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The psychology of ownership: Analysis of a Norwegian worker cooperative

A qualitative study of how shared stock ownership shapes employee's attitudes towards their workplace.

Master's thesis in Work and Organizational psychology
Supervisor: Anne Iversen
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Foreword

This thesis concludes my master's in work- and organizational psychology and five years of psychology studies at NTNU, the University of Queensland, and the University of Bologna. Writing this evokes a sense of sadness, as it marks the end of my chapter in life as a naïve psychology student. However, I mostly feel contentment and joy, as I look fondly back at what I have learned and the great people I have met. The process of writing a master's thesis about employee attitudes in a shared employee ownership model has been time-consuming, and at times confusing. It began when I and a fellow student contacted an organization of interest. I was intrigued by the uniqueness of their employee-owned organizational model and the democratic structure involved with it.

During my time working on this project, my supervisor Anne Iversen has been an immensely knowledgeable resource, with insightful comments about the subject matter and remarks about my approach towards it. I always felt encouraged after our conversations, especially considering how Anne demonstrated enthusiasm about the data I had collected and the potential of the project I was conducting.

I need to thank the informants who said yes to participating and giving their time to provide me with the necessary insights for completing this master's thesis. I also would like to thank the key members of the organization I spoke with, who were most helpful. Another thanks goes to my fellow classmates, who provided a friendly and supportive social climate. Making the process of writing this thesis much more enjoyable than it should have been. Finally, I need to thank my family and friends for their encouraging words and support.

Thomas Bentsen

May, 2023

Abstract

The current thesis examines how shared employee ownership shapes employee attitudes by exploring a Norwegian worker cooperative. Previous literature has failed to reach a consensus and adeptly explain the supposed effects of giving employees ownership shares (affective commitment, employee retention, increased performance) and the perceived meaning for employees. Psychological ownership, the sense of ownership a person feels, and organizational democracy, which delves into organizational justice and employee control, was chosen as the framework for understanding employees' attitudes towards ownership. A reflexive thematic analysis of data from 6 interviews produced the themes: how shared ownership is viewed as fair, expectations involved with employee ownership, factors in the working environment, and employee engagement. The findings indicate that attitudes towards employee ownership seem rooted in the fairness of the organizational model. For the informants, it appears that responsibility, autonomy, self-identity and belonging inform their view of ownership. With individual ownership being part of collective ownership. Several supportive management practices and organizational structures aid the experience of ownership. The democratic aspects of the current organization attributes towards an understanding of why previous literature has been conflicting, and the development of psychological ownership dimensions. Few studies has looked at worker cooperatives in relation to psychological ownership, meaning that more in-depth research designs are needed to understand employees' attitudes in ownership structures emphasize the same level of employee control as the current one.

Key words: Psychological ownership, Employee stock ownership, Worker cooperatives, Organizational justice, Employee control, Workplace satisfaction, Reflexive thematic analysis.

Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven forsøker å se hvordan delt ansatteierskap former ansattes holdninger, ved å utforske et norsk arbeiderkooperativ. Tidligere litteratur har ikke oppnådd konsensus eller evnet å forklare i rik detalj antatte effekter ved å gi ansatte eierandeler (affektiv forpliktelse, fastholdelse av ansatte, økt prestasjon) og hva betydning det har for ansatte. Psykologisk eierskap, følelsen av eierskap en person føler, og organisasjonsdemokrati, som innebærer organisasjonsrettferdighet og medarbeiderkontroll, ble valgt som rammeverket for å forstå ansattes holdninger til eierskap. En refleksiv tematisk analyse av data fra 6 intervjuer produserte temaene; hvordan delt eierskap blir sett på som rettferdig, forventninger knyttet til eierskap av ansatte, faktorer i arbeidsmiljøet og ansattes engasjement. Resultatene indikerer at ansattes holdninger til eierskap virker forankret i organisasjonsmodellens rettferdighet. For informantene ser det ut til at ansvarlighet, autonomi, identitet og tilhørighet informerer deres syn på eierskap, med individuelt eierskap som en del av kollektivt eierskap. Funnene fra studien indikerer flere støttende ledelsespraksiser og organisasjonsstrukturer som hjelper til med opplevelsen av eierskap. De demokratiske sidene ved dagens organisasjon bidrar til en forståelse av hvorfor tidligere litteratur har vært motstridende. Få studier har sett på arbeiderkooperativer i forhold til psykologisk eierskap, noe som betyr at mer dyptgående forskningsdesign er nødvendig for å forstå ansattes holdninger i eierskapsstrukturer som legger samme vekt på medarbeiderkontroll som den nåværende.

Nøkkelord: Psykologisk eierskap, Ansatt aksjeeierskap, Arbeidskooperativer, Organisatorisk rettferdighet, Ansatt kontroll, Arbeidsplasstilfredshet, Refleksiv tematisk analyse.

Just purchasing stocks doesn't necessarily create ownership, unless the business is concerned with what it means.

— Informant (1), page 49

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When hearing the phrase “employees as owners” people might be quick to think that it is a new and unique way to run a business. It’s a rarer ownership structure than most companies adhered to, but employee ownership has picked up interest in the latter part of the previous century (Kim et al., 2022). The truth is that the idea itself has existed for a long time. One of the earliest accounts of an employee-run business dates back to 1733. None other than Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States of America, was involved in the pursuit of forming an employee-owned business (Biswas, 2022). The story goes that Franklin sent journeymen, whom he had employed, to set up print shops across various cities in the U.S. The equipment was paid for by Franklin himself, as it was costly and had to be shipped from England. For the first six years, Franklin took one-third of the profits for himself, and after that, he gave the journeymen the option to purchase the equipment with the profits they had earned working in the print shops. This meant that they could own the business, primarily through equity, which was more available than cash back in the 1730s. Franklin himself wrote in his autobiography that “most of them did well”, and after six years they were “working for themselves” (Franklin, 1791, 1.4.36-48; Franklin, 1998, chapter 4).

Employee ownership is a business model that has been gaining attention in recent years as a potential solution to issues related to income inequality and corporate governance (Blasi, Freeman, & Kruse, 2019). Employee ownership involves the transfer of ownership or equity to employees in a company, giving them a direct stake in the company’s success (Rosen & Young, 2018). Research has shown that employee ownership can have numerous benefits, such as increased employee engagement, job satisfaction, and productivity (Bova et al., 2015). Despite these potential benefits, employee ownership remains relatively uncommon. In the United States, only about 6% of private sector employees have some form of ownership stake in their company (National Center for Employee Ownership, n.d., 2021). In Norway, the amount of company shares in the hands of their employees is 1% (Eide, 2022).

This raises questions about why employee ownership has not been more widely adopted, as well as what it means for employees managing their own businesses.

The US-, UK- and Norwegian governments, to name a few, aim to promote the number of employee-owners in private companies located within their jurisdiction through the use of schemes. These schemes involve various tax incentives aimed at encouraging a higher degree of employee ownership in companies. Some of these tax incentives are directed at the organizational level to facilitate ownership transition, such as reduced capital gains tax. For employees, they are offered income tax-free bonuses annually (Ivanov & Zaima, 2011). These incentives are correlated with the further increase of employee ownership in companies that have occurred in the last decade (Menke & Buxton, 2010).

The idea to increase employee ownership is to promote the workers' ownership interests in the company, and promote the employees' influence in decision-making, such as often found with worker cooperatives (Cheney et al., 2014; Pierce et al., 1991). The underlying belief is that employee stock ownership will motivate and translate into financial performance indirectly for the employees through the value of their stock (Kim & Ouimet, 2014), bridging the workers' interests with the companies. One of these interests, which reflects a growing trend in modern work life, is the need for autonomy (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Bakker & Leiter, 2017), especially among younger workers, who view autonomy as an essential for their satisfaction towards their workplace (Rožman et al., 2017). However, as of now there are very few studies, especially qualitative, that have explored how ownership is experienced by employees (McConville et al., 2020; Weber et al., 2020). Meaning that the existing literature lends a great deal to conceptual reasoning when making claims regarding changes employees' behaviours and attitudes, without the data to support it.

McConville et al. (2016) attempted to address the conceptual relationship between psychological ownership, which refers to a sense of ownership, and stock option plans, by

using a qualitative research design (Dawkins et al., 2017; McConville et al., 2016, 2020). The pretext is that the link between psychological and stock ownership has often been theorised, though few studies have explored this in-depth and illustrated not just certain effects, but how it impacts employees' attitudes and behaviours. McConville et al. (2016) results yielded little support for the relationship between the feeling of ownership and employee ownership in stock option planning, as a feeling of psychological ownership was found to play little to no part in the potential impact an employee stock option scheme would have on employees' attitudes towards their employer. Other subsequent studies have yielded conflicting results (Farhani et al., 2019; Storz et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021), meaning that we don't know enough about what employees think ownership does for them.

The study is an attempt to use psychological ownership, which pertains to the feeling a person has towards something and having a stake (Pierce et al., 2001), to explore some of the underlying psychological processes that have been much eluded to in the literature, in regard to behaviours, employee attitudes and performance in shared ownership structures. Therefore, the research question was formulated as such: *How does shared ownership shape employees' attitudes towards their workplace.* The research question will highlight psychological processes of those working a Norwegian employee-owned company, which functions as worker cooperative. This means that both control and ownership is in the hands of the employees (Cheney et al., 2014; Pierce & Rodgers, 2004). A more in-depth description and background of the organization and informants will be provided later in the method section. Before then I will detail the literature on both employee ownership and employee control in organizations and explain the concept of psychological ownership in the following section about the theoretical and empirical framework. These elements will aid in the later discussion surrounding the findings produced from a reflexive thematic analysis, derived from interviews with the mentioned employees of a Norwegian employee-owned company.

Theoretical and empirical framework

The thesis' research question is grounded in the study of attitudes and perceptions of employee's shared legal ownership in medium sized organization. First, I will break down aspects of legal employee ownership and organizational democracy, which explains the wider context of the organization explored in this study. These provide a framework for understanding the organizational structure, behaviours and attitudes involved. Following this is a description of psychological ownership, what theoretical and empirical considerations it entails, and how it pertains to topics of organizational psychology. Specifically, how the theoretical framework of psychological ownership can explain a sense of ownership amongst employees and attitudes towards the company.

Legal employee ownership

Legal employee ownership are instances where employees of a company have a degree of ownership of that mentioned company, often referred to as shared capitalism (O'Boyle et al., 2016). Ownership is through the possession of material or monetary values that are tied up to an organization, typically in the name of company shares (Blasi et al., 1996). Employee ownership is not a singular model, it can come about in different ways (stock option plans, worker cooperatives, direct ownership etc). The most common form is stock option plans, where employees within an organization are given the option to purchase or receive a certain number of stocks from a trust or fund, which is then managed on their behalf by trustees (Freeman et al., 2010). Stock option plans, also known as ESOPs, are a more common due to the fact that they are perceived as easier to implement, involving less structural changes to the organization than other forms of employee ownership (Pierce & Rodgers, 2004). Stock option plans are either called majority, where the employees have majority ownership, or mainstream, which is the most common form of employee ownership,

where employees do not have majority ownership of the company (Kaarsemaker & Poutsma, 2006).

Worker cooperatives is a less common form of employee ownership (Jackall & Levin, 2021). It's difficult to pinpoint exact numbers, as reports produce various results based on various samples and definitions, but there is consensus that worker cooperatives are less common than stock option planning (Blasi et al., 2019). Worker cooperatives are similar to stock option plans in that ownership is indirect, but workers are guaranteed a vote in the company's general assembly, as well having more of a voice in decision-making. Ownership is either employee-exclusive in worker cooperatives, or majority employee-owned (Cheney et al., 2014; Pierce et al., 2004). Stock option planning might entail voting right, and this is done by trustees on behalf of the employee-owners, but participation in decision-making processes are usually less common than in worker cooperatives (Pencavel, 2013). The most fundamental function of stock option plans is to provide employee benefits as a means to enhance business performance (Pendleton & Robinson, 2010). Worker cooperatives are meant to ensure stable workplaces by having employees as owners, with employee-owners being in control of the company through a number of structural elements. One of these is that employee owners are represented in strategic decision-making through their democratically elected representatives in the company board. Some worker cooperatives also involve electing company management (Cheney et al., 2014).

Some employee stocks are called restricted stocks, which are instances where the acquisition is based on them meeting certain criteria, either meeting performance goals or working for a specific period of time (Freeman, 2007). Some companies allow employees to acquire an unlimited number of stocks, often at market price or with a discount, where typically the company ownership entails both those within the organization, such as employees, and investors from outside the organization who are not employed or tied to the

organization in any other formal way. Other companies provide stocks at a fixed rate, and often at a fixed price. This approach is more closely associated with companies that aim to have higher degree of ownership within their organization (Blasi et al., 1996).

One of the first accounts in modern times of employee stock option planning was in 1956, with a San Francisco-based company called Peninsula Newspapers, Inc (Menke & Buxton, 2010). What was new about the employee stock option planning created by Louis O. Kelso was that it functioned as a way of business succession. In this case to transition ownership from its two founders, who were both in their 80s at the time, to the employees and managers within the company. Kelso believed that the natural course of ownership should be for employees to take over, seeing as they were responsible for making the business successful. They also had knowledge about the ins and outs of the business. The founders shared the same view as Kelso and wanted to sell their shares to the employees when they retired. They feared that selling to a competitor would result in employees being laid off, cutbacks that would result in lower quality, and a loss of the company's identity (Menke & Buxton, 2010).

Douglas Kruse (2022) reviewed the literature on employee ownership and found that: (1) it's linked with better company performance, (2) companies have higher stability, with fewer layoffs in recessions, which potentially leads to less unemployment in the overall economy, (3) employer stock tends to come on top of, rather than replacing regular complementation, leading to added wealth, (4) reduced economic inequality in employee-owned companies. Some of the potential cons were that: (1) employee ownership is subject to the free-rider problem, since the incentives are based on profits from shared effort rather than individual, (2) the effectiveness of employee ownership may be based on a complicated combination of supportive policies, such as employee involvement, job security and training, (3) workers can be exposed to financial risk, especially when the employee ownership is a

large part of the workers wealth, or it replaces others pay benefits (Blasi et al., 2018; Kruse, 2022).

Employee attitudes towards ownership

Previous literature has looked at employee attitudes in terms of workplace satisfaction, affective commitment, and employee retention (Sieger et al., 2011; Saari & Judge, 2004). Most frequently the emphasis is whether or not employees are satisfied with their ownership. Meaning that workplace satisfaction is frequently used, referring to the extent to which employees feel content or fulfilled by their employer, and how they feel negatively or positively towards work-related experiences (Weltmann et al., 2015). This shapes views employees have towards their workplace, and often correlated with work productivity, absenteeism and retention (McCarthy et al., 2010). This can be conflated with Job satisfaction, which refers to being pleased with the work task related to one's work (Saari & Judge, 2004). These two forms of satisfaction are usually related, and found to correlate positively with each other (Boles et al., 2001; Hira & Loibl, 2005).

Buchko (1992a, 1992b, 1993) and later Caramelli (2011) found that those who invested more financially into an their company perceived to have more affective commitment and satisfaction towards their company. Although often with employee stock option planning it's found that employees often view it as detached financial bonus, where a certain investment results into a financial profit, and it doesn't lead to any meaningful sense of affinity towards their workplace (Bolton & Houlihan, 2009; Weltmann et al., 2015), such as the case with (McConville et al., 2016). These findings are based on stock option plans. Basterretxea et al. (2019) however looked at attitudes in the context of worker cooperatives, using a qualitative design, and found rare insight into how attitudes where shaped through ownership in organizational model that emphasized the collective aspect. Employee attitudes were a reflection of collective aims, and deliberate human resource management seemed to be

involved (Basterretxea et al., 2019). Jackall and Levin (2021) argue that the democratic aspects of worker cooperatives informs ownership attitudes differently than other employee ownership forms.

