to do their jobs well and by solving problems on their behalf. By doing so the leader takes the company forward. The leader is a role model that always acts professional; he sets the vision and creates the culture in the company. He also motivates people to do well and makes sure that objectives are reached. A good leader also focuses on the tasks at hand, not on the people doing the jobs. He/she understands that no-one is perfect. He brings the right people together and also knows how to delegate tasks to the right people. When needed he will also protect his employees from outside threats and negativity.

“Now an executive VP is no longer a personal hero, but a hero in the way that he gets others to implement, he enables perquisites for the functioning of others’ tasks. To me this is good management, good leadership. He is able to inspire, but he also sets the direction and creates the perquisites for success. It is a little like in church, so also in working life, the bigger the leader, the bigger the servant. The role is that I enable a working organization, I remove barriers, I offer possibilities. I hear that somewhere else in the company something is making it difficult for my subordinates to succeed, I try to remove it. It is setting the direction and offering perquisites for succeeding. To me it is good leadership.” (Male, 52)

“Nr 1 quality of a leader is to be a visionary and to understand what needs to be done and to be able to set the vision, and the 2nd one is to be able to really motivate the people, bringing the best people together, and motivate them to perform well.” (Male, 35)

Honesty, Trust and Transparency at Work. Honesty and trust are of great importance at Work. A leader is supposed to be honest and trustworthy at all times. However honesty does not necessarily mean that everybody needs to know everything at all times. Often things will be disclosed at a timely manner.

“It is a double-barreled issue. There are certain things in my own role as well that cannot be told to everyone at all times. It does not mean that you could or should lie or be dishonest, but you cannot [disclose] all things. If you tell something, you have to be honest.” (Male, 49)

“Honesty is very important, trust is very important, the foundation of trust is honesty. It is important to understand however, that honesty doesn't mean disclosing everything, that everyone has the right to all the information. There is a lot of information that doesn't get disclosed, until later, in timely manner...I always try to be very upright and very honest with the people that I interact with and be very clear that if there is uncertainty, clear what the risks are, but also what the rewards are. It is very important for leadership. I have seen several cases where that has not happened...” (Male, 43)

The building blocks of trust are transparency and honesty. A culture of transparency helps companies to be trusted and to stay in business. Transparency at the place of work also helps people to act in an honest way as they don't have to hide their mistakes. This helps in creating a positive working atmosphere and it reduces stress and lessens the amount of energy wasted on pondering on “Wrong issues”:

“I have tried to grow trust. At the place of work there needs to be trust and it can be reached only through transparency. Trust, transparency. ”To build trust you need

transparency". We cannot be completely nude, but what I say needs to be taken with nominal value. If I say: "You have a beautiful necklace" you don't have to think about what I really mean. Energy goes to what we are [actually] talking about instead of [wondering] if there is something [hidden] in the background. It is transparent... Trust is the only capital we have. We have of course knowledge capital, but if you lose trust it is incredibly difficult to act in any environment." (Male, 52)

"...And sometimes if I make a mistake I will be very, very open about making that mistake, almost publically exaggerating the mistakes that I make. And it's pretty much so that people can see that I am very transparent about my work and also that they can see that I am not afraid to make mistakes." (Male, 35)

Poor Leadership. The interviewees tell the tale about bad leaders, who for example bully their subordinates or who misuse their power in order to manipulate people. This kind of behavior is condemned as poor management and poor leadership.

"A leader should by no means be a workplace bully, e.g. downplaying or bullying his subordinates and others by stupid jokes. They hurt people for real. " ... "There are people who act like this, they try to tease. But it has been removed from places of work a lot in Finland. Personal opinions about how people look like, opinions and others like this, or these kinds of actions have been weeded out. We try to do the same job here, that kind of opinion about others disappear, or differences. You can [work] here, you can work with everybody."(Male, 50)

"However I have seen managers who misuse that as well, they abuse that type of power, they use the lack of information to manipulate people, and that is poor management, poor leadership"(Male, 43)

Showing Emotions at Work. Finns are known for not showing emotions, it is part of the Finnish culture. However, it is important for a leader to show when he/she is pleased or

unpleased pleased with the work done. This should however be done in a constructive way, by addressing the problem instead of “killing” the person who has e.g. made a mistake.

“It is not part of Finnish culture to show emotions, in good and bad. We are not very used to it” (Male, 48)

On the other hand some leaders think, that it is imperative to show emotions to involve people: *“If one was all odorless, tasteless [employees will think:] “he is all fake, none of us is that sterile, odorless and tasteless, he is not his true self, then who is he? We don’t know, then we start making up what he is because I can’t tell. If you don’t put yourself into the game, I won’t either”” When your feelings are involved... I have cried in front of my crew, I have laughed in front of my crew...” (Male, 52)*

All interviewees agreed that a leader needs to show his/her emotions:

“...but I have none the less taken the view that I am a Finnish leader, and if I am disappointed, I will show that I am disappointed, and if I am pleased I also try to give thanks. But I do think that you should show your emotions” (Male, 49)

