Age and work motivation:
The view of older employees’

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Abstract

The study of work motivation has yielded many applicable theories. This thesis investigated how older employees viewed factors that have been linked to the advancement of age and believed to affect work motivation. Three different conceptualisations of age were included in the study; organisational age, chronological age and life stage. By using a qualitative approach, participants were allowed to shed light on this complex area and give their own views on possible age effects. More specifically, changes in needs and values, the effects on goal setting and the development of skills were investigated. Chronologically younger employees placed greater value in their careers and reported that they would continue to work even if they became financially independent. Older employees attributed less importance to their careers and said that they would choose early retirement in order to have more time if they had money to enjoy it.

Key words: Organisational psychology, work motivation, organisational age, chronological age, life stage
Svensk titel: Ålder och arbetsmotivation: Arbetarnas syn

Sammanfattning

Studier inom arbetsmotivation har resulterat i många relevanta teorier. Den här uppsatsen undersökte hur äldre arbetare såg på faktorer som har länkats till framskridande ålder och som antas ha en påverkan på motivationen att jobba. Tre olika konceptualiseringar av ålder har använts; organisationsålder, kronologisk ålder och livs stadium. Genom en kvalitativ metod har deltagarna i studien fått belysa detta komplexa område och ge sin egen syn på möjliga ålderseffekter. Mer specifikt undersöktes förändringar i behov och värderingar, effekter på målsättning och utvecklingen av kunskaper. Kronologiskt yngre medarbetare applicerade större värde i deras karriär och rapporterade att de skulle fortsätta att arbeta om de blev finansiellt oberoende. Äldre medarbetare värderade karriären mindre och sa att de skulle välja tidig pensionering för att få mer fritid om de hade tillräckligt med pengar för att kunna njuta av det.

Nyckelord: Organisationspsykologi, arbetsmotivation, organisationsålder, kronologisk ålder, livs stadium
Preface

I would like to thank the company that co-operated in the execution of this study and all the employees who agreed to participate and contributed with long interesting discussions about their work day and personal lives. Several other stakeholders have contributed to this thesis with their support and feedback. A special “thank you” is directed towards instructor Eva Boman who has done a fantastic job, delivering excellent critique on small issues as well as fundamental considerations.

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1. Introduction

As the demographics of Western Europe and North America change, people will be expected to work until an older age. The economics suggest that there will be challenges where fewer employees will be forced to provide for a large group of retired workers which will have serious economic and social consequences. A new balance where fewer workers are supporting a larger group of non-workers may result in decreased national savings and investments. In addition, public expenditure on pensions, health- and long-term care will increase. The consequence of this will be diminished economic growth and a deteriorated standard of living. A reduced workforce implies a shortage of skilled and knowledgeable employees. This reality has inspired a new interest for society to understand how to motivate an aging work force (e.g. Kooij, Jansen, de Lange & Dikkers, in press; Latham, 2006).

During the early years of the 21st century the world could see the IT bubble burst on stock markets around the world. The era left a legacy that is shared in organisations today, the notion of the employee as the most important and valuable asset. As the industry has changed its nature from focusing on machinery, to how people operate machinery to the people itself, motivational theories have changed perspective in order to answer the questions of the relevant time periods (Latham, 2006). Now that employees are deemed to be valuable, companies want to keep their employees productive just as they wanted to keep industry plants productive 100 years ago. Successful organisations maintain a high productivity of capital. Knowledge based companies do it by productive employees which is why motivating older workers has economic incentives (Lord & Farrington, 2006). The obvious conclusion is that organisations place great value in the employees and their experience and knowledge. Retaining and motivating experienced employees will therefore be considered an act of value creation. Kauffman wrote already in 1987 that motivating older employees will be a key to the successful performance of any business. She referred to the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging which published “Aging and the Work Force: Human Resource Strategies” in August 1982. The report allegedly encourages human resource departments to educate themselves and managers on age related factors and to create tailored HR strategies for older employees. Kauffman (1987) also suggests that phased retirement could be of benefit to the employee and the organisation. The successor can learn on the job and have a smoother introduction period while the retiring employee will get used to a lower income, more free time and a less structured day.
The field of work motivation has inspired scientists around the world to produce a large amount of research. A review of some of the more renowned scientists (e.g. Bandura, Deci, Latham, Locke & Vroom) provides an exhaustive amount of theories in the area of work motivation. The nature of work motivation and how it will change over time are often implicit assumptions in the models. Latham (2006) implies that age and tenure are factors that have an effect on work motivation. Empirical research regarding motivational theories has mostly been based on young people and the factor age has often played a minor role or the role of confounder in these studies (Latham & Steele, 1983; Locke & Latham, 2002). Studies that identify age as an independent variable usually don’t use the framework provided by the established motivational theories (see e.g. Eskildsen, Kristensen & Westlund, 2004; Lord & Farrington, 2006).

In a meta-analysis, Kooij et al. (in press) found that most age related factors have a negative impact on the motivation to work. Furthermore, they conclude that more research is needed on the subject. McCain, O'Reilly, and Pfeffer (1983) and Rhodes (1983) showed that employees with a relative old age or relative longer tenure have a higher propensity to leave an organization. One study conducted in the UK on a random sample of more than 5,000 employees (Clark, Oswald & Warr, 1996) found the relationship between age and work satisfaction to be u-shaped with higher levels of satisfaction among young and old employees. However, Eskildsen et al. (2003) found a positive linear relationship between age and work motivation as well as between age and work satisfaction in the Nordic countries. These studies don’t link the findings to existing theories on work motivation. Instead, the results are explained in an isolated age framework. An example could be that older people have found their preferred career path and therefore are more motivated to work (Noe, Noe & Bachhuber, 1990). Alternatively, that older people see an end to their career and therefore are less motivated to work (Hansson, DeKoekkoek, Neece, & Patterson, 1997). In short, empirical findings are not consistent as to how age factors affect work motivation. In addition, it’s unclear as to what effect age has on the applicability of traditional work motivation theories constructed in the second half of the 20th century.

1.2 Definitions of motivation and age

In its most basic meaning, motivation conveys the determination to perform an act. Furthermore, a motivated person can also be passionate, committed or satisfied with his intended actions. This study used the definition of work motivation as “the intention to
(continue to) work” (Kooij et al., in press). This definition covers the basic understanding of motivation while it also leaves itself open for the more nuanced implications of motivation.

Age can be conceptualised in different ways. Perhaps the most common measure is people’s chronological age, where old in reference to work is usually considered to be the age of 40-50 years old and onwards (Kooij et al., in press). Another definition was proposed by Sterns and Miklos (1995) arguing that aging refers to changes that occur in biological, psychological and social functioning through time and affects each individual at the personal, organizational and societal level. Individuals with the same chronological age may differ in terms of health, career stage and family status. As a consequence, Sterns and Miklos (1995) distinguished between five different approaches to conceptualize age:

- **Chronological age** refers to the calendar age
- **Functional age** refers to cognitive abilities and physical health which can vary greatly between persons of the same chronological age
- **Psychosocial age** refers to the self perception- and the social perception of age which can vary between societies and organisational cultures
- **Organizational age** refers to tenure, career stage, skill obsolescence and age norms within the company
- **Life span approach** refers to life stage or family status

Few studies measure these different conceptualizations of age. Cohen (1993) showed the importance of separating age from tenure effects. His meta-analysis on the relations between age, tenure and organizational commitment showed that effects of tenure may be attributed to job and organizational factors, whereas effects of age may be due to external factors. Cleveland and Shore (1992) found that the employee’s age measured by the different conceptualizations predict different work outcomes. One example was that employees who perceived themselves to be older than most of the people in their work group, exhibited more job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The present study considered three of the five different age conceptualizations when collecting data and during the subsequent analysis; chronological age, organisational age and life span approach. Functional age and psychosocial age were excluded due to reasons explained in the following chapter.

Kooij et al. (in press) argue that the different conceptualisations of age may affect work motivation in various ways which could explain the contradicting results in previous studies. Considering the number of motivational theories produced during the last 50 years,
practitioners may become confused as to whether they are all valid and applicable. Locke (1999) argues that a major but seldom recognized reason for the difficulty of integration is that most of the theories address different aspects of the motivational sequence. If work motivation is multifaceted and better conceptualised as a motivational sequence it’s possible that different phases of the model would be affected differently by age factors. This second option could also explain why research provides varying and sometimes contradicting effects of age factors on work motivation. Studies may simply be investigating different parts of the motivational sequence. In summary, there appears to exist two challenges in the investigation of this area, to control for the different conceptualisations of age and the different phases of work motivation.

1.3 Theoretical contradictions

To conclude that work motivation increases with age implies that there exist age-related factors that, in sum, increase the work motivation. Since the empirical findings are not consistent whether work motivation increases or not, it’s possible that studies investigate or focus on different factors that yield contradictory results. In the following section a collection of studies are described and contradictory results elaborated upon.

1.3.1 Changes in needs and values

There is little consensus among researchers on how needs and values change during life and how these changes affect work motivation. The question is linked not only to the chronological age of people but very much to the life stage of a person. Kauffman (1987) argued that older workers with young children may have similar needs as workers that are primary caretakers of elderly persons. These employees might have to coordinate their daily working hours with the duties assigned to their personal roles and therefore prefer to work part time or using flexible working hours. Kauffman (1987) also argued that one of the key areas for older workers is to find new and meaningful challenges in order to not get bored with their jobs. The reasons why people work may change as they reach middle age. People may strive for a different balance in their lives where the home life is prioritised. The monetary needs can decrease if children become self-supportive. Grand children may invoke an urge for spending more energy on outer work activities.

