BI Norwegian Business School - campus Oslo

GRA 19703

Master Thesis

Thesis Master of Science

Thriving at work from a COR perspective

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Start: 15.01.2021 09.00

Finish: 01.07.2021 12.00

- Master of Science Thesis -

Thriving at work from a COR perspective

A quantitative survey research of young graduates in an international IT firm based in Scandinavia.

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Study Program:

Master of Science in Leadership and Organizational Psychology

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we would like to extend our most significant appreciation to our supervisor, Professor Émilie Lapointe. Her enthusiasm for our research topic and her willingness to share resources and insights throughout the thesis process has been more than valuable. She has an incredible amount of knowledge in this broad field of research and has been beyond helpful in giving us the necessary feedback and guidance to improve our work continuously.

Further, we want to thank the company representatives, giving us valuable internal data and access to our preferred sample of 113 graduates. They made it possible for us to collect the necessary data for this thesis, and we are very thankful for their effort and engagement in our critical data collection phase. We genuinely hope our thesis can offer guidance in their continuous development and improvement.

Lastly, we would also like to raise an appreciation for this project and our cooperation with each other. It has been a pleasure.

Nora Birkelund **Sigrid Tonning Buch**

Oslo, 01.07.21

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Summary

This master thesis has explored how different resources foster thriving at work among young graduates in an international IT firm based in Scandinavia. Through a quantitative self-reported survey, we have found that social support (operationalized as Perceived Organizational Support and Perceived Supervisor Support), Autonomy, Feedback quality, and Quality of relationship with supervisor (operationalized as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)) fosters thriving at work. Furthermore, we found that POS mediated the relationship between PSS and thriving, indicating that perceived support from supervisors also leads to perceived support from the organization. Additionally, our study explored whether very high levels of autonomy will lead to a negative relation between autonomy and thriving, which surprisingly was not supported. Altogether, this master thesis suggests that organizational leaders should deliberately create onboarding programs that foster thriving at work through the resources studied.

1. Introduction

Although it has been well-documented that work can be considered a source of stress (Karasek, 1979; Sonnentag & Frese, 2003, as cited in Niessen et al., 2012), work can also contribute to personal growth and well-being (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Cameron et al., 2003, as cited in Niessen et al., 2012). Despite this latter notion, the organizational research has predominantly focused on the aspects of work that induce stress, burnout, and ill-being (Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2005), rather than the elements that foster personal growth, well-being, purpose, and meaning (Paterson et al., 2014; Wiese et al., 2018; Kleine et al., 2019). Altogether, this arguably causes the organizational literature to be skewed.

Spreitzer et al. (2015), however, argue that employees are neither just negatively nor just positively affected by their work but vary in the degree to which they *languish* or *thrive* at work. Whereas languishing captures the subjective experience of being stuck, caught in a rut, or failing to make progress, thriving captures the opposite (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 537). When people are thriving at work, they feel progress and momentum, marked both by a sense of learning (greater understanding and knowledge) and a sense of vitality (aliveness and energy) (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 537). This has been associated with favorable outcomes for individuals and their organizations (Spreitzer et al., 2012). Still, research on thriving at work has been relatively sparse in the organizational literature (Niessen, 2012).

Particularly, the onboarding of newcomers is interesting to investigate with regards to languishing and thriving. As organizational entry is particularly full of uncertainty for newcomers, they may encounter various difficulties in the new environment, which can lead to languishing. This is especially true for young professionals (individuals in their 20s or 30s entering a profession as newcomers), who face more uncertainty than seasoned workers (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 2020). Despite the uncertainty, research has found that when *resources*, that is defined as “anything that enables individuals to achieve their goals” (Halbesleben et al., 2014), are provided by the organization or leaders, the newcomers are more equipped to complete their tasks, which again is facilitating thriving (Sun et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2015). Still, we know little about how young professionals thrive when entering their new job, and we know even less about which resources are needed for them to thrive at work.

When investigating resources, a particularly helpful theory is the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Hence, in this study, we will investigate the relationship between young professionals entering their new job and thriving at work, by using the COR theory as our theoretical framework (Hobfoll, 1989).

1.1 Project description

In this study, we are collaborating with an international IT firm based in Scandinavia. Through our quantitative survey research, we strive to gather insight into thriving at work among young professionals entering their new job by investigating resources that foster thriving.

The collaborative firm conducts an onboarding program where many young professionals under 35 are hired and trained for nine months. These newcomers are referred to as graduates. The program, called the Graduate Program, is initiated from the core of the firm, and the focus is to make the employees able to thrive and develop in their new job. The program consists of 10% structured learning, 20% peer-to-peer learning, and 70% learning from experience (see Appendix 6.0). All graduates that are based in Scandinavia also meet four times during the nine months to share their expectations and build team spirit across countries.

It is the different graduate supervisors that execute the graduate program in the collaborative firm. Thus, these supervisors are viewed as essential assets in the graduate program, providing the graduates with valuable resources. Still, internal evaluations of the experience from the graduates have shown that some graduates are frustrated. Specifically, 50% of the graduates had not scheduled one-to-one meetings with their supervisor, which is a meeting where the graduate supervisor sets goals and expectations. Altogether, these internal evaluations indicate that some supervisors are not well-prepared for welcoming a graduate, which leads to poor execution of the program (see Appendix 6.0). However, internal investigations have also shown that after approximately three months, the graduates perform as fully billable senior consultants.

It is noteworthy to mention that in the transition from 2019 to 2020, the firm is created as a result of a merger between two well-established and independent IT firms. The initial aim of the merger was to strengthen the position of the two firms in the international market, expand their competitive software portfolio, and build more profound customer knowledge. Despite the goal of higher value creation, there is sufficient evidence of increased turnover and other difficulties such as lack of engagement following a merger (Krug & Hegarty, 1997; Krug & Nigh, 2001; Zhu & Zhu, 2016, as cited in Ng et al., 2019). Additionally, the firm was significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic that hit in March of 2020. The restrictions imposed by the Norwegian Government led to an abundance of changes in the work-life of all employees and graduates. More specifically, all employees had to work from their homes, and all business-related or socially initiated travels were changed to digital events. All things considered, it is natural to believe that both the merger and the Covid-19 pandemic have somehow influenced the graduates.

1.2 Study goal

Based on current research within the field of thriving at work and COR combined with the graduate program in the collaborative firm, we discovered a need and an interest in investigating this topic further. Therefore, our goal with this study is to answer our self-proposed question:

Which resources foster thriving at work, and in what ways do these resources affect thriving?

This study aims to quantitatively examine the relationship(s) between resources and thriving at work from a COR perspective. Due to the scope of our research, we limit our study to a particular set of resources that we found to be valuable in both the thriving and COR literature (Spreitzer et al., 2005; Hobfoll, 2001). Hence, our study makes important contributions to both the organizational literature and practice in several ways:

Firstly, we contribute to the literature on thriving at work by analyzing the predictors of thriving from a COR perspective. In this way, we investigate the relations between resources and thriving, by identifying which resources that are found to be relevant based on previous research on thriving and the COR theory's principles. In this way, we broaden the usefulness of the COR theory and connect this theoretical framework to the model of thriving at work.

Secondly, collaborating with a large international IT firm based in Scandinavia, we provide this particular organization with valuable data, which can be utilized to improve and develop their graduate programs. By deliberately creating graduate programs that focus on the resources we studied, the firm can foster thriving at work among its graduates.

Lastly, our study may provide guidelines to other firms in the same industry that conducts similar graduate programs. Particularly, our study argues that organizations might increase thriving at work among their newcomers by deliberately creating onboarding programs that foster thriving through the resources that we investigated.

2. Theory

We turn to organizational research to understand what already exists in the area and the dynamics between resources and thriving.

The first part of this chapter concerns the theoretical framework of the *COR theory*. We chose this theory as it is suitable to explain the underlying resources that foster thriving at work in our research, which can arguably provide a deeper understanding of our findings.

The second part of this chapter will provide a theoretical background of *organizational socialization* or *onboarding* and *thriving at work*. With organizational socialization, we will be focusing on organization-related outcomes. For thriving at work, we will present and go through the theoretical model of thriving at work while also elaborating on the outcomes and importance of thriving at work.

Finally, the last part of this chapter concerns our research model and hypotheses and elaboration on the resources present in this model; Social support (POS and PSS), Autonomy, Feedback quality, and Quality of relationship with the supervisor (LMX). We have chosen to examine the impact these resources have on thriving at work based on their importance in the thriving and COR literature (Spreitzer et al., 2005; Kleine et al., 2019; Hobfoll, 2001). Thus, this part of the paper represents the central area of study and provides a context for our research.

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 COR theory

Resource-based theories, including the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, have received increased attention among scholars (Antunovsky, 1979; Baltes, 1997; Bandura, 1997; Holahan & Moos, 1987, 1991, as cited in Hobfoll, 2001). COR is a theory of motivation, which postulates that individuals seek to gain and protect resources and avoid losing them (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Hobfoll (1989, 2001) defines the term *resources* as "things that people value." Specifically, COR theory suggests that one may possess four types of resources that anticipate optimal functioning: (1) objects, (2) personal characteristics, (3) conditions, and (4) energies (Hofoll, 1989, as cited in Alarcon et al., 2011). Particularly, *object* resources are valued because of their physical nature or secondary status based on their expense or rarity, such as a house. *Personal characteristics*, however, are resources in as much as they aid in dealing with stress, like a person's conscientiousness. *Conditions* are resources to the degree they are sought, such as social support from a friend. Lastly, *energies* are resources valued for their aid in acquiring other resources, such as money which is helpful for the acquisition of other resources such as a house (Hobfoll, 1989, as cited in Alarcon et al., 2011). In Hobfoll's (1998) work, they have found 74 resources that contain all of the four types of resources mentioned above. These represent a comprehensive set of resources that appears to have validity in many Western contexts (see Appendix 5.0) (as cited in Hobfoll, 2001)

COR theory can also be elucidated based on its four principles. As only the first two core principles of COR theory are central to our research, we will focus on explaining these. The first principle in COR theory is called the *primacy of resource loss*. This is the idea that loss is disproportionately weighted compared to gain and that it is psychologically more harmful for individuals to lose resources than it is helpful for them to gain the resources that they initially lost (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 1336). This principle suggests that losses at work will have more impact than similarly valued gains (e.g., a loss of pay will be more harmful than the same gain in pay would have been helpful) (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 1336). The second principle is *resource investment*. It states that people must invest in resources to be protected against resource loss, recover from losses, and gain resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Therefore, this principle supports that individuals, teams, or organizations endowed with strong personal or social resources should better resist the destructive effects of stress and face everyday challenges (Hobfoll et al., 1993). This indicates that if an organization is aware and able to foster those resources, its employees can actively shape their vitality and learning and, subsequently, their development even if they experience a demanding environment (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 546).

These two principles concerning loss primacy and investment of resources, in turn, lead to *resource loss*- and *resource gain spirals* (Hobfoll, 1988, 1998, as cited in Hobfoll, 2001). In particular, as individuals lose resources, investment becomes more difficult (Hobfoll, 2001a, as cited in Halbesleben et al., 2014), and they enter a *resource loss spiral*. On the contrary, when individuals gain resources, they are better positioned to invest and gain additional resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Hence, they enter a *resource gain spiral*. Notably, a gain spiral indicates that "if people make some resource gains, they experience more positive health and well-being and are more capable of further investing resources" (Gorgievski and Hobfoll, 2008, p. 6, as cited in Stock et al., 2017). The idea of these spirals is that both the loss and gain of resources are increasing. Hence, resources do not exist in isolation but significantly impact each other (Mäkikangas et al., 2010). In fact, studies by Salanova et al. (2006) found that *flow,* which is defined as "the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1977, p. 36, as cited in Mäkikangas et al., 2010), and job resources reciprocally interact with each other over time. This interaction suggests an upward spiral or a resource gain spiral (as cited in Mäkikangas et al., 2010). Hobfoll and Shirom (1993) also support this resource gain spiral, as they found that "the more resources people have at their disposal, the more productive coping strategies will be employed when the people are faced with demands, leading to more resources" (as cited in Alarcon et al., 2011, p. 212).

A large number of previous research have found that individuals that experience *resource loss* are more likely to experience burnout and depression (Shirom, 1989, as cited in Halbesleben et al., 2014). Furthermore, Melamed et al. (2006) also found that resource loss leads to physiological outcomes such as the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, which alters the function of the immune organs (as cited in Halbesleben et al., 2014). Altogether, this indicates how resource loss leads to a negative spiral. On the contrary, research proposes that *resource gain* can strengthen employees' well-being at work (Rozkwitalska & Basińska, 2016, as cited in Nawaz et al., 2020). Most researchers have found that social support in the workplace positively predicts job satisfaction and other positive outcomes (Harris et al., 2001; Smith & Tziner, 1998; Winstead et al., 1995, as cited in Harris et al., 2007). In addition, research by Jacobs and Dodd (2003) suggests that the resource of social support shows lower levels of burnout in the context of 1st-year college students (as cited in Alarcon et al., 2011).