“Emotions are not part of working life, we deal with issues. On the other hand they still effect everything, maybe a golden middle way, so you don’t let them bother or disturb the message or what you are trying to do, one should be empathetic and take into consideration the people one works with” (Male, 48)

“[Leaders] need to be able to show their emotions, need to be able to show when they are excited, when they are disappointed and not happy. In both of those cases effective leaders should be able to do that in a constructive way, when to do it for most impact, for positive impact.”(Male, 43)

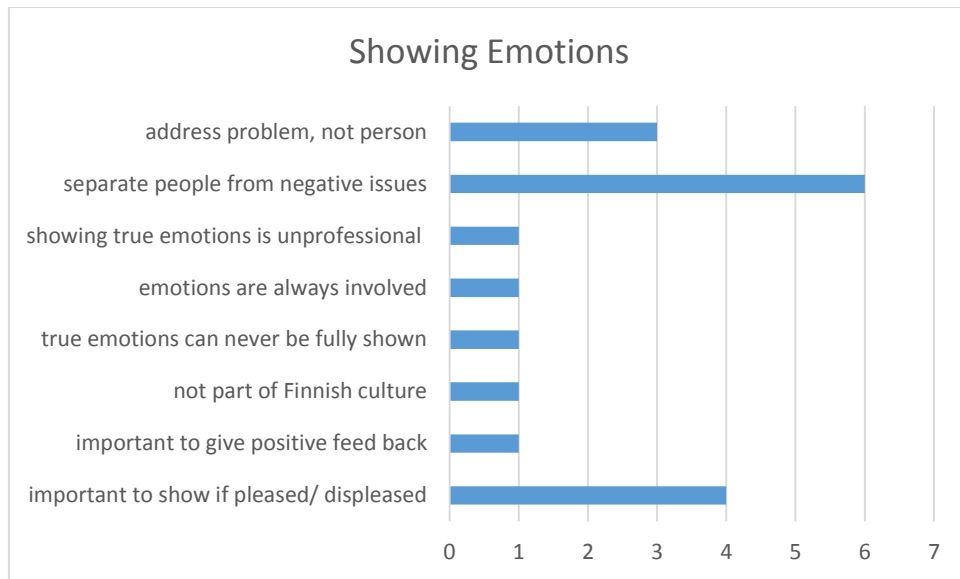


Figure 5. Views on Showing Emotions at work. As seen in this Figure it is important for leaders to show if they are pleased or displeased at work, but while doing so they need to separate between people and negative issues.

Fear of Losing Face / Embarrassment. Showing strong negative emotions at work is seen as bad manners or unprofessional behavior, which can cause one to “lose face” or gain a bad reputation. This in turn can cause you to lose your clients and can follow you for a long time, especially since Finland is so small. This is why it is very important for leaders to guard their professional reputations. The biggest fear for many is to do something that will damage their credibility as a leader, e.g. by being utterly unprepared for a meeting and hence lose subordinates’ trust.

“I don’t think true emotions can be ever truly shown. I mean even outside work we always have filters, unless maybe in our immediate family. To show one’s true emotions at work, I think is unprofessional and is very, very important to guard one’s professional reputation with one’s life, because if you lose your professional reputation then your ability to earn money and be trusted diminishes. So absolutely imperative to keep professionalism at all times” (Male, 35)

Even if crying is seen as embarrassing or as a sign of weakness, it does not make you lose your face in front of subordinates as “Life goes on”. [*Have you cried in front of your employees?*] ”*Absolutely not, it would be embarrassing*” (Male, 48)

“...*Or if I thank my crew for a fantastic accomplishment: “We are experiencing difficult times, and this is why we need people of your caliber.” If it makes me emotional, it makes me emotional. It is a bit embarrassing, but we will get past that situation.*

Sorry...Harri Aho, the director of Oma Sairaala [Own Hospital], went to see a mother whose 6 year old son had died under a plowing car the same day. There was nothing to say, just to cry.”(Male, 52)

The general view is that all people think about being embarrassed or losing face to some extent. This is why they try to display a good picture of themselves, especially at work. By accepting oneself, and that one cannot please everybody the fear or embarrassment or losing face however decreases. A learning culture, that sees mistakes as human lessens the threat of embarrassment as well. However a certain degree of fear is seen as positive, as it pushes into doing a good job.

“*If I try to be like Sean Connery, I don’t have the charisma he has, I would fail in it, so let’s admit I am I. But I am a role model... I am all the time away from my comfort zone if I try to be something that I am not. When you are 53 you are like: “This is me and I can be in balance with life”*” (Male, 52)

“*Everybody thinks about it to a certain extent. I don’t think about it, or maybe surprisingly little. I have tried to take it as “It doesn’t matter what others think” since I was a Child. Of course there are situations when I think [about losing face or being embarrassed]. I have had a rash all my life. Of course I think [about it]. I go forward the way I do, the most important thing is that I try to remove it as much as I can, you can’t [think about it] too*

much... For example in my work I can never expect that everybody likes my decisions, how I do things. It is impossible in reality... “(Female, 45)