Warr (1992) found that income and promotion opportunities are of greater concern among younger people. This is consistent with the findings by Hurd (1996), suggesting that
leisure time is valued higher by older workers, influencing their decision to retire. Higgs, Mein, Ferrie, Hyde, and Nazroo (2003) also found a higher value for leisure time among older workers. However, Wright and Hamilton (1978) found that the importance of many job features is stable across different ages while Kidd and Green (2006) found that, among biomedical research scientists, family responsibilities didn’t have an impact on career commitment and intention to remain in the profession. A number of studies have found that preference for activities that support positive affect, self-concept and identity rises with age, thus resulting in increased work motivation in jobs that offer opportunities for positive affective events or strengthened sense of identity (see e.g. Leonard, Beauvais and Scholl, 1999; Maurer, 2001). Assuming that basic needs are fulfilled, older employees have been found to respond more to intrinsic rewards such as the satisfaction of a good days work (Bourne, 1982). However, Lord and Farrington (2006) found that younger employees placed greater value in the recognition they received from their work.

In a study on work values among male and female nurses and engineers, Hagström and Kjellberg (2007) found that men rated Social relations, Work conditions and Altruism lower than women, a difference that was intact during the longitudinal study. Women rated Influence and Benefits and career lower than men before entering the workforce. For women, these differences disappeared within five years which Hagström and Kjellberg argued could be the result of women experiencing norms, values and attitudes typical in the labour market. The experiences would challenge women’s original work value preferences and thereby change over time. These findings point to another disputed area; whether there are gender differences in work motivation.

Lord and Farrington (2006) argue that to measure the satisfaction of a factor (such as a need or a value) you have to include the importance of the factor. Suppose that Jim and Bob are rewarded with a new title. If Jim values a senior title more than Bob he will be more satisfied with it. This is a challenge when studies investigate and compare the work satisfaction of older versus younger employees. If their values are not the same, a comparison becomes difficult to interpret. The fact that values do change over life is supported by empirical findings (Leonard et al., 1999; Maurer, 2001). Lord and Farrington (2006) found that there was an overall difference between the importance younger and older workers placed in work related factors. However, out of 20 factors, 16 were not deemed as different in their importance while younger employees rated advancement, security and the human relations ability of the supervisor more important and older workers rated independence more important. Older workers were more satisfied than younger workers in the factors they rated
as the most important. In addition, they found that older workers were more satisfied than younger workers in general for the following six areas: feeling of accomplishment, co-workers get along, chance to try my own methods, freedom to use my judgement, make use of my abilities and do different things. Since there’s a strong interdependency between work satisfaction and work motivation, these results suggest that older workers are more motivated.

According to Carstensen, Isaacowitz and Charles (1999), the perception of approaching retirement may be characterized by an effort of making experiences more positive. Younger workers may be less concerned with how their employment relationship ends, since they may have opportunities to work in other organizations, compared to older workers who tend to have fewer options for job transfer. Moreover, a perception of older workers, that their current employer will be their last, makes them feel more positive about the employer (Carstensen et al., 1999). Lifespan psychology explains that older workers are more focused on positive experiences, have better emotion regulation, and have more realistic expectations than younger workers (Carstensen et al., 1999). Affective events theory shows that negative events at the workplace are related to decreases in trust, job satisfaction, and commitment (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski & Bravo, 2007). Young people often enter the workforce with high expectations, but after time they adapt their expectations according to reality. Older workers may have more realistic expectations about what to receive than younger workers (Thomas & Anderson, 1998). Therefore, a psychological contract breach may be less harmful to older workers than to younger workers. Bal, de Lange, Jansen and Van Der Velde (2008) found that organisational commitment was less negatively effected by a contract breach for older employees. However, job satisfaction was more negatively effected by a contract breach. In summary, their results suggest that when older employees experience contract breach, they become less satisfied with their jobs although their commitment remains. Since older employees may perceive a lower chance of changing jobs Bal et al. (2008) suggest that they will feel more committed to the organisation. If they receive satisfaction in life from external factors they can permit themselves to feel less satisfied with their work in such a situation. The chronological age or situation in life may create a balance in individuals that has an influence on work perceptions. An employee that is committed but not satisfied will likely reflect that in his work motivation. In addition, Bal et al. (2008) observed a difference between chronological age and tenure. While older employees were less satisfied as a consequence of a contract breach, employees with longer tenure were more satisfied. The results imply that it’s important to separate tenure from chronological age.
Higgs et al. (2003) found that older workers continue to work because of financial reasons, work itself or their traditional work ethic. Older engineers with insufficient income to retire continue to work to satisfy needs on the first and second level of Maslow’s hierarchy (physiological and safety needs). Older engineers with sufficient income to retire are motivated by needs that are primarily characterized by the third and fourth levels of Maslow’s hierarchy (needs for affection and esteem) (Lord, 2002). However, Lord and Farrington (2006) found that younger employees were working to support the basic necessities in life and to maintain safety nets such as health insurance while the older workers had sufficient outside income and insurance accumulated from previous jobs.

1.3.2 The effects on goal setting

Goals control the intensity, duration and direction of action (Locke, 1996). In the article “Motivation through conscious goal setting” Locke (1996) lists relevant findings related to goal theory. Studies have shown that more difficult goals lead to higher achievements assuming the person is committed and holds the required knowledge to reach the goal. Commitment to the goal is most vital when the goal is specific and difficult. Commitment can be obtained when persons feel the goal is important and achievable. In situations where a person does not have the required ability or skill, a difficult goal actually hinders performance. In such case, a learning goal is more appropriate and facilitates the finding of successful task strategies. In addition to having a direct effect on performance, self-efficacy (~self-confidence) plays a great role in this process (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is acquired during life and is therefore likely to be higher among older employees suggesting higher goals and better performance. Self-efficacy influences the acceptance and commitment to goals and the response to negative feedback. Feedback is essential to achieving high goals effectively. Goals can be assigned, self-set or persons can participate in the goal setting decision. No significant difference in performance has been found between these three approaches (Locke, 1996). Kauffman (1987) however, argued that older workers should participate in the goal setting process since their personal goals change with age and this must be communicated to managers.

A number of factors suggest that older employees should have an advantage in goal setting. They have accumulated self-efficacy during their career; they are more aware of their own skills and abilities and should have a greater possibility to choose between task goals or learning goals. Noe et al. (1990) examined the model proposed by London for understanding career motivation in later career. The model states that career motivation includes three
dimensions: career identity, career insight, and career resilience. Career resilience is the extent to which people resist career barriers. It determines a person’s persistence in attaining career goals. Noe et al. (1990) found that career resilience is significantly higher in the later stages than in the first stages of a career, suggesting higher career motivation in later career stages.

In spite of this, several studies have found results that suggest older employees are less successful in goal setting. According to Hansson et al. (1997), the accomplishment of a person’s late career goals can result in the detachment from a career. To prevent this and support a worker to remain psychologically young through continued ‘becoming’, an open career path should be stimulated. Lord and Farrington (2006) found that younger employees are more goal oriented than older employees. Studies have also investigated work motivation from a personality trait framework. Results show that older adults decrease in their achievement oriented motivational strength compared to younger adults which is measured by the personality traits mastery and competitiveness (Heckhausen, 1997; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2000). Furthermore, Kanfer and Ackerman (2000) found that middle-aged women showed the lowest level of the trait competitiveness compared to middle-aged men and younger women and men. This may have implications for the career development of middle-aged women and implies that more research is needed to investigate gender differences.

Psychological aging refers to a shift in the individual’s time orientation emphasizing “life lived from birth” to “life left until death” (Neugarten, 1968). Psychological aging has a number of consequences. When the self perception of age turns to “life left until death” it can affect self-efficacy negatively and negate the more positive effect of accumulating self-efficacy during a person’s career.

1.3.3 Development of skills

The term older worker may activate positive stereotypes such as experience, good judgement, strong work ethic and commitment to quality. More negative stereotypes that have not been supported by empirical research are lack of flexibility, resistance to new technology, unable or unwilling to learn new skills and unable to change (Lord & Farrington, 2006). Lord and Farrington (2006) stated that older workers in particular need to feel that their jobs and efforts are meaningful and how they fit into the organisation. They also found that when older workers are supervised by younger managers, role disagreement could occur if two-way communication is not a goal. Wanner and McDonald (1982) suggest that managers realise that older employees that are less satisfied with their salary will have a more difficult time finding another position. This fact can lead to discrimination of older employees.
The accumulation of skills suggests that older employees should be superior in knowledge but this is not always true. According to Fossum, Arvey, Paradise, and Robbins (1986) skill obsolescence can be the result of a deterioration of present skills or the failure to acquire new skills as job requirements change. Older workers have longer work histories over which skills and knowledge can erode. In addition, older workers may not have had sufficient opportunities to acquire new skills necessary to meet changing job requirements and may have lower expectations that the acquisition of new skills results in valued rewards (Fossum et al., 1986). Therefore, obsolescence is expected to increase with age. Shearer and Steger (1975) suggest that relatively obsolescent individuals tend to be relatively less successful than their counterparts and would lower their expectations accordingly, with similar effects on motivation.

In terms of training, older workers are, in general, treated less fairly than younger colleagues (Simpson, Greller & Stroh, 2002). Older workers may be overlooked when it comes to training because managers fear that they are reluctant to learn, are not interested in developing their career or because the remaining years of service doesn’t warrant the cost (Lord & Farrington, 2006). Managers may hold stereotypes about older workers, e.g. unwilling or unable to learn new skills and unable to change or adapt (Greller & Simpson, 1999). Rosen and Jerdee (1976) examined the influence of age stereotypes on managerial decisions and found that stereotypes regarding older employees lead to discrimination against older workers (see also Chiu, Chan, Snape & Redman, 2001). Lord and Farrington (2006) found that older workers performed just as well as their younger colleagues but were less likely to be promoted. To the extent that an older employee perceives that his actions are no longer instrumental for career advancement because of managerial biases against older workers, his or her motivation may gradually diminish. Limited opportunities for training and development (Greller & Simpson, 1999) and lack of feedback for ineffective performance further reduce the older employee’s work motivation.

