Analysis of Internal Communication and Workplace Climate in Enterprises in the Czech Republic

Vlasta Doležalová[1]

Abstract: *Management of human resources is crucial for companies and includes internal communication, employee information, as well as employee relations at work. Workplace communication, information sharing and work relations on all hierarchical levels within a business are essential for the survival and success of small and medium-sized companies. The goal of this article is to analyse personnel systems, focusing on the relationships between superiors and subordinates, superior-subordinate communication and information sharing by company leaders with their subordinates, from the perspective of subordinates. Thereafter, gathered information is compared and analysed in terms of a focus on the advantages and disadvantages of a given work climate. Analysis and reasoning around the subject of respect and disrespect towards superiors from the perspective of subordinates is also presented. Data were gathered using questionnaires in small and medium-sized companies in the South Bohemian region. The questionnaires were completed by employees during the year 2013. This paper is based on data from the GAJU 039/2013/S grant-aided project called: The management of human resources of small and medium-sized companies.*

1 Introduction

   Human resource management can be defined, according to Armstrong (2006), as a strategic and logically thought through attitude towards managing the most precious commodity an organisation has – its employees – who individually and collectively contribute to achieving company goals. According to Graham and Bennett (1992), the goal of managing human resources is to achieve the highest possible benefit from the work, skills and capacity of company employees (its human resources) and, at the same time, to ensure that employees gain material and psychological rewards for their work. The concept of managing human resources is often presented as development in the direction of strategic human resource management (strategic HRM) (Armstrong *et* Baron, 2002), international and inter-cultural sides of organisation management (cross-cultural management, inter-

Ing. Marcela Mucalová
Mendel University in Brno, Faculty of Business and Economics, Department of management, Zemědělská 1, 613 00 Brno, Czech Republic, e-mail: xmucalov@node.mendelu.cz

cultural management) and towards international management of human resources (cross-cultural management) (Brewster, Sparrow *et* Vernon, 2007).

The difference between the years nineties of the last century and the beginning of the present century, with a focus on human capital is evident. The authors present a myriad expressions of human capital formulation. In the 90s of the last century Edvinsson and Malone (1997) and Stewart (1997) reported generally that human capital is the primary component of intellectual capital for Snell and Dean (1992) identified the meaning of that human capital is the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees, that the economic value to the organization, supplemented Nerdrum and Erikson (2001) on time and health. Hudson (1993) argues that it is only the combination of four factors: genetic inheritance, education, experience and attitude to life and business. Sveiby (1997) means that it is the ability to act in certain situations for the creation of tangible and intangible assets. Over time, changes the view on human capital, which is no longer part of the general considerations of human resources (known as the labor market), but also the specific requirements of individual competencies in the form of knowledge, skills and attributes managers and people who drive (McGregor et al., 2004). Wiig (2004) also states that it is part of the intellectual capital and expands on the knowledge, understanding, skills, and experience of personnel, the human capital is the property of the employee who is hired undertaking. A combination of factors of individuals within the organization may include knowledge, skills and personal qualities such as intelligence, energy, attitude, reliability, commitment, ability to learn, including competence, imagination and creativity, the desire to share information, participate in a team and focus on the goals of the organization (Abeysekera and Guthrie, 2005). Skills, knowledge, innovation, skills and general competence of employees represents the produced goods and services of employees that bring in revenue if the investment is their knowledge, skills and other abilities (Isaac et al., 2009), which is important for knowledge creation (Benevente and Cortina, 2010). Knowledge and talent of people that make up the organization, representing not only knowledge and talent, also have the ability, attitude, mental dexterity and creativity (Santos-Rodrigues et al., 2010), skills and knowledge acquire by individuals through investments in education, training and experience (Unger et al., 2011). Human capital defines Mayo (2012) as an intangible asset an organization that creates value, both financial and non-financial.

Human resource management is closely connected to communication. The form of communication within a company is a very important part of the company culture, because it connects all company activities (Janda, 2004). Correct distribution of information to employees affects the company's social climate, employees' motivation and loyalty, as well as their willingness to engage in different processes (Dytrt *et al.*, 2006). Brooks (2003) states that all communication within an organisation passes through its very heart, i.e. its management. Communication skills are among the most fundamental skills of a manager. Brooks further states that the manager's essential tool of communication is his charisma and that the way he communicates information is a part of the company business strategy as well as a result of it.

For any company to succeed, a proper form of communication based on everyday information sharing needs to be established (Martin, 2007). If a company wants to improve internal communication, this needs to be done with the goal of improving the performance and effectiveness of the organisation (Cejhamr *et* Dědina, 2010). Internal communication is, generally, seen as a prerequisite for organisational survival and growth in today's knowledge intensive business climate (Kitchen and Daly, 2002; Ober, 2008). Internal communication can enhance employee job attitudes, job performance (Goris et al., 2000; Johlke at al., 2000).