“About losing face and embarrassment, one of the things that I try to build within the team is a high level of trust and in a high trust environment one needs to understand that they can make mistakes and that it’s gonna be okay. As long as you don’t make too many. But should be able to make mistakes... Because making mistakes, there are two types of cultures that you can come across in the work world, one is where you have a blame culture, when something goes wrong they look for someone to kill or to blame and the problem with this is that it causes people to not be honest and to hide things a lot. And the other one is the lessons learned where you basically say that making mistakes is human, and we’re all gonna make mistakes. But when we make mistakes, let’s analyze what they were and let’s learn from them. And take that into the table.” (Male, 35)

Task-Orientation. A common view is that the most important issue at work is the work task, and not the people involved. If there is conflict between people this part is always kept in mind. You need always to act polite. If you don’t like someone, you need to hide your feelings because they are your own personal issue, and should not affect the work outcome: *“Work needs to be done, no matter what”*. This means conscious down-regulating of one’s feelings, usually by using attentional deployment or cognitive reframing.

“If you don’t like someone that’s your issue. The work still needs to be done, you still need to work with this person. If they are doing something that is making it impossible to get the work done, or is becoming eroding than you need to address it head on, you need to talk it out, discuss it and get past it- move on. What you can’t do is letting it get into way of work. Ignoring it if it is not a big deal or finding a way of work through it.” (Male, 43)

“I try not to concentrate on the person, [instead on] what we are trying to accomplish. It doesn’t matter what kind of person it is, of course if someone would act really,

like teasing, then I could let myself blow up, in that sense, but if it is about as trying to work and we have different views or ways to work, it's different. (Female, 45)

"Understanding that I am not the reason to something being broken, understand to separate the event and the person. ...we don't say: "Why did you do this?" but "What went wrong with the process?" In that manner the feelings will also cool down, when you look at work. (Male, 50)

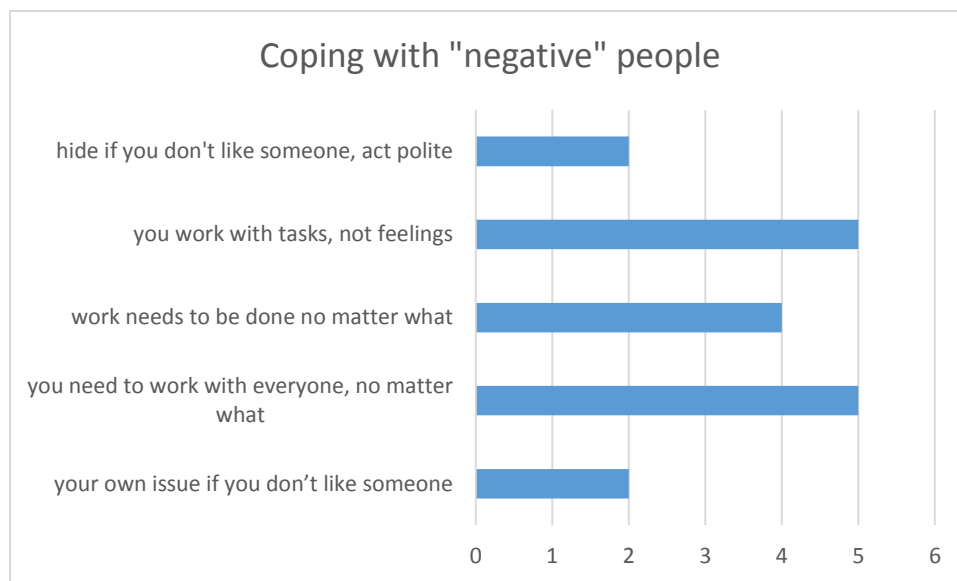


Figure 6. How leaders cope with “negative people” at work. As can be seen in Figure 6.

common views on how to deal with negative people at work are: the work task is the most important thing to be kept in mind, and work needs to be done no matter what.

Mindset of Positivity. Many respondents saw positivity as an important leadership trait. It helps leaders to see the future in a positive way and helps with reaching the goals. Most of the leaders interviewed seem to hold a mindset of positivity, displayed either directly or indirectly in their speech: *“I don't even remember the last time I have been in a bad mood. I try to keep a positive stand. Others know when I am happy, it shows. In our company there is no pressure from the management side to be positive, everybody's allowed to be what they are”* (Male, 45)

“It’s very much about how you think about the situation. Like, in any day, is the cup half full or half empty? During the day You probably have the same amount of positive and negative experiences but it’s how you tell the story, how you build the focus of that and I choose to always build a positive focus and a positive story.”(Male, 35)

“[I ask myself:]”Is there something I don’t understand?” This person, deep down both of us have the same goal. I don’t think he wants to cheat or steal, there must be something I don’t understand. I have a saying: “Seek first to understand, then be understood”. If you start from the standpoint that all people are good and strive for good, or inversely that all people are lazy con artists, it is pretty hard- “Where is this one cheating or where is this one scamming?” If I am wrong, I am rather wrong, I am rather blue eyed, but it helps my energy level in a whole different way than if I think that everybody’s up to no good and so on.” (Male, 52)

Downplaying Emotion. The respondents agree on the fact that negative emotions should be controlled or downplayed at the place of work. This is especially important for leaders, who are also role models for others and set the atmosphere and work culture. Being in control of your emotions is important also because it helps the leader to make the right decisions and cope with demanding work requirements.