Finally, these stereotypes could affect older workers’ self perception if they believe that these stereotypes apply to them. Thus, it is possible that diminished motivation is not a direct result of aging, but a result of changes in managerial attitudes and treatment of older employees, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy: limited opportunities for professional development and training will diminish motivation, skills and future employment opportunities of older workers, thereby validating stereotypes held by managers (Greller & Simpson, 1999).
1.4 Purpose of study

Inspired by the findings outlined above, this study aims to explore older employees’ perception of work related needs and values, goal setting and development of skills.

1.5 Research questions

Five research questions have been identified based on the discussion of earlier findings within the fields of needs and values, goal setting and development of skills. These five areas have been selected because of contradictory results in previous studies, because of their importance to work motivation or a combination of those two factors.

1.5.1 Changes in needs and values

1. How do older employees value income and promotion opportunities compared to beneficial work conditions?
2. Why do older employees approaching retirement continue to work?

1.5.2 The effects on goal setting

3. How important are goals in the daily work of older employees?
4. How do older employees relate to career goals when approaching retirement?

1.5.3 Development of skills

5. How do older employees rate their own skills and how do they maintain and develop them?

2. Method

Previous studies have tried to measure work motivation in quantitative variables and compare the results from younger and older employees. The results have been mixed which suggest that improvements to the research method should be possible. Older workers are consistently missed or underrepresented in many studies because of early retirement options and healthy worker effects (Zapf, Dormann, & Frese, 1996). There may be a survivor bias since unhealthy people retire early while healthy people stay at their jobs and maybe even conduct post-retirement work. Another risk for bias is that older employees in the workforce might be motivated if they have not chosen retirement because of financial reasons or because they receive satisfaction from work. A quantitative study using a questionnaire might be received differently among older versus younger employees. Experienced people will most likely have
been subject to different evaluations during their career and could have accumulated scepticism as to their value. In addition, any organisational change takes time to implement before it yields any benefits. If older employees see an end to their career they might feel that improvements won’t benefit them.

2.1 Design

This study tried to cross those initial barriers by using interviews in a qualitative framework. Today, employees are asked to give their views on a range of topics such as courses, work evaluations, services etc. The advancement of the internet as a working tool has meant an explosion in the amount of information people are exposed to. When investigating complex questions such as work motivation, the method of questionnaire might not be optimal. The benefit of an interview is that the participant has the opportunity to express his or her views with limited guidance from the researcher (Patton, 2001). In addition, Kaminski (1983) recommends direct interviews with employees when researching age related factors.

2.2 Selection of participants

A multinational company listed on the Scandinavian stock exchange was used to select participants. Eight participants were selected from a group of employees based on their age and tenure at the company. To be classified as “old” and included in the survey participants were either 45 years or older (chronological age), had 5 years or more length of service at the company or possessed both these qualities. The selection was made in co-operation with the HR manager at the target company. In order to explore gender differences both male and female participants were targeted.

Other studies have used the chronological age of 45 as an inclusion criterion for older employees (Kooij et al., in press). When Ericsson in 2006, at the time Sweden’s largest company, decided to scale down on their work force they offered older employees an early retirement package and the threshold was 45 years of age (www.di.se). Although the age of 45 is not close to the public retirement age which varies around 65 in Western Europe, employees are still considered “old” because of the rapid development in technology during the past 20 years which has put great demands on the maintenance and acquisition of new skills. Since knowledge is one of the areas in this study and the target company can be
classified within a knowledge intensive sector this study has also used the age of 45 as a threshold.

The organisational age of 5 years can be disputed as in some organisations, five years is merely an initiation period. There were two arguments for choosing 5 years of organisational age as an inclusion criterion. Firstly, the knowledge intensive businesses explained previously are also characterized by a much more rapid turnover of employees than what was common before the new technology era. An objective measure is difficult to establish but the market belief is that many workers change position every 3-5 years. Secondly, at the target company, the average length of service among employees has been just under five years for quite some time now. This implies that all participants included in the survey based on their tenure have worked there longer than their average colleague and will be characterised as old (or experienced) at least from an organisational perspective.

Eight employees were eventually interviewed. According to Patton (2001), a sufficient number of participants should be included so that all relevant information is discovered. When the marginal value of adding an additional participant starts to decrease the study can be assumed to have covered enough sources of data. Exactly where that balance is can be difficult to establish and certainly varies from study to study. Gustafsson, Hassmén, Kenttä and Johansson (2007) interviewed 10 former athletes when investigating burnout among elite athletes which is one example of how many participants a published paper used. A bachelor thesis also has certain limitations within time and resources. Initially six participants were interviewed over the course of one week. Subsequently, another two were asked to participate in the study and accepted. During those additional two interviews, many subjects and themes re-appeared from the initial ones. After reviewing the raw data, the number of new themes per additional interview had significantly been reduced and it was decided that no further employees were to be interviewed. At that point in time, close to eight hours of discussions had been recorded which corresponds to many hours of transcribing recordings into text.

2.3 Data collection
The interviews were conducted for approximately one hour and documented in notes and recordings. The interview itself was semi-structured and based upon the five research questions in 1.5. An interview guide was used that included suggested topics in each of the five areas. This guide was used as a backbone of the interview. Each area was discussed and the participant had the authority to direct the conversation in any direction preferred. When a
discussion of an area reached a closing point, a new one was introduced with the help of the guide. The guide itself can be found in Appendix 1.

This study considered three of the five different age conceptualizations when collecting data and during the subsequent analysis. Chronological age and organisational age were provided by the HR department. The life stage of the participant was established during the interview. Functional age was excluded since all employees were active in their career and no information was available on their physical health or cognitive abilities. No objective information was available on the psychosocial age of the participants. The complexity of establishing how old a person views herself and how old colleagues experience her was beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, this variable was also excluded from the analyses.

2.4 Procedure

A senior executive at the target company sponsored the study. Meetings were conducted with the senior executive and the HR manager prior to the interviews where the subject of work motivation and the outline of the study were discussed. An e-mail was sent to all employees by the HR manager explaining the study and encouraging people to participate. The fact that the study was sponsored by the senior executive gave the study a greater mandate. All responses were screened by the HR manager and employees were identified based on the two inclusion variables; organisational- and chronological age. From this group of older employees, eight were selected for interviews which took place at a conference room in the offices of the company during working hours.

The participants were informed about the study in the initial send out and also at the start of each interview. Participants were aware that the research was made on work motivation but did not know about the interest in age related factors. The e-mail sent to all employees can be found in Appendix 2.

2.5 Data analysis

The data was analysed by the classical method of thematic analysis. Themes are characterised as recurrent ideas or topics that can be identified in the data. In general, themes are raised by different participants, described in different words and emerging in several contexts (Hayes, 2007). Hayes (2007) describes two different approaches to thematic analysis, theory-led versus inductive thematic analysis. The inductive thematic analysis is used when there’s little
prior knowledge within an area and data is allowed to establish any possible theme. On the contrary, theory-led thematic analysis is derived from a theory or hypothesis and aims to accept or reject the hypothesis. The themes are pre-established and guide the study. The researcher searches for evidence in the data, in favour of or against the pre-established themes.

This study was actually a hybrid between the two approaches. Research questions were identified based on the background discussion of work motivation which suggests theory-led thematic analysis. However, within each area, little was known about how employees actually felt and thought which is why all possible themes were able to form. Therefore, an inductive thematic analysis was used within the framework of a theoretical one. Prior to the interviews, the research questions were used as inspiration for the interview guide. After the interviews, the interview transcripts were divided into pieces of meaningful units of text. At that point in time, the concept of research questions was ignored. Any possible theme was instead identified from a unit of the text. Gustafsson et al. (2007) used the definition of meaningful units as “a segment of text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode or piece of information”. After an initial analysis of all units a large amount of themes had emerged. A first examination of these “proto-themes” was performed where similar phrases were merged into one common theme. At that point, 25 different themes had been identified. The following process undertook a more detailed analysis of the themes, separating a theme into two new while merging others. Each theme was validated against the original unit of text. The result of this process was 12 final themes which were then linked back to the original research questions. Since the research questions influenced the interview guide, the interview, the units of text and subsequently the themes, it was only natural that each theme actually related to a research question. Were it not for this fact, the study could have been considered a true inductive thematic analysis. However, since each theme was in a way limited by the research questions there was definitely an aspect of the theory-led approach.

2.6 Ethical considerations

Since age can invoke many different stereotypes it was deemed to benefit the study if this fact was not disclosed to the participants prior to the interviews. In research in general, ethical considerations must be taken towards all participants. This implies that all available information should be disclosed as long as it does not critically impact the actual study. If this procedure is breached, extra care must be taken so that participants are treated fairly (Patton,
The participants were informed that they would be kept completely confidential and that their participation was voluntary. This was initially raised in the first information send out and then again in more detail before each interview commenced. Participants were also informed that they could at any point during the interview abort and leave without facing any consequences. They have also been offered to receive the final thesis based on their data.

3. Results and discussion

Eight employees participated in this study and are referred to as participants A-H in Table 1. Four participants were included based on their chronological age, three were included based on their organisational age and one employee actually fulfilled both criteria. The average participant had an age of 45 and had worked at the company for 5.5 years. Three of them were women making it possible to draw some conclusions about gender differences. During the interviews it was noted that two of them had children that were now of adult age. Four of the participants had children living with them in their families. One participant was single and one was expecting a child later this year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant ID</th>
<th>Chronological age (old &gt; 45 years)</th>
<th>Organisational age (old &gt; 5 years)</th>
<th>Life stage</th>
<th>Sex</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Adult children</td>
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Table 1: The categorization of participants into chronologically old, organisationally old and their current life stage.
A total of 12 themes were identified and linked to the five different research questions within the three different areas. Figure 1 portrays the research questions and their link to theoretical contradictions. The themes defined within each research question are described in more detail in sections 3.1 through 3.3.