One restriction to effective communication can be the misunderstanding of expectations. Furthermore, some types of organisational structures, cultures or climates within the organisation prevent the free flow of information and communication. Barriers to effective communication are often connected with the persons involved in communicating, their personal disposition and possible inadequate communication skills (Tureckiová, 2007).

The quality of interpersonal relations, mainly workplace relations, creates a social atmosphere which affects the mood of employees, their work attitude and productivity in a positive or negative way (Kocianová, 2010). The concept of workplace relations does not only include the formal relations governed by rules, valid either within a certain working group (e.g. rules for reward distribution within a team), or within a company (standard operating procedures, bonus plan, rules for complaints, etc.), or state regulations (state employment regulations, such as the Labour Code, legal regulation of employment, collective bargaining agreement). It also possibly includes some other areas, such as the officially accepted Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms. It may even encompass international areas (e.g. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, European Social Charter, various treaties of the International Labour Organization (ILO) covering employing practices, employment, rewards and social matters, and EU directives). Workplace relations also often include informal occasional relationships, reflecting the personal characteristics of the participants (Koubek, 2011).

A manager's behaviour impacts work planning, management effectiveness, decisions, education, training, as well as career choices. Managers live under constant stress, having to change their focus between different subjects, problems or persons every five minutes. Gossip and speculation provide relevant information for managers as they reveal what people are thinking and what they are probably doing. This is true, in particular, when coming from more experienced employees who create a network of colleagues to complement the information on what is happening and what will probably happen. Managers thus do not only depend on subordinates, but on many people with whom they need to establish good relations, learn to deal, bargain and compromise (Cejharm *et* Dědina, 2010).

2 Methodology

Primary data were gathered via questionnaires from 107 employees in small and medium-sized companies in the South Bohemian region. This data collection took place during 2013 and focused on how employees perceived company competitive abilities and company reputation. Apart from basic company characteristics, the questionnaire was also divided into the following areas: how well informed employees are by the management; work climate and communication rating; positive and negative characteristics of the direct supervisor; state of the company life cycle; rating the level of company processes, products and services; rating the company strategy and its market position and, finally, social responsibility. For the purpose of this paper is article focuses on the company characteristics (company legal structure, geographic presence of business, company international relations, distribution of enterprises by number of employees), information provided to employee about plans and changes in the company, employee satisfaction in the organization, contribution to the performance of the company, specification, explaining and comparing satisfaction and employee dissatisfaction with working climate and communications in the workplace and the last areas of respect and disrespect to his superior.

For clarity, this report begins with company characteristics gathered from the employees participating in the questionnaires. The first part of the questionnaire focuses on categorising the companies questioned, based on: company legal structure, geographic presence of business, company international relations and, lastly, the number of employees. Employees changed one of the possible company legal structure, concretly stock company, a limited liability company, a general partnership, a co-operative, a state company, or are themselves registered as entrepreneurs. In addition selected within the geographic presence of the possibility of local, regional, national and multinational. As regards the distribution by size of enterprise, employees reported according to the EU classification of 0-9 microenterprise, 10-49 small enterprise, 50-249 medium-sized enterprise, 250 and more as large enterprise.

The second part of this report focuses on how well employees are informed of company plans and coming changes. Respondents answer questions covering whether they are informed in a timely manner about about future company strategies and plans, financial performance reports, personnel changes and other company activities, and to what extent trade unions are present within the company. This section refers to the percentage distribution of employees according to informed and uninformed employees in the areas of future plans and strategies, financial results, changes in personnel, other activities in the organization and existence of trade unions in the organization.

The third part of the report reveals employee satisfaction in relation to the specific work climate and the communication between superiors and subordinates. This part is expanded to elaborate on the employee appreciation of their superiors. This section expresses the percentage of the total distribution of employees according to satisfaction with work climate in the organization and communication between superiors and subordinates.

The fourth part of this report focuses on subordinates' perception of how their direct superiors contribute to the performance of the company. Employees answered 10 questions covering the superiors' areas of responsibility: management, work organisation, more consistent control of work and workplace, pressure on the morale, performance evaluation, better communication with subordinates, lead by example for employees, greater professionalism, greater fairness, superior-subordinate relations. The choice ranges between 1 and 10, where 10 corresponds to the maximum possible contribution to company operation and 1 the least possible contribution. The results are converted to percentages, where 100% corresponds to the highest possible contribution to company operation and 0% indicates an ideal company situation.

The final – analytical – part of this report is divided into two sections. The first section specifies, explains and compares employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the workplace climate and communication. The second section aims to describe employees' respect or disrespect towards their superiors. For the sake of clarity, employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction with workplace climate and communication, as well as the reasons for respect or disrespect towards superiors, are divided into the 13 most common replies in this area. The 13 most frequently reported reactions of satisfaction, dissatisfaction with the workplace climate and internal communications and employees´ respect or disrespect towards superiors were percentage distributed for more clarity.