2.2 Theoretical background

2.2.1 Organizational socialization

According to Bauer and colleagues (2007), *organizational socialization* is when new employees, or newcomers, move from being organizational outsiders to becoming organizational insiders. Moreover, Wanberg (2012) defines organizational socialization as “the process through which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to adapt to a new work role.”. Over the last decade, a new term, *onboarding*, has also entered the scene, which has been prevalent in practice-oriented outlets and organizations (Wanberg, 2012).

There is some confusion in the literature around the distinctiveness of onboarding and organizational socialization (Klein & Polin, 2012, as cited in Klein et al., 2015). Whereas some authors equate the two (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007, Bauer & Erdogan, 2011), some authors (e.g., Klein et al.,2015; Wanberg, 2012) view them separately. Klein et al. (2015) base this on the argument that socialization is something that occurs within the individual, whereas onboarding refers to efforts by the organization to facilitate socialization. Yet, as several other researchers use the term organizational socialization and onboarding for the same process, we will do the same in this thesis.

Bauer and Erdogan (2011) argue that this process of learning to become an influential organizational member is different from occupational socialization, which focuses on learning the norms of one’s profession. They also argue that organizational socialization is influenced by newcomer characteristics, newcomer behaviors, and organizational efforts (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). Generally, a typical onboarding process starts when a job offer is given to the newcomer and continues for up to twelve months after organizational entry (Fyock, 2012, as cited in Chillakuri, 2020). Existing literature indicates several onboarding models, but Stein and Christiansen (2010) define the core elements of an onboarding program to be: (1) Preboarding, (2) Organizational socialization, (3) Follow-up, and (4) Assimilation. Snell (2006) argues that onboarding presents a straightforward business process improvement that can yield great returns if done well and integrated into an organization’s talent management systems. The keys to successful onboarding require a complete and consistent process, a technology platform with a configurable workflow, and seamless integration with the organization’s talent management system (Snell, 2006).

Organizational socialization, or onboarding, is essential to consider for both employee- and organization-related outcomes for several reasons. According to the meta-analysis by Klein et al. (2015), onboarding is necessary for newcomers for three main reasons; (1) reduce the uncertainty and anxiety that newcomers experience, (2) help them make sense of their new environment, and

(3) provide necessary resources to become well-functioning and influential members of the organization. These findings accentuate the importance of onboarding for fostering thriving among newcomers. Additionally, Pike (2014) emphasizes that onboarding is vital to retain top-performing talents and eliminate newcomers that are not suitable for the organization. Moreover, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) argue that organizational socialization is critical for newcomers to gain rapid influence and efficiently contribute to organizational performance to create lasting effects. On the contrary, if organizations do not adequately socialize their newcomers, research has shown that the effects are unmet expectations, poor attitudes, negative behaviors, and higher levels of turnover (Wanous and Colella, 1989; Wanous, 1992, as cited in Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006).

Lastly, it is crucial to recognize that by focusing on organizational socialization, research indicates that employees can be better equipped and more receptive to rapid workplace interventions and changes (e.g., mergers, financial crisis, pandemics) (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). This aligns with the idea from COR theory stating that individuals endowed with robust resources should better resist the destructive effects of stress and face everyday challenges (Hobfoll et al., 1993).

2.2.2 Thriving at work

According to Kleine and colleagues (2019, p. 973), the broader psychological literature and research typically conceptualize *thriving* as “a dynamic process of adaptation to physical, psychological, or social adversity, leading to positive outcomes such as personal growth and enhanced functioning.”. Concerning thriving and organizational behavior, management researchers focus on a somewhat different conceptualization. Specifically, Spreitzer et al. (2005, p. 538) define *thriving at work* as “the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and sense of learning.”. Thriving at work is distinct from related constructs, such as positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA), proactive personality, and learning and performance goal orientations. Explicitly, PA and NA are defined as the experienced positively or negatively valenced moods or dispositions (Seo et al., 2004, as cited in Porath et al., 2012). Proactive personality, however, is defined as the tendency to take action to influence one’s environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993, as cited in Porath et al., 2012). Lastly, people with high learning-goal orientation view skills as malleable and focus on developing the ability to achieve future tasks (Martocchio, 1994; Button et al., 1996; Farr et al., 1993, as cited in Porath et al., 2012, p. 252). Thus, they are all different from thriving at work.

Thriving at work consists of two dimensions: vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Spreitzer and colleagues (2005) define *vitality* as the feeling of energy and aliveness, whereas they define *learning* as the sense that one is acquiring and can apply knowledge and skills. Further, Porath et al. (2012, p. 251) emphasize that “together, the two dimensions capture both the affective (vitality) and cognitive (learning) essence of the psychological experience of personal growth,” and to thrive fully, one must feel a sense of both vitality and learning. Porath et al. (2012, p. 251) explain this relation by arguing that:

> If one is learning but feels depleted, thriving suffers. Conversely, if one feels energized and alive while working but finds personal learning to be stagnant, again, the experience of thriving is limited.

Therefore, one can experience limited thriving if either learning or vitality is lacking. However, one must recognize that thriving at work is most accurately conceptualized as a continuum, meaning that people will thrive more or less at any point in time rather than either thriving or not (Saakvitne et al., 1998, as cited in Porath et al., 2012).

Researchers have noted that, for thriving to occur at work, organizations should provide the right environment and work context that gives employees opportunities for growth and development (Wallace et al., 2016). Spreitzer et al. (2005) have developed a theoretical model of thriving at work called the Socially Embedded Model of Thriving at Work (see Figure 1), which explains how specific characteristics, contexts, features, and behaviors lead to thriving at work. Spreitzer et al. (2005) assume that thriving at work is not automatically fostered by simply removing or decreasing the influence of stressors within their framework. Instead, they suggest that thriving at work requires increases in favorable individual and relational characteristics and contextual features (as cited in Kleine et al., 2019, p. 974).

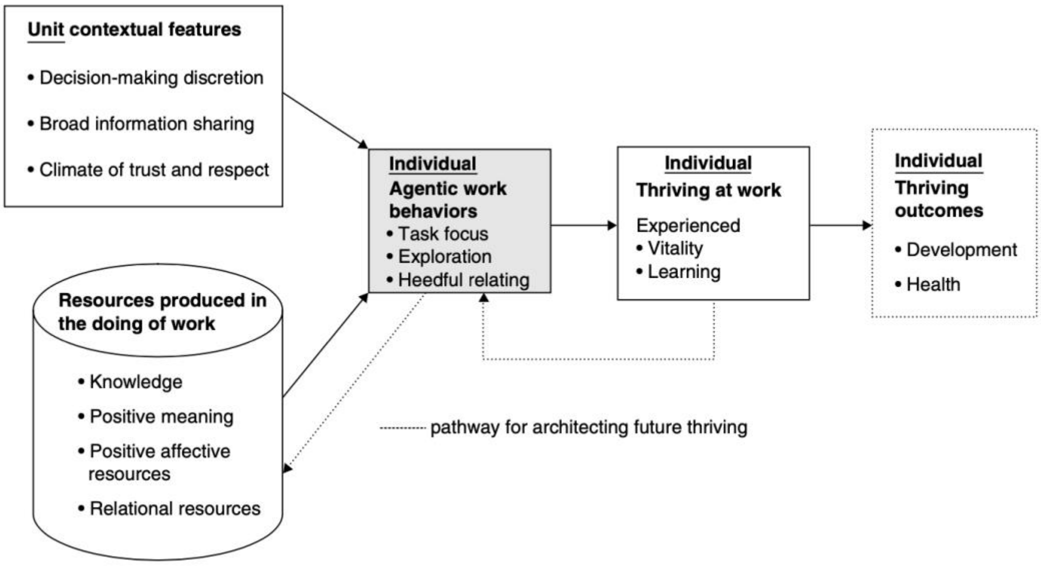


Figure 1: "A Socially Embedded Model of Thriving at Work" from Spreitzer et al. (2005, p. 540).

In their model, Spreitzer et al. (2005) conceptualize "unit contextual features" (i.e., a climate of trust and respect, information sharing, and decision-making discretion) and "resources produced in the doing of work" (i.e., knowledge, positive meaning, positive affect, and relational resources) as essential promoters of thriving at work. As opposed to the relatively stable unit contextual features, Kleine et al. (2019, p. 975) argue that the resources in the model are renewable in that they are endogenously produced through social interactions at work. This is in line with Hobfoll's (1989) idea of resource gain spirals.

Regarding the importance of thriving on organizational outcomes, previous research suggests that thriving at work benefits employee performance, affective commitment, career adaptability, task mastery, helping behavior, self-development, innovation, proactivity, and it has also been found to buffer against burnout (e.g., Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Gerbasi et al., 2015; Paterson et al., 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2018; Jiang, 2017; Niessen et al., 2017; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Paterson et al., 2014; Wallace et al., 2016; Hildenbrand et al., 2018, as cited in Hyde et al., 2020). Hence, given the increasing evidence of the relationship between thriving at work and various desired individual and organizational outcomes, Paterson et al. (2014) argue that a better understanding of factors that promote thriving at work is needed. More importantly, as newcomers might be overwhelmed with their new tasks resulting in frustration and burnout (Spreitzer et al., 2005), studying thriving among young newcomers can be considered critical.

From a COR perspective, resources are a central part of recent conceptualizations of thriving at work. Specifically, resources that are valuable for individuals, both in a COR and thriving perspective, are Social support (e.g., Zhai et al., 2020; Kleine et al., 2019), Autonomy (e.g., Ng & Feldman, 2012; Hobfoll, 1989), Feedback (e.g., Spreitzer & Porath, 2014) and Leader-member relationship (e.g., Kleine et al., 2019). Still, we experience that there has not been enough emphasis on the importance of resources in thriving literature. Therefore, we will define, elaborate, and build our research on these resources in the subsequent chapter.

2.3 Research model and hypotheses

Below, we present our overall research model to illustrate what we investigate in our study (see Figure 2). We include all study variables in this comprehensive model while testing it piece by piece through the hypotheses. We will detail each hypothesis in the subsequent sections.

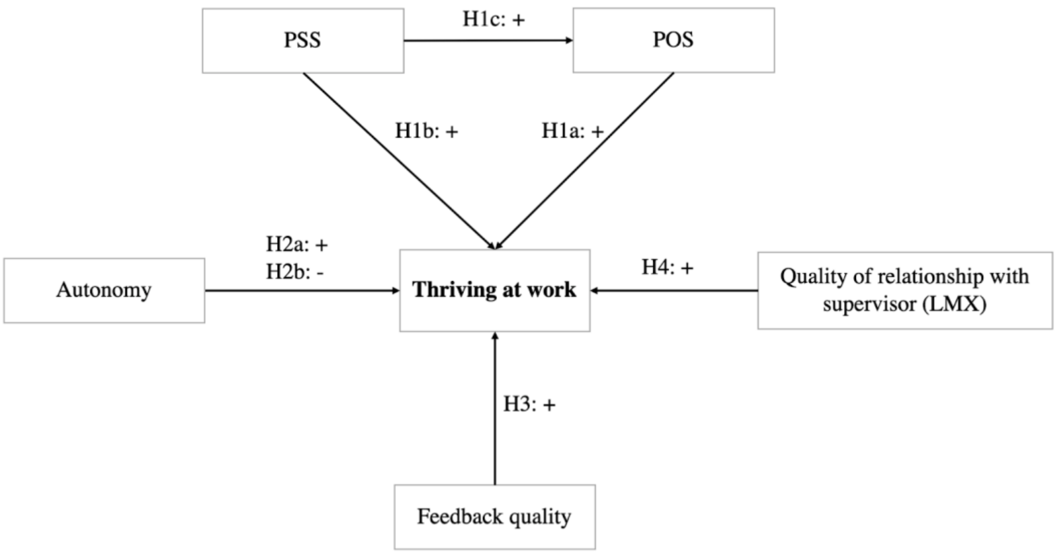


Figure 2: Overall research model for the study

2.3.1 Social support

According to COR theory, resources such as social support may be desired in their own right and importance. It contributes to maintaining substantial resource reservoirs (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 349), meaning that it may increase an individual’s pool of available resources. Social support is considered a condition resource because it is a resource to the degree it is sought (Hobfoll, 1989). Also, COR theory suggests that social support can weaken the negative effect of occupational stress and foster resource gain (Hobfoll, 1989). In addition, Spreitzer and colleagues (2005, p. 539) propose that thriving at work is socially embedded for several reasons. Both because vitality and learning are deeply rooted in social systems and because learning occurs in social interactions and not only in the individual mind or in isolation from others. Thus, both the COR and thriving literature argue that social support is an essential resource.