In 1987, when stock option planning had seen an increase in popularity, Katherine Klein decided to test this distinction with three models for how employee ownership could positively affect employee attitudes (Klein, 1987; Rosen et al., 1986). The first model is the intrinsic satisfaction model, and it claims that ownership itself is critical for employee morale, where the more ownership the stock option plans provides in terms of stock, the more satisfied the employee owners will be. The second model is the extrinsic satisfaction model, which posited that the financial benefits is the most important aspect for employee satisfaction. This means that the most lucrative part of stock options is what the value of the company stock and what can the company bring towards the stock options. The third model, the instrumental satisfaction model, states that employee ownership increases worker participation, which leads to a higher degree of organizational commitment. This is highly dependent of whether the relevant company facilitates this process within its organizational structure (Buchko, 1992a). Klein's (1987) study, and subsequent follow-ups (Weber et al., 2020), found support for the first two models, with an added notion of how the third model may affect employee satisfaction. The results speak to how financial benefits are enticing, but that management practice and the attitudes of the employees are also very important.

Despite the positive effects of employee ownership, it can lead to some negative aspects. It's found to create high expectations among employees for greater involvement in decision-making and financial outcomes. If these expectations are not met, it can lead to disappointment and decreased motivation (Pierce & Rodgers, 2004) It can also create risk aversion among employees, who become more concerned about protecting their ownership stake than taking risks that could benefit the organization (Freeman et al., 2010). Employee

ownership can also lead to a reduced sense of job security among employees, as they may perceive that their jobs are more tied to the financial performance of the organization (Freeman et al., 2008; Pierce & Peck, 2018). In addition to this employee ownership can create tensions among employees who have different ownership stakes, interests, and perspectives. This can lead to conflicts and decreased cooperation (Pendleton & Robinson, 2010)

Organizational democracy

Organizational democracy is the practice of giving the employees a voice in the organization and involves empowering employees to participate in decision-making and increasing their autonomy (Johnson, 2006). This is often found to lead to increased job satisfaction and commitment, as transparency, trust and accountability between employees and management is often elevated (Unterrainer et al., 2011). It's found that organizational democracy, which highlights both employee control and organizational justice, is important for employees to feel a sense of emotional investment, as they perceive organizational processes as fair, and that their interest are considered (Weber et al., 2020). Employees also experience less prevalence of top-down management, which is beneficial in employee-owned organizations, where its ideal that employees themselves feel a sense of urgency towards ownership and their work (Johnson, 2006).

Employee control

Employee-controlled companies, also known as or self-managed companies, or worker cooperatives, are businesses that are managed by their employees (Freeman, 2007; Pérotin, 2013). Employee ownership and employee control are sometimes viewed as synonymous, such as Freeman et al (2010) defines it, but the matter of fact is that the two often exists without each other. Worker cooperatives are for example based on the principles of democracy, equity, and collective decision-making, where workers have a say in the

management and decision-making processes of the company (Lee & Edmondson, 2017; Pencavel, 2013). Employee control has been gaining popularity in recent years, particularly in the wake of the global financial crisis in 2008/2009 (Lampel et al., 2014), which highlighted the drawbacks of traditional hierarchical organizational structures. A higher degree of employee control in companies is an increasing trend, due to increasing demands of worker-participation and autonomy (Martela, 2019; Wren, 2020). In relation to employee ownership there's inclinations among scholars that it needs to entail a high degree of employee control to produce a sense of ownership and improved labour performance (McCarthy et al., 2010). The reason for this seems to be that a higher degree of employee control is correlated with employees and other shareholders being more aligned in terms of priorities towards the firm (Kim & Patel, 2017).

Organizational Justice

Like employee ownership, organizational justice is concept that has existed for a while and has had an increased interest due to the rise of employee control and self-management in modern organizations (Elovainio et al., 2001). Organizational justice refers to the perception of fairness by employees regarding the distribution of resources, decision-making processes, and interpersonal treatment within an organization (Colquitt, 2001). It's a crucial aspect of organizational behaviour and has been linked to important outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. There are three types of organizational justice: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (Greenberg, 1987; Moorman, 1991).

Distributive justice is the perceived fairness of outcomes or rewards, such as salaries, bonuses, and promotions. Rewards are allocated based on objective criteria and in a proportionate manner are more likely to perceive distributive justice (Colquitt, 2001).

Procedural justice refers to fairness of the procedures and processes used to make decisions,

such as resource allocation. Employees who perceive that procedures are transparent, consistent, and unbiased are likely to perceive procedural justice (Colquitt, 2001).

Interactional justice is stated as the perceived fairness of interpersonal treatment, with the respect and consideration shown by supervisors and colleagues. Employees treated with respect, dignity, and courtesy will more often experience interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001).

While organizational justice and self-managing seem different, they are closely related because self-managing organizations can be seen as a way of promoting organizational justice by empowering employees to take responsibility for their work and participate in decision-making processes (Mehmood et al., 2021). Higher degree of employee control in organizations is argued to enhance perceptions of organizational justice because it promotes transparency, consistency, and objectivity in decision-making processes. Employees are given greater control over their work and are more likely to feel that they are treated fairly and with respect (Bakke, 2010).

Psychological ownership

The concept of Psychological Ownership was conceived when Pierce et al. (1991) published a review paper, where they discussed their findings on the current employee ownership literature. Their conclusion was that employee ownership not only exists as legal phenomenon, but also manifest itself as state of mind which they called psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 1991). A decade later Pierce et al. (2001) published a paper in which they presented their definition of psychological ownership, and how it occurs within organizations. Since then, a number of follow-ups have been produced by Pierce and other researchers to understand psychological ownership in an organizational setting (Dawkins et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2021).

Psychological ownership refers to the feeling of having a stake in the outcome because of one's contribution or commitment (Pierce & Rodgers, 2004). Pierce et al. (2003) stated that

psychological ownership answers the question “what do I feel is mine?”. They describe it as the state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership, or part of it, is theirs, and that they are psychologically tied to the object (McConville et al., 2016; Pierce et al., 2003; Pierce et al., 1991). Feelings of possession, which is a more extreme version of psychological ownership, is the experience of something being an extension of the self, meaning it’s not only “mine” it’s also “a part of me” (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

Psychological ownership is conceptualized as self-driven perception that’s not upheld by any legal system, or that is recognized formally by anyone else. Meaning that someone can feel ownership over something not legally theirs or feel no sense of ownership towards something they legally own. The boundaries with which feelings of ownership are contained and determined are the results of the individuals feelings towards the target of ownership (Dawkins et al., 2015). Scholars pertain to two schools of thought regarding psychological ownership and what function it serves. Some argued that there’s an innate need to possess, and that the desire to possess and collect objects is found across cultures, and thereby stating that ownership is instinctive (Dawkins et al., 2015; McDougall, 1923). The other hypothesis argues there is no evidence to support this notion and assert that ownership is learned behaviour from early development processes. However, both of these hypotheses lack empirical evidence (Dawkins et al., 2017).

There is an agreement, despite a lack of consensus surrounding the function psychological ownership might have, that psychological ownership emerges because it satisfies certain human motives, some of them genetic and others of social in nature (Pierce et al., 2003). Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) suggested that psychological ownership serves three fundamental human needs, that make up the dimensions of PO. The first one is **efficacy**, which refers to peoples belief that they can successfully implement action, and subsequent the need to complete the task as an extension of their sense of control (Pajares, 1997). The second

one, **self-identity**, refers to the way in which people establish, maintain, and transform their self-identity through interactions with tangible and intangible objects that they target. Self-identity refer to how groups of people (social identity) and targets of possession acts a symbols through which people can identify themselves with. The third one, **Belongingness**, entails the need for a sense of place, or home, that exceeds the physical need to belong and satisfies the pressing psychological need to belong. This need is often manifested by owners of an organization as “having a place” that meet their social and emotional demands (Avey et al., 2009; Dawkins et al., 2017; Pierce et al., 2003).

Avey et al. (2009) later added **accountability** as a fourth dimension to the framework. Its defined as “the implicit or explicit expectation that one may be called on to justify one’s beliefs, feelings and actions to others” (Lerner & Telock, 1999, p. 255). Avey et al.’ (2009) distinction deviates from Pierce et al. (2001, 2003), as they argue that psychological ownership manifests itself when the individual feels: (1) efficacious about working with the target of ownership, (2) accountable for the target of the ownership, and (3) a sense of belongingness with the target of ownership (Avey et al., 2009). Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) theorized that perceived accountability and psychological ownership are separate states, and that the responsibility felt by an individual towards as target was derived from a sense of ownership, whereas Avey et al. (2009) argue that perceived accountability is a component of psychological ownership.

Olckers and Du Plessis (2012a) also added their point to the discussion of the framework by arguing that the dimensions Autonomy and Responsibility should be included as part of the needs psychological ownership satisfies. These two are less explored within the framework, but account for various support in the literature (Chen et al., 2020; Kim & Beehr, 2017). **Autonomy**, which is defined as the regulation of the self (Ryan & Deci, 2006), is in the context of ownership viewed as the ability exercise control over and object of possession

(Olckers, 2013; Olckers & Du Plessis, 2012b). Mayhew et al. (2007) noted that in businesses where employees are empowered in collective decisions-making and given the ability to exercise control over work arrangements, the manifestation of work-related attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment), will have an improved sense of ownership.

Responsibility refers to feelings implicit in the right to control associated with the experience of ownership (Olckers, 2013). Pierce et al. (2001) stated that when the individual's self is closely linked to the organizations, then a desire to maintain, enhance and protect that identity will result in an elevated sense of responsibility towards the target of ownership. Employees who feel more like owners believe that they have the right to influence the direction of organization (Olckers, 2013), and according to Rogers and Freundlich (1998), have a greater sense of responsibility than those that don't feel ownership. Wood and Winston (2007) state that being responsible involves liability to be called to account for themselves, whereas being accountable involves the acceptance of responsibility and showing voluntary transparency and answerability (Olckers, 2013), meaning that someone can be responsible without being accountable, and vice versa.

Psychological ownership plays a mediating role in the way employees perceive and interact with an organization. Javed & Idris (2018) argue that increased emphasis on the self-identity dimension can be achieved through increased voting rights. The effect of participation in such decision-making processes supposedly gives employee stronger sense of ownership. This also supports the previously mentioned point of higher employee control in improving employee attitudes towards ownership (Javed & Idris, 2018), which aligns the interests of the employee with other shareholders (Kim & Patel, 2017), and is found to reduce agency costs. Though as we saw at the beginning with McConville et al (2016) this might seem straightforward, but these results are not always found to produce satisfied and emotionally invested workers. Indicating that a greater qualitative understanding of how psychological

ownership is produced in such situations is needed to garner a more likely positive outcome (McConville et al., 2020).

How does psychological ownership occur?

Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) proposed experiences leading towards feelings of psychological ownership can be depicted as routes. These routes arise from the process of association of the individual with the target. The three routes are: (1) the degree of control an employee has over the target (control), (2) the extent to which the employee knows about the target (intimate knowledge), and (3) the level with which the individual invests themselves towards the target (self-investment) (Pierce et al., 2001, 2003). Pierce et al. (1991) stated that ownership can be defined according to three fundamental rights: (1) The right to receive information about the object/target's physical being or financial value (equity), (2) the right to information about the status of that which is owned (information), and (3) the right exercise a degree of influence over that which is owned (control).

Chi and Han (2008) built upon these routes that Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) detailed, and explore these in relation to formal- and psychological ownership. They define formal ownership as being associated with practices such as profit-sharing plans, participation in decision-making and access to business information. They conceptualize that formal ownership leads to psychological ownership via two forms of organizational justice, either distributive justice or procedural Justice. Formal ownership practices such as profit-sharing plans lead to distributive justice, which leads to psychological ownership. Formal ownership practices such as participation in decision-making and access to business information leads to procedural Justice, which then in turn leads to psychological ownership.

In Chi and Hans' (2008) conceptualization psychological ownership can be achieved without profit-sharing plans, or it can be achieved without participation in decision-making and access to business information, or with a combination of both. Their inclusion of

organizational justice as a link between Formal ownership and psychological ownership is an addition to the literature that has been adopted by other researchers (Zhang et al., 2021).

Though Chi and Han (2008) provides no specific criteria for what must be presented for the respective routes towards psychological ownership to be achieved, such as employee attitudes, organizational climate, or management. Nor do they delve into how this can be done effectively. There is lacking conclusive results on what formal ownership entails, which is something that has to be address going forward (Campbell Pickford et al., 2016).

There is an ongoing discussion around underlying two appraisal processes of psychological ownership, which contribute to an individual's sense of ownership: cognitive appraisal and affective appraisal (Kirk et al., 2015; Lee & Chen, 2011). The term appraisal is often used interchangeably with commitment, and relates to the foundation of attachment towards the object of ownership, as well as behaviours associated with it (Curcuruto & Griffin, 2018). Cognitive appraisal involves a rational evaluation of one's relationship with an object. This evaluation is based on factors such as the history of the object's acquisition, the effort invested in obtaining it, and the perceived control over its use (Brown & Zhu, 2016). Cognitive appraisal allows individuals to form a sense of ownership based on their perception of entitlement to an object. Affective appraisal is an emotional attachment to an object. This attachment is based on the positive feelings that arise from using, possessing, or being associated with the object (Sieger et al., 2011). Both cognitive and affective appraisals are necessary for psychological ownership to occur (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Individuals must believe that they have a rightful claim to an object (cognitive appraisal) and experience positive emotions associated with the object (affective appraisal) to develop a sense of ownership.

Promotive- and preventive psychological ownership

In the development of the concept of psychological ownership two distinct and independent forms have been proposed, promotive- and preventive psychological ownership (Avey et al., 2009; Avey et al., 2012). Both stem from regulatory focus theory (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 1998), which suggest that individuals have two self-regulatory systems. The promotive self-regulatory system relates to accomplishments and aspirations, whilst the preventive self-regulatory system relates to duties and obligations. Promotive psychological ownership focuses on fulfilling hopes and aspirations. For instance, if a manager or employee with promotive psychological is more likely to share information, they “own” with others, as they view this as beneficial, and this enhancement of the company is personally fulfilling (Alok, 2014; Ladan et al., 2017). Those who adopted the preventive approach in mainstream employee owned businesses were found to be less likely to share this information due the potential risk of change in status quo (Avey et al., 2009; Mortazavi & Shojaei, 2016).

Avey et al. (2009) suggests that both promotive- and preventive approaches have bearing towards psychological ownership, with promotive being a higher-order construct containing: self-efficacy, belongingness, self-identity, and accountability. Promotive entails the mentioned psychological ownership dimensions (efficacy, self-identity, belonging, accountability), and arguably the two suggested by Olckers (2013) (autonomy and responsibility), Promotive psychological ownership is characterized by individuals who feel “more efficacious towards the target, feel more accountable for what happens with respect to the target, experiencing a greater sense of belonging to the target, and feeling a sense of personal identification with the target” (Avey et al., 2012, p. 24). Preventive psychological ownership, which entails territoriality, relates to individuals that are concerned with avoiding punishment and meeting obligations, and are associated with more possessive traits

surrounding their organizational targets of ownership (Avey et al., 2009; Dawkins et al., 2017). Territoriality in ownership reflects attitudes and behaviour that are protective, of not wanting to share the object of ownership with others, and is related to weakened pro-social behaviours and performance in team-oriented settings (Olckers, 2013). Brown et al (2005) summarized territoriality behaviours as being “emanate” from psychological ownership, and that the two are distinct but related to each other.

Collective psychological ownership

Psychological ownership was initially conceived at the individual level, and how it occurs and affects the individual employee. In more recent year there has emerged an interest in how it can be defined on group level, as there is a growing recognition that collective psychological ownership plays an important part in the workplace (Jussila et al., 2015; Pierce & Jussila, 2010). Collective psychological ownership has been described as shift from “this is my company” to “this is our company” (Dawkins et al., 2015). For collective psychological ownership to be achieved individuals must feel a need for a social identity, they must develop a single and shared mindset on the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the collective towards the target of the ownership (Rantanen & Jussila, 2011). This social identity is seemingly affected by tenure, with employees that have higher tenure at the company reporting they feel more individual ownership than collective compared to those who spent less time in the organization (Dawkins et al., 2015).