“It is really important to be able to control, that you don’t boggle from things, for example if there is suddenly bomb news from somewhere. You just think: “Okay, where is this coming from, what does it mean?”- You try to understand the situation. It is very important in my opinion.”(Female, 45)

“You have to make a decision when you arrive at the parking place or garage that a small dampener is put on, if you start on with full emotion then all scales of emotion are involved. Work is more like running a marathon than 150 meters hurdles. If you now set ahead with too strong passion you will burn out, and it follows you a lot at home. You go to

work to do work, you can reserve your passion for home or spare time, hobbies and others. If you go ahead with a horrible amount of passion at work and in the work community then you might explode or the amount of intensity makes you not to be able to keep it up. It really means you have to use some of that dampener, but then at least you don't have to change the place of work every year, when you feel you have given it your all and your coat is all empty.

“(Male, 52)

Displaying Energy. One of the most important tasks of a leader is to motivate his/her team members. This means that leaders need to display enthusiasm and energy, even by faking it.

“The challenge with negative emotions is that if you say: “We are just here to work”, it takes away much of the energy level. “It doesn't matter, we are just here to work!” It is pretty difficult, because we work often with pressurizing situations, [these are] not always pleasant issues” (Male, 52)

“I think it is really important, at least with the teams that I have worked with to be very upbeat, even if it is Monday morning, and I go into a meeting on Monday morning, and I feel horrible, I still fake it and I still try to put in a lot of energy there. The thing is that there needs to be motivation, there needs to be some energy. And if you need to get stuffs done and you're not portraying a lot of energy, “Let's go, let's go, let's go!” you're like the one on the Robots... the guy who is beating the drums ... so if you're not putting the energy there, if you are not being optimistic, enthusiastic, you mess with the whole rhythm of the team.” (Male, 35)

“I need to be an uplifting member in the society. Like in some meetings I think if I am taking energy, or can I bring it? I have sometimes been in a meeting where I have been very... cultivating satire, it doesn't uplift anyone, it doesn't make you like ': “Awww, now we are full of energy!” “Let's do as well as we did last year!”- When we did really poorly. Or

something else, underestimating takes energy. Why would I do that to others, why would I do it to myself?” (Male, 52)

Displaying Anger at Work. One respondent expressed that much anger is being displayed at the places of work. Whatever the emotions involved, a leader is always expected to act professional, meaning that he/she has to downplay or hide his/her feelings of anger or frustration. When anger is displayed, it should be done in a constructive manner. Leaders are usually able to control their emotions. Sometimes they lose their temper too, and it is acceptable to a certain point, but if it happens too much, the leader risks losing face.

”I have [been furious] a couple of times when there have been really inappropriate matters. They really get scared, because I am usually not [angry]. It is always really impressive [laughs]. Super impressive! ...The better you can control [the better], it is useless. But when it is really necessary, then it is pretty impressive and good as well.” (Female, 45)

”Here still, even if I have work already 4 years in this company, here people still respect superiors a lot and this is a pretty hierarchical society. They don’t really... how should I say this, they don’t really show their emotions. Of course, since I already know them so well, I can see that they are scared or worried or else. But usually they hide their feelings...But actually I have been here 13 years and it has happened maybe twice or three times a year [that] I have gotten angry. But it cannot be weekly or monthly, because in a way subordinates kinda lose their trust. And here they talk about losing your face, it is very risky here.” (Male, 49)

”You see anger at work quite a bit. When you choose to display that emotion, you need to display it in a constructive way. You can go ahead and show that emotion when a partner breaks a contract. You have to keep it in degrees, you can’t just go crazy and start throwing things, that’s gonna break trust, that’s gonna break your reputation. Displaying anger towards those who broke the contract, they are not doing what they agreed to do, can

show a degree of passion, it can help the team to express those feelings as well, to negotiate those ... it helps you to move on quickly how you remedy the situation.”(Male, 43)

Causes of Stress. Stress is mainly caused by too much work at once; many high-priority items to solve simultaneously. This might happen suddenly or work can pile up. There might also be many demands on the person at once, e.g. finding time for both work and family/friends. Unfamiliar or unpredictable things cause stress, as well as natural reasons as tiredness and travel days. Demands by co-workers or subordinates were also reasons for frustration and stress, as well as dishonesty and value conflicts met at work.