Despite the importance mentioned earlier of social support, the research field is usually faced with one primary difficulty: how to best define it. Yet, social support has been broadly defined as "the resources provided by other persons" (Cohen & Syme, 1985). Furthermore, it is also referred to as "the function and quality of social relationships, such as perceived availability of help or support actually received" (Schwarzer et al., 2004). Hence, social support can differ based on context, delivery, and perception.

Recent studies by Kleine and colleagues (2019) and Imran and colleagues (2020) suggest that social support resources such as perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived supervisor support (PSS) serve as effective means that promote thriving at work. Consequently, to investigate the relationship between social support and thriving at work, this thesis focuses on social support in terms of POS and PSS.

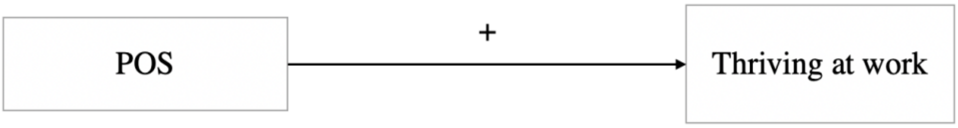
2.3.1.1 POS

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to "employees' beliefs regarding the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger et al., 1986). According to Eisenberger et al. (2001), POS leads to a felt obligation to help the organization reach its objectives while also helping other employees (as cited in Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006).

In their meta-analysis, Kleine et al. (2019) argue that employees who feel supported by their organization should be motivated to acquire knowledge and skills to help the organization achieve its goals. Additionally, Rhoades and Eienberger (2002) found that employees with high perceived organizational support find their job more pleasurable, have a better mood at work, and suffer fewer strain symptoms, such as fatigue or burnout (as cited in Kleine et al. 2019).

Most importantly, in the meta-analysis by Kleine and colleagues (2019), one notable finding was for the relationships between thriving and perceived organizational support (*rc* = .63). Based on this, we developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1a: POS is positively related to thriving at work.



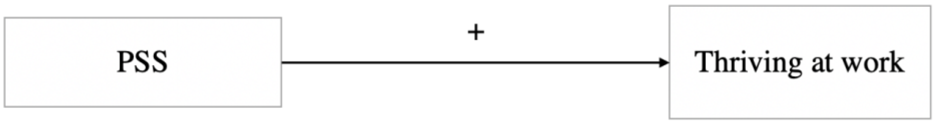
Model 1.1

2.3.1.2 PSS

Just as employees form global perceptions concerning their valuation by the organization, they develop general views concerning the degree to which supervisors care about their well-being, value their inputs, and provide them with help and support (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988, as cited in Eisenberger et al., 2002). This employee perception is defined as Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS).

When supervisors express concern for their subordinates' well-being, helping them with their career development, and valuing their work, they create a supportive climate (Zhang et al., 2008, as cited in Paterson et al., 2014). Kahn (1990) argues that one of the essential implications of such an environment is that employees are not afraid to take risks or even fail because they are confident they will be supported by their supervisor (as cited in Kleine et al., 2019). When a supportive supervisor is enabled to create such an environment, Paterson and colleagues (2014) argue that employees are likely to experience work behaviors that promote thriving at work. Moreover, research has found that PSS has a strong association with employee job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment (Alkhateri et al., 2018). In addition, research on supportive leadership behavior has been found to promote perceived meaningfulness of one's job and quality of work relationships (Kahn, 1990), leading to more enhanced feelings of vitality (Berg et al., 2013, as cited in Kleine et al., 2019). Therefore, it led us to the following hypothesis:

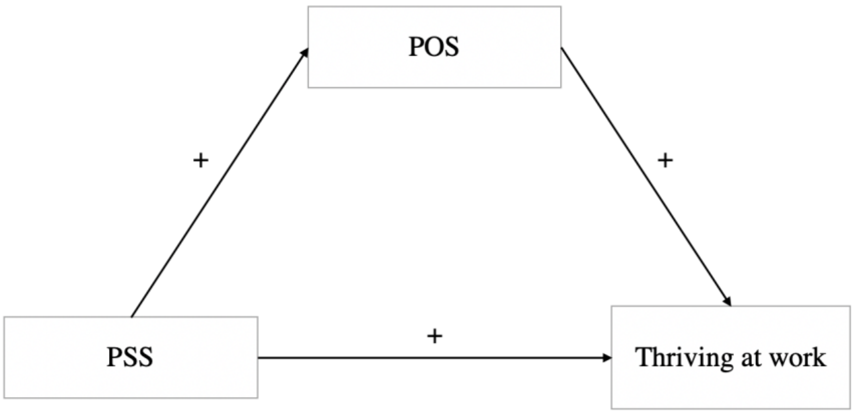
Hypothesis 1b: PSS is positively related to thriving at work



Model 1.2

Further, COR theory suggests that the consequences of the initial acquisition of resources can result in a spiral of ongoing resource gain (Hobfoll, 1989). According to Shanock and Eisenberger (2006), as supervisors act as organizational agents in their treatment of subordinates, PSS should contribute to higher levels of POS (Levinson, 1965, cited in Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Consistent with this, studies by Malatesta (1995, as cited in Eisenberger et al., 2002) found that PSS should increase obligations to the supervisor and the organization. Altogether, this suggests that POS mediates the relation between PSS and thriving. Following this line of reasoning, we argue that when graduates perceive that the supervisor is supportive, it can lead to a perception that the organization is supportive. This leads us to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1c: POS will mediate the positive relationship between PSS and thriving at work

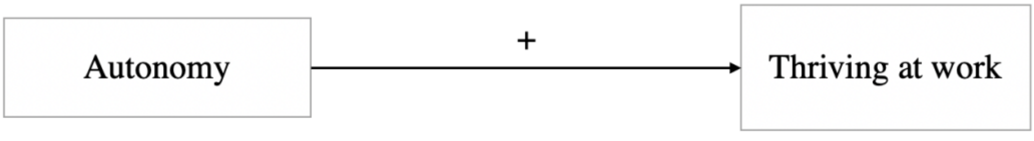


Model 1.3

2.3.2 Autonomy

According to COR theory, having autonomy means that employees have authority to make decisions on the job, which provides employees with opportunities to generate further resources and consequently enter a resource gain spiral (Hobfoll, 1989). As with social support, autonomy can also be considered a condition resource, as it is a resource to the degree it is sought. In a review of the three psychological needs (need for autonomy, need for competence, need for belongingness) and thriving at work, autonomy was argued to be the strongest predictor of energy or vitality (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014). This is based on the assumption that when human behavior is autonomous, people have fewer inhibitions and there is less conflict, and thus, autonomy is energizing (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014). Moreover, as seen in the Socially Embedded Model of Thriving at Work, when individuals are exposed to work contexts that foster decision-making discretion, Spreitzer and colleagues (2005, p. 542) argue that their feelings of autonomy are strengthened and that they are more likely to thrive. This is also supported in research by Li et al. (2016), suggesting that when employees had high autonomy orientations, they thrived at work to a higher degree. In addition, Spreitzer et al. (2005, p. 542) argue that “when people feel autonomous and capable of mastering their work responsibilities, they are more likely to behave proactively and persistently in applying their skills to the job at hand.”. Indeed, prior studies have supported a positive relationship between autonomy and thriving (Tummers et al., 2016). The following hypothesis is, therefore, developed:

Hypothesis 2a: Autonomy is positively related to thriving at work



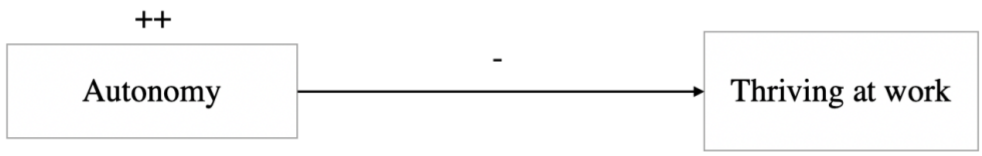
Model 2.1

Regardless of the positive effects of autonomy on thriving, Pierce and Aguinis (2013) demonstrated that many work-related phenomena follow a curvilinear rather than a linear pattern. They found that resources that are generally considered desirable have adverse outcomes after context-specific points. Pierce and Aguinis (2013) called this the Too-Much-of-a-Good-Thing (TMGT) effect.

This effect aligns with the common criticism of the COR theory's definition of a resource ("things that people value") because the use of the term "value" implies that a resource *must* lead to a positive outcome to be a resource (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Also, this can indicate that people value certain resources at certain levels only. As research increasingly shows that even good things can lead to bad outcomes, COR theory's definition of resources becomes problematic.

Indeed, it has been found that teams with too much individual autonomy and too little monitoring will perform worse compared to teams with less individual autonomy and more monitoring (Langfred, 2004). Moreover, in a study by Olmos-Vega and colleagues (2017), they found that when trainees reported that when their supervisors' ability to give autonomy and learning opportunities were either too excessive or too limited, tensions arose. Consequently, this means that both too little and too much autonomy will lead to a limited experience of thriving (Porath, 2012, p. 251). Following this line of reasoning, we developed the hypothesis below:

Hypothesis 2b: At low to moderate levels of autonomy, the relation between autonomy and thriving will be positive. At very high levels of autonomy, the relation between autonomy and thriving will turn negative.



Model 2.2

2.3.3 Feedback quality

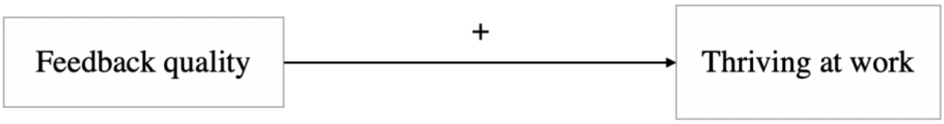
Research has found that feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). COR theory also argues that through feedback, individuals may become more capable of investing these initial resources to access more valuable ones, and therefore experience a resource gain spiral (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). Again, feedback quality can also be considered a condition resource, as it is a resource to the degree it is sought (Hobfoll, 1989). Furthermore, Spreitzer and Porath (2014) argue that feedback allows individuals to make adjustments to maximize the use of their time toward personal growth and improvement. Also, because feedback keeps people's work-related activities directed toward desired personal and organizational goals, Spreitzer et al. (2012) argue that it enables thriving.

Feedback has been variously defined based on its use in different fields, and several definitions of the term have been proposed (Mulder & Ellinger, 2013). However, Ilgen and colleagues (1979) have found it beneficial to conceive feedback as “a special case of a general communication process in which some source conveys a message to a recipient, where the message contains information about the recipient” (as cited in Mulder & Ellinger, 2013). How the message is perceived by the receiver depends on the recipient’s personal characteristics, the nature of the message, and the personal characteristics of the source of the feedback (Ilgen et al., 1979, as cited in Mulder & Ellinger, 2013). Particularly, a growing stream of research has shown that goal orientation, need for approval, and self-monitoring are personal characteristics of the receiver that have a strong effect on whether this person asks for feedback (Krasman, 2010). Regarding the characteristics of the source giving the feedback, Griffin (1967) and Ilgen and colleagues (1979) have found expertise, reliability, intentions toward the receiver, dynamism, and personal attraction to be some characteristics that influence the receiver’s perceptions of a source’s credibility (Griffin, 1967; Ilgen et al., 1979, as cited in Mulder & Ellinger, 2013). Additionally, the perception of the feedback also relies on how the source of the feedback is able to convey the message, and Feeney (2007) narrows this down to a term called *Feedback quality*. To reduce the scope of feedback in this thesis, we explicitly focus on Feedback quality.

Feedback quality can broadly be seen as “good” feedback; however, this leads us to the question of what is meant by “good” (Mulder & Ellinger, 2013). Yet, Frase (1992) suggests that high-quality feedback should be helpful and uplifting and not inaccurate, shallow, and mean-spirited (as cited in Feeney, 2007). Steelman et al. (2004) also state that employees perceive the feedback to be more useful when receiving high-quality feedback that is consistent across time and specific, compared to when they receive low-quality feedback that varies with regards to mood, liking, or opportunity of the person giving the feedback.