![Figure 1. Research questions linked to each area of theoretical contradictions.](image)

### 3.1 Changes in needs and values

Two research questions were posed covering the informants’ perception of changes in need and values and seven themes emerged from the interviews; ‘Balancing work and personal life’, ‘Personal development’, ‘The importance of financial compensation’, ‘The professional content of the job’, ‘The value of independence’, ‘The satisfaction of working’ and ‘Working for money and the value of time’

3.1.1 Research question 1: *How do older employees value income and promotion opportunities compared to beneficial work conditions?*

In the analysis for the first research question five themes emerged from the interviews and are depicted below.

**Theme 1 - Balancing work and personal life**

All participants displayed a will to balance their work life with their personal time. Exactly where to find that balance is surely an individual decision (Kaufman, 1986). What the
participants formed was a clear pattern dependent on their life stage. All of them stated that the possibility to work from home, flexible work hours and excellent vacation possibilities were important factors in them taking the jobs and remaining satisfied in them. The two employees without children reported that they used flexible work hours and the possibility to work from home in order to optimise their time and combine work with social activities. They could choose to work from home if they wanted a quiet environment, as opposed to the office which could be hectic at times.

Four participants had young children at home and they reported quite a different picture. “The possibility to work from home and especially flexible work hours is crucial because I have a young son at home. Children have a great (negative; authors comment) impact on work motivation and it’s a disrupting transitional period when you have kids the first time.” A different participant told that “I work from home on average twice a month and use flexible work hours occasionally. These tools are vital in balancing work and family life, I have two children today. I have also reduced my working hours to a 4-day work week. It’s not really possible for me to squeeze in more hours per week considering my current family situation so it’s important for me to find a meaningful job that does not require additional effort in terms of hours.” Yet another participant touched upon the risks of working from home; “Working from home can be a danger as there are quite a lot of stressors at home e.g. housing chores or children not respecting the privacy of work.” Clearly, employees with children at home were struggling more to maintain all parties happy and were to a larger extent dependant on the company’s beneficial policies. The remaining two participants had adult children who no longer lived at home. They confirmed these impressions while reminiscing about the past; “My son is an adult now and no longer lives at home which has significantly reduced the amount of time and effort needed outside work.” In a different stage of the interview, that same participant stated that “It’s a paradox that employees peak in their careers at the same time as they need to spend the most amount of time and energy with their families. It’s quite easy to develop a guilty conscience for not spending enough time with your family.” It was evident that the one critical factor was the participant’s family stage. Their day-to-day needs would change during life but the factor that had most affect on work motivation was whether they had children or not. Moving, for example, from being single to married had little implication on the balance between work- and personal life. In return, company policies also affected families the most. This is important for management to understand. If half of their staff have families and children, changing policies regarding vacation, over time, flexible work hours and the like won’t affect the half with families equally as the half without. The
magnitude for employees with families will be much greater and this should be included in a “weighted” consideration.

The female participants were to a higher extent struggling to combine their careers with their personal commitments. One male participant even recognised this and said “Even in these enlightened times, I believe women still take more responsibility for the family and sacrifice more of their careers. As a husband, I have never really limited my career due to family considerations”. Hagström and Kjellberg (2007) found that women rated work conditions higher than men when entering the workforce, a deviation that remained during their careers. This is consistent with the statements that women have more personal responsibilities for their families. It’s possible that more responsibility would trigger a higher importance for work conditions so that a) an employee wouldn’t be as physically and mentally tired after work, having energy left when returning home and b) having more options in terms of working hours, holidays and time off which could benefit the family. It seems only natural that if women have a harder time to combine work- and personal lives they would also prioritise it higher.

Theme 2 - Personal development

A mixture of comments eventually formed the theme ‘Personal development’. The units of text refer to different aspects of work motivation but they share a notion of the employee developing from one stage to the other. The younger participant who was single said that “Because I’m single my job constitutes the greater part of my life. This puts a lot of pressure and expectations on the company and work environment and also on how happy I am at the company.” Usually the debate focuses on how professionals with families balance their work- and personal life and the type of tensions that might occur. Here, a different concern was raised, the situation where there aren’t several meaningful parts to life but where the career is dominant. Perhaps this situation is most common among employees who have gathered enough experience to be fully committed to work but haven’t raised a family yet. With current divorce rates, it might also be applicable for divorcées who have a minimum contact with their family and are spending the bulk of their time at work. A different comment was phrased by one of the participant’s approaching retirement and with an adult son; “The organisation is under constant change and it’s not always easy to find a consistent way of working. The changes are not always for the better. As an experienced employee you can handle the changes with some more ease, you know that changes come and go and the results are usually never as good or bad as promised.” This is clearly two opposite statements, perhaps not very
surprising, but still with significant implications. The single participant states that company events have a significant effect on his life and well being. The older and more experienced employee with children suggests that she is no longer personally affected by company events. Lord and Farrington (2006) reasoned that work satisfaction is dependant on the importance an employee attributes to different factors. If you feel that a factor is important you will be very satisfied or very dissatisfied with the outcome. If you don’t put to much weight in it, either outcome will not matter as much to you. If employees have a life balanced over several meaningful parts such as family, friends, colleagues and career, they won’t be that satisfied or dissatisfied with specific company events. These findings are in contrast with the results of Bal et al. (2008) who argued that older employees’ job satisfaction was more affected than younger employees’ in the case of a psychological contract breach. Interestingly enough, Bal et al. (2008) used the same arguments to end up with the opposite conclusion. They argued that if older employees receive satisfaction from external factors they could permit themselves to feel less satisfied with their work. The findings in these interviews are supported by Lord and Farrington (2006) who argued that a factor with less importance will lead to a minor effect on satisfaction. Applied to our scenario, if the importance of an employee’s career is relatively smaller because other facts in life are also relevant for him, that person will be less negatively affected by a contract breach, since the importance of the career is relatively lower. It’s really an analogy to “not keeping all of your eggs in the same basket” which is widely used in financial theory, arguing for diversification. If one interest decreases in value it won’t affect you as much if you have other interests as well.

Apart from the varying importance of work in connection to age, changes in personal characteristics and types of jobs were reported. One participant, falling in the category chronologically old, described how his interests and type of work changed during his life; “In my previous jobs I was managing up to 70 employees. At the time, job satisfaction was derived from a manager role. Today it's important for me to feel independence and responsibility for my actions. The change of interest was a natural development triggered by the type of job I was doing as manager. The character of jobs in this business segment requests early "retirement", focusing on other job opportunities.” Another participant who recently changed positions within the company explained that “The new position is more long term focused in its nature which requires a slightly different kind of motivation. Earlier, objectives and results were established and achieved within a matter of days. Today it could well take a couple of months. Therefore it's even more important that I have the end objective in mind during the entire process.” Yet another example of the effects of personal
development was “Although recognition is important, I have developed a self-efficacy during the years so that I know when I’ve done a good job and can praise myself for it.”

This theme portrays both work motivation and work satisfaction as truly dynamic parameters. The importance of the career varies with the life stage and conditions of the employee. The nature of motivation will change with the position and the type of position might change with age and experience and can vary across different industries. Although these results may raise more questions than answers, they highlight the complexity of the area and the challenges facing quantitative studies wanting to label employees as motivated or not. Locke (1999) constructed the motivational sequence where different motivational theories applied to different aspects of work motivation. The statements by the participants implies that age effects might pertain to different aspects of that sequence. Your needs for independence, influence and recognition seems to change with chronological age. Your values and motives are highly affected by your life stage where consideration is taken towards the family. Your goals, performance and self-efficacy seems to vary with the organizational age, where self-efficacy is accumulated during the years and career goals and task goals will change with your role. Even further to the right in the model, rewards and satisfaction will be impacted by the type of job you have. The preference for type of job may be impacted by all three age conceptualizations. Locke (1999) does admit that one motivational theory can be applied in different parts of the sequence.

**Theme 3 - The importance of financial compensation**

Money can satisfy basic needs such as food and security but also more sophisticated needs such as the need for recognition and influence (Locke, 1999). Therefore, financial compensation is assumed to play a significant part when people choose jobs, stay in jobs and are motivated in jobs. Trying to evaluate the importance of financial compensation vis-à-vis other job features does pose some challenges though. Perhaps especially in Scandinavia, discussing money and salary is still labelled somewhat as taboo. Therefore, more than any other themes, the validity of these results are questionable. What would be the socially appropriate answer from participants when discussing financial compensation? It wouldn’t be reasonable to say it didn’t matter at all. It surely wouldn’t be attractive to state it as the most important job feature, ahead of the professional content, the work environment, colleagues and so forth. Inevitably, the participants’ answers were all in the mid-range of these two extremes. Financial compensation did matter but it wasn’t the most important job feature; “I’m motivated by interesting assignments, feedback and a good work environment with my
colleagues as well as compensation. The balance is about 50/50 between salary and other softer aspects which are excellent at the current company.” or “In terms of job characteristics, compensation is important but has to be in balance with all other factors such as work environment, relationship to manager and colleagues. It’s easy to focus on money if all other aspects of the job are fulfilling.” Obviously, the answers could be consciously or subconsciously distorted to become socially acceptable. In the attempt to verify this, the participants were asked if they would continue to work if they became financially independent by winning big on a lottery. More details on this approach are reported in section 3.1.2. The argument here is that if you value other job features more than the salary, you might continue to work even though you don’t need the money. Assuming that it’s more socially acceptable to imagine retiring after winning the lottery than saying that you value money the most, this could be a suitable verification method. Four participants said they would continue to work. This is consistent with their statements that financial compensation is not the most important job feature. Out of these four, two would consider reducing their working hours so they could spend more time on friends and family. Four reported that they would consider early retirement. Three of them had ten years or less left to work and were already planning for retirement. The remaining fourth had young children he wanted to spend more time with. They also communicated a slightly different tone when discussing financial compensation, although still stating that it was one among many important factors; “…compensation and career opportunities are important. It's vital that an employee maintains his skills and it's also reasonable that he's compensated for it.” This is by no means a fool proof verification. It’s feasible that if a person values money highly he will continue doing so after winning the lottery and therefore continue working to earn even more.

