



Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Anni-Maria Hietanen

How do newly recruited employees perceive and evaluate onboarding strategies?

School of Management
Master's thesis in Strategic
Business Development

Vaasa 2025

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**School of Management****Author:** Anni-Maria Hietanen**Title of the Thesis:** How do newly recruited employees perceive and evaluate onboarding strategies**Degree:** Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration**Programme:** **Strategic Business Development****Supervisor:** Rodrigo Rabetino**Year:** 2025 Pagecount: 66

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study is to find functioning onboarding practices. The research topic is important because a well-executed onboarding process strengthens the employee's sense of belonging within the organization and enhances motivation, which in turn increases commitment to both the work community and the employer. From the employer's perspective, organizational commitment is generally considered one of the most significant and desirable outcomes of a successful onboarding process. The conceptual background of this study is in previous studies, specifically in theories of organizational socialization and the 4C's framework. Literature review explores concepts of onboarding, organizations, and the roles of the hire and the receiving organization in the onboarding process. This study aims to examine through qualitative interviews the experiences of newly recruited and onboarded employees, to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions of their onboarding processes. Thus, it becomes possible to identify and address potential areas for improvement as well as well-functioning practices in the onboarding process. The empirical study was conducted in four qualitative interviews in a maritime shipping company. Based on the empirical research data gathered from the qualitative interviews, it can be stated that successful onboarding consists of all four components of the 4C's framework: compliance, clarification, culture, and connection. Interviewees highlighted self-efficacy and an active approach during the initial period of employment to improve learning and integration into the organization. This study contributes to the previous research on onboarding and organizational socialization and adds to the earlier established theories of successful onboarding practices. The results provide guidelines that can be used among different organizations for onboarding strategies planning and execution.

KEYWORDS: familiarisation, transfer of expertise, human resource management, human resources strategies, human resources, adaptation, organizational culture, corporate culture, work culture, organizational behavior, social integration

VAASAN YLIOPISTO**Johtamisen yksikkö**

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Tekijä: | Anni-Maria Hietanen |
| Tutkielman nimi: | How do newly recruited employees perceive and evaluate onboarding strategies |
| Tutkinto: | Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration |
| Oppiaine: | Strategic Business Development |
| Työn ohjaaja: | Rodrigo Rabetino |
| Valmistumisvuosi: | 2025 Sivumäärä: 66 |

TIIVISTELMÄ:

Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on löytää toimivia strategioita ja käytäntöjä uusien työntekijöiden perehdytykseen. Aihe on tärkeä, sillä toimiva ja kokonaisvaltainen perehdytysprosessi vahvistaa työntekijän organisaatioon kuulumisen tunnetta ja parantaa työmotivaatiota. Tämä puolestaan nostaa halukkuutta sitoutua työorganisaatioon ja työnantajaan. Työnantajan näkökulmasta työntekijän sitoutuminen työorganisaatioon on yksi yleisesti merkittävimpiä ja tärkeimpiä rekrytoinnin ja perehdytyksen tavoitteita. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys nojaa aiempiin tutkimuksiin aiheesta sekä erityisesti organisaatiososialisaation teoriaan ja neljän C:n viitekehukseen. Kirjallisuuskatsaus käsittelee perehdytyksen ja organisaatioiden käsitteitä sekä työntekijän ja työnantajan rooleja perehdytysprosessissa. Empiirinen tutkimus on toteutettu neljän kvalitatiivisen haastattelun muodossa laivavarustamossa. Kvalitatiivisen haastattelun kautta tutkimus pyrkii tutkimaan hiljattain työssään aloittaneiden työntekijöiden kokemuksia ja luomaan syvempää ymmärrystä heidän näkemyksistään kokemastaan perehdytysprosessista. Näin ollen on mahdollista tunnistaa perehdytysprosessin potentiaalisia kehityskohteita sekä toimivia käytäntöjä. Haastatteluissa kerätyn tutkimustiedon perusteella voidaan todeta, että onnistunut perehdytysprosessi koostuu kaikista neljästä neljän C:n viitekehysten komponentista, joita ovat compliance eli sääntöjen ja käytäntöjen omaksuminen, clarification eli roolin ja vastuiden selkeytyminen, culture eli organisaatiokulttuurin omaksuminen ja connection eli sosiaaliset suhteet ja yhteenkuuluvuus. Haastateltavat painottivat oma-aloitteisuuden tärkeyttä sekä korkean minäpystyvyyden tunteen tärkeyttä työsuhteen alkutaipaleella, sillä niiden nähtiin vaikuttavan positiivisesti oppimiseen ja työorganisaatioon integroitumiseen. Tämä tutkimus täydentää aiempaa tutkimustietoa perehdytysprosesseista ja organisaatiososialisaatiosta sekä laajentaa ymmärrystä onnistuneista perehdytyskäytännöistä aiemmin vakiintuneiden teorioiden pohjalta. Tutkimuksen tulokset antavat suuntaviivoja, joita voidaan hyödyntää erilaisten organisaatioiden perehdytysstrategioiden suunnittelussa ja toimeenpanossa.