3 Results

The questionnaires were completed by 107 participants employed by companies in the South Bohemian region. Of this total, 7 questionnaires were excluded due to incorrect completion of the form.

3.1 Basic company characteristics

The 100 employees participating in the survey state that they are employed either by a stock company, a limited liability company, a general partnership, a co-operative, a state company, or are themselves registered as entrepreneurs. The exact distribution can be seen in Figure 1, showing that most participants (51) are employed by limited liability companies.

Figure 1: Sample distribution by company type
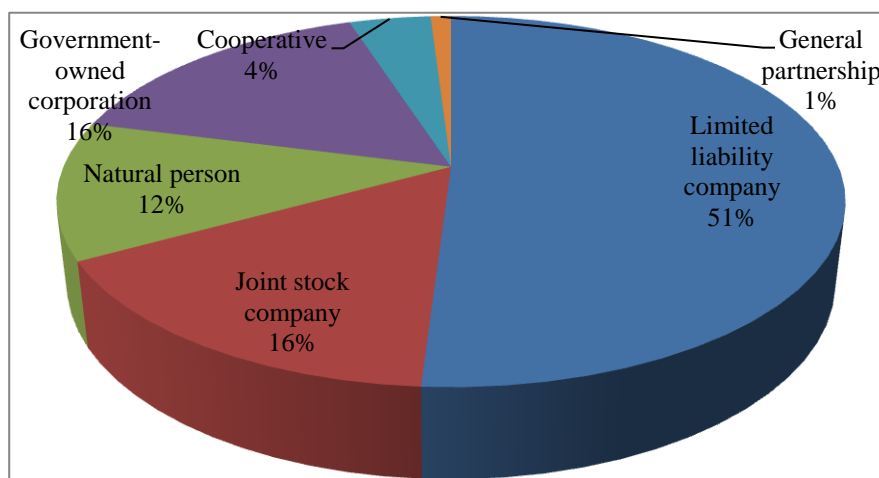
Source: own data analysis

The questionnaires reveal that 43% of companies and entrepreneurs are internationally active. The company geographic sphere of influence is divided into local, regional, national and international company presence. Figure 2 shows that nearly half of the companies in the South Bohemian region are active internationally and thus offer their products or services both within the Czech Republic and abroad. Regional and national activities are almost equally represented. Nearly one-quarter (24%) of the samples are present regionally and nearly one-quarter (22%) are present nationally. Only 12% of the sample is represented by companies with exclusively local business activities.

Figure 2: Sample distribution based on geographic sphere of influence
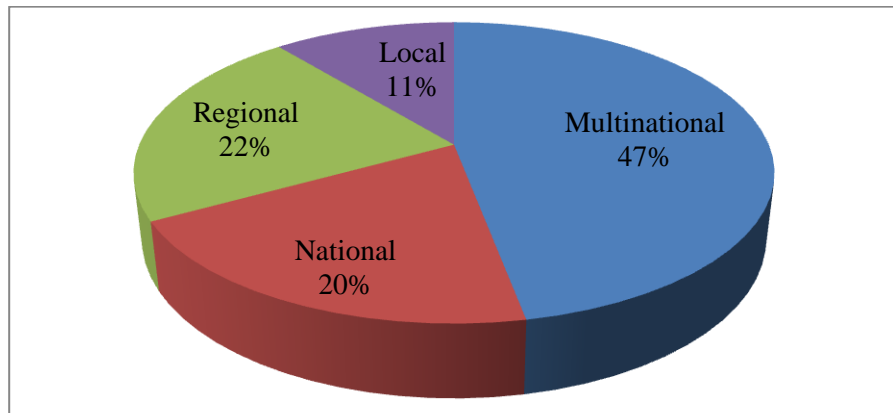
Source: own data analysis

The questionnaires further differentiate companies by the number of employees. As seen in Figure 3, 38% of employees are employed in large enterprises (as per EU classification), 53% of respondents work in small or medium-sized companies and the remaining 9% are employed in micro-enterprises.

**Figure 3:** Sample distribution by the number of employees
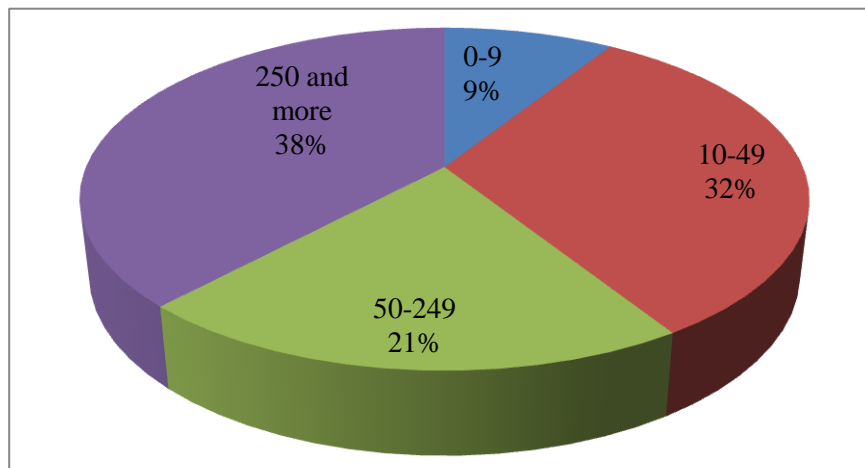
Source: own data analysis