An increasing body of literature has argued for the presence of collective psychological ownership within organizations and teams (Gray et al., 2020), as constructs within and relating to psychological are in constant development (Pierce et al., 2018; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2017). Findings suggest that collective psychological ownership can exist independently from the individual level, where employees with a higher degree of co-worker interactions report stronger feelings of “this is our company” and low feelings of “this

is my company”, compared to those with less interactions (Henssen & Koiranen, 2021; Henssen et al., 2014). This interesting to note, as collective psychological ownership through collective employee ownership is linked to higher levels of stewardship behaviours (Henssen et al., 2014), which is when employee prioritize the company’s interest and needs above their own, and is found to improve the overall working environment (Martinovic et al., 2022; Nijs et al., 2022). Bernhard and O’Driscoll (2011) found that psychological ownership towards the organization had a stronger effect on behaviours that improve the working-environment compared to psychological ownership towards one’s own job. A person is more likely to have more control over one’s own job, and this is the explanation given by Peng and Pierce (2015) as to why the majority of employees feel more ownership towards their job than their organization.

Summary of framework

The framework of this thesis delves into organizations that are employee owned, with some being employee-controlled, and how this relates to other organizational psychology topics such as attitudes towards the workplace. More specifically how this control and ownership is related to feelings of organizational justice, and psychological ownership. The aim of this section of the thesis is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the scientific literature and introduce certain areas that are relevant for the organization that this thesis will be looking more closely at. Following the framework presented I will in the subsequent section detail the chosen method of this thesis, and how this study attempts to answer the research question, by producing relevant findings with an added discussion around it. The presented framework will be used to understand these findings, and aid in the discussion surrounding them.

For this thesis I will attempt to use qualitative data, which previous studies have lacked (Dawkins et al., 2017; McConville et al., 2016, 2020), to explore in richer detail

psychological ownership, a complex and developing concept, in a Norwegian worker cooperative from a work- and organizational psychology perspective. More specially not just what influence psychological ownership might have on employee-owners satisfaction towards their workplace, but also what these affects might look like, and the areas of the organization they pertain to. Previous psychological ownership studies have also primarily focused on employee stock option planning, as they're a more common form of employee ownership (Blasi et al., 2018). But these attempts produced mixed results. The nature of worker cooperatives, with aspects of employee control and democracy embedded, provides a novelty for this study in the exploration of the framework. This is especially in regards collective ownership and how is perceived by the individual, which is a point we unfortunately we know far too little about in modern work life (Nijs et al., 2022; Pierce & Jussila, 2010). Therefore, the research question for this thesis was formulated as: *How does shared ownership shape employees' attitudes towards their workplace.*

Method

This section will detail the chosen method and research design used to explore how different aspects of employee owners' attitudes can be explained through the concept of psychological ownership within the context of a Norwegian employee-owned IT-company, where organization democracy is emphasized through employee participation and control in decision-making process. Firstly, an explanation of why the specific research theme was chosen, followed by an explanation of the epistemological position. I will provide details regarding choice of method, the design of the study, and the processing of data. Lastly there will be a description of the analytical approach used, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022), and how the work was executed in its six phases.

It is important to address consideration about trustworthiness in the research process and findings. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985) trustworthiness in qualitative research involves four main criteria: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) conformability (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986). To enhance both credibility and dependability it is important that methodological decisions made are explained and justified according to the standards that are agreed and accepted within qualitative research design (Nowell et al., 2017). Therefore, in the following section I will explain the research approach taken, and the decisions that were made relating to it. This refers to the sampling process, conducting interviews, and being as transparent as possible about the analysis of data and subsequent rationale.

To address transferability, I will follow the recommendations of Clarke and Braun (2022), and provide a description containing non-personal information about the informants, following Sieber (1992) recommendations. Also, I will describe the company they work for and the organizational context. Giving contextual information is important, as the previously mentioned literature on the relevant subject matter applies to cases across multiple countries

and industries. The last criteria, conformability, refers to not allowing personal values or theoretical notions influence the research conducted. This was addressed by providing informants freedom to express themselves, which is something that I will expand upon later in this section. The element of reflexivity of this study's approach also provides a mindfulness about how personal values or theoretical notions might affect the research process.

Background for the theme and research question

During the late spring of 2022, 4 months before informants were recruited, I and a fellow master's student in Work and organizational psychology at NTNU, together contacted representatives of an IT-organization, with the hopes of exploring psychological aspects of their employee-owned company. The reason for this interest was rooted in employee ownership and control in modern organizations, and what it might mean within the context of work- and organizational psychology. Both me and fellow student were familiar with the organization in question, and discussed how we should go forwards with this request, especially as we were going to write two separate theses with different perspectives and topics involved. My part of the request detailed the initial research question, which was: *How stock-ownership influences workplace culture*. The question was rooted in a curiosity about what employee stock ownership might entail towards attitudes among employees.

In the initial designing of the study, I and a fellow student worked together in detailing how our respective methodological approaches should be considered. We started to work more separately, once our projects became methodologically different. When it came time to interviewing the informants the initial emphasis was to gather as much information about the organization through informants, and how they understood it. The representatives themselves also provided information about the organization, which further enriched my understanding.

Description of the organization

The organization at hand is an IT consultancy firm solely based in Norway and was founded in the early 2000s. It spans across 3 main locations in Norway and provides services such as IT- and business counselling, IT- and business development, data driven innovation, design, and user experience (UX). The company predominantly operates within the Scandinavian marketplace, and is considered medium sized, with approximately 180 employees, who mostly consist of IT-developers, UX-designers, and technicians. The organizational structure is regarded as flat and reflects virtues of Scandinavian work culture (Grenness, 2003; Warner-Søderholm, 2012). This is through the use of autonomy, developmental opportunities, and employee empowerment.

The organizational model chosen by the firm at its inception was named employee ownership model, and functions as a worker cooperative, with ownership being employee exclusive, and control being in the hands of the employees (Cheney et al., 2014; Pierce & Rodgers, 2004). The control employees have is formalized through a general assembly, where every employee-owner receives voting rights. In addition to this there are a number of management practises and structural aspects that facilitate this employee control in meetings, and on an individual level. The majority of the company board makeup is current employee-owners, who are elected democratically. Other board members are former employees, managers, or CEOs, with the addition of members who are external from the organization. This is to provide the organization with an added outside perspective in strategic decision-making.

The ownership model states that the company shares are to be solely distributed to company employees, who when recruited can purchase a restricted amount of company shares. Employees are given the option to acquire more shares over the next years, until they reach a restricted stock limit. This limit is put into place to ensure that the equal ownership is

sustained. If an employee leaves the company, they are contractually obligated to sell back their shares to the company. The organization utilizes a wage compensation model that states that employees receive no commissions. Employee engagements are evaluated in part to their adherence to the organization's cultural norms, often stated as their "life rules". The employees have predominantly a background, within IT-development, finance, and business consulting.

Choice of method:

Data was collected from 6 informants from the IT-organization described above. This study uses a qualitative research design with an explorative approach, based on a lack of qualitative research on psychological ownership and worker cooperatives, and what it means for employees in stock-ownership structures (McConville et al., 2016; Wren, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Qualitative research design fits well in this instance, as there is a lack of literature that adequately can explain the phenomena explored (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Therefore, the study applies an explorative and unstructured approach, though eventually I sought the need to include some structure in terms of the interview-guide. This was due to the topics explored being considered broad (employee ownership model, motivation, engagement, workplace identity, work performance and management), which could lead to informants exploring different avenues. This means it would be uncertain if data saturation would be possible, and enough insights on the same topics would be granted (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 1999). These topics were chosen to acquire general knowledge about the organization and the informants' views about it.

The method of thematic analysis was used to extract various themes from the data. More specifically the method of reflexive thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2022; Clarke et al., 2015), which is based upon the sturdy and readily approach for analysing, developing and interpreting patterns within a qualitative dataset. These patterns arise through the systematic

process of coding data, which leads to the development of themes. Thematic analysis emphasizes the lived experiences of informants within the framework of an employee-owned organization, and is in line with the experiential nature of research questions related to thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017). The reflexivity in thematic analysis assumes the notion that the researcher plays an active role, which encourages reflection and being critical towards one's own understanding of the phenomena investigated (Clarke & Braun, 2022). This means reviewing what, why and how things have been done throughout the process, and how it impacts the research being conducted. It boils down to the researcher being aware of their position relative to the material they are analysing.

In light of the noted reflexivity, it's important to detail my background for understanding the current study and research question. My master's in work and organizational psychology, which this thesis is a part of, focuses on how an improved work-life can be achieved from a psychological perspective, and the respective research methods involved, both qualitative and quantitative. I previously completed bachelor in psychology from NTNU, providing me with a general introduction to areas of psychology, as well as research methods involved. I had unintentionally attained some familiarity of it before filling in an application to NSD (Norwegian centre for Research Data) and contacting the described organization. This, together with my educational background is something that might have implications towards the generating- and analysis of data, and conclusions drawn from the results, and is something I as the researcher need to be mindful of.

The epistemological position taken in this study, grounded in a contextualized approach, assumes that the informants use of language communicates their views and experiences on working within an employee-owned organization. Due to lack of qualitative research within this framework, and thereby uncertainty of what this means for employees, the perspective became grounded in the data, leading me towards taking an inductive

orientation towards the data (Clarke et al., 2015). In regard to focus on meaning the approach is predominantly more semantic than latent, as intended. However, both the coding and analysis of data is likely to contain a variation of them. Clarke and Braun (2022) state that the variations in approaches within reflexive thematic are not dichotomous and operate on a continuum. Within reflexive thematic analysis there are a number of approaches that can be used, and Braun and Clarke (2021) argue that instead of forcing something that doesn't fit into a given approach the research should consider changing element of their approach to fit their project better. This means that an approach towards thematic is likely to contain elements of each side, as is the case with the current thesis in regard to stages of analysis and interpretation of data. However, it should be made clear which way the researcher intends to predominantly lean towards (Clarke & Braun, 2022). This point also applies to the experimental orientation chosen towards analysis.

As mentioned, the current thesis follows the recommendations of Clarke and Braun (2022) of transferability, in order to highlight generalisability. This so that others can judge whether or not the current thesis is applicable to their context (Carminati, 2018; Polit & Beck, 2010). Morse (1999) states that generalizability in qualitative research can be achieved by use of theories and previous research literature. In light of the point Braun and Clarke (2021) made about not forcing an approach where it doesn't fit, the thesis lends elements of idiographic, or analytical generalisability later on when discussing findings, which means the thesis will attempt to capture conceptual-oriented elements of analysis to aid in theoretical generalisability. Something more applicable to deductive approaches (Clarke & Braun, 2022), demonstrating how the current thesis methodology is not purely inductive. The reason for including this is to address the conceptual development and theoretical disputes within the psychological ownership framework (Dawkins et al., 2017).

Background for data collection:

Both me and fellow student established a dialogue with key members of the organization. We kept separate dialogues ongoing with the key members. The initial phase of the dialogue was done via email, where the outline for the thesis project was detailed, as well as the topic areas. Thereafter I met with some of the key members and further explained the outline, timeframe, and requirements from the potential informants of the project. This ongoing dialogue was maintained throughout the data collection process, which further garnered insight into the organization. The key members aided in curating a list of potential consultant-informants I could contact, based on their availability. In addition to this, the key members were helpful in providing materials and tips for where I could find more relevant information about employee ownership and their organization.

Selection process

The reason for wanting employees that were consultants, and not managers or others, to achieve an understanding based on the accounts of employee-owners, reflecting attitudes of those who identify themselves with the majority group of the described organization. This is important considering the nature of the organization, which is exclusively employee owned. Managers often experience a higher degree of control and influence than regular employees (Elovainio et al., 2001), therefore they were not considered relevant in regards to the aspects of organizational democracy or changes in perceived control in psychological ownership. However, as we'll see later on (table 1), some of the informants had experience within management. This is something I was not aware of before the interviews. Therefore, in keeping with the initially idea of informant selection, I chose not to ask them specifically about their management experience or tasks relevant to it, in order to emphasize their current employment status.

In choosing who to contact for interviews I referred to the list given to me previously by key members. It's important to note that that any communication between me and the informants was strictly direct, and included no other parties, which is important in keeping with anonymity and research ethics (Orb et al., 2001). The list contained names of potential informants that were considered to have a flexible work-schedule and be employee without management responsibilities, but no other prerequisites were detailed. Informants had been contacted via e-mail by me and asked to participate based on their own free volition, meaning that they would have to say yes by their own free will, and not by encouragement from others or other external motives. In the e-mail they were given a copy of the project-report that was pre-approved by NSD (appendix 1) and a copy of the consent-form (appendix 2). In the e-mail the informants were given additional information about the project, that their participation would be completely voluntary, that a physical copy of the documents in the e-mail would be provided to them, and the contact-details of the interviewer. 6 employees said yes to participate, which according to my project supervisor fulfilled the theoretical criteria of data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The logistical aspect of the interview was arranged via e-mail with the informants.

The informants themselves had varying backgrounds (table 1). They were all senior- or chief consultants within IT-development, UX-design business, or Test management. The information below (table 1) summarizes relevant background information about the informants that the informants shared during the interviews conducted during the fall of 2022. The numbers given to informants were assigned using a random number generator. Relevant background information was based on information that would shed light on findings reported later on, and that would simultaneously not break any terms of confidentiality. This was reviewed with the help of my supervisor. Below is summary of informants' background, following Sieber (1992) ethical considerations about non-personal information, where

identifying characteristic (age, occupational area, residency, ethnical background, previous employers) were either excluded or changed (Kaiser, 2009).

Table 1.

Overview of informants' non-personal background information.

Informant number	Relation to current company	Previous experience
1	Senior IT and business-consultant.	More than 15 years of within the IT-sector. Has experience as employee-owner from another company.
2	Senior IT-consultant within UX-design.	Worked more than 5 years within IT in the public sector.
3	Senior consultant within test management. Current/former board member for the current company.	Worked within aviation for more than 15 years.
4	Chief consultant within IT and business development. Former /current board member for the current company.	Almost 20 years together of working within IT. Worked for public-, private- and start-up companies. Has experience as employee-owner from another company.
5	Senior IT and business-consultant with personnel management experience.	Worked almost 10 years as an IT-consultant for various companies in the private sector.
6	Senior consultant within test management. Also has personnel management experience.	Worked more than 15 years for various other companies in both private and public sector within IT and education.

Data collection

The creation of the interview guide was partially done in co-operation with a mentioned fellow student. This was to receive feedback on the contents and the overall structure. The informants were all interviewed solely by me, as was the transcribing of the 6 interviews and analysis of these said transcripts.

Interview guide

The interview guide was created during the summer of 2022, with the guidance of my supervisor, based on the scientific literature detailed in the introduction relating to the framework of such organizational structures (appendix 3). These themes covered broad areas, and with each one were questions formulated that emphasized the informant as an individual, but also the larger context of the IT-organization. The interviews themselves were semi-structured. This was to allow follow-up questions that were not previously added to the interview-guide. This gave more freedom to the informants to express themselves. The interview guide functioned as form of collection of the informants' own thoughts about their experiences relating to the broader theme of employee ownership. The interview guide was divided into 3 parts. The first one related to background information about the informants and the organization. This potential variation in background and experience was considered in the design of follow-ups and probes, as well as the interpretations of the answers given. The second part contained the main themes revolving around the work psychological aspects (Motivation, Identity, Performance, Management). The last section was short and included some general questions about employee ownership, in order to avoid the final questions asked being of a personal or sensitive manner.

Evaluation of interview guide

2 mock-interviews were conducted as a form of dry-run before scheduling the interviews. Both were done by two who were external from the project and the IT-organization in question. Both participants had an academic background and were told about the nature of the project. They were told to play the role of an employee-owner. The aim of these mock-interviews was to identify possible probes, misinterpretations of the questions and to receive feedback on the flow, as well as my own performance as an interviewer. With this

feedback, alternative formulations to certain questions were added, in addition to some probes.