AVAINSANAT: perehdyttäminen, osaamisen siirto, henkilöstöjohtaminen, henkilöstöstrategiat, henkilöstöressurit, sopeutuminen, organisaatiokulttuuri, yrityskulttuuri, työskulttuuri, organisaatiokäyttäytyminen, sosiaalinen integraatio

Contents

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 1 | Introduction | 6 |
| 1.1 | Background of the study | 6 |
| 1.2 | Research question and objectives | 9 |
| 1.3 | Structure of the study | 10 |
| 2 | Literature review | 12 |
| 2.1 | Organizations and organizational culture | 12 |
| 2.2 | Onboarding process | 14 |
| 2.3 | Organizational socialization | 15 |
| 2.4 | The new hire's role in the onboarding process | 17 |
| 2.5 | The organization's role in the onboarding process | 19 |
| 2.6 | Successful onboarding and 4 C's framework | 21 |
| 2.7 | Summary of the literature review | 23 |
| 3 | Methodology | 26 |
| 3.1 | Research approach | 26 |
| 3.2 | Data collection and case company | 27 |
| 3.3 | Data analysis | 29 |
| 3.4 | Reliability and validity of the results | 30 |
| 4 | Findings | 34 |
| 4.1 | How did the employees experience the process? | 34 |
| 4.2 | Comprehensiveness of the onboarding | 37 |
| 4.3 | Successful onboarding practices | 39 |
| 4.3.1 | Interpersonal support | 39 |
| 4.3.2 | Social inclusion | 40 |
| 4.3.3 | Employee Retention | 42 |
| 4.4 | Problematic areas in onboarding | 42 |
| 4.5 | Suggestions for future onboarding | 44 |
| 4.5.1 | Suggestions for the employer | 44 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 4.5.2 Suggestions for the employee | 45 |
| 4.6 Summary of the findings | 46 |
| 5 Discussion | 49 |
| 6 Conclusions | 54 |
| 6.1 Managerial implications | 54 |
| 6.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research | 55 |
| References | 57 |
| Appendices | 63 |
| Appendix 1. Interview questionnaire | 63 |
| Appendix 2. Haastattelurunko | 65 |

1 Introduction

This thesis discusses the importance of properly onboarding new employees and aims to create a consensus on well-executed, functioning onboarding processes. The topic is important in all business fields to ensure employee well-being, make recruitments successful, and integrate the new employees into the team and working society from the beginning. In this introductory chapter, we discuss the background and premise of the study, familiarizing ourselves with the research question, objectives, and structure of this thesis.