“Work issues fluctuating, it might vary very much. Busy, don’t have time to do everything that you should. You need be with your Family and need to have time to Work, take care of Animals and everything. It is maybe the basic setup.” (Female, 45)

“I think the things that cause most stress are the things that you can’t really control. And that you are not familiar with as well...It’s really the things that are unpredictable and how possibility to impact your life, some obviously more stressful. Not day to day problems, because that’s just part of the work so to speech.”(Male, 35)

Dealing with Stress. Leaders have many ways of dealing with stress. These can be divided into cognitive and physical ways of acting. The most commonly used cognitive method was self-reflection. This is usually done when starting a new day, but also commonly as conflicting situations arise, or as a way to guide further action during the day. Some interviewees reported finding strength in spirituality through prayers or by reading the Scriptures. It was also important for a couple of interviewees to have someone to talk or complain to, but they agreed on that they could not complain to customers or subordinates, but only to their own boss, their work colleagues or to their assistant.



Figure 7. Different ways of dealing with stress. As can be seen clearly in Figure 7. the most used method for dealing with stress was self-reflection, followed by spirituality and talking to someone (interpersonal emotion regulation).

None of the interviewees reported directly practicing yoga, mindfulness, or meditation in order to better themselves in emotion regulation tactics. Some did however say that they find it an interesting topic and that they have thought about taking it up some day. One respondent did however tell about his practice of using self-reflection / visualization / prayer as a means to motivate and program himself:

“[There are] a lot of ways to practice mindfulness, yoga, meditation. For me it is about my own spirituality, prayer, thinking about my own life, reflecting about my own emotions, self-reflection, it is also how I manage my desires to do things, how I get things done...maybe visualization is the best way to say it.... it is a similar concept when I pray in the morning, my task list, I have a system how I keep my tasks, how I keep my priorities. When I sit down in front of that, think about what I want to accomplish that day and how that fits into the bigger picture of themes. That is a form of visualization. It is a very important part of performance, no matter what you do.”(Male, 43)



Figure 8. Reducing Stress through Physical Activities. As can be seen in Figure 8. different kinds of exercise methods are common in reducing stress caused by work. Also listening to music and having a stable home life were amongst the most common answers.

The most common way of reducing work related stress was according to the respondents doing different kinds of sports (walking, running, boxing, exercising), followed by listening to music. Some also saw a stable home life as the foundation for overall well-being, reflecting in the working life and in the ability to deal with stress. Eating right and sleeping right were mentioned as important issues in the overall well-being of an interviewee, whereas another one said that he reduces stress by smoking. One interviewee said that he sometimes needs time to walk away, though he never does that without first dealing with the problem at hand.

Even if going to sauna is widely considered as relaxing, it is perhaps too big a part of Finnish culture to be mentioned as a means of relaxation. None of the respondents mentioned it as a stress reducing tool. When I asked one of the respondents directly about it, this is what he answered: *"I don't go to sauna every day. It is such a big part of Finnish culture. I go there twice a week. It relaxes too, but yes, if I would use it for relaxation I would go there three or four times a week. Twice a week is just basic cleanliness... I do relax there, but it is*

for other reasons, I spend my own time [there], it is not work related. It is not because I am in need of acute relaxation. “(Male, 50)

“Physical activity, running, boxing or talking to someone. I have not practiced any meditation or something like that, maybe I should try it sometime. “(Male, 48)

“I try to exercise regularly, I do a range of things, today I swam, and yesterday I hiked into the forest. I try to take out time to do that, I think it is important and I do notice a difference in my mood and my ability to think if I don't. “(Male, 43)

“We have also got that kind of quiet rooms upstairs, we call them “hairy rooms”. You can go there and rest your nerves for example. In other words music, walking, being still. You just go to another room, sit down, close your eyes for 5 minute, empty your brain and [then] continue your journey.” (Male, 50)

“Have you ever seen the movie “Saving Private Ryan”? There is an interesting line in there. Tom Hanks is the sergeant in there and the guys underneath are always complaining to him but he never complains to them: “In the military grips and complaints go up but never come down. “ If I have a problem I complain to someone else, usually to my assistant. “(Male, 35)

Growing in Leadership. Many leaders report that their leadership style has changed during the years. By age and experience they have become more emotionally intelligent and that they have learned to manage different aspects of life more effectively.

“Emotional intelligence is something that I have gained more as I have become a little bit older, and don't put so much weight on performance, but on what emotion we come with; lack of trust, fear or what got you.” (Male, 52)

“..Sometimes when I was younger, I might have shown more [emotion], or explode more. I noticed that every time when I had done so, if I wasn't 100% sure that: “this is now wrong treatment”, I have noticed that it has been all in vain, and it doesn't build things

forward. This is why I have tried to take it easy. Yes, it is good that people show deeper emotions sometimes, to show daily emotions, how they feel -you have to be open all the time, but if you talk about showing really strong emotions you have to think:” is this just my feeling, is this really necessary and what do I gain from exploding and showing these?” ... Is it of use for myself, for others, if not then why on earth [should you do it]? “ (Female, 45)

“No tricks per se, but as you develop as a leader, as you develop as a person, you become more aware of your emotions, and you manage that more constructively. If you are starting to feel frustrated, you stop and ask yourself: why am I feeling frustrated? Is it because something happened, is it because of this, is it because of that? Are you mad at those things? Are they causing you these emotions? Of course sometimes you have a lot of things that pile at ones, and sometimes need to take time to walk away. I think part of the key, the part you learn as you grow as a leader, as a manager, you learn to manage those on an ongoing bases, in a constructive way. “(Male, 43)