3.2 How well informed employees are about company plans and changes within the company

The following section of the questionnaire focuses on how well informed employees are about company plans and changes. As seen in Figure 4, the majority of employees receive information affecting their own activities within the company. However, 24% do not receive any kind of information regarding their own future from their employers. Early information about personnel changes are distributed to 71% of our sample employees. Nearly two-thirds of employees receive information about future strategies, plans and timely company financial reports. One-third of employees is not aware of the company's financial situation or future strategies, plans and intentions.

Figure 4: How well informed employees are about planned changes and the company's future
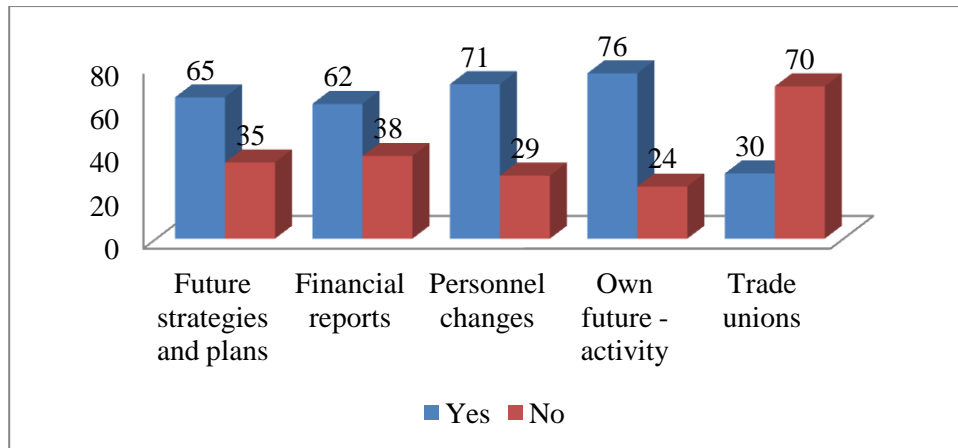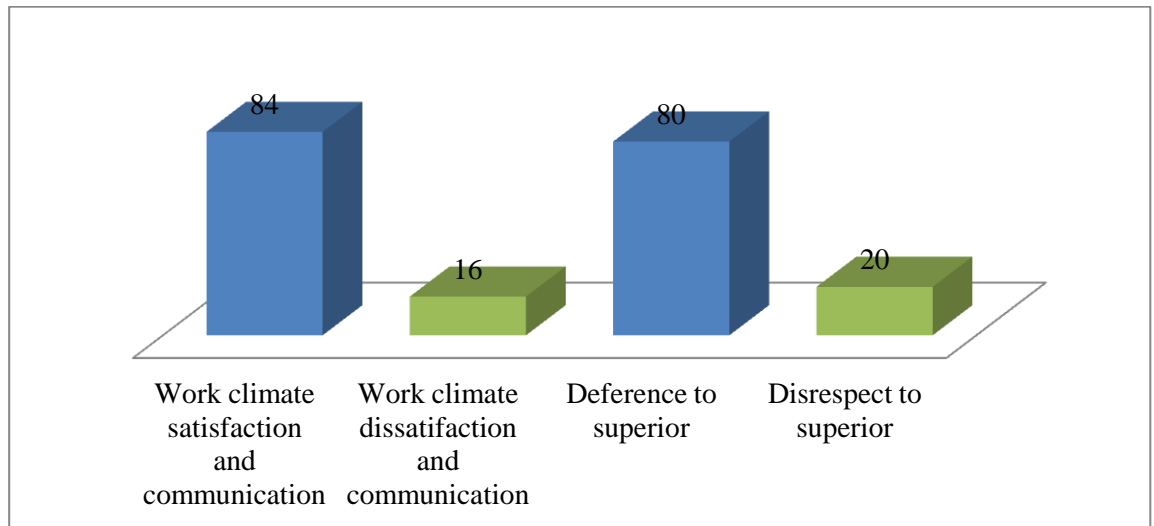

Source: own data analysis

3.3 Work climate satisfaction and respect of subordinates for superiors

– The next section of the questionnaire deals with employee opinions on their work climate, working conditions and management communication skills. One of the questions addresses employee respect or disrespect towards their superiors. Respondents reply as to whether or not they appreciate their superiors.