1.1 Background of the study

Onboarding is the process by which new or new-to-role employees are introduced to their position and the company's culture (Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2018). Onboarding is not just orientation, training, or hiring. Orientation can be defined as "a process of taking someone from outside your organization and making them a productive, independent, and confident member of your team who understands the culture, the technical and process expectations" (Giles, 2020, 07:47). During the onboarding process, knowledge is typically transferred from more experienced employees and team members to newcomers to enable their integration (Hemphill & Begel, 2011). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is also an important aspect of the onboarding process. It guides understanding and navigating various firm-related and societal issues, as well as how to react according to company guidelines (Boyd, 2017). Corporate social responsibility means companies are responsible for acting the best way possible, not only towards the people working inside the company but towards the people outside the company as well, and the whole society and environment (Stobierski, 2021). Corporate social responsibility is included in the company's strategy and also guides the company's goals. Company social responsibility can be described as a company's self-regulation and aims to have a positive impact on the world and society around the organization. (Stobierski, 2021.) The European Commission has determined corporate social responsibility as "a concept whereby

companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (European Commission, 2011, p.3).

Successful onboarding is vital in all companies because it enables new employees to learn everything they need concerning their new role. Effective onboarding is a process that seamlessly integrates new individuals into the organization and enables the new individuals to comply with both the organization’s values and culture as well as the strategic objectives of the company (Stein & Christiansen, 2010). Effective onboarding lays the groundwork for long-term employee satisfaction and performance as well as retention (Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2018). Korte and Lin (2013) emphasize that new employees have to learn the unwritten norms and rules of the organization to integrate into the organization successfully.

Rivera (2024) suggests that employees should take the initiative and actively participate in the onboarding process to be successful. The recruit has a significant responsibility, for instance, to ask about things that remain unclear and actively engage in the social settings of the workplace to become an integral part of the new work society. On the other hand, the employer is responsible for providing an onboarding process that allows the recruit to adapt, learn, and feel capable in their new position and new environment. As Keino (2023) states, employee engagement and a proper onboarding strategy are vital for both the organization and the employee over the long term. Employees who receive proper onboarding in their new position are more likely to be satisfied and motivated, and they are also more productive in less time. (Keino, 2023.) Conversely, poorly managed onboarding can lead to higher employee turnover and decreased performance (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016).

Successful onboarding is a ground for organizational commitment. Workplace and job commitment have been researched a lot by scholars across various disciplines (Cohen, 2007), and recently, the importance of committed employees has been emphasized by

several Human Resource Management researchers (Reza, 2019). Organizational commitment has been described as a vital factor in companies' success by various researchers. For instance, Reza (2019) argues that all successful companies need to have committed and efficient employees and that the overall success of organizations is clearly connected with human resource practices that promote employee commitment to the organization. Khan et al. (2014) describe organizational commitment as a psychological bond or connection between the organization and employee. They state that this bond represents a sense of loyalty and identification that guides the individual's choice to continue with the company.

On the other hand, organizational commitment can be seen as a dynamic where individuals are invested in actively applying their skills and talent to support the organization's goals and thrive (Lamba and Choudhary, 2013). Brown (1997) has described organizational commitment as a psychological state with a sense of positive obligation toward the organization and states that this sense of obligation often grows both from the employee's adoption of organizational goals and values and from their history, prior actions, and experiences within the organization. Brown (1997) also expresses that commitment is a mixture of future-focused dedication to the organization and a bond shaped by past experiences between the organization and the individual.

Equally as challenging as designing programs and policies that foster the development of organizational commitment is the task of sustaining members' positive and enthusiastic engagement with organizational goals and activities over time (Brown, 1997). Brown (1997) states that a decline in enthusiasm and active involvement not only risks retention of highly goal-committed members of the organization but may also result in a workforce characterized by disengagement and dissatisfaction. This results in employees who lack both the motivation to contribute meaningfully and the initiative to seek alternative employment opportunities. Several researchers have demonstrated how committed employees are more motivated and ready to extend their task range, self-initiated, and to widen their area of expertise in the organization, not only concentrating

on a narrow role-specific task description (Paré, 2007). A well-executed onboarding builds the foundation for long-term organizational commitment.

1.2 Research question and objectives

This research explores onboarding strategies by documenting the experiences of onboarding four relatively new employees in a Finnish sea transport company. In doing so, the thesis addresses the following research question:

“How do newly recruited employees perceive and evaluate onboarding strategies?”