Regarding the outcome of feedback quality, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that high-quality feedback concerning information about the task, strategies, and appropriate task behaviors influences employee performance positively and consistently (as cited in Whitaker & Levy, 2012). Furthermore, Whitaker and Levy’s (2012, p. 172) studies indicate that specific and high-quality feedback may help craft contexts that stimulate self-enhancement by influencing the emergence of feedback utility, meaning total satisfaction. Altogether, this somewhat corresponds to the effect of a positive gain spiral (Hobfoll, 1989). Additionally, when Spreitzer and colleagues (2012) collected high-quality feedback using a 360-degree feedback approach (an approach where feedback is collected from leaders, peers, subordinates, and possibly clients or customers), it led the participants to experience a significant positive change in thriving at work. The change in thriving was partly due to the participants learning about their strengths and weaknesses and feeling energized to address developmental opportunities (Spreitzer et al., 2012). Hence, we developed the subsequent hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Feedback quality is positively related to thriving at work



Model 3

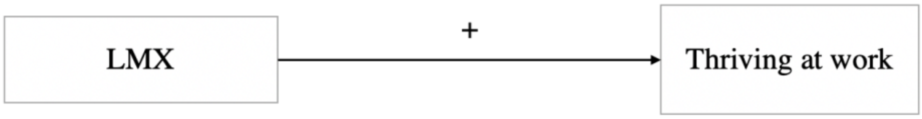
2.3.4 Quality of relationships with supervisor

From a COR perspective, the supervisor-subordinate relationship acts as a prime source of support from which resources are accumulated, replenished, and protected (Halbesleben, 2006, cited in Harris et al., 2011). Again, LMX can also be considered a condition resource because it is a resource to the degree it is sought (Hobfoll, 1989). The supervisor-subordinate relationship is often examined through the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) lens.

LMX is a social exchange process and mirrors a business-orientated connection among leaders and followers (Bauer and Green, 1996, cited in Khalifa, 2019). The nature of the relationship considers shared trust, respect, and liking (Eisenberger et al., 2010, as cited in Khalifa, 2019). Although LMX has some similarities to the PSS mentioned above, the two differ based on the degree of connection. Essentially, LMX focuses on the *dyadic relationship* between leader and follower as the level of analysis (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Although LMX and PSS can be separated, Zhang et al. (2008) found that the two influence each other. Specifically, PSS was a crucial antecedent in improving trust among employees-supervisors (Zhang et al., 2008, cited in Khalifa, 2019). Khalifa (2019) also found that PSS predicted LMX significantly, which suggested a mediation relationship. Hence, one should be careful when analyzing these concepts in the same analysis, as they are theoretically very similar.

Regarding thriving at work and leader-member exchange, Spreitzer and colleagues (2005) include relational resources as an influential factor that fosters thriving at work. They describe these resources as high-quality connections or bonds between individuals (Dutton 2003, Roberts et al. 2005, as cited in Spreitzer et al., 2005), which might be generated in dyadic relationships with others at work. Such high-quality connections are also found in the LMX theory. Indeed, Bezuijen and colleagues (2010) argue that employees with high-quality LMX relationships were more engaged in learning activities than those with low-quality LMX relationships (as cited in Marstand et al.,2017). Moreover, research has found that when an employee is assigned more interesting and challenging tasks, high-quality relationships will generally increase (Liden et al., 1993, as cited in Marstand et al., 2017). This indicates a relationship between high-quality relationships and learning (one of the components of thriving as work). Most importantly, when investigating the relationship between thriving at work and LMX, Kleine et al. (2019) found a strong sample size-weighted and reliability-corrected correlation (*rc* = .61). Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 4: LMX is positively related to thriving at work



Model 4

3. Method

Based on the theoretical ground presented, the following chapter will elaborate on the methodological choices in the study regarding approach, design, data collection, and measures. Following this, the methodology will be evaluated concerning the validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research design

As the primary goal of our research is to investigate relationships between variables in a particular context, an *explanatory design* is the most suitable (Saunders et al., 2019). An explanatory design seeks to explain the relationship between variables by investigating a situation or a problem and can be conducted through, e.g., statistical testing (Saunders et al., 2019). Further, an explanatory design is preferable as we build our research on the already suggested relationships in the COR theory while contributing with a different range of resources than those from the Socially Embedded Model by Spreitzer et al. (2005).

According to Saunders et al. (2019), the choice of research approach depends on the nature of the research and the amount of existing theory regarding the phenomenon. As our research utilizes existing theory to formulate the study goal and objectives, we use a *deductive approach*. This approach differs from the inductive approach, where one first collects data before exploring it to develop a theory (Saunders et al., 2019).

A typically associated method with a deductive strategy is the *quantitative research method*, where one is deducing hypotheses and testing theories by quantifying attitudes, opinions, and behaviors (Bryman & Bell, 2015). According to Wilson (2014, p. 13), choosing a quantitative method allows us to employ questionnaires to make more generalized research findings to a certain extent. Arguably, combining the deductive strategy with a quantitative research method enables us to explain relationships between concepts and variables.

3.2 Data collection

Saunders and colleagues (2019) argue that questionnaires are a widely used data collection method when having a quantitative strategy. Based on our explanatory research design, quantitative strategy, and study goal, using questionnaires proved an acceptable way of collecting data (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 419).

Specifically, we chose a *survey strategy* with self-reported questionnaires administered through a web-based tool called Qualtrics, which BI Norwegian Business School made accessible (See Appendix 2.0). In addition, the survey strategy enabled us to gain insight into the participants' thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, and behavior (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), which aligns with the goal of our research.

Regarding the research time horizons, Saunders et al. (2019) distinguish between two primary approaches: cross-sectional and longitudinal. Considering the limited time frame of this thesis, a *cross-sectional approach* was the most appropriate. Using this approach, we studied a phenomenon at a single point in time. On the contrary, when using the longitudinal approach, one investigates whether factors change over time (Saunders et al., 2019). However, when having a cross-sectional survey study, there are some issues to be aware of. Notably, two issues dominate our concerns: (1) common method variance (CMV) (i.e., systematic method error due to the use of a single rater or single source) and (2) causal inference (CI) (i.e., the ability to infer causation from observed empirical relations) (Rindfleisch et al., 2008, p. 261). Thus, this will be discussed in a later chapter of this thesis.

3.3 Sample and procedure

To test our hypotheses, we collected data from employees who are currently conducting or recently completed a graduate program within an international IT firm in Scandinavia. Although Kahneman and Egan (2011) argue that participants should be able to answer in their first language to prevent misunderstandings that could decrease the results' reliability, the official work language at the firm is English. Therefore, we did not see the need to translate the items from the original measures into any other languages (see Appendix 2.0).

Our sample was found using a *purposive* or *judgemental sampling method*. We aimed to find a group of new employees within the collaborative firm who are currently conducting or who recently completed the graduate program. This is a non-probability or non-random sampling method where particular people are selected deliberately to provide important information that others cannot obtain (Maxwell, 1996, as cited in Taherdoost, 2016). Johnson and Christensen (2014) argue that the ability to generalize from one sample to a population only based on one research study is a severe limitation of this sampling method. They argue that the optimal sampling method would be to specify the criteria for the participants and then obtain a random sample of these people (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Although we acknowledge this limitation, the optimal sampling method would be neither practical nor possible in our quantitative survey research due to the available population of graduates in the collaborative firm.

Taherdoost (2016) argues that the sample needs to be of adequate size to generalize the findings and avoid sampling errors or biases. Indeed, the sample size is the single most significant factor affecting the statistical power of a study (Dawson, 2014). However, even though the statistical power often relies on a large sample size, smaller sample size does not necessarily indicate a lack of reliability (Dawson, 2014). When aiming for an adequate sample size, we got access to graduates who started in the firm in these cohorts; Fall 2018, Fall 2019, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021. In total, the survey was distributed to 295 graduates. To increase the chances of a high response rate, the graduate responsible was the one who distributed the survey through email. We received 138 responses from the survey but only had 113 fully completed responses, which corresponds to a response rate of 38%.

Out of the 113 graduates within the international IT firm, 49,6% are men, and 50,4% are women. The graduates' age ranges from 22 to 36 years, with a mean age of 26,96 years. Furthermore, 76,5% of the graduates work in Norway, whereas 23,5% work in Sweden. Regarding enrollment in the program, 17,6% enrolled in Fall 2018, 37,8% enrolled in Fall 2019, 37,8% enrolled in Fall 2020, and lastly, 6,7% enrolled in Spring 2021. Considering the educational level of the graduates, the majority, 60,5%, has completed a master's degree, 37% have completed a bachelor's degree, and 2,5% have education below a bachelor's degree. Regarding tenure, the graduates have 0 to 8 years of experience, with a mean of 1,96 years. When investigating the impact of the merge, the majority, 51,3%, felt that the merge had a neutral impact. Regarding the impact of Covid-19, the majority, 55,5%, felt that the Covid-19 situation had a somewhat negative impact.

When designing a web-based survey, we considered and aimed to account for several pitfalls. Qualtrics are web-based tools, and up to 53% of their surveys are initiated on mobile devices (Qualtrics, n.d.). Therefore, we aimed to make the survey mobile-friendly concerning the chosen format. Most importantly, data has shown that if a survey takes more than 9-12 minutes to complete, the completion rate significantly decreases (Qualtrics, n.d.). Hence, we focused on reducing the completion time by including only the relevant and essential measures in addition to control variables.

3.3.1 Research ethics

Johannessen and colleagues (2016) argue that several ethical considerations may arise when conducting research. Therefore, to ensure that we follow ethical guidelines and adhere to participant anonymity, we contacted The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) and got approval before processing any data (see Appendix 3.0). In our research, we primarily focused on three essential aspects of research ethics.

Firstly, as Jacobsen (2015) argues that the study should not be detrimental to the participants in any way, we treated all personal data with complete confidentiality and anonymity. Hence, we ensured that the responses were not available to anyone within the firm, although the graduate responsible distributed the survey.

Secondly, since participation in the study should be voluntary (Jacobsen, 2015), we clearly informed the participants about the purpose of the research and how we will store and delete their data before involving them in our project. We did this by giving information about the project and the confidentiality of responses on the first page of the survey (see Appendix 1.0).

Thirdly, to ensure complete agreement between us and the participants, which Ritchie and Lewis (2003) emphasize as critical, we added a participation agreement at the beginning of the survey that allowed us to use their responses (see Appendix 1.0).

3.4 Data credibility and measures

To reach our goal of conducting a successful and valuable study, we must focus on data credibility. Saunders and colleagues (2019) state that data credibility is determined by data reliability and validity. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014, p. 279), “reliability concerns the consistency, stability or repeatability of the results of a study,” whereas “validity concerns the correctness or truthfulness of the interference that is made from results of the study.”

There are many ways for ensuring reliability, making our research reliable and dependable. Particularly, transparency regarding the accuracy of the data, how we gathered the data, and how we analyzed the data are essential for increasing the reliability. Furthermore, using previously validated measures is another way of ensuring credibility. As Cronbach alpha (α) indicates the reliability for all variables used in the research, we aimed for measures with alpha greater than .70 as this is generally considered adequate (Cortina, 1993). All of the measures used in the study have an alpha greater than .70.

Additionally, to ensure valuable and reliable responses across measures, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used in all measures in this study. We will elaborate on all the measures used in the survey in the subsequent paragraphs.

3.4.1 Thriving

Thriving was measured by using the 10-item measure developed by Porath et al. (2012) with five items for learning and five items for vitality. A sample item for learning is, e.g., "At work, I see myself continually improving," and a sample for vitality is, e.g., "At work, I am looking forward to each new day." The 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = "*Strongly disagree*" to 5 = "*Strongly agree*" with 3 = "*Neither disagree nor agree*." The alpha reliability coefficient was found by Porath et al. (2012) to be .93. In this study, the Alpha coefficient was .91.

3.4.2 Social support

Social Support was measured using the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support developed by Eisenberger and colleagues (1986). This survey originally measured Perceived Organizational Support (POS), but we also measured Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) using the same questionnaire. This was done by changing the word "organization" with "supervisor" as Eisenberger et al. (2002) argued that many researchers such as Kottke and Sharafinski (1988), Hutchison (1997a, 1997b), and Rhoades et al. (2001) had done before. We used six items for both POS and PSS. A sample item for POS/PSS was, e.g., "My organization/supervisor really cares about my well-being." The reliability coefficient was found to be .95 (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In this study, the Alpha coefficient was .93 for POS and .88 for PSS.

3.4.3 Autonomy

Autonomy was measured using six items. We adapted the scale "need for autonomy" in the Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction scale (W-BNS) developed by Van den Broeck et al. (2010). It is important to mention that the scale developed by Van den Brouck and colleagues (2010) is a scale that is newly developed to measure a need satisfaction, and the "need for autonomy" scale is only one part of the scale.

For autonomy, a sample item was, e.g., "The tasks I have to do at work are in line with what I really want to do." The 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = "*Strongly disagree*" to 5 = "*Strongly agree*" with 3 = "*Neither disagree nor agree*." The reliability of the Autonomy scale was found to be .81 (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). In this study, the Alpha coefficient was .70.