“When I was 35 and I became for example managing director, then I had to be like Kent Clark-”Superman!” I needed to sort out all the issues that I was responsible for. Whenever someone asked me: “What do you think should be done?” I answered: “Good that you asked me, let me tell [you]”. Now I might say “It is a pretty good question, what do you think?” There is the difference that has become when growing in leadership, when someone asks me, I don’t have to think that all answers depend on me, but I empower someone by asking him: “What do you think?” “(Male, 52)

“One of the things you learn, as you become a leader, that you take more responsibility on, you learn to manage yourself, your life, your health, your activity levels in such a way that... Link with how productive you are, how focused you are, it is just not the small things you do at work, but it is the cumulative work, are you eating right, are you

sleeping right, are you exercising, is your home life in good shape or is it a mess. Is your spirituality in a good place?”(Male, 43)

Socializing with Co-Workers. Most of the respondents separate between work and private life, as is common in Finland. Some of the co-workers might with time become personal friends, but it is common to separate between “friends” and “work-friends”, who people only spend time with at the place of work. The degree of hierarchy can also make people feel that there needs to be some distance between leaders and subordinates.

Reasons for getting to know the workers are usually work related: it is important in case of emergencies, in order to work together better, or in order for the leader to be able to help them better. Some leaders say they want to get to know their workers on a personal level. Many leaders see it as their responsibility to know their workers in order to better help them in fulfilling their organizational goals and dreams.

“You don’t have to go on a boat trip with your boss, it is the kind of chatting at work. Someone tells more, someone less.” (Male, 50)

“Finns... It’s a cultural thing here that personal life is personal life and work is work and you don’t have to like or be friends with the people that you work with. But for me I don’t really separate my personal life that much. I try to be friends with the people I work with. Usually like, that’s another thing Finns don’t do. I do feel I have to keep a slight professional distance to them, so like I can’t be buddies hanging out every week end and I can’t complain to them about my problems that are not going so well in my life but at the same time I know who they are, I need to know about their families, their personal situation, the challengers in their lives and just be a boss/ friend to them. Always try to get to know people personally as well...” (Male, 35)

“Basically being a professional friend, someone they can trust, someone who is there, someone they can depend on and someone who is interested in their lives and their problems

and also as a manager as well you want to show that you care about their development as well and you want to see them successful, take on new challenges and being interested and motivated in what they do.” (Male, 35)

“I try to get to know the people on a personal level. If you are able to understand the people that work for you on a personal level, then you are able to help them better, it is a key about being a leader, it is something I strive for.” (Male, 43)

Leaders usually get to know their subordinates through one-on-one meetings that are held on a regular basis. Also lunches or dinners are used for this reason. Many leaders also organize team building activities and kick-offs, especially at the beginning of projects in order for the workers to get to know each other. At these activities the subordinates have a chance to socialize and get to know each other without being involved with work-related tasks.

“I talk a lot with my subordinates, also outside working hours and about matters other than work. We might meet at lunch or by a glass of wine. I have long-time friends, also some who I used to work with. I can for example call them on my way to work and ask them how the week end went.” (Male, 45)

“Mostly informal communication, breaks etc. In some places for example everybody have their break at the same time and talk there”. (Male, 48)

Showing Concern for Subordinates. Many interviewees said that they feel that they should show more that they care for their workers. The ways that express their care for them are through communication; finding time to talk to them or by taking time to listen to them. Email communication is seen an important addition to personal communication. Leaders further feel that it is important to follow up on subordinates’ lives and career development. Simple ways to display appreciation is by giving thanks, and by saying friendly words. Monetary rewards as well as general appreciation for the work that has been done are also

used at work in order to show appreciation, as well as not taking credit for other's work.

Giving the subordinates time for their personal lives without interruptions from work is also of concern to some leaders.

“For example one worker lost her unborn child. We organized that a bunch of people went to visit the hospital and brought her flowers and I too wrote her a personal letter. I do try to communicate to people that I care for them.” (Male, 49)

“...Then I try to say that I wouldn't disturb them or set a meeting in the weekend or other, I give them time when they don't have to think about work... I don't arrange meetings or phone calls on Sundays. I give them the space and ask them to take the space. I say for example, “Hey”- if I know someone works like crazy – “Hey, this weekend is the time when your most important task is to be at home and take care of your family”... I have said at work: “Remember that there are no statues for unknown business men on grave yards - Do not work yourselves to death! Companies don't have memories, people have. No matter how much you slave away this company will not remember it!”” (Male, 52)

“I should show it more, giving thanks is one thing, remembering when something has been done well. It is never probably [done] enough. Friendly words, and listening a lot and thanking. At work comes also these salaries and bonuses and other [monetary rewards] like this along. But in everyday life by being friendly and respectful and by thanking and listening as much as possible. And that you don't take thanks for someone else's work, but giving thanks. I get things that I present but they come from others. That you try to bring forth the people who have actually done the work and prepared it, it is in my opinion very important. Not trying to snatch ideas that other people have come up with. Like you are doing this- if you perform somewhere, if you get good hints from someone, if you present it somewhere [you admit] that: “This person too helped me”, if he/she is there listening. “I came up with this, when this person helped me invent it.”” (Female, 45)

Summary of Results and Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to find out what kind of emotion regulation methods Finnish IT leaders use in order to regulate their emotions at work in stressful times.