Figure 5 demonstrates that 84% of employees are satisfied with their work climate and superior-subordinate communication. Even though Figure 4 indicates that one-third of employees are not informed about company changes, only 16% of employees express dissatisfaction with this lack of information. An interesting fact is that one-fifth of respondents disrespects their superiors. This disrespect can have many causes. For example, a lack of communication, lack of reliability or great work load may result in insufficient time devoted to their subordinates and inadequate information sharing.

Figure 5: Work climate satisfaction and respect of subordinates for superiors
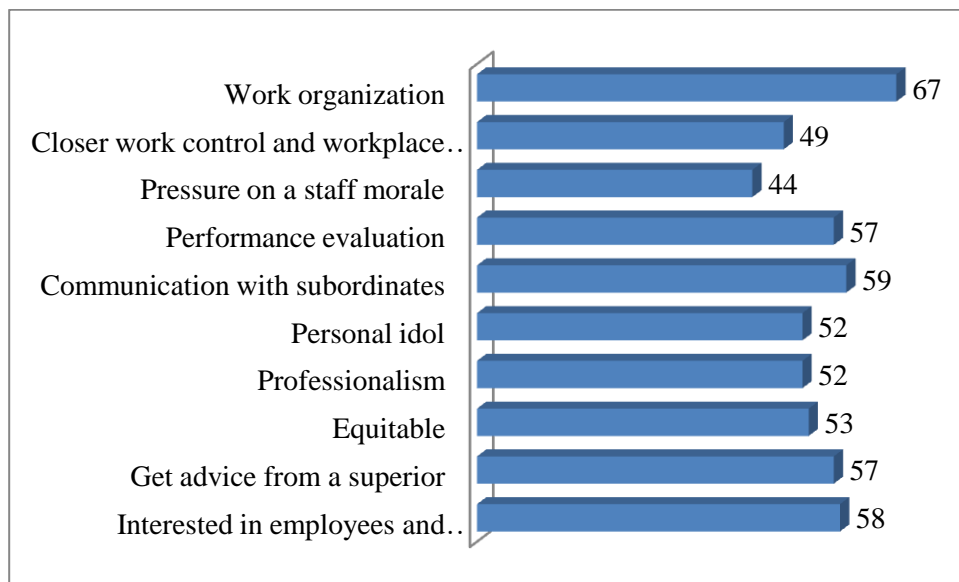
Source: own data analysis

3.4 Superiors' contribution to better company operation from subordinates' perspective

The following section of the questionnaire deals with the direct superiors' contribution to the company operation, from the perspective of subordinates. Using a semantic differential scale, employees express their opinion on the subject. The choice ranges between 1 and 10, where 10 corresponds to the maximum possible contribution to company operation and 1 the least possible contribution.

Employees rate 10 different areas of possible company improvements (see Figure 6). The results are converted to percentages, where 100% corresponds to the highest possible contribution to company operation and 0% indicates an ideal company situation, where the superior does not need to engage any further in a given area in order to improve company operation.

The questionnaire reveals inadequate work planning by superiors, as shown in Figure 6. This means that, in the view of 67% of employees, superiors could improve work organisation. Another interesting result is employees' view of superiors' communication with subordinates, which 59% state could be improved. However, this information does not correspond to Figure 4, showing that two-thirds of employees are satisfied with the information sharing and communication by their superiors. Likewise, the high level of interest in employees by superiors and their appreciation of employees indicate a far better situation of 58%. The improved results also ensue from the rating of superiors' work performance and whether they are able to accept advice from their subordinates.

Figure 6: Direct superiors' contribution to better company operation from subordinates' perspective

| Category	Value
Work organization	67
Closer work control and workplace…	49
Pressure on a staff morale	44
Performance evaluation	57
Communication with subordinates	59
Personal idol	52
Professionalism	52
Equitable	53
Get advice from a superior	57
Interested in employees and…	58

Source: own data analysis

3.5 Analysis of employee work climate satisfaction and company communication

The following section of the questionnaire specifies and compares employee satisfaction with company climate and internal communication. For clarity, this section is divided into 13 of the most common replies and the results are converted to percentages.

As seen in Figure 7, employees are most (15.13%) satisfied with communication taking place within the company, and with e-mail communication which speeds up information sharing. They also appreciate the friendliness of their team and friendly relations in the workplace (13.87%). Followed by this is employee cooperation and teamwork (12.18%). An interesting fact is that most positive replies come from the areas of communication, cooperation and workplace relations. Information sharing and information availability, expertise, competence and education are less represented in the replies (9.66 - 10.08%). Career, experience, salary conditions and democratic leadership style are not shown to be as important factors for satisfaction as workplace relations and communication.