3.4.5. Feedback quality

Feedback quality was measured using The Feedback Environment Scale from Steelman and colleagues (2004). We measured *Feedback quality from the supervisor* using five items. A sample item for feedback quality was, e.g., "My supervisor gives me useful feedback about my job performance." The 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = "*Strongly disagree*" to 5 = "*Strongly agree*" with 3 = "*Neither disagree nor agree*." Internal consistency reliability was found to be .92 for Feedback quality (Steelman et al., 2004). In this study, the Alpha coefficient was .91.

3.4.6 Quality of relationship with supervisor

To measure *Quality of relationship with supervisor,* we used seven items from the LMX-7 Survey developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien, (1995). A sample item was, e.g., "I have enough confidence in my leader, that I would defend and justify his or her decision if they were not present to do so." The 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 to 5, but the items had different response anchors (see Appendix 2.0). The Cronbach's alpha was found to be .84 and the construct reliability to be .85 (Caliskan, 2015). In this study, the Alpha coefficient was .84.

3.4.7 Control variables

We included age, gender, country of enrollment, time of enrollment, education level, and the number of years in the job market as potential controls. For respondents who were enrolled in Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 (thus, before the merge), we controlled for which organization they were originally enrolled in. Additionally, we added one question to control for the impact of the merge and one question to control for the impact of Covid-19. Saunders et al. (2019) argue that such variables must be included to avoid influence on the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

4. Data analysis

In the process of explaining, describing, and analyzing the data collected in the questionnaire, we mainly used the statistics program IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Also, the PROCESS macro by Hayes (2018) was used for mediation analyses, while the MPlus 8.3 by Muthén and Muthén (2019) was used for the confirmatory factor analysis.

Firstly, we examined all measures for internal reliability by applying Cronbach's alpha. For a reliable measure, we used the general rule of thumb to have a Cronbach's alpha above either .70 or .80. However, it has been argued that even lower values may also be sufficient in some cases (Kline, 1999, as cited in Field, 2018, p. 823).

After reliability was examined, we examined for correlations between all variables by using the Pearson's correlation coefficient or Pearson's *r*. Seeing that there were strong correlations ($r < .70$) between some of the different measures, we performed factor analyses to ensure that measures were distinguishable from one another and that items loaded on the factors they should load on. We first performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which is commonly employed to evaluate the factor structure of measures (Sass, 2010).

Initially, the EFA was run using varimax rotation. We chose varimax, based on that it is conventionally advised to use due to its production of easily interpretable results (Costello & Osborne, 2005). As varimax is an orthogonal method of rotation, it produces uncorrelated factors. However, when researching in the social sciences, some correlations among factors are expected since behavior is rarely partitioned into neatly packaged units that function independently of one another (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Hence, one should expect some correlations with the varimax method. For the EFA, the extraction method used was principal component analysis.

After examining the factor loading of each item, we got an indication of how well the items measured the construct they were intended to measure. Thus, if one item had a poor factor loading, it should have been excluded. However, according to Brown (2015, p. 27), there are no universal rules of thumb regarding sufficient factor loading. Still, he highlights that "factor loadings greater than or equal to .30 or .40 are often interpreted as salient" (Brown, 2015, p. 27). Also, Nunnally (1978, as cited in Sass, 2010) confirms that factor loadings of .30 or .40 would be acceptable in most cases.

As EFA is often used early in the process of scale development and construct validation, we saw the need to employ a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This type of factor analysis enables us to examine the dimensionality of our data as it is a method used when the underlying structure has been established on prior empirical and theoretical grounds (Brown & Moore, 2012, p. 3). We used Mplus 8.3 (Muthén, & Muthén, 2019) and the maximum likelihood method of estimation.

A linear regression analysis was used in most of our hypotheses (Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, 3, and 4) to evaluate the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables and account for the effect of relevant control variables.

When testing the mediating effect (Hypothesis 1c), we conducted hierarchical regression analyses using SPSS with the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) and bootstrapping. We used model 4 as this is a simple mediation model. The robust mechanism, bootstrapping, was also applied as it extracts random samples from the data set and imitates the sampling process (Field, 2018, p. 266). With bootstrap, we chose an iteration of 5000. A confidence interval of 95% was also chosen.

Lastly, when testing for a curvilinear relationship in one of our hypotheses (Hypothesis 2b), we used a quadratic regression analysis (regressing Y on X and X^2). To examine whether autonomy squared explained any variance in the outcome over and above autonomy, we first mean-centered the independent variable as Dawson (2014) recommends. This method ensured that the (unstandardized) regression coefficients of the main effects could be interpreted directly in terms of the original variables (Dawson, 2014). This also guarded us against potential multicollinearity. Then, we multiplied the centered independent variable with itself to get the squared variable. Lastly, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis adding the centered and squared variables in separate steps.

When testing every hypothesis, we followed Becker and colleagues' (2016) recommendations that one should only test the control variables (CV) with significant correlations with the main study variable.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the means (M), standard deviations (SD), correlations, and reliabilities (in parentheses) for all variables included in the research model, as well as the control variables. As seen in Table 1, every study variable included in the data analysis had high internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas greater than .70. All these variables had a positive and significant relationship with thriving at work.

When examining the data, some responses were missing data on some of the items. Thus, the final sample N is 113 instead of 138.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlations

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	Age	26.96	2.330														
2	Gender	1.5	.502	-.05													
3	Country	1.24	.426	.17	.07												
4	Enrollment time	2.34	.847	-.32**	-.02	-.06											
5	Education level	2.58	.545	-.01	.13	-.19*	.00										
6	Tenure	1.96	1.953	.59**	.04	.25*	-.49**	-.23*									
7	Merge impact	2.70	.743	-.04	.05	.12	.01	-.11	-.04								
8	COVID-19 impact	2.31	.851	.09	.15	.10	-.26**	-.04	.15	.15							
9	Thriving	3.74	.632	-.23*	.04	.08	.20*	-.01	-.24*	.30**	-.01	(.91)					
10	POS	3.12	.886	-.13	.09	.05	.30**	.09	-.30**	.45**	.12	.51**	(.93)				
11	PSS	4.00	.715	-.14	-.02	-.22*	.19*	.13	-.35**	.16	.17	.38**	.39**	(.88)			
12	Autonomy	3.47	.564	-.15	.06	.08	.14	-.02	-.21*	.30**	.06	.73**	.37**	.29**	(.70)		
13	Feedback quality	3.64	.862	-.19	.05	-.19*	.26**	.18	-.37**	.12	.16	.50**	.39**	.66**	.46**	(.91)	
14	LMX	3.55	.691	-.18	-.07	-.19*	.06	.18	-.34**	.00	.14	.37**	.28**	.74**	.39**	.67**	(.84)

Note. N=113. Cronbach's alpha values are reported in the parentheses. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

5.1.2 Control variables

As mentioned, Becker and colleagues (2016) present some central recommendations for the treatment of control variables (CV). Specifically, they highlight "when in doubt, leave them out." With this in mind, we only controlled for the variables that significantly impacted thriving (Beckr et al., 2016). In our study, significant CVs was age, (r = -.23, p < .05), enrollment time (r = .20, p <.05), tenure (r = -0.24, p < .05) and merge impact (r = .30, p < .001). Thus, we only control for these CVs in all of our analyses.

5.2 Factor analysis: EFA and CFA

Since we found high correlations between LMX and PSS (r = .74., p < .001), LMX and feedback quality (r = .67, p < .001), and feedback quality and PSS (r = .66, p < .01) (see Table 1), we were able to investigate if these variables are distinguishable with factor analysis.

From the EFA, we found item loadings of each factor to range between .36 (lowest) and .90 (highest). Most item loadings of the respective factors were above what is recommended, except for one item from autonomy (.36). Yet, we decided to keep this item together with all other items since factor loadings of .30 or .40 are regarded as acceptable in most cases (Nunnally, 1978, as cited in Sass, 2010).

When diving deeper into the results from the factor analysis, we found that the autonomy and LMX measures had some measurement issues. Particularly, the autonomy measure is loading on five different factors (see Appendix 4.0), and vitality and learning, the two measures of thriving at work, are two of them. As mentioned, the scale from Van den Brouck et al. (2010) is newly developed and not only captures autonomy alone but aims to capture work-related basic need satisfaction. From the EFA, three of the autonomy items are loading on the vitality and learning scale of thriving at work (see Appendix 4.0). This suggests that they represent, at least in part, the same underlying construct. Still, as autonomy can be considered a broad concept and we acknowledge the scale issues, we have decided to keep it.

Also, the LMX measure itself seems to load on two different factors. When running LMX through two separate factor analyses, with PSS and feedback quality, respectively, the results point to three different factors. Although researchers still debate whether the LMX construct should be considered unidimensional or multidimensional, the measure is widely used and verified (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Caliskan, 2015). Thus, we have decided to keep it. Nonetheless, this difficulty will not be ignored and will be assessed in the discussion.

Lastly, when investigating the high correlation between feedback quality and PSS, the EFA confirms that the measures load on two different factors, indicating no measurement issues.

For the hypothesized CFA model, the results yielded a lower-than-expected fit to the data, $\chi 2$ (719) = 1095.04, p-value = .001, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .0.88, TLI = .87, SRMR = .07. Particularly, the results are not very good for the CFI and the TLI as they are below the threshold of 0.90. However, the sample size to parameter ratio is not great in our study, which can explain our results (Kline, 2015).

5.3 Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, 3, and 4 were examined using multiple hierarchical regression, where CVs were added in the first step. Further, Hypothesis 1c was tested using a hierarchical regression with the bootstrap method. Lastly, the curvilinear relationship in Hypothesis 2b was tested using a hierarchical regression with centered and squared variables.

5.3.1 Social support hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a suggests that POS is positively related to thriving at work. This hypothesis was examined using a hierarchical regression analysis. As shown in Table 2.1, POS positively predicted thriving at work (β = .39, p = .001), and the CVs did not provide statistically significant contributions. Altogether, yielding support for Hypothesis 1a.

Table 2.1: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for POS

	Thriving at work	
	Step 1	Step 2
Model variable(s) entered	β	β
Age	-.18	-.19
Enrollment time	.15	.07
Tenure	-.05	.03
Merge impact	.30**	.11
POS		.39**
ΔR^2	.18**	.10**

POS: Perceived Organizational Support.

Except for the ΔR^2 row, entries are standardized regression coefficients.

Final model statistics: F (5, 80) = 6.38, p < .01, R^2 = .29

* p < .05, ** p < .01

Hypothesis 1b, which posits that PSS is positively related to thriving at work, was examined using a hierarchical regression analysis. Seen in Table 2.2, PSS also positively predicted thriving at work (β = .35, p = .001). The CV, merge impact, remains significant in Step 2, which will be discussed in a later chapter. Hypothesis 1b was also supported.

Table 2.2: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for PSS

	Thriving at work	
	Step 1	Step 2
Model variable(s) entered	β	β
Age	-.18	-.21
Enrollment time	.14	.14
Tenure	-.05	.09
Merge impact	-.21**	.20*
PSS		.35**
ΔR^2	.18**	.10**

PSS: Perceived Supervisor Support.

Except for the ΔR^2 row, entries are standardized regression coefficients.

Final model statistics: F (5, 81) = 6.30, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .28$

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Hypothesis 1c proposed that POS will mediate the positive relationship between PSS and thriving at work. We conducted hierarchical regression analyses using SPSS with the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) with a bootstrap method to test for the mediation. We entered thriving as the dependent variable, PSS as the predictor, POS as the mediator, and age, enrollment time, tenure, and merge impact as CVs. The bias-corrected confidence interval (CI), as obtained from 5000 bootstrap estimates, for the indirect effect excluded zero (.07, 95% CI = .003, .15), indicating a significant indirect effect. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is also supported.

5.3.2 Autonomy hypotheses

Hypothesis 2a suggests that autonomy is positively related to thriving at work and was examined using a hierarchical regression analysis. As can be seen from Table 3.1, autonomy positively predicted thriving at work ($\beta = .66$, $p = .001$), and the CVs did not provide statistically significant contributions. Consequently, Hypothesis 2a was supported.

Table 3.1: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Autonomy

	Thriving at work	
	Step 1	Step 2
Model variable(s)	β	β
Age	-.18	-.09
Enrollment time	.14	.12
Tenure	-.05	.01
Merge impact	.30**	.11
Autonomy		.66**
ΔR^2	.18**	.38**

Except for the **Δ**R² row, entries are standardized regression coefficients.