The results of this study are in line with earlier work by e.g. Peltokorpi (2006), showing that culture plays a big role in forming the requirements on leadership and on expected leadership behavior, hence affecting the entire working environment and culture at work.

The description of Finnish organizational culture by Tixier (1996) is further confirmed in this work. In Finland a good leader is someone who acts as a good role model by always acting professional. The leader sets the vision and creates the culture in the company with his own example. It is also important that he is honest, trustworthy and communicates in a straightforward manner about risks, uncertainties and rewards.

Also Kultanen's (2009) work is reinforced by these study results: The good leader needs to hold good interpersonal skills; to be good a good communicator and good at listening.

The current study results are also in line with Tixier's (1996) results, as she describes that it is common to separate between work and private life in Finland, and that the power difference between leaders and subordinates are greater in Finland than in other Nordic countries. Current study results show that work is done during working hours, evenings and weekends are spent with family and/or friends. Friends at work are separated from private friends, even if some friends at work might with time become personal friends. Reasons for learning to know subordinates or colleagues at work are mostly work related and getting to know them usually happens during working hours.

This study shows further that trust and honesty are important in Finland, and they are seen as the corner stones of transparency. It is important in order to gain and maintain a good

reputation, and crucial in order to stay in business. Transparency also helps people to act in an honest way, in creating a positive work atmosphere and in reducing stress and energy wasted on pondering on wrong kinds of issues. Honesty does not however mean that everybody needs to know everything at all times. While being honest, the leaders need simultaneously to be able to hide or control his/her feelings, and to give constructive feedback. He also protects his employees from threats and negativity when needed.

Haver et al.'s (2014) findings on the importance of leaders portraying a mindset of positivity are further reinforced by the current study. The leader takes the company forward by taking on a supporting role. By being positive, energetic and authentic, with his own typical style he supports and motivates the workers and makes sure job objectives are reached. The leader provides workers with the tools to do their jobs well, and solves problems on their behalf. He focuses on the tasks at hand, not on the people doing the jobs, understanding that no-one is perfect. He also brings the right people together and knows how to delegate tasks.

It is not part of Finnish culture to show emotions in public. It is none the less important for a leader to show when he/she is pleased or displeased with the work done, but in a constructive way. Leaders are usually able to control their feelings, but might lose their temper too at times. Showing strong negative emotions is bad manners or unprofessional behavior, which can cause "loosing face" or a bad reputation, especially if it happens often. This can be devastating in a small country like Finland. Being in control of one's emotions is important also because it helps to make the right decisions and to cope demands at work, as also mentioned by Haver et al. (2014).

Leaders use many different ways in showing concern for their workers. These include finding time to talk/listen to them, email communication, and following up on things in their lives and career development. Also simple gestures as giving thanks and friendly words and

general appreciation of work done were used a lot. Allowing the subordinates take time for their personal lives without interruptions from work was also of concern to some leaders.

People think about losing face to some extent, and try to display a good picture of themselves. The positive aspect with fear is however that it pushes people to perform well. By learning to accept oneself, and the fact that one cannot please everybody the fear or embarrassment or losing face decreases. The most common fear for Finnish leaders has to do with professionalism; to lose the subordinates trust by e.g. being utterly unprepared for a meeting.

Stress is mainly caused by too much work at once; by many simultaneous high-priority items to do, or finding time for both work and family. Unfamiliar or unpredictable things can also cause stress, as well as natural reasons such as tiredness and travel days.

The most important issue at work is the work task itself, "*Work needs to be done, no matter what*". This is kept in mind even when conflicts arise between people. Politeness is expected, even if you don't like someone. Feelings of dislike and anger needs to be hidden, because they are personal issues, and are not allowed to affect the work outcome. This means using different emotion regulation strategies, most commonly attentional deployment, positive refocus, perspective taking, suppression, surface acting, and social sharing. It seems as displaying true emotions is rare in Finland, as a consequence of social norms. Hereby the results of this study largely agree with the findings of Haver et al. (2014), as the same emotion regulation techniques are used in both cases. The Norwegian leaders' emotion regulation techniques consist of: faking and hiding their feelings by using suppression and surface acting; Modifying or changing their mindsets through reappraisal and displaying naturally felt emotions (Haver et al., 2014).

Several leaders reported that their leadership style, emotional intelligence level and emotion regulation skills had changed during the years as they had grown older and matured as leaders, supporting the study by Gross (1997).