Figure 7: Analysis of employee satisfaction with their work climate and company communication
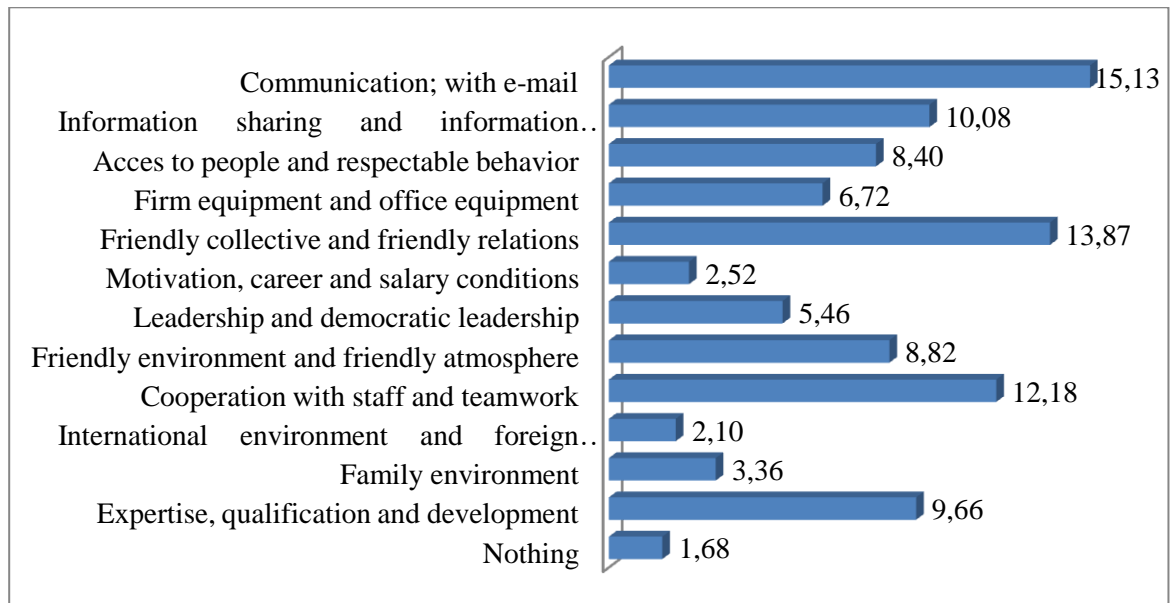
Source: own data analysis

To compare employee work climate satisfaction with satisfaction in the area of internal communication, an analysis was performed on employees' dissatisfaction in the same work environment. Employee dissatisfaction is then divided into 13 of the most common replies and converted to percentages, in the same way as with employee satisfaction.

Interesting information results from comparing Figure 7 with Figure 8. The reasons for dissatisfaction with the workplace environment do not correspond with the reasons for satisfaction – employees react in this area in the same manner. The most common reply is in the area of communication with colleagues and superiors (20.9%). This is followed by the lack of information sharing and lack of communication (15.92%). In third place, where results from Figures 7 and 8 start to correspond, are replies related to working and salary conditions (14.43% show dissatisfaction).

Figure 8: Analysis of employee work climate and internal communication dissatisfaction

Communication with colleagues and superiors — 20,90
Not sharing information, non-cooperation — 15,92
Foreign management, language demands — 1,99
Working environment and modernization — 11,94
Working and salary conditions — 14,43
Rivalry, disputes and conflicts in the workplace — 4,98
Strict management, bureaucracy — 5,97
Family business — 2,99
Superficial negotiations, false face — 4,48
Excessive amount of work — 3,48
Inexperience, incompetence lead — 4,48
Impossibility of professional growth — 2,49
Nothing — 5,97

Source: own data analysis

Generally speaking, it can be concluded that the area of communication is the cause of both the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of employees, similar to what is seen in information sharing and lack of information sharing.

3.6 Analysis of respect and disrespect towards superiors

The last section of this report deals with employees' respect and disrespect towards their superiors.

Employees specify the reasons for their respect towards their direct superiors. For the sake of clarity, the answers are divided into the 13 most common reply groups and converted to percentages.

Figure 9: Analysis of employees' respect towards their superiors
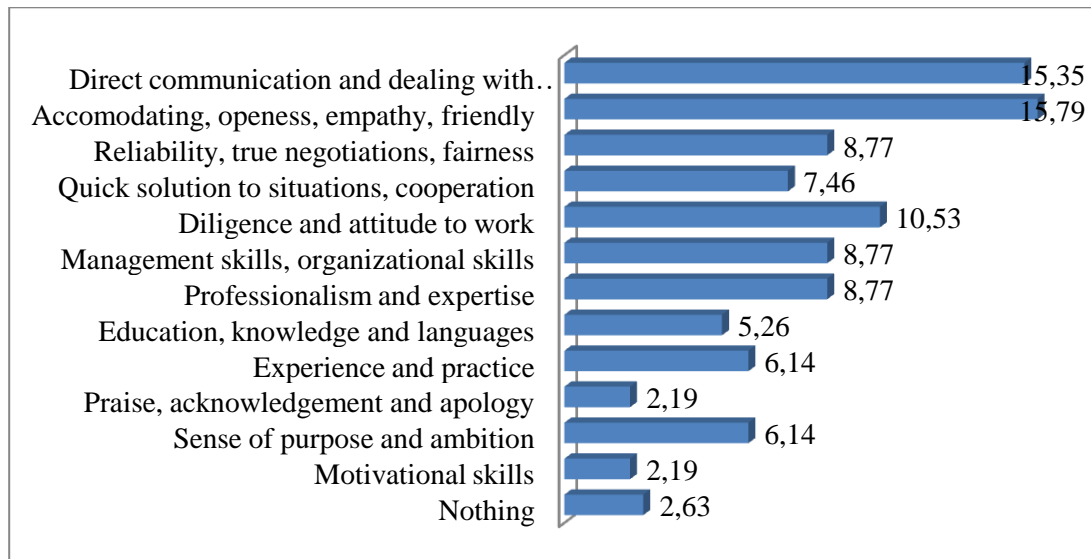
Source: own data analysis