Final model statistics: F (5, 81) = 21.07, p < .01, R^2 = .57

* p < .05, ** p < .01

Further, Hypothesis 2b suggests a negative relation between autonomy and thriving at work when there is a very high level of autonomy (i.e., the positive relation should turn negative at very high levels of autonomy). This hypothesis proposed a curvilinear relationship between autonomy and thriving at work. In the hierarchical regression, we first included all the statistically relevant CVs, then added autonomy centered, and lastly, added the autonomy squared. As seen in Table 3.2, autonomy centered predicted thriving (β = 66, p = .001). However, beyond this, autonomy squared did not significantly predict thriving at work (β = -.02, p = .77). This suggests a linear relation rather than a curvilinear relation. Therefore, Hypothesis 2b is not supported.

Table 3.2: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the curvilinear relationship between Autonomy and Thriving at work

	Thriving at work		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Model variable(s) entered	β	β	β
Age	-.18	-.09	-.09
Enrollment time	.14	.12	.12
Tenure	-.05	.01	.02
Merge impact	.30**	.11	.11
Autonomy centered		.66**	.66**
Autonomy squared			-.02
ΔR^2	.18**	.38**	.00

Except for the **Δ**R² row, entries are standardized regression coefficients.

Final model statistics: F (6, 80) = 17.38, p < .01, R^2 = .57

* p < .05, ** p < .01

5.3.3 Feedback quality hypothesis

Hypothesis 3 proposes that feedback quality is positively related to thriving at work. This hypothesis was examined using a hierarchical regression analysis. As can be seen from Table 4, feedback quality positively predicted thriving at work (β = .44, p = .001). The CV, merge impact, remains significant in Step 2, which will be discussed in a later chapter. Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Table 4: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Feedback Quality

	Thriving at work	
	Step 1	Step 2
Model variable(s) entered	β	β
Age	-.18	-.17
Enrollment time	.14	.09
Tenure	-.05	.07
Merge impact	.30**	.21*
Feedback quality		.44**
ΔR^2	.18**	.15**

Except for the ΔR^2 row, entries are standardized regression coefficients.
Final model statistics: F (5, 81) = 8.29, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .34$
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

5.3.4 Quality of relationship with supervisor hypothesis

Lastly, Hypothesis 4, which proposes that LMX is positively related to thriving at work, was examined using a hierarchical regression analysis. As can be seen from Table 5, LMX positively predicted thriving at work (β = .45, p = .001). The CV, merge impact, remains significant in Step 2 and this will be discussed in a later chapter. Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 5: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for LMX

	Thriving at work	
	Step 1	Step 2
Model variable(s) entered	β	β
Age	-.18	-.18
Enrollment time	.12	.19
Tenure	-.05	.15
Merge impact	.30**	.24*
LMX		.45**
ΔR^2	.18**	.17**

LMX: Leader-Member Exchange

Except for the ΔR^2 row, entries are standardized regression coefficients.

Final model statistics: F (5, 77) = 8.33, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .35$

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

6. Discussion

Above, we have presented the results from the self-reported survey from 113 graduates where we investigate the relationship between thriving at work and the resources social support, autonomy, feedback quality, and quality of relationship with the supervisor. Based on predictions from COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the Socially Embedded Model of Thriving at Work (Spreitzer et al., 2005), this study found that the resources we investigated foster thriving.

For social support, POS and PSS were found to predict thriving at work, and it was also found that POS mediates the relationship between PSS and thriving at work. Further, autonomy was also found to positively predict thriving at work, but the proposed curvilinear relationship between autonomy and thriving at work was not supported. Further, both feedback quality and LMX were found to positively predict thriving at work.

The following chapter will discuss these findings and attempt to link and compare them with existing and previously presented theory and research.

6.1 Social support

All the social support hypotheses (Hypothesis 1a, 1b, and 1c) posits that graduates will thrive when they perceive the supervisor and organization to be supportive. It is noteworthy to state that we expected social support to predict thriving, as social support is a key element in onboarding processes and an essential resource in the COR and thriving literature (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Hobfoll, 1989; Spreitzer et al., 2005). By providing support for all these hypotheses, multiple interesting reflections arise.

Finding, in Hypothesis 1a, that POS is able to predict thriving at work is consistent with COR theory and previous research. Indeed, in the meta-analysis by Kleine and colleagues (2019), one of the strongest sample size-weighted and reliability-corrected correlation was found for thriving and perceived organizational support (rc = .63). The results indicate that the collaborative firm is able to value the contribution of their graduates while also caring about their well-being, which leads graduates to experience thriving at work. This result can be explained by the fact that the graduate program is initiated from the organization's core, not from particular departments or individuals. In this way, the organization can create a supportive environment for the graduates that permeates the whole organization. Moreover, the fact that the collaborative firm invests a lot of money and time in these graduates and encourages and expects them to be fully billable consultants after only three months, can also explain this result. Yet, the link between the organizational actions of this firm and the graduates' POS is not empirically investigated in this study and is, therefore, a direction for future research.

Additionally, finding that PSS predicts thriving at work in Hypothesis 1b is also in line with theory and previous research. The support for this hypothesis indicates that the supervisors in the collaborative firm are able to create supportive climates, where they, e.g., care for the graduates' well-being (Zhang et al., 2008, as cited in Paterson et al., 2014). This, according to Paterson et al. (2014), facilitates thriving at work. It is also likely that the graduate supervisor's role in the graduate program explains our findings to some degree. Indeed, it is the graduate supervisors' responsibility to execute the program, and they also play an essential role in the development and follow-up of the graduates during the program. In particular, the graduate supervisors are expected to set goals for the graduate and schedule one-to-ones for ensuring progress (see Appendix 6.0).

However, it is interesting that we find that PSS is able to predict thriving at work, considering that internal evaluations found that approximately 50 % of graduates have not had one-to-ones with their graduate supervisors to follow-up their progress and issues they may encounter (see Appendix 6.0). This raises an interesting question regarding the importance of one-to-ones for fostering thriving at work. At the same time, it also indicates that the collaborative firm is able to ensure PSS through other means, e.g., through daily interactions and communication, instead of scheduled one-to-ones. Hence, the various manifestations of PSS and how employees interpret them should be further explored in future research.

Further, the fact that our results show that POS mediates the relationship between PSS and thriving in Hypothesis 1c indicates that when the graduates have an initial resource investment (high PSS), it leads to the acquiring of a new resource (high POS), meaning they enter a resource gain spiral (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This is a spiral where the graduates perceive that they are provided with social support from a supervisor, which, in turn, leads the graduates to perceive that the organization is providing support. According to Rhoades and Eienberger (2002), this resource gain spiral will lead to better work mood and less strain symptoms (as cited in Kleine et al. 2019). These findings again stress the important role that the graduate supervisor plays both for fostering thriving at work among the graduates and showing how important they are for the organization as a whole.

Despite these findings, it would be interesting to investigate social support from a resource loss perspective (Hobfoll, 1989). For instance, one direction for future research could be to investigate how abusive supervision, non-supportive environment, and lack of social support in an organization relate to thriving at work, similar to the work of Usman et al. (2021) and Abid et al. (2015).

6.2 Autonomy

The autonomy hypotheses postulate two different things. The first (Hypothesis 2a) suggests that autonomy will lead to thriving at work, while the last (Hypothesis 2b) suggests that at low to moderate levels of autonomy, the relation between autonomy and thriving will be positive, while at very high levels of autonomy, the relation between autonomy and thriving will turn negative. Only Hypothesis 2a was supported. The results of these hypotheses provide grounds for discussion.

Finding that Hypothesis 2a was provided support is consistent with prior research on both thriving at work and the theory from COR. Particularly, it is consistent with research from Li et al. (2016), where they found that employees with high autonomy thrived at work to a higher degree. It also aligns with Hobfoll’s (1989) research that found that autonomy is a central resource that enables individuals to enter a resource gain spiral. It is fascinating that autonomy fosters thriving to this degree in an onboarding process, as Klein and colleagues (2015) argue that this is a process that aims to reduce the uncertainty and anxiety that newcomers experience and help them make sense of their new environment. The support for this hypothesis could potentially be explained by one thing in particular: the graduate program structure. As mentioned, 70% of the graduate program is learning from experience, where the graduates are expected to be autonomous in projects they work on, which according to Spreitzer and Porath (2014), requires less inhibition, creates less conflict, and thus, is energizing. Although not empirically tested in this study, there are interesting angels of potential reasoning why Hypothesis 2a is supported. For instance, personal characteristics could potentially explain the relationship between autonomy and thriving at work. From COR theory, personal characteristics are considered resources in as much as they aid in dealing with stress, like personal conscientiousness (Hobfoll, 1989, as cited in Alarcon et al., 2011). Indeed, it is likely that our results could be explained by individuals' scores on personality traits such as extroversion, optimism, self-efficacy, and confidence. Additionally, the culture in the IT sector could also explain some of the results, as this is a sector with rapid changes. Hence, a direction for future research is to take a multi-faceted approach to thriving at work during an onboarding process.

Further, we assumed in Hypothesis 2b, due to the uncertainty newcomers may experience during an onboarding process, that at low to moderate levels of autonomy, the relation between autonomy and thriving would be positive, whereas at very high levels of autonomy, the relation between autonomy and thriving would turn negative. Not finding support for this hypothesis challenges the idea that autonomy has adverse outcomes after context-specific points. Consequently, this finding is inconsistent with what Pierce and Aguinis (2013) called the Too-Much-of-a-Good-Thing (TMGT) effect. Seeing that this hypothesis was not supported challenges the criticism raised by Halbesleben et al. (2014), where they imply that a resource also *can* lead to a negative outcome. Our finding is inconsistent with this assumption, as we find that autonomy only implies a positive outcome.

The fact that autonomy did not have a curvilinear relationship with thriving at work can potentially be explained by the likelihood that the graduates feel safe to be autonomous at work. As Kahn (1990) argues, one of the essential implications of supervisors creating a supportive environment is that employees are not afraid to take risks or even fail because they are confident their supervisor will support them. However, the presence of a supportive environment is not empirically tested in our study. Thus, it could be interesting to investigate the presence of trust, supportive environment, and risk-taking behavior with autonomy and thriving at work in future research.

6.3 Feedback quality

Hypothesis 3 suggested that feedback quality is positively related to thriving at work. This means that when a graduate receives high-quality feedback that is, e.g., uplifting, and helpful (Frase, 1992), they have a greater likelihood to thrive at work. The support for this hypothesis provides us with multiple interesting elements to discuss.

Seeing that feedback quality had a strong effect on thriving at work was interesting but not surprising as feedback quality has been found to influence employee performance in a positive and consistent manner (Whitaker & Levy, 2012). Despite our findings, feedback quality as a resource that fosters thriving has not been researched to a large extent in neither the COR nor thriving literature. Indeed, Spreitzer and colleagues (2005) include feedback in their reasoning and literature, but they do not view feedback as a resource that fosters thriving at work in their model. Also, in the meta-analysis by Kleine and colleagues (2019), they do not include feedback as an important driver for thriving; instead, they include feedback seeking as a part of their synthetic concept of "positive attitudes towards self-development." Therefore, our findings correspond with theories and research of more broad feedback literature (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It also adds value beyond what the COR and thriving literature has emphasized previously. As neither of the theoretical frameworks highlights feedback quality as a concrete resource, one could argue that feedback quality should be accentuated as a key resource in the COR literature and as a primary predictor of thriving at work in the thriving literature.

Additionally, as feedback is a large research field (Mulder & Ellinger, 2013) and our study only included feedback quality as a study variable, a direction for future research is to investigate how different aspects of feedback predict thriving at work. For instance, Mulder and Ellinger (2013) point to how feedback can come from various sources, including colleagues, managers, supervisors, customers, patients, etc. Hence, one direction for future research is to investigate multiple aspects of feedback. Particularly, one could investigate how feedback-seeking behavior from the employee affects thriving at work. One could also look at positive and negative feedback given from a supervisor and look at how feedback from multiple different sources (e.g., colleagues or subordinates) predicts thriving at work.

Another future research angle could be to investigate feedback together with personal characteristics. As mentioned, goal orientation, need for approval, and self-monitoring are personal characteristics of the receiver that have been found to have a strong effect on whether a person asks for feedback from others (Krasman, 2010). Also, Hobfoll's (1989) research emphasizes how personal characteristics, as one of the four main types of resources, may anticipate optimal functioning, and consequently foster thriving at work. Therefore, one direction for future research is to investigate how personal characteristics of the receiver can moderate or mediate the relationship between feedback and thriving at work.

Lastly, it is noteworthy to mention that Mulder and Ellinger (2013) emphasize that feedback has a longitudinal nature because it is often received more than once. Considering that we only investigate feedback quality with a cross-sectional approach, a direction for future research is to consider feedback longitudinally and as a dynamic process as Shute (2008), Kahmann (2009), and Gabelica et al. (2012) suggests (as cited in Mulder & Ellinger, 2013).