The empirical part of the study is conducted by interviewing new employees after they have started working in the case company. This study aims to understand how they experienced and evaluated the onboarding strategy in this company and if there is room for improvement. Hence, there are no clear guidelines for the onboarding process that apply uniformly across all departments of this company. It is essential to understand how the process is experienced and, most importantly, how it can be improved. Elle Mäkinen (2024, p. 82) suggested that “future research could be conducted by following employees from the beginning of their onboarding process through their first year of employment. This could provide more insight into the long-term effects of an onboarding process.” This empirical research aims to understand the experiences of four new employees in the company from their first week to their first one and a half years working in the company.

The contribution of this study is threefold. Stein and Christiansen (2010) state that effective onboarding is a strategically executed process that seamlessly integrates new people into the work organization. Proper onboarding enables newcomers to become insiders who understand and comply with the company’s values, culture, and strategic objectives. This study aims to determine whether the case company’s onboarding process is effective and strategically executed, and if so, whether it helps new employees quickly adapt

to the organization in the way that Stein and Christiansen state. The empirical part of this research aims to investigate, through qualitative interviews, employee satisfaction with the onboarding experience. Davila and Pina-Ramirez (2018) state that effective onboarding lays the groundwork for employee satisfaction and retention, and also for good performance at work in the long term. Korte and Lin (2013) claim that, in order to achieve full integration and acceptance within an organization, newcomers must develop an understanding of the informal norms and unwritten rules that shape the company's culture. This research also explores the experiences and views of newcomers regarding the social aspects of the workplace and their integration into the organization.

1.3 Structure of the study

This thesis comprises six chapters: introduction, literature review, methodologies employed in the study, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The thesis starts with an introduction to the study, providing an overview of its background, objectives, and purpose. Also, the central research question is introduced. The primary goal of the introduction chapter is to familiarize the reader with the topic and research objectives of the thesis. Following the introduction, the second chapter presents a literature review that explores theories and practices related to onboarding. It also discusses roles and relationships, dynamics, and social aspects involved in the onboarding process between the organization and the recruit. The third chapter concentrates on the practical elements of study, providing a comprehensive description of the research methodology and the techniques used for data collection. The fourth chapter will present an analysis of the study's findings, including the results from the interview. The fifth chapter discussion will interpret these findings in the context of the literature review. Finally, the sixth chapter will summarize the study's key conclusions, discuss practical implications, and suggest ideas for future research. A list of references and appendices follows the conclusion. The study structure is presented in Figure 1.

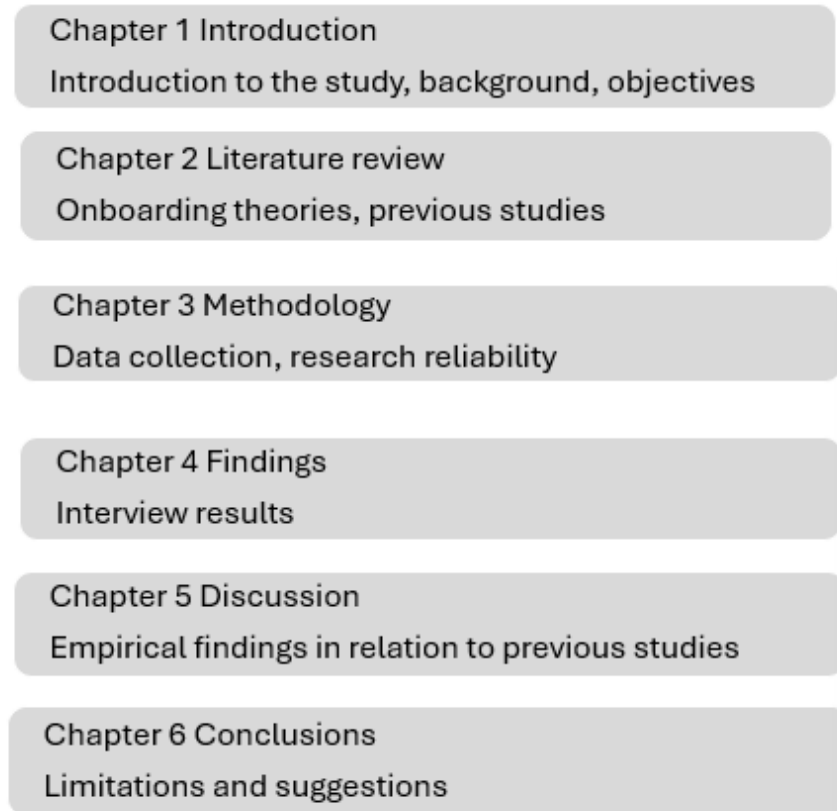


Figure 1. Structure of the study.