Conducting interviews

The interviews were all semi-structured, and 5 out of 6 were conducted in person with the informants at their offices. One of the interviews was done over videocall on Microsoft teams, due to logistical difficulties arising. All of the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. Before asking any questions from the interview-guide or recording any audio, informants were informed about their rights, what the project is about, what would happen to the audio recording and their data, and physically signed the consent form (Appendix 2), which they all did before the interviews. The interviews varied somewhat in length, but all were between thirty minutes and one hour in duration. During the interviews the number of probes used varied, as some informants elaborated on their answers without them, whereas others gave shorter answers in certain sections. The use, or non-usage of probes and follow-ups was actively considered throughout the interviews, in accordance's with the general flow and direction of the interview. This meant that the overall structure of the interviews varied from somewhat structured, to somewhat unstructured. Both across the various interviews, but also within the same interview. Although the intended semi-structured was upheld. All the themes in the interview-guide were covered in all the interviews, though not equally extensive in each. The tone of the interviews was perceived as friendly.

Before the audio-recording was stopped all the informants were given the opportunity to ask about anything that seemed unclear to them about what had been detailed in the interview, or about the project in general. The 6 informants said they had nothing else to add. During the closing stage, when the audio-recording stopped and the formal interview was over, the informants shared varying degrees of insights regarding the interviews and the subject matter addressed. They predominantly pertained to how they hadn't really reflected

upon the topics before, or that they perhaps hadn't spent time organising their thoughts about it. As the interview sessions ended the informants all gave no sign of uncertainty regarding their participation, or what to do if they had any questions. Some of the informants said they were intrigued to see what comes about of this project. One of the informants sent an e-mail the day after the interview with a follow-up answer to one of the questions asked in the interview, as the informant wrote that they wanted to give a better explanation than the one given during the interview. After consultation with my supervisor, the written follow-up was later added to the transcript in the section it related to. Transcription was done using NVivo 1.7 and done offline and saved on an encrypted flash drive, as specified when applying to NSD.

Data analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was the aforementioned method chosen for data analysis of the transcribed interviews. The following section will detail this process, as well as adhering to the phases of this method, as detailed by Clarke and Braun (2022).

Phase 1: Familiarization with the dataset

This initial stage revolves around what Braun and Clarke (2022) detail as three practices of familiarizing oneself with the data. The first one is repeated reading, otherwise known as immersion, which emphasizes getting to know the data through several readings and starting to identify various meanings and to spot potential patterns in the data. The second practice aims to take a step back from the immersion, and to critically engage with the data, both as a listener and a reader. In this instance you want to make sense, problematize things, critique and understand how things could be different in the given dataset. This important for the method of reflexive thematic analysis, as the researcher needs to understand their own role and question how it affects their viewpoint on the data, and avoiding fitting data into pre-existing ideas (Clarke et al., 2015). The third practice is taking notes. While transcribing and

reading through the dataset, both annotations in NVivo and handwritten ones were taken. Notes taken were about ideas generated by the themes explored by the informant in the interview, in light of the research question. This was in order to see how certain part of the data fit in to the broader scale. Adhering to Braun and Clarke's (2022) practices, the following section details the subsequent thematic coding.

Phase 2: Coding

Coding involves a systematic readthrough of the dataset, with each interview read separately, line by line in the transcripts, looking for data items that may encompass something relevant to the research question. Coding was done with NVivo 1.7. The codes themselves were created in a physical manner. Once a data item was deemed relevant it was tagged with a descriptive code label. Here it is important to remain curious and open to the various experiences of the informants, and to not forgo any foreclosure, as these experiences may perhaps be different from the researcher's own perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Avoiding foreclosure is also an important part of avoiding developing themes too early (Clarke & Braun, 2022). Missing potentially out on important and unconceived ideas relevant to the research question. The other part Braun and Clarke (2022) stress relating to this point is rigour, which refers to coding that systematically traverses the datasets and produces patterns of meaning that give a detailed picture of the informant's experiences and thoughts.

Clarke and Braun (2022) stress transparency while coding, which refers to the researcher's orientation towards the data. As addressed earlier, an inductive orientation was chosen, which is data-driven and is associated with the semantic approach (Clarke & Braun, 2022), emphasizing reiteration of the informants' statements and aims at telling their story word by word. In this approach the researcher is mindful of their own perspectives and how this might affect the meaning captured. Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that a researcher will always be affected by their own experiences. Essentially saying that an inductive approach

will never be purely inductive. The other approach is deductive, is more theory driven. The research project started with coding that was more inductive, though my own experiences likely influenced the coding process on some level, leading certain codes to becoming perhaps more deductive. The idea behind adhering to an inductive approach is to achieve a bottom-up understanding from the informants' perspective, detailing their views and experiences. This was done without explicitly stressing any aspects from the theoretical framework, and allowing the data speak for itself in the process of analysis. Thereafter the focus shifted more towards tying the informants experience together with relevant theory. Braun and Clarke (2022) makes a case for this, pointing out that analysis is founded upon analytical power from theory.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes

In this phase one should retain an exploratory standpoint of testing different things out (Braun and Clarke, 2022,) referring to uncertainty when beginning to produce ideas for potential themes. The key aspect is diverting the emphasis on individual codes and smaller units of meaning towards larger patters across the dataset. This was done through the act of engaging with the codes created to identify some similar meanings. This similarity may be spotted on the surface by reviewing the label of the codes, giving an indication of what they entail. For the sake of rigour during this process I reviewed the raw data and let it set an impression on the possible meaning these codes might share (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Once similarity was identified the codes were arranged together and categorized. This process of reducing the meaning of the data through categorization needs to keep in mind the research question, and its part of the larger analysis. It's important to stay open-minded to a variety of how to sort themes. Especially considering the intended freedom to express meaning that was given to the informants in the designing stage of the data-collection, and the

array of possible interpretations of it. The generating of themes relied upon an explorative and inductive approach, stemming from the data.

Codes that were interpreted to have some initial similar meanings were grouped together, this without a specific name for this group or theme. Certain codes were only referenced only a few times were not considered, as they presented no apparent pattern of meaning or related to any other codes. Codes were first divided into sections relating to if the informants were referring to experiences or opinions on an individual- group or organizational level, which pertained to the organizational understanding of the employees and sense of ownership. Certain codes were difficult to distinguish between these and were therefore rearranged throughout this process. Codes were then organized into negative and positive aspects. It was at this point that the sense-making aspect of the codes became clear, and certain narratives arose. This is as described by Braun and Clarke (2022), as telling a story about the dataset to address your research question. This process of categorization provided insight to patterns of meaning, though the codes themselves were not viewed as distinctive units of meaning. With this insight the similar patterns of meaning were categorized into initial themes. The categories names reflected the common similarity between the codes within, which became one of the 6 initial main themes (appendix 4). Subthemes were also created and reflected nuances between certain groups of codes. To aid in this process, as a recommendation of Braun and Clarke (2022), visual maps were created in NVivo using the maps-function in the visualizations section. This was to organize a larger scale picture for understanding the meaning and narrative. This was especially important when creating themes, but also some of the initial subthemes.

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes

This next phase begins with a review of the initial themes, which was done by reviewing the extracted codes in the dataset once more. Effectively looking at the codes

produced and seeing if they make sense in relation to the themes generated (Clarke et al., 2015). In NVivo this process is made by simply double clicking the code label, which then produces an overview with all the references to that code in the dataset. The highlight function in NVivo showed how codes related to each other in the dataset. For the sake of reflexivity of the analysis the themes from the previous phase were put aside, to put more emphasis on the data and the story the informants were sharing, rather than the preconceptions the codes and themes entailed (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The secondary review of the themes was coupled with the thematic map produced in the end of phase 3. The map was reviewed, developed, and rearranged. This was a back-and-forth process, where the story itself was made more and more clear in relation to the dataset. The thematic map was gradually updated towards the latter stage of this phase and compared to the previous map.

The idea of this phase is to review this initial cluster of codes, which leads to improved pattern development (Clarke, 2015). This was done by identifying the central idea to the theme and ensuring that there is precedence for it in the dataset. Identifying an idea and generating a theme around it rather than just summarizing a topic makes it easier to reflect upon the research question, which after this phase was altered to: *How shared ownership creates an experience of psychological ownership among employee-owners*. The purpose is to show latent patterns of meaning across the transcripts, reducing the number of themes to 5 (appendix 5).

Phase 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes

This next phase entails the development of the analytical narrative being portrayed through my interpretations and comments of the dataset. The purpose is to clarify what the theme is about, and what key-aspect(s) is important. In line with Braun and Clarke's (2022) recommendations, the writing up of the definitions of each theme was done by formulating

what the theme is about, the boundary of the theme, what makes the theme specific and unique, and how it contributes to the overall analysis (Braun et al., 2022; Terry et al., 2017).

An inductive method emphasized what the dataset was telling me about certain topics. Some codes and themes were prevalent in certain sections of the data, and not necessarily equally distributed among informants' transcripts, which was expected considering the unstructured approach to the research design. This did not affect the relevancy of the chosen themes, as the goal was not to pick themes based on quantifiability in the dataset. Furthermore, themes presented throughout the analysis were cross-referenced with the theoretical framework. The cross-referencing provided further insight into how certain phenomena and topics, such as the organizational structure and decision-making process within the organization. This was mainly through the explanations given by the informants. Due to these insights gained, which included some deductive reasoning, the research question was now defined as: *How does shared ownership shape employees' attitudes towards their workplace.* After this phase I landed upon 4 themes (Table. 2).

Phase 6: Writing matters for analysis

In this final phase it's about detailing how the story has come through the analytical process (Braun and Clarke, 2022). When designing this study, I had chosen an exploratory perspective, due to the lack of previous qualitative literature describing the topics I was engaging in. This led me to a broad selection of codes and themes procured, and an array of descriptions to work from. Through analysis I realized that my initial research question needed to be slightly modified, as further exploration provided further insight into the topics I was delving into. I decided to emphasize certain topics that were deemed relevant to the framework, but also reflecting on the breadth of topics in the dataset. It became apparent that themes arising from the dataset were applicable to various levels within the organization. Therefore, the themes presented were described with this distinction in mind. Clarke (2015)

recommends when writing up the process the contextualization of the themes should be done first. Therefore, before presenting the first theme I will provide a general background for themes and the organization overall, based on the impression formed by informants' statements. The quotes used to report findings were translated from Norwegian to English, adding another layer of interpretation to the data, which Van Nes et.al (2010) states is unavoidable, though the researcher should be mindful of it.

Findings

The following section details the findings from the reflexive thematic analysis explained in the previous section. Each theme analysed and extracted from the dataset will be presented in order, with its accompanying subthemes, before explaining the following themes. The themes address experiences and attitudes that pertain to how the informants view their organization across various work-related areas. These involve the mentioned aspects of employee control and democracy embedded in the ownership structure of the organization, and how these aspects are seemingly important for employees' satisfaction with their workplace. The findings also explore informants' perspective on being part of a shared ownership structure. The results will be presented in accordance with the stated research question: *How does shared ownership shape employees' attitudes towards their workplace?*

Background

As mentioned in the case description above, the organization at hand is a Norwegian IT company, which functions as a worker cooperative, meaning that both ownership and control are employee centred. Ownership is exclusive to those who work at the company. In the initial phases of data collection, the impression formed of the organization what that employees' well-being and humanistic principles are important. The employees feel seen and heard. One informant (1), who joined the current company little over a year ago stated,

I was well looked after when I arrived here. It's a very nice place. Comfortable. Nice, and surprisingly relaxed, for a consultancy firm. It was somewhat why I wanted to work here. One does emphasize performing [well] here. We're here to run a business. However, we are very concerned with seeing the humane [side]. I find that very comfortable. To have a place where you're not chased around and work long days.

Whilst describing the social environment one informant (4) stated that, “There are surprisingly few cliques [within the organization]”. The informant depicts an organization with a flat structure where everybody talks to everybody. The relational distance between the leaders and the employees is described as very close. Leaders are easily available and the threshold to engage and communicate is low. One informant (5) said, “The road to the department managers’ office is short, and the road is also short to [the office of] the CEO”.

Employees experience freedom to affect how their working days are organized, and what projects they are involved in, within a reasonable framework that promotes the organization’s well-being and growth. This was described by an informant (4) as “you have to make investments that fit into the larger community of people and the common interest we have”. This relates to the employees working as consultants, whereby they are rented out periodically by customers, and this is something they cannot avoid adhering to. Described by one informant (3) as such, “As a consultant you don’t work for yourself. You’re delivering something for someone else.” Suggesting that the informants adhere to different areas of responsibility across the various situations they must navigate through, both within and outside of the organization.

Main themes

In this next section the main themes will be presented, described, and explored, along with respective subthemes, which will be highlighted in bold. The main themes address things such as how shared ownership is viewed as a fair and democratic model, what expectations are involved with being an employee-owner, what factors contribute to a desired working environment, and how employee engagement affects internal processes. Below you will find a table that provides an overview of the themes and subthemes from the dataset. I will go over each finding and explain its meaning, as well as referring to quotes from the informants.

Table 2.

Overview of themes produced from reflexive thematic analysis.

Theme	Subtheme
Democratic model	The meaning of ownership Sustainability Showcasing ownership Our workplace
Expectations	Dual roles Thinking long-term Making decisions Helpfulness
Environmental factors	What people value Sense of security Continuous support
Engagement	Facilitation Quarrelsome processes

Democratic model

The first theme addresses aspects relating to the organization's structure, and what it entails for employees. More specifically how the democratic element of an equal share profit model is perceived by informants, and how this is viewed as an organizational strength based on equality. This equality is not only based on the distribution of company assets such as share profits, but also the distribution of procedural involvement. Not only is this a formally- or legally tied aspect, but also one that affects social elements within the organization such as individual- and shared identity. The role of ownership in the democratic model was depicted as such by one informant (1),

Nobody can own more than anyone else, so there is a max number of stocks [you can purchase], even if you are the CEO or completely new. That way when everyone has bought up the max amount, then it will be completely equal ownership. I think it makes everyone feel that everyone has an equal voice.

The foundation of the democratic element is the flat ownership structure, where the same rules for share acquisition apply to all the employees, and there is a limit to the amount shares one can acquire. According to the informant (1) it is expressed as a sense that the individual has an “equal voice”. This implies one of the ways in which **the meaning of ownership** is perceived by the employees, and its purpose for the organization. This emphasis on equality is something other informants touched upon, as stated by an informant (5) whilst answering the question “what do you think is the future of employee ownership?”,

I think it’s a little bit political, inequality is rising. I think if more [people] get the opportunity to own their workplace, then there will be a fairer financial distribution. And it can provide a better managing of companies. I don’t only mean financial results. It’s about people having a good workplace, a good life.

From the perspective of the company the informant infers that ownership perhaps provides better management, which is due to a more equal distribution of financial means. In this instance ownership seems to be a facilitator of fairness for employees and entails a positive effect on the workplace. Additionally, the informant states that “it’s a little bit political”, indicating that the equal distribution of means through employee ownership implies a certain political or attitudinal orientation, which perceives employee ownership as fair. This is something informant (6) also touched upon,

Here everyone owns the same amount. It’s very fair and good structure accompanying it. That way there is no one that gets a bigger share profit than anyone else. We get the

same amount when we're equal owners. But of course, in a purchasing phase not every has the equal part of stock ownership. Share profits are calculated based on how much stock ownership you have. When you are a full-worthy owner and have bought your way up to 50000 stocks, then everyone owns the same amount.

The informant details the way to acquire stocks, and how there is a sense of fairness in the way it's structured. The fact that you get share profits based on the amount you have, though the goal is that everyone over time becomes an equal owner, or as the informant (6) put it, "full-worthy" owner. This word seems to entail a distinction between those who have bought the total amount over time, and those with less or nothing in terms of stock ownership. The use of such a distinction also seems to have been an ongoing subject of discussion within the organization, as one informant (3) explained,

One period there was some unfortunate language. It was that you were a full-worthy owner when you had bought the total amount of stock. I don't know how you would have felt if you were a non-full-worthy owner. It was a word I reacted to. So now when we say that you have full ownership, or that you have maxed out.