6.4 Quality of relationship with supervisor

Our hypothesis on quality relationship with supervisor (Hypothesis 4) posits that LMX is positively related to thriving at work. Again, as this hypothesis is provided support, there are multiple potential reasonings for this worth discussing.

As with PSS, we predicted that LMX would foster thriving at work among the graduates based on the graduate supervisors' important role in the graduate program. The support for our hypothesis aligns with the theory of thriving at work, where relational resources are included as an important factor that fosters thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005). It also aligns with previous research from Kleine et al. (2019), in which they found that LMX was strongly associated (reliability-corrected correlations of .61) with thriving at work. Thus, both previous and our research suggest that leaders should deliberately establish a mutual connection between the leader and follower as it can foster thriving at work (Spreitzer et al., 2005).

As the COR theory emphasizes that the supervisor-subordinate relationship acts as a prime source of support from which resources are accumulated, replenished, and protected (Halbesleben, 2006, as cited in Harris et al., 2011), it indicates that high LMX scores can lead individuals to enter a resource gain spiral. Due to this, it is a little alarming that graduates reported their leaders not to pay attention to scheduling one-to-ones (see Appendix 6.0), seeing that LMX can facilitate other resources to occur. Hence, it could be interesting to investigate the importance of one-to-ones on LMX regarding graduates and onboarding processes. Moreover, this is a potential direction for future research.

In addition, and as previously mentioned, the LMX measure is complex and consists of a wide variety of items. This made the measure very similar to both PSS and feedback quality and made us unable to use the LMX measure in analyses with these two measures. Despite the complexity of LMX and the issues that it raises, our hypothesis was supported, and we found strong and positive relationships to thriving at work. Still, for future research, a direction would be to include either PSS or LMX, and not both.

6.5 Supplementary discussion: Impact of control variables

In addition to our main study goal and hypotheses, some other interesting results appeared in the analysis, which we find interesting to discuss.

As previously mentioned, our initial thought when investigating the collaborative firm was that the control variables “merge impact” and “Covid-19 impact” somehow would influence the results. Our decision to include these two variables is based on Saunders et al. (2019), who states that variables must be included to avoid influence on the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. After conducting hierarchical regression analyses to test our hypotheses, the results show that only merge impact had a positive and significant impact. Particularly, we saw that merge impact positively influenced the relationship between thriving at work and the study variables PSS, Feedback quality, and LMX, respectively. Indeed, it predicted some variance in thriving when considering these variables.

More specifically, the sign of the coefficient suggests that the more positively the employees experienced the merge, the more they thrived at work. On the one hand, our findings are inconsistent with previous research that found sufficient evidence of increased turnover and other difficulties such as lack of engagement following a merger (Krug & Hegarty, 1997; Krug & Nigh, 2001; Zhu & Zhu, 2016, as cited in Ng et al., 2019). On the other hand, our findings are consistent with research by Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006), where they found that organizational socialization (here: graduate program) is able to make employees better equipped and more receptive towards rapid workplace interventions and changes (here: merge). Thus, it is likely to believe that the graduate program facilitates the graduates to be better equipped to face a merger, which again, according to our findings, leads to more thriving at work.

Nevertheless, we should emphasize that we did not have insight in data about turnover and turnover intention (e.g., leaving the company due to a very negative merge impact) from previous graduates in the collaborative firm. Considering the findings from Ng and colleagues (2019) that suggest, e.g., increased turnover after a merger, a direction for future research is to investigate the relationship between merge impact and turnover intention of previous graduates.

6.6 Practical implications

Based on the discussion above, our findings suggest that organizational leaders and supervisors should be aware of the positive outcomes of thriving at work. Most importantly, they should be aware of how the different resources foster thriving at work among their employees.

Organizations that employ young graduates should pay particular attention to ensuring that the procedures in their graduate program are supporting social support, autonomy, feedback quality, and high-quality relationships. This can be deliberately done in a variety of ways. Particularly, autonomy can be supported by, e.g., creating a program that facilitates learning by doing where both the organization and the supervisors communicate this onward to the graduates. Ensuring social support from the organization and the supervisor can be done by, e.g., caring, understanding, and showing support beyond the work context. To ensure that the supervisors provide high-quality feedback and create high-quality connections, the organization can, e.g., provide training or development programs. In these programs, the supervisors can be trained to give feedback and create high-quality connections with their subordinates.

Regarding practical implications for the collaborative firm, we noticed some potential areas for improvement. As mentioned, internal investigation of the collaborative firm highlights that they have some internal issues (e.g., 50% of the graduates had not scheduled one-to-one meetings, and supervisors are thought not to be well-prepared, etc.) (Appendix 6.0). Yet, our findings on PSS indicate that supervisors are able to foster thriving at work among their graduates. Consequently, if implementing the practices mentioned above, it is likely that the graduate supervisor would reduce the uncertainty that the graduates may feel, help them make sense of their new environment, and ensure that they are provided with necessary resources. With this, they can become well-functioning and influential organization members (Klein et al., 2015). Also, suppose that the collaborative firm manages to encourage and give the graduate supervisors tools to focus on fostering resources that promote thriving at work. In that case, the supervisors can work autonomously on cultivating these particular resources emphasized in this paper among their graduates.

6.7 Strength, limitations, and directions for future research

To further enlighten the reader of the context of our study, we will now discuss the most important strengths and limitations of the processes and procedures used.

6.7.1 Strengths

One of the main strengths of our study comes from the relatively high internal consistency reliability of the well-known and widely recognized measures adopted from previous research. Thus, the high validity and reliability of the measures strengthen our study.

Despite our relatively small sample of 113 graduates, it is, in fact, encompassing 38,3% of the population of Scandinavian graduates in the company (295 graduates). Additionally, the fact that we were able to get statistically significant results with our small sample size makes our research quite conservative. Thus, our sample could arguably be highly representative of the population, making our significant findings strong.

It is also a strength that our study only encompasses graduates in the IT-industry, a group of workers with arguably unique work characteristics, e.g., our study shows that the majority have a high education level (60,5% have completed a master’s degree, SD = .55) and relatively little work experience (mean of 1,96 years, SD = 1.95). Arguably, this enables our data to be more specific and valid for this group of people in this particular industry. Yet, there is a limitation with generalizability that will be discussed later.

6.7.2 Limitations and directions for future research

As all measures relied on self-reports, and our research method was limited in using single-source data (i.e., responses from employees), it may raise issues about common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Particularly, Burke et al. (1993, p. 410) argue that “self-reports of negative features of the work situation and negative affective reactions may both be influenced by negative affectivity, whereas self-reports of positive aspects of the work situation and positive affective reactions may both be influenced by positive affectivity” (as cited in

Podsakoff et al., 2003). Hence, other sampling techniques should be employed for a better understanding of the results.

Although our sample size produced statistically significant results, it is noteworthy to mention that a sample size of 113 would provide some issues with the generalization of the findings. Notably, our small sample size was evident when conducting the CFA as this is an analysis that is very sensitive to sample size (Kline, 2015), causing less than acceptable model fit. Also, with our small sample size, generalizability is unclear. A direction for future research is, thus, to explore if our findings can hold in other organizations, industries, countries, cultures, or situations by examining the effects in a broader sample.

It is also important to mention that our sample consists of four different cohorts with different enrollment times, supervisors, and slightly different graduate programs. It would have been preferred to have a sample with graduates enrolled in the same period, with the same supervisors, and the exact same program. Yet, this was not practically possible. Therefore, a direction for future research is to aim for a sample with newcomers that all have the same occupational conditions.

After noticing that enrollment time significantly impacted thriving, we included it as a potential control variable. Still, the results showed no impact between the main study variables. However, a direction for future research is to explore larger groups of graduates from previous years and dive deeper into the variety of the programs to see how the results are impacted by enrollment time.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the autonomy scale was not without flaws. In fact, the EFA showed that the autonomy scale loaded on five different factors, making it challenging to identify the underlying structure of, and the relationship between, the autonomy variables. Hence, future research should use more items that capture autonomy or develop a more precise autonomy scale.

Additionally, the time frame of the thesis made our study limited to a cross-sectional approach. A cross-sectional approach has some limitations, such as common method variance (CMV) and causal inference (CI) (Rindfleisch et al., 2008, p. 261). Although a cross-sectional approach was sufficient for our research project, a longitudinal could provide more valuable data, both for research and business-related purposes.

A longitudinal approach would be specifically valuable for investigating the CV merge impact, as it showed a significant effect on several of our variables.

This approach could have provided our study with valuable data if we researched before and after the merge. Yet, this was not possible for us due to the starting point and timeframe of this thesis. Thus, a direction for future research is to investigate the onboarding of employees before and after the process of a merger and investigate how they thrive at work.

It is also noteworthy to mention that we only included one for the four main types of resources of Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory. Hence, if including all the four types of resources (object, personal characteristics, conditions, and energies), our study could get a broader understanding of how these different types of resources foster thriving at work among the graduates. Therefore, a direction for future research could be too, e.g., include personality, in the same way as Nawaz and colleagues (2020) recently have done.

Lastly, due to the scope and timeframe of this thesis, we analyzed the relationship between the resources and thriving at work in separate analyses. In this way, we were able to clearly see how each variable predicted thriving at work but could not see which of the resources that were the strongest predictor of thriving at work. Thus, one direction for future research is to examine the resources we investigated together (i.e., in the same analysis) to find out which ones most strongly predict thriving at work.

7. Conclusion

Our study strengthens previous literature and research that emphasizes how resources can foster thriving at work. Particularly, this study highlights the importance of the resources: Social support, Autonomy, Feedback quality, and Quality of relationship with the supervisor for fostering thriving at work among graduates.

Referring to our study goal, “Which resources foster thriving at work, and in what ways do these resources affect thriving?”, all the resources investigated had the ability to predict thriving at work positively. We also found that Perceived Organizational Support mediated the relationship between Perceived Supervisor Support and thriving at work, indicating that perceived support from supervisors also leads to perceived support from the organization. Yet, we did not find support for the idea that very high levels of autonomy will turn the relation between autonomy and thriving negative.

Our findings implicate that organizations should deliberately create organizational socialization programs that emphasize the importance of providing autonomy and social support while creating high-quality relationships and providing the newcomers with high-quality feedback. With this, organizations may arguably benefit from reassessing their current graduate or onboarding program to focus on these resources to promote thriving among their newcomers.

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9. Appendix

Appendix 1.0: Participant information sheet

Hi,

Our names are Sigrid Buch and Nora Birkelund, and we are two master-students in the Leadership and Organizational Psychology program at BI Oslo.

Currently, we are writing our thesis on thriving among young professionals. The goal of our research is to examine the relation between resources and thriving. Your response is highly valuable to us and will help us contribute to the growing field of research on thriving.

The survey will take approximately **10 minutes** to complete, and your participation is completely **voluntary**. Your answers will be strictly confidential in accordance with the privacy regulations, and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain anonymous. After the project is completed on the 1st of July, your information will be deleted.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this survey. However, you can withdraw from the survey at any point if you feel uncomfortable answering any of these questions. If you choose to withdraw, please contact us and all your data and answers will be deleted.

If you have any questions about the survey or procedure, you may contact Sigrid (sigridbuch16@gmail.com), Nora (n_birkelund@hotmail.com), our supervisor Emilie Lapointe (emilie.lapointe@bi.no) or our institution (personvernombud@bi.no) at any time.

Please indicate if you agree with the following:

1. I have read and understood the information about the project, and I have gotten the opportunity to ask questions
2. I agree that my answers will be used in this master thesis

We thank you very much for your time and effort.

You can now start the survey.

Appendix 2.0: Survey

Control variables:

Age

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other

Which country do you work in?

- Norway
- Sweden
- Finland

When were you enrolled in the graduate program

- Fall 2018
- Fall 2019
- Fall 2020
- Spring 2021

Display This Question:
If When were you enrolled in the graduate program Fall 2018 Is Selected
Or When were you enrolled in the graduate program Fall 2019 Is Selected

Which one of the following applies to you?

- Ex EVRY
- Ex Tieto

Education level

- Below bachelor level
- Bachelor level (3 years)
- Master level (5 years)
- Above master level

Number of years (full-time) in the job market

How did the merge between Tieto and EVRY impact you?

- Extremely negative
- Somewhat negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat positive
- Extremely positive

How did the COVID-19 situation impact you?