One participant speculated that “It might be that younger workers define success in their careers more in terms of money. In my opinion, this changes with age.” If financial compensation is not the most important job feature among older and more experienced employees, where would it actually rank? Quite a lot of comments related to market compensation “Naturally, the compensation has to be market based and in balance with the private financial needs.” or “As long as the salary is market based, compensation is not an important factor.” One participant phrased it in a different way that was truly intriguing; “Financial compensation is more important in a fairness perspective, ‘why should I earn less than my colleague, am I doing a poorer job?’” According to equity theory (Locke, 1999), people value fairness in rewards and evaluate their input against comparable others. When a person’s salary covers his financial needs to the point where he can live a comfortable life,
what level will he strive for? According to equity theory, he would evaluate himself, his achievements and his input against colleagues and professionals in the industry and settle for a salary he believes is fair. This is consistent with the answers from the participants, demanding a market based salary. It also implies that organisations should spend some effort on explaining their decisions. A general rate cut can be necessary due to company specific events. A colleague might have received additional pay because of an extraordinary event his team members are not aware of or do not value. If this is left unexplained resentments can foster. If the causes are communicated, employees may find the outcomes fairer. In summary, these points boil down to:

- Employees will want their salary to cater for their private financial needs.
- Assuming that the net salary surpasses those needs, employees want to maintain a market salary
- The market salary is really an expression of fairness. Negative deviations from it signals that they are treated less fairly when compared to colleagues which requests explanation.
- A positive deviation communicates appreciation from the employer. However, non-monetary compensation can perhaps to a higher extent be appreciated by older employees.

This is consistent with the findings by Bourne (1982), arguing that older employees to a higher extent appreciate intrinsic rewards assuming that their basic needs are fulfilled.

Finally, a few comments touched upon the difference in personality types when valuing financial compensation. An example is "Perhaps employees who try becoming managers do so because they value compensation, titles and influence more. Workers who are happy with being non-managers might value other characteristics more." It would be reasonable if employees with families had greater financial needs and therefore valued money higher. However, no such indications were reported. Those employees tended to have more years of service at the company and were more focused on other job features important for the development of their careers, such as the professional content of the job discussed in the following section 3.1.5. Employees willing to consider early retirement expressed a value for leisure time which is further discussed in section 3.1.2.

**Theme 4 - The professional content of the job**

The professional content of the job, defined as work processes, relationship to manager or interesting work assignments, were all reported as very important job features. Some quotes
supporting this were “In general, I’m motivated by interesting assignments, feedback and a good work environment with my colleagues.” or “I look forward to coming to work in about 85% of the time because of interesting assignments. At previous jobs the rate varied between 50%-90%. The missing points today are simply because it’s unreasonable for each day to be challenging and interesting.” Some participants even took this to a level further, communicating that it was the most important factor; “In terms of job characteristics, the level of professionalism in a company is the most important.” or “The professional content of the job is more important than compensation, assuming the salary meets the financial needs of the private economy. I actually switched from a high profile, better paid position at a different company to my current job because the pressure from previous owners and the administration of all employees took too much time and effort. The intention of the move was to receive better professional content and challenge in my work.”

In a different setting, one participant described how he had been disappointed by the company; “The change in organisational structure was a disappointment because my type of role was neglected. However, it did not impact my motivation or satisfaction that much because the job description remained the same. Had the actual job changed, the effects could’ve been much more severe.” The professional content appears to be the most important job feature here which was supported by remarks from other participants; “A different and more appealing job would have a slightly different role, a position with more overview and involvement in the entire process. The risk at the current position is to become too specialised and isolated.” or “A change of jobs today would be triggered by a more interesting content in a new position; the chance of working with something even more exciting than today.” According to Bal et al. (2008) such a psychological contract breach should be associated with decreased commitment and satisfaction, regardless of the employees’ age and tenure. Age and tenure only mediate the effects. The statements above suggest that employees will remain committed and satisfied if the most important job features remain unaffected by the breach. Thomas and Anderson (1998) argued that young employees entering the work force had higher expectations than experienced employees who had adjusted them according to reality. The participants in this study who were included based on their years of service and were relatively younger chronologically speaking did prioritise the professional content higher than employees who were older. In a way, that makes sense because they have more years left until retirement and can benefit more from interesting assignments, sophisticated work processes and skilled management. The chronologically older employees were more observant of their independence which is discussed in the following section.
Theme 5 - The value of independence

Independence was the third job feature apart from compensation and professional content that emerged as a common theme among all participants. Typical comments could be “Even though we follow standard work processes I feel a great deal of independence in the daily work. This is mostly due to a humble manager who is supportive and knows when to discuss the more technical aspects of the job but also when to give freedom of choice and responsibility.” or “Independence is important for job satisfaction. Ideally I control my own work day and assignments. Managers should be supportive and have some knowledge of the work area in order to facilitate communication.” It’s only natural that experienced professionals want to feel independent at work. Lord and Farrington (2006) found that young and old workers differed in the importance of four job features. Only one feature was rated as more important by older workers and that was independence. When the participants tried to rate independence against compensation and professional content it was increasingly difficult to put one factor ahead of another. It appeared as all three dimensions were important for a fulfilling job. Whatever factor was trailing behind would be singled out as possible to improve. One example of this was “In terms of job characteristics, compensation is no longer as important as independence and recognition. I have even accepted a decrease in salary to start my current job because it offered a high level of independence.” On the other hand, employees did say that a different, more appealing job would have a superior professional content. No participant imagined themselves switching jobs to become more independent. This implies that the employees either were happy with their independence or that the professional content had higher priority. The level of independence was intimately related to the relationship between the employee and the manager. The background and experience of both individuals had a significant effect; “Independence and responsibility are motivating factors. Ultimately you want to produce something you’re proud of. Ideally an employee controls his own work day and assignments. I have used my work experience to plan my days and received feedback from colleagues on various projects.” and “Independence is crucial for job satisfaction. Managers should be supportive and realise that they are not experts within specific areas – this can be a challenge for certain managers. In my case, my manager is young and inexperienced so he has benefited from letting the senior team members take on more responsibility.” Not all young managers have the confidence to do that though. Lord and Farrington (2006) found that conflicts can arise specifically in situations where the manager is younger than the team members.
3.1.2 Research question 2: Why do older employees approaching retirement continue to work?

Two themes were identified in the analysis of the second research question.

**Theme 6 - The satisfaction of working**

In all fairness, the target company and the participants do not represent the average workplace. All participants seemed very happy with their careers and the company even had retired employees working a couple of hours each month as consultants. Higgs et al. (2003) found that employees with sufficient income to retire continued to work because of higher order needs. Kid and Green (2006) found that family responsibilities did not affect scientists’ career commitment and intention to continue to work. Half of the participants argued that they would continue to work even if they became financially independent and could retire. The reason for this was that they derived satisfaction from actually working. That also resulted in participants predicting to remain in the same job for several years ahead; “If I would become financially independent I would most likely continue to work in the same position.” or “If I would become financially independent I would still continue to work, most likely in the same position, because the job is challenging, brings satisfaction and also gives a structure to everyday life.”

During the interview it became clear that work was very much integrated into their daily lives and provided structure, purpose and challenges. Even though some could imagine the benefits of having more time to spend on family and friends, they simply couldn’t imagine a normal day without coming to work. Two of these four participants did have children at home, supporting the findings by Kid and Green (2006). However, one of them had reduced her working hours by 1/5. The other participant experienced considerable independence and flexibility in his position. Both of them seemed to be less frustrated in their private-work life balance than the other two employees with children. One parent was even sceptical to this attitude and said the following “I’m surprised to hear that 60 year olds are disappointed about retiring! Perhaps the situation is different if your children are adults and no longer living with you - assuming the job is satisfactory - people may want to continue to work.” The study included two employees without children reporting that they would continue to work. On the other hand, two participants that no longer had children living with them reported they would consider early retirement if financially independent. Out of the four employees with
families and children it was equally divided, two in favour of retirement and two in favour of continuing to work. It seems that neither life stage nor organisational age were critical in the decision to retire. Each category had examples of both. Indeed it was the chronological age of employees that was the critical factor. Although all participants argued that they were motivated to work and satisfied with their jobs, only the youngest imagined themselves continuing even if they didn’t have to work to support themselves.