The informant notes the semantics involved with ownership, and how stocks acquired not only attributes to value in financial terms. The amount one acquires in terms of stocks translates to the amount ownership both oneself and others is perceived to have over the company. There also is a sense of entitlement in this notion, something the informant reacted to, which perhaps points towards a difference between groups of employee-owners based on the number of stocks they have acquired. In affect this might refer to seniority, as stocks is something that is acquired over time. This difference in relation to ownership is something informant (4) also detailed,

There has been done some things to wash [differences] out, or to feel that people that come in feel just as much a part of the company as those who have been there a while. When I started here the first time you started without any ownership. And it takes time before you actually get any influence, and also get a part of the share profits that are paid out every year. And you probably feel a kind of jealousy and a little that you are on the outside before the ownership-share is significant. And one has done some things, now when you start you get stock from the beginning.

The informant here also touched upon the mentioned difference, especially in regard to seniority, but also explains that is an awareness surrounding this and that subsequent measures were taken against it. The reason for such measures, such as providing new employees with stocks, is perhaps rooted in that this difference amongst employee-owners is or was viewed as unfavourable by the organization. Perhaps because it challenges the notion of unity in the experience of sharing a company, and a sense of **our workplace**. In terms of this last point there seems to be important for employee-owners. Informant (1) talked about it when asked “Does being an employee-owner change your work goals? And if so, how?” and stated,

Yes, for example the fact that I can influence what assignments I can take. I know that other companies don't have the ownership-model like us and lets their employees decide, but it's something that's fundamental in our culture. I have to be allowed to affect how my workdays are.

The informant explains how the ownership-model is perceived to give employees influence on how their workdays look like based on their assignments. The informant infers that this is something not unique to them as company, but it's ingrained into their culture as a fundamental part. Here the ownership-model seems to facilitate a notion of procedural involvement, or fairness, in terms of choosing what to be involved with in your work life, and

sense of autonomy. The ownership-model speaks to how the formal ties of ownership are viewed as beneficial, as they give employee not just the option, but also the right to be involved. Another informant (3) also touched upon this, but referring to it a larger context, and stated as such,

We don't have that stress of making money that comes from the outside, it comes from within. We get to decide what industries we want to go in to, to provide with our input. A big difference for me is that there is no one that sits and controls us like marionette[puppets].

Not only does the influence and right to choose affects employees on an individual level, but according to the informant it is also means that on a collective level. Referring to the sort of customers they want to work with, based upon their collective desires and autonomy, and not necessarily due to some outside influence that affects their overall strategy. According to the informant this seems to be something that reduces stress in such processes. One informant (4) elaborated upon employee control, and how it relates to the organizational structure, by stating that,

I would describe it as a loop, where you have employees that make up the [company] board, that is above the CEO, who again is above the department managers. It's very much a structure, a very nice one. I'm on the board myself, so I get to see that loop. Yes, so quite a flat cyclical structure is perhaps the word I would use.

The informant depicts an organization that is cyclical in nature due to the fact that employees make up the company board, and therefore are able to ensure that their interest are heard by those with administrative- and management responsibilities. This "loop", as described by the informant, indicates that the design of the organizational structure promotes employee control. However, over time this becomes a question of **sustainability** for the company. This is something the same informant (4) touched upon later in the interview,

stating,

What happens when it becomes over 200 [employees]? What happens when we are close to 200 and it still works? We can ask ourselves questions, but it has worked as long as there is growth, and we can issue new stocks. What happens when there are bad times? Yes, so there are not all scenarios we have tested the [organizational] model in.

The company has yet to test the organizational model through “bad times”, and indirectly the experiences the informant has with the company have mostly been in the context of growth, resulting in issuing new stocks. Another point regarding sustainability seems to be the actual number of employees that can fit into such an organizational structure without any issues that compromises the functions supporting employee-owners control and the company’s performance. This is something other informants also reflected upon, with one informant (2) saying,

We’re now over 170-180 employees, and there’s a limit to how many you can become acquainted with and learn the names of. I don’t know where the limit goes, but I think we shouldn’t grow too much more. There is research about those kinds of villages where people are close and people care about each other, it is perhaps a 150 people that are mentioned.

Here the informant states how it might be difficult to care about other employee-owners once the amount of them within the company exceeds a certain limit. With emphasis on words such as “learn the names of” the informant indicates a potential need to sustain close relations among employees, which is a cause for concern in terms of growth. It seems that the need to sustain such a relational equilibrium is experienced as a reason not to want too much more growth within the company. Rather, just keep things as they more or less are in terms of the number of employees. There is also a reoccurring pattern of **showcasing**

ownership, as part of awareness and brand-building around the company, as stated by one informant (5),

We have decided to talk more about employee ownership, but what happens? I don't see a big change, that there is talk about employee ownership perhaps. It's mentioned now and then, but I have faith in the model.

The informant describes how they in the organization work to communicate employee ownership, and that this was a decision made on a collective level. This decision seems rooted in the sense that not only do employee-owners have faith in the model, but they also seem to express a sense of pride relating to ownership. The informant indicates that perhaps the effects of communicating haven't instigated a "big change" perhaps desired. The informants detail ways in which they work making their employee ownership more visible. This refers to those from outside the organization and might indicate an attempt to tie the company brand to the concept of employee ownership. Another informant (1) addressed this notion by stating,

That we for example, that you came here and are writing your masters about [employee ownership]. That we all the time invite to discussion and that we have campaigned about it on Java and such. We made a video about it. It communicates the effect of ownership.

The informant delves into the aspect of communicating employee ownership, and how the organization attempts to engage in discussion, as an informant (1), who had previous experience with employee stock ownership from another company also stated that "just purchasing stocks doesn't necessarily create ownership, unless the business is concerned with what it means". This concern is supposedly what creates value for the organization, and for the model is expressed through the communication of ownership effects. There is a collective

belief in the ownership model and the effects it produces for the organization. This belief translates into a notion that those within and outside the organization will take an interest, which again will provide added benefits. This is something an informant (3) experienced, and summarized as such,

I feel that when I am rented-out [to a customer] and we talk around the lunch-table, that we are employee-owned [comes up], and how it is at us and that it's not the same. More get curious, and some get fixated by the fact that we got so much in share profits. I think more can try out our model. It would be exciting to see big companies try out or model and see how it would work.

In total, the grander theme of the democratic model reflects views towards the organizational model rooted in the belief that it produces fair outcomes for the employees. The financial benefits it brings seem to be less important for the functioning of the model and the motivations of the informants, than the perceived fairness. The informants also project a sense of pride towards their ownership-model through the belief that the organizational model produces positive attributes for employees, something the informants seem to want for others outside the organization. There are some concerns surrounding how this model might function, or not, if the number of employees exceeds the current number, as there are fears it might weaken bonds between employees.

Expectations

The following theme explores the expectations that exist within the organization. These expectations are experienced on several levels within the organization, and they refer to the experiences of employee-owners and what it entails. The informants describe experiences about being more than just employees, and how it affects their thinking and behaviours. Most of these expectations are unwritten rules and guidelines that they ideally

would like employee-owners to consider. This seems to also affect how the organization also considers potential new employees, as one informant (5) detailed,

What we're thinking about when we hire is that people are interested in the ownership model and that it's not about just the share profits. We hire owners. It's clear that people are different, but that there is some interest in it. And we see that there really lies a desire to take part in improvements and take responsibility. So, what you really think about is that you have to give is that, that you show involvement as an employee and as an owner.

Expectations associated with being an employee-owner are expressed as a transaction between the employee and the organization, in how the employee receives company shares and is expected to show interest and responsibility in return. These expectations also seem to occur due to the fact that by default employee-owners have **dual roles**. They are seemingly expected to wear two hats at once. The informant explores the duality that occurs between the roles of employee and owner, and the subsequent merging of the two as employee-owner, or co-owner as it is often referred to in the dataset. When asked "Employee-owner, what does that word mean to you?", one informant (5) stated,

There's both a commitment and a privilege. It is a privilege that I have influence, it's a privilege that I get to partake in the [company] share profits. But it presupposes that I take some responsibility. To engage in the development of the company, but also to be responsible in the day-to-day. That I can't act like an owner towards the management [group] and start banging [my] shares on the table and [demand] influence when I want to change something.

When interacting with the company management, the informant refers to how the employee-owner is expected to be more of an employee towards their leader, and that this

expectation is based on responsibility. This responsibility presupposes that an owner's interest sometimes isn't compatible with the role of the employee and that the employee-owner should be mindful of this. That there is a time and place for an owner's interest to be expressed. Expectations also seem to relate to how organization attempts to attain several positive attributes from their employees, with longevity in mind. This builds a notion of **thinking long-term**. This is an element that the organization ideally would like employees to be aware of, and to see how their choices affect the company and others involved, as summarized by one informant (5),

You can't just think about short-term profits as an employee. You need to think about long-term consequences for the company. For example, when we talk about working from home. I think it's a good example of it, because we have employees that want to sit at home and work and think that its great and effective, and it suits their family-situation. I understand it well. And then you have employees who want to be here. That they enjoy having people around them and leaders are dependent on meeting people. And you have new employees that need to be followed up and need to make acquaintance with people.

There is also the aspect of how the structure of employee ownership model creates an expectation of long-tenured workers with high motivation, that fits in well with the organizational climate. This expectation is rooted in the fact that employees invest in their workplace, and then expect a return on that investment. When asked "what do think are the benefits of being an employee-owned business?" one informant (2) replied,

There is less [employee] turnover when you first have taken the step of investing in your own workplace, then the threshold to move to another job becomes higher. And it is shown in the statistics too. Turnover here is somewhat lower than at our competitors. In our industry it's about 10%. We have some competitors that employ

many new graduates every year. And many of them chose to move to another job after 2-3 years. But when we recruit, we want a co-owner, who can therefore grow here in the company. So perhaps a bit different mindset.

This expectation based on longevity is seemingly embedded even before investing in the workplace, by the matter that people are given the option of purchasing stock, but rarely or never refuse the offer. When asked the question “What does the word co-owner mean to you?” one informant (4) stated,

There are few exceptions of people who that don't want to buy themselves in. Co-owner means here and in other companies, that it's about having a stake in the company and its entirety, and the value that company has. It means you receive benefits when things go well, and you roll up your sleeves when things go bad.

One of the primary mechanisms involved in retaining employees is the implied financial benefits of becoming an owner, as you're able to acquire more and more stock the longer you work for the company. This mechanism is closely tied to the company's overall performance, as the more successful it is the more share profits are available. However, this financial incentive seems to function as an initial enticement, but the informants themselves state that over time other aspects of the organization play a key role in retaining employees. One informant (1) explained,

I thought that in the beginning I didn't feel so much of it [ownership]. It was more, ownership gives a financial benefit. You can buy yourself in, and then you get share profits from it. But after a while you notice more and more that in ownership there lies, there seems to be a cultural part here that is very strong. The fact that people take care of each other, we are together in what we are doing here.

Further on, informants made comments about how expectations are present in several ways when **making decisions**, and how these expectations make them more cognizant about how their choices affect themselves, each other, and customers. One word, that all but one informant mentioned, was responsibility. This refers to either acting responsibility when making decisions or to make the decision to take on responsibility. One informant (5) depicted it as such,

I think generally speaking that people here expect that there is this responsibility. That we make a living off our customers and that we are professional. So, I think that take what they do and their work very seriously. I don't think it's about attitudes, I think it's about interest.

Here the informant (5) describes employees' interest and approach to their work as a source of responsibility. The source of this responsibility in decision-making is something that several other informants touched upon. As an informant (6) shared,

There is this with the responsibility, with everyone I feel they have this responsibility to deliver quality. I don't know, I haven't experienced it as clearly and prominent in any of the other companies I have worked for. But I think it is rooted in the ownership model.

So, besides the source of having an interest in taking responsibility, there seems to emerge two other reasons given by the informants about what explains this sense of responsibility. One being delivering quality, which refers to customers, whom which they work for as IT-consultants. The second source was the ownership model. Other informants elaborated upon how shared ownership is related to responsibility, as one informant (1) shared,

We built a bar that we were going to have for the re-opening-party after the pandemic. Should we use money on that? Then I'll be taking money others have worked for. At the same time when others do the same it goes up in up, but you become more conscious about if you take something. If I don't care about the cost for cloud-services that I use, then I eat up someone else's part. I think it's an awareness people have. You don't need a manager to come and tell you because you already feel it.

In addition to responsibility in decision making there is also appeared to be a pattern of taking initiative being important for the organization, or as one informant (5) stated, "we have a core value that we have to take initiative". While answering the question "What values would you say are typical in your workplace?", one informant (6) stated,

We want to take initiative for the good of the business. It comes very naturally to us. And it is here I think of course the ownership model plays an important part. The fact that we own this shop together, so we're preoccupied with everybody being successful.

This emphasis on taking initiative is describe as being due to the space given to employees to act. There is a sense of empowerment that allows employees to take initiative and responsibility, rooted in and expectation. These expectations are not based on some inherent moral criteria, but as mentioned by one informant (5), based on your "interest". Hinting towards how the statement made above by an informant, "It comes naturally to us". Which might imply that expectations towards employee are not always experienced as explicit or clearly defined, but rather as an organic and subconscious process.

Further on another pattern emerges when informants conveyed their experiences with the social climate, and how **helpfulness** is something that is highly incentivised, expected

and appreciated by employees. This cultural aspect entails a supportive organizational structure, or as one informant (1) depicted it as,

I learned quickly that here there is a wage-model, so if you want to rise amongst the ranks than you have to among other things help each other, it's something that is highly appreciated. You won't get a senior consultant position without showing that you are supportive for others, and especially towards those who are younger and those who are junior consultant. It's very comforting. It's not difficult to use time on such activities because you know its appraised. Not just formally, but also informally.

In this instance we can see the informant refers to a wage-model that formally incentivises helpful behaviour, and how informally you are expected to help those with more need for support who have less experience. This way of incentivising merges the personal gains of rising through the ranks with the collective gains of knowledge sharing and helping out. Another informant (6) reflected upon how things would change if helpfulness was not emphasized, and stated,

If we had lost much of those values we have, such as sharing and helping. The fact that we are occupied with helping each other in order to succeed with what we are working with. I think many would sit within their field of competency and grip tightly on to it because it might have given them a personal gain.

The overall notion pertaining to the theme of expectations involves a sense of you receive stocks, becoming a fellow employee-owner, which then means you are expected to reflect certain values and attitudes. Such as being responsible in your resource management and decision-making. Some of these are also formally embedded into further financial incentives, such a helpfulness towards others being important for the wage-model. It takes

time to receive the total amount of shares and a sense of ownership, indicating that the organization expects employees to stick around once they have invested.

Environmental factors

This next theme sheds light on the organizational climate within the company, what factors seem to be important for the employees, and how they reflect a collective desire of how things ought to be in the workplace, in terms of their culture. In particular how these factors contribute to an environment that is beneficial towards both employee and company, and what purpose they serve. Whilst answering the question “What do you experience as typical values in the company?” one informant (6) stated,

The fact that our life-rules have been formed in the way they have it makes things we do become very natural to us. It doesn't become artificial either. We don't feel that it's something that's forced. I think that's traits we look for when we recruit too. A co-worker that owns all those values, which we also feel. So, I think there is something that lies very anchored here, and I think when we get new co-workers, we chose those that are like us, and then we find those same traits. That's how simple it is.

The informant details how values in the organization have been formed through certain “life-rules”, which were later described by the informant (6) as “Take initiative, Lift each other, Create value, Be curious, and Show passion”. The integration of these into the workplace culture is depicted as being such that the informant perceives them as natural and not forced and reflects **what people value**. These values seem to manifest into certain traits, which again is important, as according to the informant they are reflected in recruitment-processes. These “life-rules” provide a loose framework for the employees, whether they are aware of it or not. This framework might contribute towards the organizations being homogenous in terms of values, as they look for those like themselves. Informant (2) described important values in the organization as such,

That you are curious, and that you are interested to learn, because we only hire those who we think can be senior consultants. And we don't hire those that are at a junior level and can't rise up. There will be difference in the potential between people but.

The informant mentioned one of the life-rules (be curious) and elaborates on how such values affects attitudes towards recruitment. Such life rules and other cultural aspects of the organization implies perhaps that the organization views these traits as something difficult to teach. Besides recruitment the informants also detailed such values and what they mean for the workplace culture. Informant (2) depicted the workplace environment as "Very nice and perhaps informal. Compared to many other places. Maybe more personal." and further stated that,

I feel that it is especially at our office that everyone knows everyone, and that everyone cares in a sort of way. I've worked in the public sector, and it was a bit more impersonal. But here everyone thinks together that what we work with now, that profit is something we get back later.