2 Literature review

This section aims to build a comprehensive foundation for the study. In this section, we familiarize ourselves with previous research on onboarding processes and adaptation to organizations and their organizational cultures. The first paragraph will discuss and define the term onboarding, and the second will introduce the concept of organizational socialization. This chapter also discusses adaptation to a new organization, the role of a newcomer in the onboarding process, and the role of the organization. Additionally, paragraph five discusses the factors that, based on previous studies, contribute to successful onboarding.

2.1 Organizations and organizational culture

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1977, p.1-2), Work organizations provide individuals with more than just employment. Organizations offer a distinct socio-cultural environment. By joining an organization, individuals engage with a set of routines, values, interpersonal dynamics, expectations, and opportunities that go beyond the technical aspects of their work roles.

Every organizational culture is characterized by enduring informal norms and conventions, a specialized vocabulary and set of ideological beliefs, collectively understood standards of conduct, implicit biases, and established models of appropriate social behavior. These cultural elements include customs and protocols that guide, for instance, how members interact with colleagues, subordinates, superiors, and external stakeholders. Organizational culture informs members' perceptions of acceptable and strategic behavior within the context of the workplace, shaping their understanding of what kind of behavior in the organization is expected and accepted. In addition, different departments within the same organization might have their own distinctive organizational cultures. (Maanen & Schein, 1977, p.1-2.) Kulmala and Rosvall (2023) agree with this view, stating that organizations often have several subcultures simultaneously, and usually, the

bigger the organization is, the more different subcultures are formed. They suggest that, for instance, different geographical locations within the same company often enable the formation of different subcultures as well as different departments and teams that have different tasks and characteristics in the organization. Despite this, the general and common company culture should bring together all employees from different departments, and the subcultures cannot have strongly contradicting values or characteristics in their cultures, so that the integrity of the organization is possible. (Kulmala & Rosvall, 2023.) They also state that the same company culture can be experienced in various ways by individual organization members depending on their past experiences, preferences, individual values, and motivators. (Kulmala & Rosvall, 2023.)

Starting in a new position within an organization can be a complex and demanding experience for many. The range of challenges that might arise includes difficulties adapting to an unfamiliar work environment, managing expectations both ways towards the company and towards the hire, and understanding the new organizational culture, especially if it is not clearly communicated at the beginning of employment and during onboarding. New employees are required to learn and navigate new organizational structures and to find sources of information and support. They also need to adopt organizational norms and informal, often unwritten practices. These unspoken elements of workplace culture can create a steep learning curve before a sense of belonging and competence is fully achieved. (Carlos & Muralles, 2022)

Carlos and Muralles (2022) discuss the importance of feeling comfortable as a new hire in a professional organization, an important and little-discussed topic in academic literature. Feeling a sense of belonging to the organization and feeling capable and competent in the new role is crucial to bringing one's full potential to use. Carlos and Muralles believe belonging and competence are critical for unlocking a new hire's full potential. Without belonging and competence, even highly skilled individuals may struggle to perform to the best of their abilities, and their energy might be consumed with self-doubt, anxiety, and confusion about organizational norms. This is one reason why investing in

comprehensive onboarding processes and mentoring systems is not just a matter of kindness towards the new organization member but an important strategic decision that can strongly influence employee retention, engagement, and long-term success of organizations.