Theme 7 - Working for money and the value of time
When offered the possibility of early retirement due to becoming financially independent two participants reported that they would at least decrease their working hours while four would consider early retirement. The four participants that would consider early retirement expressed for example that: “If I would become financially independent I would not continue to work in the same position. Eventually I would decrease the amount of working hours and instead spend more time on hobbies.” and “Although the job is part of my identity and I’m generally pleased with it and with the work environment, colleagues and so forth, the main reason for retiring is more leisure time. Since I’m planning to retire in roughly 6 years I would have to consider my options if it became financially possible today. I would most likely choose early retirement”

Three of the four participants were the oldest in the group of employees. The fourth participant was actually the youngest, only 33 years old, but with 8 years of service at the company. The monetary needs were not reported to decrease with age as Kaufman (1987) argued. On the contrary, monetary concerns were a significant aspect in the decision to retire. The participants seemed to believe the recent arguments in our society that pensions in the future will not be as generous as in the past. Because of the high tax burden and expensive cost of living, the participants actually demanded that the imagined prize money had to be substantial before they could consider retirement. It did signal that they had given the idea some thought and that their financial needs played a significant role in the decision of how long to remain in the work force. Kaufman (1987) argued that people may strive for a different balance in life as their age increased. Hurd (1996) argued that leisure time is valued higher by older workers, influencing their decision to retire. The answers are just as puzzling as previous results from quantitative studies. On one hand, employees say that they want to retire in order to have time which implies that they put higher value in leisure time. On the other hand, they want to wait until they are financially secure which implies a higher value for money. Perhaps the challenge in interpreting this is to overcome the innate assumption that
value for time and money are two independent linear functions, where at one point the value for time supersedes the value for money. Putting it differently, it seems that if a person has a lot of money they also would want to have a lot of time. However, if they aren’t financially independent they don’t want time either which makes sense because without money they can’t use the time optimally.

3.2 The effects on goal setting

Two research questions were investigated regarding participants’ perception of age effects on goal setting and three themes emerged from the interviews; ‘The failure of goals’, ‘Career development and possible barriers’ and ‘Career goals: the employee’s or the manager’s responsibility’.

3.2.1 Research question 3: How important are goals in the daily work of older employees?

Only one broad theme was identified on the importance of goals.

Theme 8 - The failure of goals

Although appropriate goals have been found to have a great effect on performance, little has been said about the relation to age and any possible effects of age (Latham, 2006). Lord and Farrington (2006) did find that younger employees are more goal oriented than older employees. The participants in this study described a static process of goal setting at their company, performed by the individual employee and their manager on a yearly Employee Performance Review meeting. The achievements of previous goals were evaluated and new goals were established for the subsequent year. Goals could be set for the company, department, team or individual. During the year, the progress on goals could be discussed at a half-year meeting but apart from that, goals did not play an active part of the participants work day. The overall impression by the majority of the participants was that their goals did not in any way enhance performance; “Goals are established once a year during the standard process but are not used in the daily work. Typically you would revise them at the next yearly meeting or perhaps every 6 months.”, “Goals are established once a year during the standard process but have limited effect on the daily work.” or “I’ve never felt that our goals have inspired or affected our performance.”
There were four reasons why goals did not increase performance. Firstly, many goals were established on targets that were part of the normal job description. One participant described that “My personal bonus goals have not made any sense because they have been so similar to my work description and normal expectations. What happens if I don't receive a bonus for registering time, will I stop doing it? Of course not. If the goal wasn’t there I would still do it correctly.” Secondly, if difficult goals were defined and it became uncertain whether they would be reached, the goals would be changed or adjusted so that, officially, they were met. This was fine as employees received their bonus payments but it also resulted in goals loosing their validity. Workers would know that if it becomes uncertain, the goals will simply be adjusted so they’re achieved. Thirdly, the achievement or failure of goals was often out of the employees’ control; “The problem with goals in our department is that employees often don't have personal control over them. In spite of this, goals are always achieved and therefore lose validity. I’m not sure whether goals are relevant at all for our department. I would prefer a team strategy.” or “Goals seem to be harder to establish for specialists compared to managers, especially when persons are dependant on other workers, the goals lose in value.” Another issue was that too many goals were defined, sometimes more than 10 during a year; “Approximately five goals are optimal. It’s not easy to do a good job and still keep track of all possible goals.” or “I can’t remember all of my 12 goals by heart.” Since goals were discussed once or twice a year there was a lack of continuity. The sheer number of goals and the discrepancy in expectations might be why only two out of eight participants reported that they to a large extent remembered and knew their goals; the remaining six were either very hesitant or completely honest, saying that they did not know them.

The employees did communicate a sense of readiness to use more difficult and effective goals. They were simply stating that goals were not used effectively in their organisation and that the process could be improved. This is consistent with the fact that people’s self-efficacy highly affects the goal setting process. Self-efficacy influences the acceptance and commitment to goals and the response to negative feedback (Locke, 1996). Since self-efficacy is acquired during life it is therefore likely to be higher among older employees suggesting higher goals and better performance. Although difficult goals were not part of the culture at the current company, the employees seemed to be open to the possibility. However, they did not seem to be frustrated due to the lack of challenging goals. This is consistent with earlier findings on goal motivation, explaining that people will not do their best when asked to (Locke, 1996). Although people perform better when faced with difficult goals it’s typically
not something that we seek for ourselves. In a way it makes sense. Just like the law of nature directs electricity towards the easiest path available, so will humans direct their efforts towards the easier paths and not push themselves the extra mile. On this theme, no differences appeared between the different conceptualisations of age, nor between men and women. It was however complicated to establish since the discussions revolved around the failure of goals and not how the participants perceived the goals as such. Since the participants were in agreement of the failure of goals it became impossible to investigate whether they perceived the goals differently, whether certain employees felt more or less challenged or whether goals were more or less valuable in their work.

During the discussions though, a distinct pattern was recognised early where the participants were dissatisfied with the fact that their goals seemed to be established in order to improve the company and not the individual. A couple of examples were “Goals seem to be set in order to advance the company and not the employee.” and “The first time I took part of the company's goal setting process I was surprised to learn that my goals were actually derived from my manager's and their managers' goals and not initiated by myself. They were designed with the perspective to develop the company more than the employee.” Goals were not established- nor supported by the employees which is why employees lacked a commitment to them. According to Locke (1996) commitment is especially important when aiming for difficult goals.

3.2.2 Research question 4: How do older employees relate to career goals when approaching retirement?

Two themes were identified on the topic of career development and career goals.

Theme 9 - Career development and possible barriers
Career development in general was an important factor among all participants, regardless of age, experience and gender. One participant described how it was easier for an experienced employee to know the organisational structure and have enough informal contacts to know when and where an opening might occur. Another participant, also with quite a lot of years of service, touched upon the difference between managers and non-managers; “There are sufficient options to move sideways in the organisation. I do feel it’s a greater challenge to move upwards and become a manager. Managers are to a higher extent recruited externally. In addition, the process is often less transparent. The position of managers are seldom
advertised which doesn't really encourage non-managers to make a career move.” Employees’ length of service had a dual effect. It benefited worker’s informal networks and by that provided career opportunities. However, significant changes in employees’ career path were hindered by the organisation becoming dependab le on a person after many years in a position. As years passed, it became increasingly difficult to switch position which is further discussed later in this section.

Earlier studies in the US described how young and old employees had to consider social security and pension plans when considering a change in careers (Lord & Farrington, 2006). Older workers had an advantage because they had accumulated insurance and health care during their careers. The participants in this study communicated a perception that social security and pension systems are rather sophisticated in Scandinavia. Coupled with the fact that the recent years have experienced respectable economic growth and a booming job market, the participants did not experience any practical obstacles to changing their line of work. To a certain extent it was reported to be sad to leave current colleagues and engagements but that wasn’t factors that would hold the participants back from considering a change in careers. However, older employees’ potential advantage towards younger employees seemed to have disappeared when comparing to findings in the US due to the different social systems.

On the contrary, three external barriers appeared to be potentially limiting career advancements. Greller and Simpson (1999) reported that managers may hold negative stereotypes towards older workers. Rosen and Jerdee (1976) found that the negative stereotypes could result in older workers being discriminated. A different type of stereotype was reported by a few of the participants. Many jobs allegedly have stereotypes attached to them which can be a limiting factor. This was reported by chronologically older employees who identified certain positions more typical among younger workers. One participant reported that “I enjoy the start-up and growth phase of new projects and departments. That is also where I have excelled if you look upon my past achievements. However, companies are reluctant to fill those positions with employees turning 60; they tend to go to younger up-and-coming workers”. A related barrier reported by mostly organisationally old employees was the fact that they enjoyed becoming skilled at what they did but eventually felt that their experience and senior roles in the teams kept them from exploring new challenging assignments. One participant phrased it; “After becoming one of the key employees in the team it became more difficult to pursue new challenges of my own choice“. Many participants reported that an activity out of the ordinary, such as a maternity leave or an additional degree,
was followed by a significant shift in their career. This was one method of overcoming the entrapment of being locked in an experienced role. One participant reported that he finished a second master’s degree while working after which it was only natural to contemplate his current role and the future use of his new skills. It eventually resulted in a change of position and department. A similar story was reported by an employee who finished an Executive MBA and in close connection changed both roles and employer. In his case, the MBA degree was not only a door opener but also a huge obstacle to overcome. “I experienced the downside of an MBA when companies were reluctant to hire a person with my education and experience in a non-managing position. Potential employers believed I would soon be enticed to switch to a managing role. However, that was not something I desired in my current life stage. My skills became a limiting factor“. Noe et al. (1990) found that career resilience is significantly higher in the later stages than in the first stages of a career, meaning that experienced workers will combat barriers in order to achieve career goals. It’s unclear whether those findings were supported by these interviews. To a large extent the employees reported that they were satisfied with their current jobs, suggesting that they had in fact overcome career barriers. Carstensen et al. (1999) provides a warning sign to these reports as they found that older workers perceive their situations more positively, trying to maintain a good experience. Their career goals were also a questionable theme, discussed in the following section.