The informant paints the picture of a culture where things are informal, and where close relations are prevalent. This closeness seems to be the result of care for the workplace and its members, which also reflects the life-rule of "Lift each other". Underlying this there is seemingly a **sense of security**, rooted in the collective belief of shared return on investment later on. Another informant (1) spoke about this sense by stating,

I'm going to be part of an investment in data analysis. It means that there will be a good deal of internal work, with writing up offers and such internal investment areas and also arranging breakfast seminars and such. It's very nice to get that security, that there is no one that walks after me and points at me to have a certain degree of billable hours.

In this case the informant is given space to work in internal projects without feeling pressured to prioritize other tasks that require billable time. The sense of security experienced seems to be a manifestation of trust amongst employees, who are consultants and need to register billable time in order to be profitable for the company. Another informant (5) also broached the topic when stating,

It's a cultural thing, but it is also something that says something about the working environment. If you are in an environment where people have pointy elbows and look at themselves first, that won't help when you need help, then it affects your impression of the workplace. You would feel that you are surrounded by selfish people. So here it's safe and nice.

The informant details what they perceive as important for the workplace. The sense of security is not only rooted in the trust towards or between employee but also that other employees share the same values and don't threaten this trust and such values by demonstrating selfish behaviour that goes against the collective aim. In addition to the perception of safety, there emerged a pattern of the role of management and co-workers in the creation of the feeling of **continuous support**, which was reflected through statements such one made by an informant (3) regarding their relationship with management,

It's not like we have a chat once a year where we have the big employee review conversation. We have small talks frequently for about thirty minutes every fourth/sixth week. It's a bit up to what the individual wants. It's a bit like this when I'm sitting outside [on a customer assignment] then I call it being reeled [back] into the mothership. It's then you get to speak to someone else from the company. You are a bit alone out there.

Here the informant details how communication with management is frequent, and based on the circumstances of the relationship and needs of the employee. These small talks not only serve as way of support, but also are experienced as providing a bridge. This bridge is between working outside and within the organization, which functions as maintenance for belonging. In such cases as the informant describes there could be need for more frequent talks with management, whereas in other cases it might require fewer. One informant (2) noted,

I like working from the office, you get a greater sense of ownership then, as opposed to being a consultant that is rented out to a customer the whole time. You get closer to your customers, but you don't get as close to the office and your co-workers.

Engagement

This theme addresses a sense of engagement within the organization, and how it manifests itself across various examples, and as a sense of wanting to partake in the development of the company. Engagement within the organization reflects attitudes towards how employees involve themselves. Examples seem to occur on two different levels of, the first one is the **facilitation**, which pertains more the individual level, and refers to how participation and involvement is both encouraged and perceived by informants within the organization. Informant (5) described it as,

There is space created for engagement in department-meetings and general meetings. I think it's easy to come with suggestions and input. Little formalism when it comes the development of the company. The same goes for the personnel-manager. It depends of course on how dependent people are.

Mentioning meetings and how there is space for employee to engage, the informant states that there is little formalism, and that this serves the purpose of aiding the development of the company. Formalism is viewed as an antagonist to employee engagement

and influence. The mentioned space was stated as being “created”, indicating that there has been awareness surrounding how employees are engaged in meetings and with their personnel-manager and others.

One informant (6) referred to an organized “campfire” the organization arranges, as a preparation meeting on a group and department level before the general assembly. These campfires are according to the informant (6) intended to “take up things regarding how the business should survive going forwards”. This functions as a space for unfiltered ideas or smaller issues that don’t need to take up time in the general assembly, or to refine those that should be brought forward. Moreover, the informants detail experiences of **quarrelsome processes** through engagement on group and organizational level. These processes reflect a more strenuous element to employee engagement. One informant (1) told of such an instance when tasked with naming certain rooms at the organization’s offices,

We came up with some names, and it there arose a lot of fuss in the [company] chat[board], and I felt there was a lot of fuss. I was clear that a name discussion for some rooms, and making a huge deal, with some crass formulations in the chat. I said then, as a completely new [employee], that this was something I didn’t want to be a part of. I’ve been working for a long time, and I can image that a newly educated or newly employed might experience it as a little uncomfortable. Dependent on what type you are, but after I while I learned to recognize that yes, there can be a downside that there are many discussions.

The informant details an experience where a process of addressing certain rooms with names became a lengthy and tedious affair in relation to the scale of the task. Expressing further how it was viewed as unnecessary and might be perceived by new employees as uncomfortable. The “fuss” experienced by the informant is perhaps a result of a low threshold for engagement amongst employees on a general basis that manifests itself into

matters regarding internal processes. The high level of engagement dragged out the process of choosing names, and in certain cases turned into crass comments surrounding the topic. Others noted that there had been disagreements taken place, with one informant (2) stating,

I haven't experienced it myself, but it can happen that there arises some conflicts surrounding principles about how the company should be run. I've heard that some years before I started, we had some general assembly's surrounding principles that got heated. How the owner shares should be divided and so forth. I don't know all the details, but some discussions were pretty heavy.

The informant notes that conflicts have occurred, citing a disagreement held between employees, that revolved around principles for how company should do certain things. It seems that employees felt so passionately towards the topics, such as ownership shares, that there arose a heated argument in the general assembly. Besides heavy discussions on certain things there is also the element of being throughout in workplace processes, which is something informant (4) amongst others summarized as such,

There is a share [of people] that are very thorough. And perhaps sometimes we are to thorough. That we know so much about what is best practise is that we try and gather all the advice and rigg everything up optimally, but it can become big, costly and an affair. We are busy with doing things properly.

The informant depicts a notion that certain people are very thorough, which stems from the desire to achieve an optimal solution. Certain processes become extensive and costly as a result of this need to do things "properly". This need, and the low threshold for engagement is sometimes experienced as unnecessary at times and seems quarrelsome, though it reflects attitudes and interests related to how employees engage with each other within the organization.

Summary of findings

The themes address experiences and attitudes that pertain to the informants view their organization. These involve the mentioned aspects of employee control and democracy, but also areas relevant to workplace values, or “life rules” present in the organization, and the occurrence of employee engagement. The main themes address things such as how shared ownership is viewed as fair in terms of share profits and involvement, expectations involved with being an employee-owner, factors contributing to a desired working environment, and how employee engagement affects internal processes.

Discussion

The following discussion is an attempt to structure reflections on the findings that are based on previous literature and how they can aid in answering the research question: *How does shared ownership shapes employees' attitudes towards their workplace?* I will go over the findings and discuss them with a continuous thread of how employees in a shared ownership structure, emphasizing organizational democracy, understand their workplace through a sense of ownership towards it. I will also discuss what these employee perceptions might entail for such organizational structures and other forms of employee ownership in working life.

Distributive justice through equal ownership

The organization adheres to an ownership model engrained in a belief in equality. It operates as a worker cooperative. This lays the foundation for democratic processes in the organization, which is part of a fair and flat structure. The fairness based on ownership relates to the point Klein (1987) made about the Intrinsic satisfaction model, where ownership leads to more satisfied employees. The informant's accounts reflect positive views towards the ownership model and make the same case for employee ownership as Kelso did in 1956, with the ownership being in the hands of those who create value for the organization (Menke & Buxton, 2010). The ownership model functions more to improve organizational governing than to produce financial results. Also, it should be noted that this point is highly contextual, as Kelso, Klein and several others refer to stock option planning and not worker cooperatives. The mentioned informants are all senior consultants of what they considered a well-run business. This means that financial incentives might not be as enticing to them as someone who has not worked as much and acquired the same personal capital or that is employed by an organization with less perceived financial stability.

The shared ownership model promotes a sense of distributive justice, whereby the employee feels a sense of fairness in how share profits are distributed (Chi & Han, 2008). The sense of fairness expressed by the informants is something Chi and Han (2008) argue is a route towards feelings of psychological ownership. They, along with Pierce et al. (2001), recognise that generating such feelings of ownership and positive views towards the organization is easier when formal benefits plans are involved, such as share profits. A worker cooperative, as the current organization operates, seems to have an advantage over employee-stock ownership planning in collective psychological ownership terms, as they have formalised the shared element of benefit plans through restricted stocks and provided employee control through voting rights. A company using stock option plans as an individual benefits package, where employees' shares might vary significantly in size, wouldn't necessarily produce the same feelings of fairness, as rules for the acquisition of stocks would vary to a higher extent (Freeman, 2007).

A discourse surrounding the number of stocks employees acquire was represented through the use of the term full-worthy owner. The term might perhaps reflect a notion that the sense of ownership an owner has is directly related to their share amount or tenure, as the organization operates with restricted stocks based on the number of years they have worked there. Klein's (1987) extrinsic satisfaction model, which posited that financial benefits are the most important aspect of employee satisfaction, explains the underlying motivation towards such semantics. The notion is that the most lucrative part of ownership is the value of the company stock and what the company can provide for an employee (Buchko, 1993). This means that an emphasis on the worth of an owner being tied towards their stock value relates to extrinsic employee satisfaction. According to the informants, the discourse surrounding this point led to measures to reduce such an emphasis on full-worthy ownership and the underlying differences between owners it might entail. This indicates a desire in the

organization that satisfaction towards ownership pertains to other means or interests than monetary value or stocks. Extrinsic satisfaction towards ownership highlighting differences might therefore present certain issues regarding the equality experienced among employees.

The reduced emphasis on ownership being equal to stock value is interesting to note considering that previous studies have found that employee-owners can feel that share profits are just a detached bonus (Weltmann et al., 2015), though these findings mostly reflect stock option planning. In the current organization, the number of stocks carries semantic connotations of entitlement towards the target. Such feelings of entitlement are related to cognitive appraisal towards psychological ownership. This means that factors such as the history of the object's acquisition and the effort invested in obtaining it are important (Pierce et al., 2001). In light of the restricted stocks used by the organization, it might be that seniority, or the history of the object's acquisition, amplifies these feelings of entitlement. We know that the current organization and other employee-owned companies have low employee turnover (Buchko, 1992b; McCarthy et al., 2010), meaning that workers will likely have a higher average tenure, which then strengthens feelings of entitlement.

The higher-than-average tenure in the organization, compared to their competitors, seems to align with the expectations of workers to commit for a long time with the company. This way the expected long tenure forms the employees' attitudes about their role in the organization, as it reflects the potential benefits that are expected with employee ownership, such as reduced employee turnover (Pendleton & Robinson, 2010), which in itself is a cost-saver for the organization. The underlying psychological reasoning behind this is that personal investment leads to employees feeling they have a greater stake in the outcome compared to if they had none (Pierce et al., 2001, 2003). However, this financial investment doesn't necessarily itself lead to a sense of psychological ownership (Weltmann et al., 2015), highlighting that expectation towards creating affective commitment often needs to be

complemented with something more than just stock purchase. To achieve personal investment employees must perceive that their interests are taken into consideration and that organizational processes are fair (Weber et al., 2020). The current organizational model is perceived as fair, indicating that the emotional side of self-investment is prevalent within the organization. This is an example of how expectations towards long-term employee ownership investment in organizations need to ensure that the financial part encompasses elements of organizational democracy.

Procedural justice through employee control

Besides the distributive justice mentioned, there seems to be another element of fairness important to the employees, namely procedural justice. The employees experience a high degree of collective control and work autonomy in the organization, and employees can influence where they can work and what kind of work they want to do within an agreed limit. This might satisfy certain control aspects of achieving a sense of psychological ownership (Pierce & Rodgers, 2004), though as Lee and Edmondson (2017) pointed out, this control aspect is not mutuality achieved through employee ownership, and that employee ownership can exist without employee control. The informants seem to have an awareness that this control is not necessarily exclusive to them, but that ownership formalises it. The awareness informants have of this indicates that their attitudes are informed by their ownership, and how its viewed as being synonymous with control, which is something Freeman (2007) argued it could be. This adds to the discussion around the concept of psychological ownership and whether or not autonomy is a need that must be satisfied in order for employees to feel a sense of ownership. Olckers (2013) makes an argument for this, citing that this stems from the right to control a certain degree of influence over the target of ownership (Pierce et al., 1991), and implying that control is fundamental to the experience of ownership. In the case of the current worker cooperative, it seems to be the case, implying that psychological ownership looks

different in such an organizational structure compared to other employee ownership models, such as stock option planning.

The conflicting results surrounding psychological ownership in employee stock option ownership literature might be explained by the control dimension, as with stock option planning employees often perceive having less control compared to worker cooperatives (Meyers, 2011), such as the current IT organization. The higher prevalence of stock option planning compared to worker cooperatives in the psychological ownership literature is perhaps one reason to why control was originally found by Pierce et al. (1991) to be a right and route associated with, but not an innate need for feelings of ownership. Pierce et al. (1991) review of ownership literature, was predominantly based of mainstream stock option planning. Pierce and Rodgers (2004) addressed this, by noting that this initial conceptualization provides a lacking insight into alternative employee ownership arrangements, such as cooperatives, which are exclusively employee owned and controlled. This way we can see how psychological ownership perhaps looks different in depending on the organizational context and nature of the work of the employees. With the increased demand for autonomy in modern work life it might be so that employee control in ownership might something to explore for others interested in employee ownership and its potential benefits.

The findings support the notion of procedural justice, with Chi and Han's (2008) routes towards psychological ownership through organizational justice. This is due to the fact that the informants accounts portray a sense control through collective ownership. The employees feel a great deal of control, and this feeling is possibly a result of organizational mediums such as the general assembly, meetings, and the employee-owner majority company board being perceived as ensuring employees common interests' through a flat structure. This way a collective form of psychological ownership based on control and procedural justice

seems to occur. Pierce et al (2003), nor Chi and Han (2008) have inferred that these routes towards psychological ownership apply on a collective level, though Pierce and Jussila (2010) noted that this is an area within the framework that needs more exploration. In the case of the informants, it's difficult to withdraw a distinction between collective and individual psychological ownership.

How much ownership can be shared?

When informants were asked about potentially negative aspects of ownership. They displayed attitudes rooted in concerns about sustaining organizational growth. These concerns were about the model and growth and pertains to preventive psychological ownership, where maintaining the status quo and protecting the target of ownership is important (Higgins, 1998; Mortazavi & Shojaee, 2016). Each employee-owner represents a certain percentage of the voting rights in the general assembly and represents the influence each employee formally has. With each new employee-owner employed this percentage will be diluted, meaning that the existing employee-owners will have less. Interestingly this does not seem to be a motivation for concern among the informants. Perhaps informants don't have a mindful relationship with the more formal elements of ownership and control, such as voting rights (Chi & Han, 2008; Nijs et al., 2022) and are rather preoccupied with how it affects things on an informal level.

A more specific concern is the many employees the model can accommodate, before certain elements, such as the relational emphasis, becomes weakened. According to the informants the more employees, the more difficult it becomes to know each other, indicating changes on an informal level. Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) note that co-worker relations are important for identifying with a workplace and producing feelings of psychological ownership. The restricted view towards growth is based on not wanting to lose track of these relations. This would then weaken the identifying aspect of psychological ownership,

especially on a collective level. The relational emphasis might therefore promote attitudes towards regulating growth in relation to democratic ownership structures, as hiring new employee-owners carries added implications compared to hiring in alternative organizational structures.

A belief in employee ownership

The mentioned aspects of the organizational model there seems to be an important element of talking about ownership, which is an extension of the effort to affiliate ownership with the identity of the organization. This is done in several ways to promote the company's brand, which is rooted in the belief that the equality of the model produces both a positive look, but also improved results. It sets them somewhat apart from their competitors, as Eide (2022) noted about the low number of employee ownership in the Norwegian labour market.