While Figure 5 demonstrates that 80% of employees respect their superiors, Figure 9 demonstrates the reasons for this. The most common reasons for employees' respect for their superiors are: helpfulness, openness, empathy and friendly attitude (15.79%). This is followed by direct communication and interaction (15.35%). The third most appreciated category is the superiors' diligence and work attitude (10.53%). The areas of helpfulness, honesty and fairness, leadership and organisational skills, professionalism and expertise all attain the same percentage (8.77%). Generally speaking, employees most value their superiors' behaviour, superior-subordinate relationships, manners, expertise and professionalism in the workplace.

To compare respect and disrespect, employees answered questions on what they do not appreciate and what they dislike about their superiors. As in the analysis of respect, disrespect is also divided into the 13 most common reply groups, and expressed in percentages.

Figure 10: Analysis of disrespect towards superiors
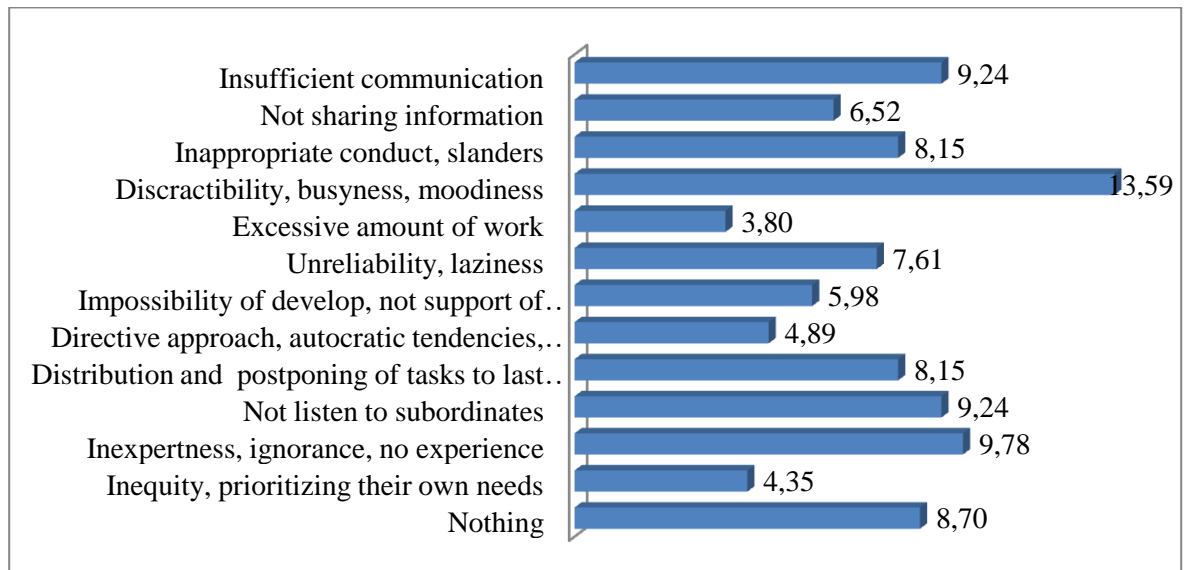
Source: own data analysis

While Figure 5 displays 20% dissatisfaction with superiors, Figure 10 demonstrates the reasons for this. The most common reason for disrespect towards superiors is superiors' stress, lack of time, moodiness and short temper (13.59%). This is followed by lack of expertise, lack of knowledge and lack of experience (9.78%). The remaining problems, on the same perceptual level (9.24%), are lack of communication and lack of listening to subordinates, which are very important parts of a superior-subordinate workplace relationship. It should be noted that 8.7% of employees do not respect their superiors at all. These superiors have no reason to even consider themselves of any use to the company. Also very alarming is the fact that 8.15% of employees state that the most common reasons for their disrespect towards their superiors are unsuitable behaviour towards subordinates and even participating in gossip. In addition, superiors assigning work at the last moment, or postponing tasks just before deadlines, attain the same percentage of disrespect. If it is the superior who decides to postpone tasks allotted to subordinates, this should not be taking place at all in the workplace.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

Human resources can be used effectively and efficiently, and thus may lead to an effect on performance. In this case, an important concept that should be taken into account is work commitment, denoting the employee's identification with the organizational tasks own is incumbent with, and the sense of belonging to the works or performed thereby (Güney et al., 2012).