The current study results show that Finnish IT leaders use a wide variety of cognitive and physical ways of dealing with stress. The most commonly used cognitive method was self-reflection in the morning, but also during conflicting or stressful situations during the day, or as a way to guide further action. Some interviewees also reported finding strength in spirituality, and it was important for several informants to have someone talk or complain to. Many also used different kinds of exercises and music as ways of de-stressing. A stable home life, eating right or sleeping right were also recognized as the foundations for overall well-being, reflecting at daily work and stress tolerance. Stressful situations were always dealt with at first hand. Earlier research by Thayer et al. (1994) on self-regulation of moods also shows that exercise appears to be the most effective mood regulating behavior and research by Kettunen (2015) shows that exercise is important in reducing stress at work.

A surprising finding was that no-one reported using yoga, mindfulness, or meditation as means to cope with stress or in order to better themselves in emotion regulation tactics. Some did however think about taking something like this up one day. Going to sauna was also not mentioned as a de-stressing tool even if going to sauna is usually considered as a means of relaxation by Finns. The reason to this is perhaps that going to sauna is too big a part of the Finnish Culture to be mentioned as a “separate” means of relaxation.

Implications of the Study for the Finnish IT Industry and Industry Leaders

Even if Finnish IT leaders do seem to use a large variety of emotion regulation strategies when faced with stressful situations at work, they might benefit from further training in emotional intelligence and in different emotion regulation strategies, e.g. mindfulness. These topics could be introduced in the training of leaders or students in the

field in order to improve their skills and hence benefiting the employee satisfaction with their leader, advancing the work environment and advancing companies competitive advantages. Also learning about the health effects of different emotion regulation strategies is useful and important for leaders and subordinates alike.

Future Research

In this study no-one reported using yoga, mindfulness, or meditation in order to better their emotion regulation capabilities. It would however be of interest to find people who do use these methods and to study if and how these affect the abilities to cope with stress and negative situations at work. It would likewise be interesting to know how much going to sauna helps people to relax and deal with stress in different countries and cultural contexts. Further, studies of spirituality and prayer in the context of emotion regulation seems to be lacking, especially in leadership context.

Limitations of Research

As the method used in this research was personal interviews, participant and observer biases might have affected the study results' reliability. Different interview settings used might also have affected the reliability of the work in a negative way. This research was also carried out by a single individual. By having several researchers or authors working jointly and sharing ideas, critique of the work and its findings could be expanded further.

As this work has been done in a particular cultural context (Finland) and within a particular industry (IT industry) the study results cannot be generalized to hold for bigger populations, e.g. all leaders, all Finnish leaders, or all IT leaders. It does none the less contribute with information on Emotion Regulation in a leadership context.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions in Finnish

Tunteiden säätely

Taustakysymykset:

-Ikä

-Sukupuoli

-Koulutus

-Asema yrityksessä

- Kuinka kauan virassa

Millainen on hyvä johtaja?

Saako johtaja osoittaa työntekijöilleen todelliset tunteensa? Miksi?

Osoitatko/näytätkö sinä todelliset tunteesi töissä?

Salaatko muilta kielteiset tunteesi?

Onko hyvä olla rehellinen? Myöskin kielteisten asioiden suhteen? (Esim. Onko sinun sallittua olla eri mieltä esimiestesi kanssa?)

Mitä tapahtuu jos osoitat todellisia tunteitasi töissä (negatiiviset/positiiviset)? Mitä tapahtuu?

Miten muut reagoivat?

Miten säätelet tunteitasi?

Harjoitteletko tietoisuustaitoa (mindfulness), yogaa tms. Oppiaksesi hallitsemaan tunteitasi?

Mikä aiheuttaa eniten stressiä sinulle? (Oma pomo/yritysjohto, puoliso/perhe, työtoverit, työntekijät)

Ajatteletko paljon sitä miten muut näkevät sinut/ ajattelevat sinusta?

Pelkäätkö kasvojen menettämistä?

Tuntuuko sinusta että sinun täytyy toimia tietyllä tavalla ollessasi johtaja? Tunnetko siihen painostusta yrityksen tai työntekijöiden puolelta?

Pitääkö johtajan tuntea työntekijänsä henkilökohtaisesti? Miksi? Millä tavalla opit tuntemaan heidät?

Kannatko huolta työntekijöistäsi? Miten osoitat sen?

Appendix B

Interview Questions in English

Emotion Regulation

Background questions:

-Age

-Gender

-Education

-Position in the company

- Tenure in the company

What is a good leader?

Is it okay for a leader to show the employees/subordinates his/her real emotions? Why?

Do you show your true emotions at work?

Do you hide negative emotions?

Is it good or bad to be honest? Also with negative issues? (E.g. is it okay for you to disagree with your superiors?)

What happens if you show true emotions at work (negative/positive)? What happens? How do others react?

How do you regulate your emotions?

Do you practice mindfulness, yoga etc. in order to learn to regulate your emotions?

What causes most stress for you? (Boss/headquarters, spouse/family, co-workers, employees)

Do you think much about how other people see you?

Are you afraid of losing face (embarrassment)

Do you feel you need to act a certain way as a manager? Is there pressure for it from employees, company management etc.?

Does a manager need to know his/her workers on a personal level? Why? How do you get to know them?

Do you show concern for your workers? How?

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