Theme 10 - Career goals: the employee’s or the manager’s responsibility
Considering that all of the participants were generally happy with their work, felt motivated and experienced a rather formalised goal setting process (regardless of how effective the actual goals were) it was surprising to hear that none of them had established a career goal. Apparently, the option was there in the goal setting process. Most participants would express themselves in terms of; “I have never had a specific career goal, not officially in the company nor in private, and I feel no need for it.” or “I have never had a formal career goal at the company or a more personal one either. The main objective is to work with interesting assignments; it's as simple as that.” Although interesting assignments might be very real and tangible for the employee it does not qualify as the kind of formalised career goal older employees relate to. Hansson et al. (1997) identified a risk in that older employees who achieved their career goals could start to feel detached from their career. It wasn’t obvious whether the lack of a career goal was because employees did not feel a need for them or because the company did not encourage them.
One employee reported that although she felt no need herself “…organisations may need career plans for younger employees so they can easily identify a clear career path if they are to invest their future with the company.” Another employee suggested the same for older employees; “Even though I have approximately 6 years left to retirement I feel that a career plan would be relevant since 6 years is still quite a lot of time. A career plan would be reassuring as me and my manager would agree on my professional direction and establish an end goal to work towards.” Interesting enough, this was communicated by the oldest participant. Why then, did not employees who wanted a career goal enforce one for themselves? Considering the other parts of the interview, the participants all appeared to be forceful employees with good relations to their managers and no fears of speaking their mind or considering a change of careers or employers. Did they simply not put too much importance in career goals?

Certain employees were comfortable with having informal career goals. What they valued was a good relationship with their manager. They also felt that it was part of the manager’s responsibility to consider career development for the employees; “I’ve never had a specific career goal, not officially in the company nor in private, and I feel no need for it. It’s more important that my manager looks out for my best interest.” or “I have no formal career goal with my manager although my manager is good at discussing different issues and quickly giving feedback. This is usually done in frequent and short conversations.” In contrast, other employees felt that it was the individuals responsibility to establish and achieve career goals, regardless of how informal they were; “I’ve never had a formal career goal. I think that it's very much up to the individual employee to guide his or her career development. My current change of career path was initiated by myself.” or “As an experienced employee you have an overview over the organisation and know which jobs and which assignments are interesting. Should an opportunity occur it's therefore easier to know what to look for.” A different employee working on a specific project felt that his career development was implied by his position; “When the strategic goals have been accomplished by this project I will most likely have to switch jobs within or outside the company. I’m not worried as I see opportunities within my current area and also in other parts of the organisation.”

Many participants felt that career goals were difficult to set for non-managers and implied that this was an area open for improvements; “Career plans for specialists seem to be a larger challenge than for managers. Managers usually experience a more natural progression, either towards executive management or middle management. For specialists there’s more of a vacuum.” or “Many organisations try to encourage their specialists to
become managers which is not the obvious direction. The employee might become frustrated in a new position which is not suited for his natural talents and the company might lose their most productive employee.”

In conclusion, the employees in this study did not have formal career goals and, except for one, they did not seem to prioritize them highly. However, informal career goals were more popular. Opinions differed whether it was the responsibility of the individual employee or the manager. Informal goals were valuable as they eliminated uncertainty. Uncertainty is a relative term. Chronologically older employees might be uncertain as to how they will spend their last years working. Younger employees might be frustrated because they have more years over which career goals will have an effect. Employees with families might have concerns over their financial health or the timing of promotions vis-à-vis family milestones. No single age group stood out from the rest on this. Although formal career goals do not appear to be a one-for-all solution, it does seem important for employees to establish with their managers how they will consider formal and informal career goals and whose responsibility it actually is.

3.3 Development of skills

One research question was posed covering the informants’ perception of their development of skills and two themes emerged from the interviews; ‘Limited opportunities for training among experienced workers’ and ‘Avoiding training because of work load’.

3.3.1 Research question 5: How do older employees rate their own skills and how do they maintain and develop them?

During the analysis of the last research question two themes emerged that are closely related to each other.

Theme 11- Limited opportunities for training among experienced workers

Three of the participants had during the last couple of years finished different types of certifications or degrees that were quite extensive. In all three cases, the initiative came from the employee and the company had been supportive in either paying tuition fees, course material, providing time to study or a combination of those factors. The three employees were male and representing all three conceptualisations of old age, chronologically,
organisationally and life stage. In distinct contrast, the remaining five employees ranged from no training at all to only a few days training per year. A number of reasons were given; “I have had limited training at the company and I have a hard time finding relevant internal courses.” or “I have attended approximately one course per year during the last three years. The company encourages training but the opportunities are limited after attending the standard internal courses. I find that as the years pass, employees become specialised and the challenge of finding relevant courses increases.” Even the three employees who finished external educations agreed that the opportunities became limited for experienced employees.

The company is large enough to provide internal training but employees with several years of service quickly found that their options were reduced after attending a few appropriate internal courses. Their only alternative was to find external ones of which there are countless to choose from. The challenge then is to find relevant quality courses that your manager will pay for out of the numerous courses available; “The company and my manager encourages training but the opportunities are limited. Experienced specialists are often more skilled than the instructors on internal courses and it can be a challenge to find relevant external ones.” Since managers often refer to internal courses, finding external ones become the responsibility of the individual employee. When managers are asked to approve, they have to balance the perceived value against the actual cost which can rule out some of the most attractive (and expensive) alternatives.

Again, participants reported more options for managers than for non-managers; “There are quite a lot of options for managers in a variety of subjects such as "motivation", "change management" & "setting direction" seminars.” Similar to career development and career goals, training also seems to be facilitated for managers. There could be a dose of envy in these descriptions, non-managers identifying managers as prioritised in all aspects. But the detailed arguments and the recurrence by so many different participants suggest that the comments do reflect the reality. It appears to be a challenge, in at least this company, to provide non-managers with the same opportunities. On-the-job training might maintain the required skills to a certain extent but it is a reactive approach. Employees will find it challenging to develop into new areas and eventually might be tempted to seek other challenges elsewhere. Fossum et al. (1986) did warn that if employees have limited opportunities for acquiring new skills or are sceptical to their value, their knowledge may deteriorate.

Predominantly years of service determined how many options the employees perceived that they had. An organisationally old employee with several years of service in the same
company was subject to an increasing risk of not receiving relevant training. If the employee also had remained in the same position the risk increased. Fortunately, alternatives to external courses do exist. One employee described how her being member of professional networks did benefit her in terms of training and maintenance of skills. Socialising with other professionals and discussing interesting topics and experiences on seminars did inspire her; “I’m part of various professional networks, some of which are assembled during working hours. These act as a substitute for traditional courses where participants can interact with other professionals and become inspired on different topics.” Another unexpected option was having experienced colleagues lecturing instead of attending courses; “I have together with other colleagues lectured on internal courses. To be an instructor has proven very challenging and you learn just as much as if you're attending a course yourself.” From a company perspective, this is highly attractive as they avoid the cost of an external course for the experienced employee while educating their more junior work force. A chronologically older employee had typically worked more years during his career but may have changed industries and roles during those years. The challenge here is slightly different. When joining the company, employees are subject to a rigorous initiation period with a standardised educational package. That period had the potential of being frustrating to older professionals that were used to producing a certain amount of work on a daily basis. Going back to the school desk for a number of weeks could be frustrating and is perhaps more suitable for junior colleagues. There might be a need for a specialised introduction package, suited for older employees.

Theme 12 - Avoiding training because of work load

An influence on the daily motivation and satisfaction was to a certain extent the current work load; “My overall impression of coming to work varies depending on the work load at the job and the amount of stress in my personal life.” or “Prior to my maternity leave, my work motivation and satisfaction was negatively affected by the workload at the company. We were definitely understaffed. Since then, the company has employed more workers and the situation is in better balance today.” That motivation and satisfaction are affected by stress is only natural. However, these effects appeared once again, in relation to training and education. Several participants reported that their work load affected their desire for training “I have turned down some suggestions (on courses: authors comment) because of fears of becoming more stressed at work.” and “When offered an external course I declined because of fear of increasing work load. Attending the course would only mean that my work load increases.
The company increases the overall skill level but there's no immediate gain for me as an employee.” In contrast to the three male participants who finished external certifications and degrees, all the three female participants reported that they had avoided training because of fear of additional stress. They were also more suspicious to the added values of training; “Doubt about the added value of a course makes it easier to decline and just keep on working, learning whatever you need at the job.” and “The validity of training decreases when the processes are not used in the department. Managers can’t insist on courses when the new skills are not used in the daily work.” A general conclusion is that managers must enforce work processes that use the knowledge gained from training. Otherwise, the skills become obsolescent and future enrolments will be questioned by the employees if the only outcome is an increased work load. Lord and Farrington (2006) argued that older employees in particular need to know that their efforts are valuable.

Furthermore, a gender difference did appear in this area. Women seem to take on more responsibility for the team, or at least that is what they communicated. Out of our participants, the women were also more afraid of stress while the male participants never mentioned this aspect. It doesn’t have to be a symptom of women not tolerating as much stress as men. It could just as well be that because women, to a larger extent, feel responsible for the team at work and for the family at home, they have to consider more factors when evaluating their own resources.