Out of 107 questionnaires collected from employees, only 100 could be used (93.5%) due to 7 incorrectly completed questionnaires. The majority of participants (51%) are employed by limited liability companies and companies with an international sphere of influence. The majority of employees (59%) are employed by small or medium-sized companies.

Two-thirds of employees state that they are informed about planned changes in their company such as: future company strategies, financial reports, personnel changes and other employee activities within the company. One-third of participating employees do not receive any information about

future company changes, which could be caused by a lack of communication within the company. This lack of communication, however, needs to be corrected by superiors according to §276 of the Labour Code entitled Employee Information and Consultation Rights, which states that employees must be informed about the future operation of the company. Even though one-third of employees are not at all informed about the company's future plans, only 16% are unhappy with the situation in the company and 20% disrespect their superiors. According to Luss, Nyce (2008) the organizations share business plans and goals about two-thirds of employees as well as in this research in Czech Republic, concretely data are in Asian-Pacific (64.7%), in Canada (64.1%), in Europa (66.7%) and in USA (61.5%). The same organizations share financial informations about half to two-thirds employees, concretely in Asian-Pacific (52.9%), in Canada (64.1%), in Europa (66.7%) and in USA (61.2%).

Not only in Czech enterprises, but also in Europe, have problem with information area as stated in study of Aragón and Domingo (2014), where the largest problem with lack of information seems to be the area of communication. According to Van Gramberg et al (2014) abroad eg. in Australia are suggested solutions abuse communication at workplace by courts and tribunals. More than 80 percent of employees polled in the US and UK said that employee communication influences their desire to stay with or leave an organization. Nearly a third said communication was a "big influence" on their decision (Burton, 2006).

In the area of superiors' possibilities to improve company operations as seen from the employees' perspective, employees state that the most improvement is needed in work organisation. This is why the suggested measure is to improve work organisation in order to improve work productivity and to utilise employees more effectively.

An interesting finding arises from the area of communication. 84% of employees are happy with communication on planned changes. 84% are happy with their work climate and communication. Curiously, on the other hand, the second area needing the most improvement is superior-subordinate communication, which could be improved, as stated by 59%. This results in a mismatch in employees' replies regarding communication. The area of communication is also questionable when assessing satisfaction or dissatisfaction with working climate and internal communication, as 15.3% of employees state this as being the most common reason for workplace satisfaction. However, 20.9% of employees select communication as the most common reason for their dissatisfaction. One structural mechanism influencing internal communication is the organisation structure (Dasgupta, Gupta, 2009).

The following mismatch arises in respect and disrespect towards superiors. 15.35% of employees respect their superiors because of excellent communication with subordinates, and sharing of information needed for employees' work. However, in 9.24% of the replies, the most common reason given for disrespect towards their superiors is also communication. It is apparent that communication is very important within the whole company hierarchy. It all depends on the subjective viewpoint and behaviour of individuals. Company communication and information sharing do not appear to be favourable for companies. An essential management skill, among others, is the ability to effectively communicate and conduct conversation with subordinates. Unfortunately, communication is often underestimated and therefore not many pay attention to it. A possible suggestion for improvement is management communication training for managers.

Another interesting result is that 58% state that managers should increase their interest in and praise for employees. 57% state that superiors should allow subordinates to advise them and should give feedback on employees' work. Here we also find some differences in the responses. As was earlier stated, 84% of employees are happy with superior-subordinate communication and company climate. Even though they feel that they should be given more attention, 80% of employees do respect their superiors. This goes in line with the fact that only 2.19% respect their superiors only due to his/her ability to praise subordinates. Once again, dissatisfaction with the lack of attention recei-

ved by employees can be connected to managerial communication skills or lack of time. Manager training and a course in time management are the proposed solutions in order to improve communication.

According to our results, the area focusing on superiors' behaviour is alarming. It is no wonder that employees do not respect their superiors, if it is common for superiors to engage in gossip, unsuitable behaviour or are agitated, moody, unreliable and lazy. These characteristics do not belong in a workplace. Training to improve communication skills and to improve workplace behaviour is recommended. Güney et al. (2012) discovered that open communication has a positive effect on work commitment. On the other hand closed communication, contrary to expectations, has a positive effect on commitment towards work as well.

According to this study and studies of other authors are probably similar conclusions constant problems in internal communicationof. Generally can be said that interpersonal communication is difficult because of its transactional nature. Knapp and Daly (2002) have said that, there is considerable variety in how conceptually and operationally define this area of study. In some respects, the construct of interpersonal communication is like the phenomenon it represents – that is, dynamic and changing.

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