The organization communicates ownership to themselves, what effects it can have, and how it's an organizational strength. This ownership interest, and what it entails is important for the employees to see ownership not only in terms of share profits but also as part of something more. Talking about ownership, and showing interest in it functions as a way to avoid it being viewed as a detached financial bonus, where a certain investment results in a financial profit, and it doesn't lead to any meaningful sense of affinity towards their workplace (Bolton & Houlihan, 2009; Weltmann et al., 2015). The interest in model by the organization as a whole is seemingly important for the adoption of psychological ownership towards the organization. This might be explained by the fact that employees' ownership is implicated in the identity of the organization, which transforms their relationship with the organization. This makes it easier for employees to identify with the organization and achieve a sense of psychological ownership on an organizational and collective level (Pierce et al., 2018; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2017). Also, it strengthens the self-identifying aspects of psychological ownership with the organization, concurs with affective appraisal, where the

association with the organization is based on positive view of it (Pierce et al., 2001).

Something that is reflective of the informants, who seem to have a positive view on the organization model and are interested in advocating for it.

Taking ownership

The findings from the reflexive thematic analysis reflect expectations embedded with becoming an owner, receiving control, influence and share profits. This is then exchanged for certain efforts towards the organization, often in the sense of taking ownership, which is consistent with findings from other employee ownership companies (Blasi et al., 2018; Pierce & Rodgers, 2004). These efforts lean towards a more promotive self-regulatory system of ownership (Higgins, 1998). This stems from informants' experiences with ownership being primarily grounded in accountability, responsibility, autonomy, and identifying with the organization, indicating dimensions of psychological ownership most important to them when taking ownership. This emphasizes behaviours reflective of setting personal goals, which Avey et al. (2009) claims functions as a system. This system speaks to the underlying motivation, which is that attitudes towards ownership are characterized by feeling more accountable towards what happens to the organization, and feeling personal identification towards it (Avey et al., 2009; Avey et al., 2012). In regards to responsibility towards others in organization as an employee-owner, a view of responsibility entails liability not just towards oneself, as Wood and Winston (2007) defined it, but also towards other employee-owners. This view arguably stems from the collective aspect of the informant's ownership experience, where ownership fits into a larger part, and so does liability.

Becoming an owner for the informants reflects feelings of appreciation, but that this comes with a level of responsibility. This responsibility refers to an attitude informants have towards employee ownership. The responsibility expressed pertains a desired enhancement of the organization. Olckers (2013) argues it's a consequence of feeling like an owner, which

results in the perceived right to influence the company's direction. The perceived right to influence would then be rooted in the autonomy that the informant's ownership entails. Empowerment of employees is linked with increased positive attitudes, such as job satisfaction and increased commitment (Mayhew et al., 2007), making it reasonable to assume that the positive attitudes towards ownership expressed can be explained by a autonomy and responsibility being viewed by employee-owners as part of the ownership experience. With the current organization the level of autonomy perceived is arguably a result of the flat and democratic organizational structure that accompanies the ownership model.

There is also an awareness surrounding ownership, a sense of consciousness created about how the individual affects the collective ownership. The awareness pertains to stewardship behaviours, where the collective interest is above the individual (Nijs et al., 2022), and how these behaviours affect business performance, as employees who become owners are expected to perform better (Kruse, 2022). Resource allocation represents the control the employee-owner has over the use of collective resources on various work-related areas. This points to actions being regulated through ownership attitudes that emphasize the collective good. Such a focus on responsibility, and how it relates to the collective, shows how ownership can promote collective psychological ownership. For collective psychological ownership to be achieved individuals must develop and perceive a single and shared mindset on the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the collective towards the target of the ownership (Rantanen & Jussila, 2011). In case of the organization, it seems that these expectations, with the added life-rules, presents a set of norms that achieves a shared mindset.

The mentioned responsibility infers that individuals themselves are in control of certain resources, but also needs to justify them. Not necessarily through any formal means, but through their own judgment, meaning that accountability is a more trusting and self-regulated process. In the framework of psychological ownership there was a noted

disagreement surrounding accountability and whether it is part of the psychological dimensions or a correlated construct (Dawkins et al., 2017). The informants' accounts of implicit or explicit expectations surrounding responsibility entail not needing to formally justify their actions towards others. In this way we can see that accountability is an important aspect of employee-owners decision-making. Employees are expected to be accountable when acting as owner, which manifests into the degree of trust between employees. This way we can see how accountability is a part of taking ownership and is part of certain self-regulating attitudes amount employee-owners. It's not clear if this accountability is fundamental to their self-contained sense of ownership, or if it fundamental to feeling secure about other owners' behaviours with shared resources. This means that Avey et al. (2009) view on accountability as psychological ownership dimension can arguably be supported, but it's not clear if it's part of the needs of psychological ownership, or a result of it. It might that in a collective ownership context accountability manifests differently than both Avey et al. (2009) and Pierce et al. (2001) described it for the individual.

A value-orient organization with a shared mindset

The organization formed certain life-rules (Take initiative, Lift each other, Create value, Be curious, and Show passion). These are not specific to ownership itself, rather a general framework of values the organization has. It appears important that these values are experienced as natural, as well as shared among employees. Avoiding forcing values is interesting to note considering how perceived control and influences are important for employees to achieve experiences of ownership and fairness (Moorman, 1991; Pierce et al., 2003). However, it seems that the values themselves are not the result of any current or continual development process, meaning that the existing values have already been prescribed. How then is it seemingly natural to the employees of the organization? When detailing recruitment-practices there lies a notion that a certain orientation towards the

candidates' values. The sentiment that the organization chooses those that are like themselves indicates that the organization finds those who fit well into existing value framework. This emphasis towards homogeneity in work-related values is perhaps important for getting employees on the same page, which also aids in the creation and maintenance of a shared mindset towards the organization. This is generally speaking important in such decentralized organizational structures (Meyers, 2011; Robertson, 2015), and seemingly also in collective ownership creation (Martinovic et al., 2022).

The orientation in recruitment processes also pertains indirectly to attitudes towards ownership, as the values of the organization are viewed as something some such already possess. This begs the larger question of if these desired values, which reflects on the employee-owned organization as whole, is something one can develop. Or in the context of this organization, is ownership learned behaviour or innately human? The informants' accounts seem to lean towards the latter. We saw that the discussion around whether or not psychological ownership is learned, is something scholars within the research-field themselves disagree on (Dawkins et al., 2017), indicating that this point is difficult in terms of reaching a consensus.

Further on the results delved into how informants experienced a sense of security, due to both the trust they perceive and the fact that they work together to achieve the same fiscal goal: share profits. Freeman et al. (2008) argues that employee ownership can lead to less perceived sense of security, as performance seems more tied up towards financial performance. In terms of the informants, it seems that this is not the case, as their accounts infer that trust between employees reduces this emphasis. For them safety is more value-driven, as a reflection of their culture. Informants spoke about how things such as selfishness are attributes that will not thrive in the organization. Employees need to be on the same page in terms of their values, which functions in the same vein as a single and shared mindset from

collective psychological ownership (Dawkins et al., 2015). The individual selfishness would threaten this collective feeling that provides security.

The organizations wage-model is one organizational structure that incentivises care and help for each other and can be viewed as a means of promoting selflessness. This added with the emphasis on equal share profits, which Pendleton and Robinson (2010) found was important to increase cooperation, speaks to the promotive approach towards psychological ownership. This is where employees are more likely to share information, they own with others, as they view this as beneficial, and this enhancement of the company is personally fulfilling (Ladan et al., 2017). Promotive psychological ownership can aid with potential issues of knowledge-sharing that often occur with employees that feel a greater sense of ownership on an individual level compared to the collective level (Ladan et al., 2017; Mortazavi & Shojaee, 2016). This also applies to risk aversion among employees who may be more concerned about protecting their ownership stake than enhancing the organization (Freeman et al., 2010). Informants inferred that the care for each other prevents a more individual focus on gains and would therefore be more motivated not share valuable insight with fellow employee-owners.

Engagement rooted in control and self-investment

The informants state that employees are interested in partaking in the development of the company. This can be attributed to a sense of psychological ownership, which entails that employees feel a sense of ownership over the organization, and are self-invested in the outcome (Pierce et al., 2003). However, this doesn't explain how employees achieved this feeling. As we have seen before, purchasing stock option is often not enough to explain this (McConville et al., 2020), and the organization itself seems to lean away from employee motivations being driven by extrinsic satisfaction (Klein, 1987). Chi and Han (2008) state that

this feeling is the result of procedural involvement, which is an extension of the control aspect from psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2001).

Through the flat organizational structure, or loop, the employees experience a great deal of control over their workplace in various organizational processes, and therefore view that their engagement is part of something fair and procures a return for them other than financial. If it were not seen as fair, then this sense of psychological ownership through involvement would be difficult to attain. Both the control perceived, and how it is related to procedural justice (Chi & Han, 2008). The informants delve into positive experiences with organizational structures and management practises, consistent with other self-managing organizations that empower employees by facilitating employee participation (Mehmood et al., 2021). Javed & Idris (2018) argue that this participation emphasizes the self-identity dimension of psychological ownership, which leans towards the affective appraisal of ownership. This means that the emotional attachment of being associated with the organization, and possessing it, causes employees to involve themselves based on it being a positive thing. Through facilitation of engagement we see a promotion of instrumental satisfaction, which states that employee ownership increases worker participation, which leads to a higher degree of organizational commitment and satisfaction (Buchko, 1992a). This is supported by the fact that business information is shared and discussed through various mediums, such the campfires and the general assembly. An orientation towards instrumental satisfaction reflects attitude towards ownership synonymous with in such an organizational structure.

Besides the control felt by employees there is also the element of how empowerment leads to efficacy. Not only does the engagement lead to a sense of perceived control, but is also the result of employees viewing that they can successfully change things within their organization (Pierce et al., 2003). If the employees don't feel this efficacy, then there is little

reason to engage yourself, because the view is that action taken will not be successful at achieving the intended goal with the engagement. This way engagement involves both the control and efficacy aspects of psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2001). Though it's not clear what the relationship is between the two in the case of the informants. Does employee control lead to a sense of efficacy or the other way around? They are supposedly part of the same feeling of psychological ownership, but this theoretical notion is somewhat unclear in the framework of Pierce et al. (2003), Avey et al. (2009), and Olckers (2013).

When looking at employee engagement in the organization on a collective level, there seems to be not just positive experiences in regard to how employees interact with each other. This high level of shared employee control manifests into a fuss sometimes, with the perception of things taking too much time, or in being unnecessary. The result of control being decentralized seems to have lowered the threshold for engagement, with decision-making processes being more informal, making it easier for people to put their hand up and be more challenging towards other's notions towards their workplace or organization. This point supports the occurrence of cognitive appraisal, as the perceived control employees perhaps give them a sense of entitlement towards the object of ownership (Pierce & Jussila, 2010), which leads to employees being concerned with what happens to their target of ownership.

The engagement between employees on internal matters is in itself a positive thing and seems to be highlighted by feelings of psychological ownership. However, it appears that it might become overbearing, inferring that shared control and ownership is something that can be emotionally taxing, as employees themselves are more accountable and self-regulation of authority is between them. The mentioned homogeneity in values is perhaps beneficial when trying to get employees on the same page. A more diverse set of values in such an employee-controlled organization might cause more fundamental disagreement. Freeman et al. (2008) notes that employee ownership can create tensions among employees who have different

ownership interests, ownership stakes and perspectives. It's also to expect from an employee-controlled organization, as they are found to create high expectations for greater involvement in decision-making (Pierce & Rodgers, 2004). Within the organization at hand there seem to be an elevated demand for influence, which needs to be met, or else it might lead to decreased satisfaction (Pierce & Rodgers, 2004). It might be that new employees ought to expect co-workers arguing more intently and passionately, due to increased feelings of psychological ownership, such as the right to control.

When belonging becomes challenging

Informants talk about how they are consultants, and on a practical and day-to-day level they work for their customers, which presents challenges for management and the ownership aspects of the organization. As noted, the psychological ownership dimension of belonging address a need found in those who feel a sense of ownership towards their organization. This need is often manifested by owners of an organization as "having a place" that meets their social and emotional demands (Dawkins et al., 2017; Pierce et al., 2003). The informants talk about how working outside the organization weakens their sense of belonging compared to working at the office. This presents the question of what can be done to achieve a sense of belonging to those who are working as consultants outside the organization? The nature of their work makes this challenging. In the case of the informants who are seemingly aware of this notion, emphasize working a certain amount from the office, which represents interaction with the target of ownership (Pierce et al., 2003), and those the ownership is shared with. This interaction with co-workers is likely to produce stronger feelings of collective ownership (Henssen & Koiranen, 2021; Henssen et al., 2014), and affective commitment towards the organization (Peng & Pierce, 2015). Psychological ownership needs seems to vary between individuals (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004), and therefore it's likely that some would need to work more from the office than others to satisfy needs of ownership.

Olckers (2013) argues that within human resource management there should be a mindfulness that certain psychological ownership needs might be periodically weakened, such as in the case with the current IT-consultants and might predicate challenges of satisfying those needs. The nature of the informant's day-to-day work outside the organization with customers balances between commitment towards the job or the organization. When detailing the relationship with management the informants spoke of how small frequent talks were used as a measure of following up of employees, which also speaks to the relational emphasis in the organization, and also demonstrates the consideration towards employees. This consideration is one of the main causes of employees perceiving interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001). Such a supportive management not only addresses the issue with belonging, by offering frequent contact with management of the "home" organization, but is also likely to increase the effectiveness of employee ownership. This is because such supportive management practices, such as frequent talks, both enforces a sense of belonging in employee ownership (Alok, 2014). It also functions as a reminder that effort outside the organization is both appreciated and seen in light of how it relates within the organization (Bernhard & O'Driscoll, 2011; Mortazavi & Shojaee, 2016). This last point reflect whether or not the employee feel more ownership towards their job and the service they provide their customers, rather than their organization as whole.

Strengths and limitations

The current study attempts to answer the research question with the limitations that are present due to the location of the organization, in Norway. Also, the industry the organization finds itself in, IT consultancy, presents limitations towards other organizations. This means that remarks made about the findings may not be applicable to all regions, work-life cultures, sectors, or organizational structures, especially concerning the novelty of the current organizations model. Matters of points made in the discussion need more empirical and

theoretical support from larger samples from a variety of selection parameter in order to increase theoretical generalizability (Carminati, 2018; Morse, 1999). As mentioned in the introduction and method section, there are few qualitative studies within the research field. Previous literature has been lacking and non-conclusive in regard to employee ownerships effects on attitudes and sense of psychological ownership (McConville et al., 2016, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). This provides a sense of novelty to this exploratory study, and is why it fits the design of the study well (Braun & Clarke, 2014), but is also entails challenges to generalizability and active use of previous literature to explain current findings.

One benefit of the explorative approach to the reflexive thematic analysis of the current thesis is that it arguably has produced a more in-depth understanding of the data than a more descriptive approach would. An important aspect of this the awareness of the researcher, known as reflexivity, highlights the level of subjectivity that might be involved in the research methodology. A certain level of subjectivity is unavoidable, and an awareness of this is important. The current study is also aware that certain elements of the deductive approach towards thematic analysis might have been involved in an otherwise inductive approach, and emphasize Braun and Clarke (2021) argument that an inductive approach will never be purely inductive. Meaning that certain personal inclinations or theoretical interpretations might have affected the process of working on this thesis.

In regard to selection parameters there is a lack of new or other than senior employees' perspective on the organization, despite points made about how they would perceive certain things. The results and discussion around them are based on data from senior informants, meaning that conclusions draw about employee attitudes heavily representative their perspectives. However, the senior informants represent more experience with the subject matter compared to newly employed or less experienced informant, potentially providing more detailed accounts relevant for discussion. The informants also represent a variety of

roles and responsibilities within the organization, providing a broad sense of understanding of the organization. Some informants had management experience, which perhaps compromised the idea behind the selection process of capturing the employees' perspective, and not the managements perspective. On the other hand, there experience with management might have also given them a more comprehensive understanding of the organization in question.

5 of the informants were interview in the organizations own building, in a private office space, which provided them with the same environment for answering questions. It might be that interview them at their own workplace effected certain answers, without there being and awareness of if during the process. One person was interviewed using video communication software, which might have given the informant a different experience of the process, and produces different answers compared to a physical interview. But the choice of have digital interview was the result of needed flexibility in order to conduct the interview with the informant.