- Extremely negative
- Somewhat negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat positive
- Extremely positive

Thriving (learning):

The following items are about your personal learning and development at work. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither agree nor disagree	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. At work, I find myself learning often					
2. At work, I continue to learn more as time goes by					
3. At work, I see myself continually improving					
4. At work, I am not learning					
5. At work, I am developing a lot as a person					

Autonomy:

The following items are about your ability to be independent in your work. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither agree nor disagree	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. At work, I often feel like I have to follow other people's commands	○	○	○	○	○
2. If I could choose, I would do things at work differently	○	○	○	○	○
3. The tasks I have to do at work is in line with what I really want to do	○	○	○	○	○
4. I feel like I can be myself at my job	○	○	○	○	○
5. I feel free to do my job the way I think it could best be done	○	○	○	○	○
6. In my job, I feel forced to do things that I would not do	○	○	○	○	○

Perceived supervisor support:

The following items are about how considerate your supervisor is of your needs. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither agree nor disagree	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. My supervisor really cares about my well-being	○	○	○	○	○
2. My supervisor is willing to extend him- or herself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability	○	○	○	○	○
3. My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishments at work	○	○	○	○	○
4. My supervisor cares about my general satisfaction at work	○	○	○	○	○
5. My supervisor cares about my opinions	○	○	○	○	○
6. My supervisor shows very little concern for me	○	○	○	○	○

Feedback quality:

The following items are about the feedback you receive from your supervisor and how useful you think it is. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither agree nor disagree	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. My supervisor gives me useful feedback about my job performance	○	○	○	○	○
2. The performance feedback I receive from my supervisor is helpful	○	○	○	○	○
3. I value the feedback I receive from my supervisor	○	○	○	○	○
4. The feedback I receive from my supervisor helps me do my job	○	○	○	○	○
5. The performance information I receive from my supervisor is generally not very meaningful	○	○	○	○	○

Thriving (vitality):

The following items are about the energy you feel when you are at work. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither agree nor disagree	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. At work, I feel alive and vital	○	○	○	○	○
2. At work, I have energy and spirit	○	○	○	○	○
3. At work, I do not feel very energetic	○	○	○	○	○
4. At work, I feel alert and awake	○	○	○	○	○
5. At work, I am looking forward to each new day	○	○	○	○	○

Perceived organizational support:

The following items are about how attentive your organization is of your needs. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither agree nor disagree	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. The organization really cares about my well-being	○	○	○	○	○
2. The organization is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability	○	○	○	○	○
3. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work	○	○	○	○	○
4. The organizations cares about my general satisfaction at work	○	○	○	○	○
5. The organization cares about my opinions	○	○	○	○	○
6. The organization shows very little concern for me	○	○	○	○	○

LMX:

The following items are about the relationship between you and your supervisor. Please answer the following questions by using the scales provided.

Do you usually know how satisfied your supervisor is with what you do?

- ○ (1) Rarely
- ○ (2) Occasionally
- ○ (3) Sometimes
- ○ (4) Fairly often
- ○ (5) Very often

How well does your supervisor understand your problems and needs?

- ○ (1) Not a bit
- ○ (2) A little
- ○ (3) A fair amount
- ○ (4) Quite a bit
- ○ (5) A great deal

How well does your supervisor recognize your potential?

- ○ (1) Not at all
- ○ (2) A little
- ○ (3) Moderately
- ○ (4) Mostly
- ○ (5) Fully

Regardless of how much formal authority your supervisor has built into their position, what are the chances that your supervisor would use their power to help you solve problems in your work?

- (1) None
- (2) Small
- (3) Moderate
- (4) High
- (5) Very high

Regardless of the amount of formal authority your supervisor has, what are the chances that they would "bail you out" at their expense?

- (1) None
- (2) Small
- (3) Moderate
- (4) High
- (5) Very high

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: "How I have enough confidence in my supervisor, that I would defend and justify his or her decision if they were not present to do so"

- (1) Strongly disagree
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Neither disagree nor agree
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly agree

How would you characterize your working relationship with your supervisor?

- (1) Extremely ineffective
- (2) Worse than average
- (3) Average
- (4) Better than average
- (5) Extremely effective

Appendix 3.0: NSD Approval

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Masteroppgave om thriving among graduates in their first job

Referansenummer

799148

Registrert

29.12.2020 av Nora Birkelund - birkelund.n@gmail.com

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Handelshøyskolen BI / BI Oslo / Institutt for ledelse og organisasjon

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Émilie Lapointe, emilie.lapointe@bi.no, tlf: 46410686

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Nora Birkelund, n_birkelund@hotmail.com, tlf: 47391969

Prosjektperiode

01.01.2021 - 01.07.2021

Status

29.03.2021 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

29.03.2021 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen, så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet den 29.03.2021 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:

https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET
Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige personopplysninger, særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om helseopplysninger frem til 01.07.2021.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

For alminnelige personopplysninger vil lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 a.

For særlige kategorier av personopplysninger vil lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER
NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen:

om lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål
dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet.

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER
NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18) og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Qualtrics er databehandler i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må prosjektansvarlig følge interne retningslinjer/rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Henrik Netland Svensen
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

Appendix 4.0: Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation

Items	PSS	POS	Vitality	Learning	Feedback quality	--	LMX	--
At work, I find myself learning often				.81				
At work, I continue to learn more as time goes by				.84				
At work, I see myself continually improving				.73				
At work, I am not learning (r)				.74				
At work, I am developing a lot as a person			.45					
At work, I feel alive and vital			.72					
At work, I have energy and spirit			.78					
At work, I do not feel very energetic (r)			.73					
At work, I feel alert and awake			.58					
At work, I am looking forward to each new day			.60					
At work, I often feel like I have to follow other people's commands (r)								.86
If I could choose, I would do things at work differently (r)		.36						
The tasks I have to do at work is in line with what I really want to do			.51					
I feel like I can be myself at my job			.64					
I feel free to do my job the way I think it could best be done						.37		
In my job, I feel forced to do things that I would not do (r)				.53				
The organization really cares about my well-being		.84						
The organization is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability		.88						
The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work		.57						
The organizations cares about my general satisfaction at work		.90						
The organization cares about my opinions		.88						
The organization shows very little concern for me (r)		.79						
My supervisor really cares about my well-being	.76							
My supervisor is willing to extend him- or herself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability	.69							
My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishments at work	.62							
My supervisor cares about my general satisfaction at work	.76							
My supervisor cares about my opinions	.74							
My supervisor shows very little concern for me (r)	.68							
My supervisor gives me useful feedback about my job performance					.59			
The performance feedback I receive from my supervisor is helpful					.69			
I value the feedback I receive from my supervisor					.70			
The feedback I receive from my supervisor helps me do my job					.73			
The performance information I receive from my supervisor is generally not very meaningful (r)					.80			
Do you usually know how satisfied your supervisor is with what you do?						.77		
How well does your supervisor understand your problems and needs?	.55							
How well does your supervisor recognize your potential?							.40	
Regardless of how much formal authority your supervisor has built into their position, what are the chances that your supervisor would use their power to help you solve problems in your work?							.46	
Regardless of the amount of formal authority your supervisor has, what are the chances that they would "bail you out" at their expense?							.75	
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: "How I have enough confidence in my supervisor, that I would defend and justify his or her decision if they were not present to do so"							.53	
How would you characterize your working relationship with your supervisor?	.72							

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a Rotation converged in 13 iterations.
(r) = reversed items

Factor loadings less than 0.35 are not shown

Appendix 5.0: COR Resources

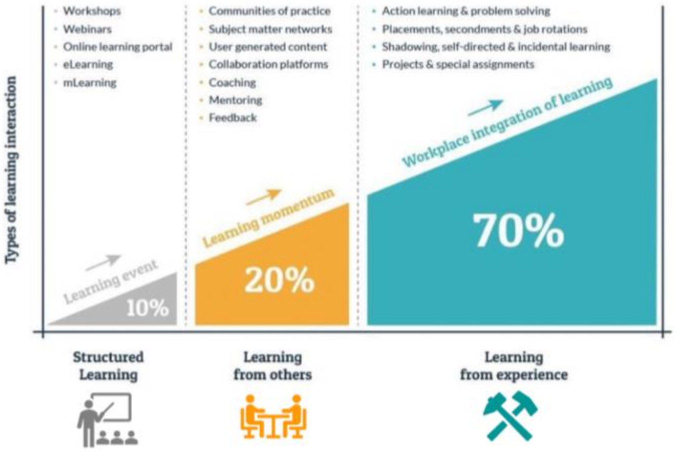
TABLE 1
COR Resources

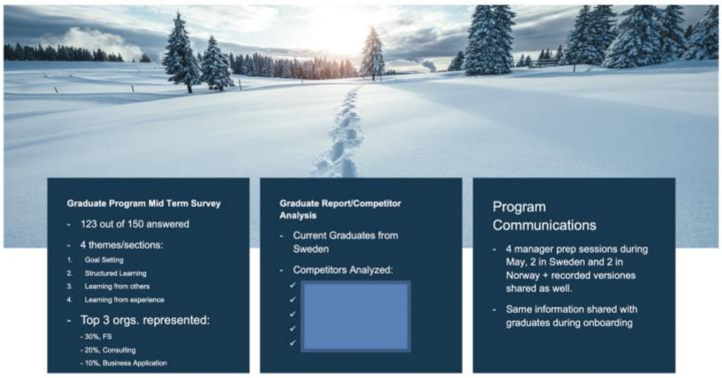
Personal transportation (car, truck, etc.)	Adequate food	Adequate financial credit
Feeling that I am successful	Larger home than I need*	Feeling independent
Time for adequate sleep	Sense of humor	Companionship
Good marriage	Stable employment	Financial assets (stocks, property, etc.)
Adequate clothing	Intimacy with spouse or partner	Knowing where I am going with my life
Feeling valuable to others	Adequate home furnishings	Affection from others
Family stability	Feeling that I have control over my life	Financial stability
Free time	Role as a leader	Feeling that my life has meaning/purpose
More clothing than I need*	Ability to communicate well	Positive feeling about myself
Sense of pride in myself	Providing children's essentials	People I can learn from
Intimacy with one or more family members	Feeling that my life is peaceful	Money for transportation
Time for work	Acknowledgment of my accomplishments	Help with tasks at work
Feelings that I am accomplishing my goals	Ability to organise tasks	Medical insurance
Good relationship with my children	Extras for children	Involvement with church, synagogue, etc.
Time with loved ones	Sense of commitment	Retirement security (financial)
Necessary tools for work	Intimacy with at least one friend	Help with tasks at home
Hope	Money for extras	Loyalty of friends
Children's health	Self-discipline	Money for advancement or self-improvement (education, starting a business)
Stamina/endurance	Understanding from my employer/boss	Help with child care
Necessary home appliances	Savings or emergency money	Involvement in organisations with others who have similar interests
Feeling that my future success depends on me	Motivation to get things done	Financial help if needed
Positively challenging routine	Spouse/partner's health	Health of family/close friends
Personal health	Support from co-workers	
Housing that suits my needs	Adequate income	
Sense of optimism	Feeling that I know who I am	
Status/seniority at work	Advancement in education or job training	

Note: * Although luxury resources, groups repeatedly admitted investing more in these two luxury resources than other resources they deemed more important.
From S.E. Hobfoll (1998).

From Hobfoll, S. E. (2001). The Influence of Culture, Community, and the Nested-Self in the Stress Process: Advancing Conservation of Resources Theory. *Applied Psychology*, *50*(3), 337–421.

Appendix 6.0: Materials from the firm



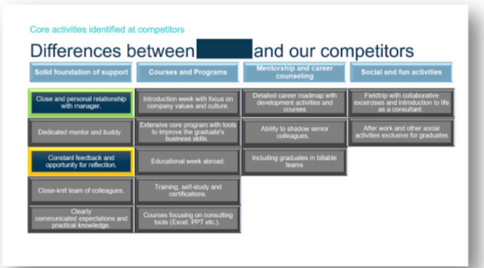


Learning from others – Manager Coaching

50 % of graduates have not had scheduled one-to-one sessions with their manager.

65 % of graduates that did have scheduled coaching from their manager found it *valuable* or *very valuable*.

25 % of graduates were indifferent.



Conclusion

The current program framework corresponds well with external competitor comparisons. However the actual graduate experience doesn't match this. Why?

Goalsetting is key and the reason why some graduates feel frustrated, both fram a development and performance perspective. A well executed goalsetting procedure adds clarity and sets expecations, which is a central theme in graduate feedback. **Coaching and goal follow-up** is the next central theme. Roughly 50% of graduates haven't had scheduled one-to-ones, even though this have been clearly communicated by the program. In general, some managers are not well prepared for welcoming a graduate.

The question is. How can the program framework/expectations be emphasized/integrated even more?
- Tougher requirements for even starting a graduate recruitment
- Manager goals?
- Other manager incentives?
- Extended manager trainings?