In this study, the target company encouraged the employees to educate themselves and participate in courses and training. Contrary to findings by Simpson et al. (2002) and Lord and Farrington (2006) no signs of discrimination against older employees, roles or gender were reported or even inclined. Still, the amount of training was scarce. There was no significant difference in chronological age, organisational age or life stage when comparing the two participants who had spent the most amounts of days training with the two in the bottom of the league. Neither of them had specific career goals but the two employees training were working on specific projects in the company with goals, deadlines and distinct requirements regarding capabilities. The two participants not training were employed in traditional positions and had attended the standard training programs a long time ago. Because of their organisational age, any kind of new training could potentially be relevant for them. As they were lacking a career goal, spending time on a course or a seminar only had negative results for them. Their decisions were clearly following a process described by expectancy theory (Latham, 2006). They reasoned that their rewards would be small or none because their acquired skills wouldn’t be used in a new project and their current work processes wouldn’t
change after them attending a course. However, their work load would increase which would lead to less time for family and friends accompanied by stress. If they attended and passed a certification, nothing would materially change. If they attended and failed, they were risking disappointing their manager. The implication is that even though the company and managers did not discriminate and did indeed encourage training, it just wasn’t good enough. Managers must provide clear incentives to why employees should spend time and energy on training. It seems feasible that this is more relevant for chronologically and organisationally older employees. The remaining four employees that were in the mid range of these two extremes were either chronologically younger and predicted more years of their careers left or they were organisationally younger and still had the standard training programs unfinished. Even though they were lacking career goals they did have certain incentives to push towards training. Older employees without career goals and without any other incentives to develop their skills simply choose the better option, not to spend time doing something with questionable rewards.

### 3.4 Final conclusions

In many studies, peoples’ value for time and money are aligned as two opposites. It is assumed that at every point in time, a person will either value time or money the most and act according to that. Research has been done whether the preference for one or the other changes with age. The interviews in this study suggest a different approach. Time and money are not two opposites but actually two sides of the same coin. If a person does have money, he will also want to have time to enjoy it and vice versa. With regards to work motivation and possible effects of age, the opposite of time and money is actually the value a person attributes to the career itself. In this study, chronologically younger employees placed greater value in their careers and reported that they would continue to work even if they became financially independent. Older employees attributed less importance to their careers and said that they would choose early retirement in order to have more time if they had money to enjoy it. If they didn’t have the financial strength they would continue to work, but their value for time and money would still be the same. They would prefer time and money ahead of their work.

Is there then nothing organisations can do to keep their employees motivated and productive after employees reach the phase where they value other aspects of life more than their careers? Collins (2001) proposed that companies should hire employees and managers
that are highly self-motivated and unlikely to prefer retirement. One could argue whether this is the easy way out or simply an impossible task. Assuming that highly self-motivated persons are limited, companies will have an interest to cater for the lesser half. A number of points have appeared in the themes constructed based on this study, summarised in figure 2.

Attractive work conditions, such as flexible working hours or working from home, are important especially for employees in certain life stages. It wouldn’t be a surprise to find women with young children valuing these attributes the most. A company that wants to attract and retain skilled women professionals could enhance those aspects of their work environment. Companies need to recognise that employees needs for independence, influence and recognition changes with chronological age. Values and motives are highly affected by the life stage. Goals and self-efficacy seems to vary with the organizational age, where self-efficacy is accumulated during the years and career goals and task goals will change with the role of the employee. Rewards and job satisfaction will be impacted by the type of job. The preference for different types of jobs may be impacted by all three age conceptualizations.
Apart from having a market salary that caters for the private financial needs, employees place importance in the aspect of fairness concerning financial compensation. Rate cuts or inferior promotions can be accepted if they are perceived as fair. It’s the responsibility of the company to communicate its arguments and convince its employees of their rightfulness. Companies also have to be conscious about the professional aspects of jobs and any potential change to them. Experienced employees who attribute a great deal of importance in their career will be mindful of their work description and the skills of the manager. They might also be responsive to changes in the professional content of their jobs. Independence or perceived independence is another important aspect. Chronologically older employees have been reported to place greater value in this (Lord & Farrington, 2006). However, independence in work roles can also result in individual responsibility for career development and career goals. It appeared to be valuable to establish if individual employees preferred formal or informal goals and who should be responsible for them, the manager or employee. This was relevant for all participants in the study, regardless of age conceptualization.

Stereotypes regarding different types of jobs can, as all other stereotypes, be limiting. In this context, stereotypes regarding chronological age may be unnecessary and destructive. Organizations should focus on allocating the right individual to the right position and do their best in ignoring prejudice. Another potential risk factor in peoples’ career development is entrapment after several years of service in a position. The situation can rapidly change from being favorable, having the employee gaining experience and skills, to a state where the employee feels trapped in his position. This can be demoralizing and difficult to overcome. Employees can use the help of extraordinary events to overcome these hurdles but they may be tempted to look towards other employers. Considering the safety of the Scandinavian social security and the evolving culture where changing employers every couple of years is not only acceptable but even preferable, companies may find themselves struggling to retain experienced employees. One tool for retention is to keep workers skilled. Unfortunately, investing in education also increases the severity of employees quitting. However, modern organizations in knowledge intensive businesses tend to favor the maintenance and development of skills. The participants in this study explained the challenge of finding relevant courses in combination with a stressful workday requiring their full attention. Managers should not settle with encouraging education but have to provide clear incentives for employees to engage in skill development. One way is to make sure that the new skills are implemented in the daily work processes of the job. Although experienced workers with several years left to retirement can see training as an investment, often enough employees will
consider their personal situation and refrain from putting more pressure on themselves if they
don’t see the benefits of it.

3.5 Methodological considerations and suggestions for future research

Research in general has to consider its relation to the two concepts validity and reliability. A
study is reliable if it will yield similar results when performed several times. Reliability is
highly valued in quantitative studies. When using a qualitative approach the researcher
consciously trades away some reliability against more validity (Hayes, 2007). If eight
employees were selected at a different company their answers would most likely be different.
Mainly because the same interview guide would result in eight completely different
interviews. Since all participants have different backgrounds and lives, it’s not reasonable to
expect that all answers are similar. All the more important then that the study actually
investigates what it portrays that it does, that the study is valid.

There’s no question about the fact that the participants in this study met the different
requirements of age, defined in chapter 1. Although the interview guide was created based on
previous research there are two obvious risks to why the interviews could be deemed as less
valid. Participants could have misinterpreted the questions and conversations as they were not
aware of the theoretical findings. This is considered to be less likely since the participants
were informed about the subject before the interviews. Answers were consistent with each
other implying that either all of them understood the subject of discussion or all of them did
not. Since their answers could be analyzed across previous findings they appeared to be
relevant for the area. The other risk was that participants, consciously or subconsciously, gave
biased answers. Naturally, people want to give the perception of them being skilled,
motivated, hard working and so on. This was partially controlled by not asking questions such
as “are you motivated?” or “is money the most important job feature for you?”. Instead,
participants were asked to relate to a hypothetical situation with them winning big on the
lottery. Also, they were asked to describe several aspects of their work- and personal life,
making it possible to consider inconsistencies that might appear due to biased answers.
Finally, many of the interesting themes appeared as a result of truly honest answers that did
not portray the participants in a favourable position. Examples were employees not knowing
their goals, not being able to find employment or considering quitting their jobs because of
different factors.

A complicating factor was that interviews were held in Swedish and the thesis, including
quotations from interviews, is written in English. This opens for the risk of important aspects
being lost in translation. The qualitative approach is very much an interpreting method and the art of language is highly sensitive to interpretations. This is evident when considering the different interpretations of the same holy texts in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Language was controlled by participants performing a member validation and reviewing summaries of the interviews including quotations from participants already translated into English. In other words, the participants have signed off the interpretations of the interviews and the quotations of their statements in English.

Furthermore, the actual choice of qualitative method can be disputed. The arguments in favour are outlined in chapter 2. A quantitative method would have required a completely different purpose and research question; more narrow and easily accepted or rejected. The purpose of the study was to “… explore older employees’ perception of work related needs and values, goal setting and development of skills.” This exploration resulted in 12 themes which hopefully may become the basis for future research and act as a guide on what areas new quantitative studies may be performed.
4. **References**

4.1 **Articles**


Kooij, D., Jansen, P., de Lange, A. & Dikkers, J. (in press). Age-related factors in the motivation to work: What we know and where we need to go.


### 4.2 Books


### 4.3 Electronic sources

[www.di.se](http://www.di.se) (search for article on Ericsson)
Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview guide

Changes in needs and values
- You wake up on a Tuesday morning, 7 am, how do you feel about going to work?
- Suppose that you would win the lottery, would you then continue to work? If not, what would it take for you not to quit?
- How important are income and promotion opportunities for you? How important is leisure time?
- How do you balance your career and personal life?
- What are the most important aspects of a job that makes one organisation better than another?
- How important are the softer aspects of a job to you? E.g. the social responsibility of a company, the product benefiting many individuals, the feeling of a job well done, recognition and appraisal from managers?
- How important is your manager's capabilities to you?
- How important is it for you to feel independence in your role at work?
- What would the benefits and drawbacks be of changing jobs today?
- If you were not satisfied with one aspect of your job, what would you do about it? Is quitting an option?

The effects on goal setting
- How do you work with goals in your organisation today?
- How important are goals in your daily work?
- Please describe the process of goal setting and what goals do you have today.
- How important is your career to you? What are your career goals? When do you expect to reach them?

Development of skills
- On a yearly basis, how many days do you spend off work developing your skills on a course or corresponding activity?
- Do you attend courses and trainings to the extent you would like to?
- Is the situation similar for your colleagues?
- How do you and your manager make sure your skills are maintained?
- How would you rate your own skills, are they up-to-date?
Appendix 2

Hello

and thank you for participating in this project! This study will be used in my bachelor thesis in organisational psychology. The subject is work motivation and the findings will hopefully be of value to various HR strategies in the future.

The interviews will be scheduled for 1 hour in the HR lounge, located all the way down in the HR corridor on the first floor. Naturally, you will be anonymous participants in the study. There's no need for any preparation by you before the interview. A couple of distinct areas from each of your interviews will be summarised by me and sent to you for comments. This is a technique called member validation which confirms that my interpretation of our discussion is aligned with yours. You will be asked to comment on the findings from your own interview and it should ideally only take a few minutes for you to review. All of your time should be registered on the project "Corporate HR Tasks"; task "HR Misc.".

I look forward seeing you,

Best regards

Robert