Implications and future research

Implications from the current study, looking at attitudes shaped from employee ownership, derived from a wish to understand what is important to achieve a sense of ownership, and how this sense unfolds in various situations. The organizational democracy elements of the current organization, which has been less emphasized in the more common stock option planning, contributes towards an understanding of why previous literature has been conflicting in achieving positive benefits for the organization. Informants' experiences are interpreted as such that structural aspects of the organization, such as receiving control and autonomy, are more important for explaining a sense ownership then the acquisition of stocks themselves. Removing the structural elements would seemingly change the employees' sense of ownership more than the removal of their stock ownership. However, the stock ownership formalizes some of the rights to control the employee's experience. This indicates

that exploration of alternative employee ownership structures, such as worker-cooperatives, might aid in understanding how psychological ownership is achieved in employee ownership. Such exploration should also account for the employee-owners nature of work, and their relationship with the organization.

The current study delves into how being concerned with ownership, especially on a collective an organizational level, can have implications for the experience of shared ownership. However, there is still a lack of insight as to what the organizational motives for employee ownership is, beyond interpreting the reasons given by the informants. Meaning that there is potential to expand upon the current findings by including data from that looks directly at the intent behind organizational design choices. As the case with Kelso, where ownership was handed to employees as a means of business succession to increased productivity through ownership interests and retain a sense of company identity (Menke & Buxton, 2010). A more concise understanding of this intent, coupled with understanding employee attitudes might lead to an even greater understanding of how these two can match, or mismatch with each other. This knowledge could then be valuable for researchers and companies who are interested in exploring employee ownership models.

The current thesis adds to the theoretical discourse surrounding what dimensions are part of psychological ownership. Avey et al. (2009) point about accountability being part of the experience of ownership is somewhat ambivalent in the current findings, indicating a need for a more defined exploration of this dimension. Regarding responsibility and autonomy they seems to play a major role in the informants attitudes towards ownership, providing support for Olckers (2013) notion that they are part of the promotive dimensions of psychological ownership. The findings show how these dimensions are apparent in democratic processes, with autonomy being linked to procedural justice, and responsibility being associated with the empowerment experienced by employee-owners. However, more research is still needed, as

few psychological ownership studies has looked at worker cooperatives. In general, the concept of psychological ownership is in development within certain dimensions and forms of it, meaning that more in-depth research designs are needed to understand employees' attitudes in ownership structures that emphasize the same level of employee control as the current one.

With Pierce et al. (2001) routes towards psychological ownership both personal investment and control over the object was apparent in the findings. Tough, the route involving attaining information about the target of ownership was not apparent. Informants themselves seemed quite knowledgeable about the company, but the findings did not delve into how this supposed knowledge was acquired, nor was it discussed. Should future studies attempt to use a similar research design to address this subject matter, then adding questions involving this route towards ownership might provide a more detailed account about knowledge-sharing in democratic employee-owned companies.

Conclusive remarks

With the increasing need to bridge employees' interest, such as autonomy, with organizations interest of increasing financial performance through employee satisfaction, the current thesis attempts to see how the phenomenon of employee ownership informs employees perceptions. The chosen research question addresses this by looking at how attitudes towards ownership are shaped, implying that there is something in the experience of ownership that affects this view, and also that the concept of psychological ownership can help explain this. The term attitudes pertains to what elements ensure that employees are satisfied. Previous literature has touched upon this but failed to explain in-depth the "how" of these affects from an ownership experience. The lack of consensus might be attributed to a number of things. The current thesis, which looks at employees from a Norwegian worker cooperative, argues that its emphasis on employee control addresses this failed consensus. Due to the fact previous literature has predominantly looked at stock option planning, which is a form of employee ownership that is less often associated with employee autonomy and influence in decision-making. The chosen framework of the thesis included therefore elements related to organizational democracy. In the current context the attitudes towards ownership are positive, synonymous with perceived collective employee control and fairness, where they perceive to have an equal voice.

In the discussion of the results it appears that there a number of things that affects the employees' attitudes of their shared ownership. One aspect is organizational justice, especially distributive- and procedural justice, as the current informants' experience of ownership seem rooted in the perceived fairness of the organizational model, which provides a sense of ownership. In terms of satisfaction towards ownership it seems to be important that it should be grounded in creating long term values rather than short term monetary gains, avoiding extrinsic motivation towards satisfaction. Highlighting differences in this equal

ownership structure is not wanted, nor in terms of values either, as great difference in these two respects challenges the sense of collective ownership the organization attempts to create.

The results delve into psychological ownership dimensions apparent in employee's experience of ownership. The experience with these dimensions seem to have created certain expectations towards employee ownership, how employees should act in certain settings, and these dimensions relate to collective aspect of the ownership structure. Perhaps not every need or dimensions must be equally apparent in every person's experience of ownership, but that certain needs might be more important to one person's sense of ownership compared to other needs. For the informants it appears that responsibility, autonomy, self-identity and belonging informs their view of their ownership. The role of efficacy and accountability is somewhat uncertain. The current results and previous findings hint towards needs being periodically weakened. Speaking to how employee in various situations might want or need different things from their ownership. The informants accounts stress the importance of an organization having intensions beyond stock purchasing in order for there to be a sense of ownership. For them a sense of ownership towards a workplace requires that the organization is preoccupied with supporting it. A number of supportive management practices and organizational structures seem to aid in the experience of ownership, such as facilitation of engagement increasing feelings of control, and providing support for those consultants "outside" the organization, which addresses issues with sense of belonging. Another one is incentivising helpfulness through the wage-model, which leans towards a more promotive form of psychological ownership. Promotive psychological ownership is more apparent overall, as preventive psychological ownership is predominantly noticeable in concerns expressed about organizational growth.

Worker cooperatives, and similar organizational structures are a less common form of ownership. In order for existing companies to follow suit with the current company and

involve employees to a larger extent it would require them not only distributing stock ownership, but also control. The rarity of the current organization implies that this is easier said than done, and that there hasn't been much interest in doing so previously. However, a case can be made for transitioning towards such a structure, as it might lead to a number of positive attributes, such increased performance, affective commitment, and reduced employee turnover. It might also help employer's face the increasing employee demands of influence over their work and workplace.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Confirmation by Norwegian centre for research data



[Meldeskjema](#) / [«Erfaringer fra ansatteierskap – implikasjoner for arbeidsmiljøet»](#) / Vurdering

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer 379753	Vurderingstype Standard	Dato 01.07.2022
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Prosjekttittel

«Erfaringer fra ansatteierskap – implikasjoner for arbeidsmiljøet»

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for psykologi

Prosjektansvarlig

Anne Iversen

Student

Thomas Bentsen

Prosjektperiode

01.08.2022 - 31.08.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 31.08.2023.

[Meldeskjema](#)

Kommentar

OM VURDERINGEN

Personverntjenester har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

Personverntjenester har nå vurdert den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at behandlingen er lovlig, hvis den gjennomføres slik den er beskrevet i meldeskjemaet med dialog og vedlegg.

VIKTIG INFORMASJON TIL DEG

Du må lagre, sende og sikre dataene i tråd med retningslinjene til din institusjon. Dette betyr at du må bruke leverandører for spørreskjema, skylagring, videosamtale o.l. som institusjonen din har avtale med. Vi gir generelle råd rundt dette, men det er institusjonens egne retningslinjer for informasjonssikkerhet som gjelder.

DEL PROSJEKTET MED PROSJEKTANSVARLIG

For studenter er det obligatorisk å dele prosjektet med prosjektansvarlig (veileder). Del ved å trykke på knappen «Del prosjekt» i menylinjen øverst i meldeskjemaet. Prosjektansvarlig bes akseptere invitasjonen innen en uke. Om invitasjonen utløper, må han/hun inviteres på nytt.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til den datoen som er oppgitt i meldeskjemaet.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

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

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

Personverntjenester vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

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

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

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

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

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

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

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

Ved bruk av databehandler (spørreskjemalerverandør, skylagring eller videosamtale) må behandlingen oppfylle kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art. 28 og 29. Bruk leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med.

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

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: <https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema> Du må vente på svar fra oss før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

Personverntjenester vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Appendix 2: Information letter sent to informants

Informasjonsskriv

Deltakelse i masterprosjektet: Erfaringer fra ansatteierskap – implikasjoner for arbeidsmiljøet

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om deltakelse i et masterprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke hvordan ansatteierskap gjennomføres i praksis, og hva vi kan lære av bedrifter og arbeidstakere som innehar slik erfaring. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene med prosjektet og hva deltakelse i prosjektet vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Tema for dette prosjektet er ansatteierskap og hvordan det påvirker en rekke psyko-sosiale forhold knyttet til arbeidsplassen. Formålet med å studere en organisasjonsmodell som ansatteierskap er grunnet i å forstå hva som skiller dem fra mer tradisjonelle modeller og hvordan medarbeiderne selv forstår sin egen organisasjon. For å undersøke disse erfaringene og praksisene, vil vi gjennomføre kvalitative intervju med personer som har slike erfaringer, og analysere disse intervjuene ved hjelp av tematiske analyser.

Ansvarlig for masterprosjektet

Ansvarlig for masterprosjektet er Anne Iversen, 1.amanuensis ved NTNU Institutt for psykologi, som i tillegg vil være veileder under prosjektet sin gjennomførelse. Masterstudent Thomas Bentsen fra NTNU, Institutt for psykologi er studenten som skal gjennomføre prosjektet og skrive masteroppgave ut ifra det. Masterstudent fra NTNU, Institutt for psykologi Oda Margrethe Skogheim vil delta i innsamling og behandling av data.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

I forskningsprosjektet ønsker vi å intervjuere personer som jobber i bedrifter hvor eierskapet er fordelt på de ansatte. Forskningsprosjektet ønsker å kartlegge erfaringer og praksiser til ansatte, slik at vi bedre kan forstå hva dette gjør med en rekke faktorer knyttet arbeidsmiljøet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Deltakelse i prosjektet betyr at du blir intervjuet av enten to masterstudenter eller en masterstudent om dine erfaringer og praksiser. Vi ønsker å gjøre lydopptak av hvert intervju, transkribere dette lydopptaket ordrett, anonymisere det og deretter vil lydfilene bli slettet. Hvert intervju vil ta om lag en time og intervjuet vil omhandle hva du gjør i ditt arbeid, hvordan du prioriterer mellom ulike arbeidsoppgaver, hva du vurderer som viktige aspekter ved ditt arbeid ol. Det anonymiserte materialet vil deretter analyseres.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i forskningsprosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke ditt samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta, eller senere velger å trekke deg fra undersøkelsen.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysninger om deg til formålene vi har beskrevet i dette skriver. Vi behandler alle opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernreglene. Det betyr følgende:

- Det er bare masterstudentene Thomas Bentsen Oda Margrethe Skogheim vil ha tilgang til dine opplysninger og ditt intervju.
- Det vil gjøres lydopptak av intervjuet med deg. Denne lydfilen vil kun lagres på en kryptert minnepenn før det deretter blir anonymisert. Når intervjuet er transkribert, vil lydfilen slettes. Det anonymiserte intervjuet vil deretter lagres på en kryptert server ved NTNU som er passordbeskyttet.

Hva skjer med dine opplysninger når prosjektet avsluttes?

Forskningsprosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes senest 31.august 2023. Lydfilen av intervjuet vil da slettes og den anonymiserte intervjuutskriften vil deres lagres i et innlåst arkivskap. Det vil ikke lagres informasjon som kan identifisere deg som person.

Dine rettigheter.

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- Å få innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg
- Å få rettet personopplysninger om deg
- Å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- Å få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet)
- Å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandling av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Behandling av dine opplysninger er basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra NTNU, Institutt for psykologi ved Thomas Bentsen, har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- NTNU, Institutt for Psykologi: Thomas Bentsen (thombent@ntnu.no)
- Vårt personvernombud: Thomas Helgesen (thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no)
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personvernombudet@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Anne Iversen

Prosjektansvarlig

NTNU, IPS

Thomas Bentsen

Masterstudent

NTNU, IPS

Oda Margrethe Skogheim

Masterstudent

NTNU, IPS

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «*Erfaringer fra ansatteierskap – implikasjoner for arbeidsmiljøet*», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Temaguide: «Erfaringer fra ansatteierskap – implikasjoner for arbeidsmiljøet»

Introduksjon

- Presentasjon av prosjektet
- Anonymitet
- Lagring av data
- Samtykke til deltakelse og opptak av intervjuet

Bakgrunn – «kan du fortelle om deg selv?»

- Hvor lenge har du jobbet i yrke ditt/sektoren?
- Hvor lenge har du vært den del av ansatteierskapet.
- Tidligere arbeidserfaring
 - Andre lignede arbeidsplasser?

Dagens arbeidssituasjon – «kan du fortelle om din arbeidssituasjon i dag?»

- Arbeidspraksis – beskriv
- Arbeidsoppgaver – beskriv «hva gjør du?»
 - Arbeidsområder, ansvar
- Arbeidsrelasjoner – beskriv

Ansatteierskap – “Hvordan fungerer ansatteierskapet?”

- Er du medeier i denne bedriften?
 - Hvordan blir man det?
- Hva betyr det (for deg) – beskriv
 - Hva betyr det for de rundt deg?
- Forskjeller i grad av eierskap/ansiennitet?
- Noen forskjeller fra andre arbeidsplasser?
- Noen fordeler/ulempes?

Identitet

- Medeier, hva innebærer det?
- Innflytelse i beslutninger, i så fall på hvilke nivå?
- Hva type holdninger kjennetegner arbeidsplassen
 - Hvordan oppfatter de utenfra bedriften eierskapsmodellen deres?

Motivasjon

- Hvorfor denne arbeidsplassen?
 - Var ansatteierskapet en faktor?
- Hva gjør det med engasjement ditt
- Hva får du ut av eierskapet (og andre)?
 - Hvilke behov dekker det?

Prestasjon

- Hvis tilfelle; hvilken rolle har medeierskapet ditt i dine målsettinger
- Er det noen fordeler (og/eller ulemper) med eierskapet i arbeidet ditt?
- Gjør medeierskapet noe med hvordan arbeidet utføres?
 - Forskjell i kvaliteten på arbeidet?
- Hvis du når dine målsettinger, hva får du (og andre) igjen som medeier?

Ledelsen

- Hvordan fungerer forholdet mellom ledelsen og medarbeiderne
 - Noen forskjeller mellom de to? Prioriteringer, strategi eller ønsker?
- Strukturen -Beskriv «Hvordan er makt og ansvar fordelt?»
- Hvor mye påvirker ledelsen ditt arbeid (direkte og indirekte), og motsatt vei?

Appendix 4: Overview of themes from phase 3 of analysis

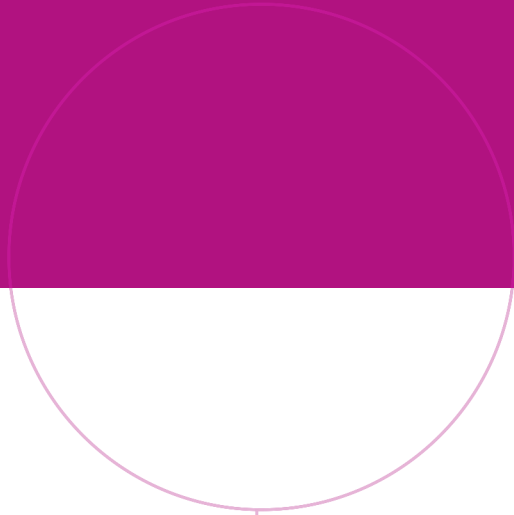
Research question: *How does stock ownership influences workplace culture?*

Main themes	Subthemes
The meaning of ownership	
Expectations	Making decisions Helpfulness
Engagement	
Democratic model	
Company values	
Being equals	

Appendix 5: Overview of themes from phase 4 of analysis

Research question: *How shared-ownership creates an experience of psychological ownership among employee-owners?*

Main themes	Subthemes
Company values	Thinking long-term Showcasing ownership
Expectations	Making decisions Helpfulness Multifaceted roles
Engagement	Individual level Collective level
Democratic model	Sustainability Our workplace
Environmental factors	Workplace setting Supporting each other Life-rules



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