2.2 Onboarding process

The traditional onboarding process focuses on three main components: compliance, clarification, and culture. Compliance means that the new hire understands the organizational policies and procedures and is able and willing to stick with them. Clarification means the new employee gains a clear understanding of the role and its associated expectations. Culture refers to the internalization of the values and norms of an organization. Bauer (2013) emphasizes the critical role of interpersonal relationships in the onboarding process and introduces a fourth component, connection, which they argue is crucial for new employees' success. Connection means that new employees feel connected to their new colleagues, experience less anxiety, and are therefore more likely to ask questions, engage in learning opportunities, and feel more accepted and confident in their new environment.

Throughout the onboarding process, organizations play a crucial role in supporting the integration of new employees by actively guiding them through both the social and functional aspects of their roles. Process involves fostering inclusion within the organization's social networks and not forgetting to introduce the informal norms that shape daily interactions and workplace dynamics within this specific organization. Dávila and Piña-Ramírez (2018) emphasize that the onboarding process includes both general and role-specific components. General onboarding introduces newcomers to the organization's culture, history, mission, values, policies, and procedures. Role-specific onboarding, on the other hand, focuses on providing employees with the knowledge and skills that are needed in their role. Together, these two components accelerate adaptation and promote a sense of belonging and alignment with the organization's objectives. (Davila &

Piña-Ramírez, 2018.) Onboarding practices vary across different organizations, both in their methods and delivery. The size of the organization and also the hierarchical level of the new employee's role influence and shape the onboarding process (Chillakuri, 2020).

2.3 Organizational socialization

The concept of onboarding has its theoretical foundation in the broader framework of organizational socialization, a concept that was systematically developed and conceptualized by Van Maanen and Schein in the 1970s (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977). Their work laid the groundwork for understanding how individuals adopt social knowledge, behaviours, and values within an organization. Term organizational socialization refers to the process by which new members learn the necessary knowledge, behaviors, and social competencies to adapt to the organization and to become effective members of it. It is a theory about how individuals are integrated into the organizational culture, internalize its norms and values, and adapt to their new roles and responsibilities. Over time, the scope of organizational socialization expanded and evolved into the nowadays more commonly known term onboarding. While the foundational principles remain based on the early work of Van Maanen and Schein, onboarding as a concept has emerged into a more comprehensive and structured process. The term goes beyond just the usual social and cultural integration, incorporating a wide range of strategic human resource practices designed to enhance employee engagement, retention, and performance from the starting point of employment.

Organizational socialization basically is a theory of how individuals become familiar with an organization and adapt to develop the necessary behaviours, skills, and knowledge required to evolve in the new role. The term describes becoming part of an organization and becoming an insider. Term organizational socialization also includes how individuals shift between different roles within the same organization (Berkelaar & Harrison, 2019). Organizational socialization is a process by which an individual adapts to their new or changing role (Chao, 2012). Organizational socialization plays a crucial role in the

onboarding process, as it enables new employees to develop a sense of belonging within the organization and build meaningful relationships with colleagues and teams (Carlos & Muralles, 2022).

According to Godinho et al. (2023), there are generally many parties involved in the organizational socialization process, such as the tutors and mentors, colleagues, superiors, the human resources department, the administration, and even clients. Organizational socialization is critical for ensuring positive outcomes for employees and the organization. Inadequate socialization of new hires has been linked to a mismatch between expectations and reality. This commonly results in decreased job satisfaction and negative workplace attitude. These factors lead to higher employee turnover rates, causing challenges to organizational stability and performance. (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006, p. 493). According to Godinho et al. (2023), the desired outcome of organizational socialization is an emotional bond, which then can develop into a deep level of dedication and motivation towards the employer. (Godinho et al., 2023).

The organizational socialization process can be divided into three distinct phases that follow one another. The first phase occurs before the start of employment and is referred to as the pre-entry phase. The objective of the pre-entry phase in the onboarding process is to provide prospective candidates with accurate and comprehensive information regarding the organization and the role for which they are applying. During this stage, applicants should assess if their academic qualifications and professional experience are aligned with the position's requirements, and the recruiting company should ensure that communications remain realistic and transparent, refraining from presenting exaggerated expectations or overly idealized portrayals of the organization or position.

The second stage of the process is the encounter phase, where the admission process for employees formally begins and during which the newcomer is introduced to the organizational environment, and they begin to acquire a deeper understanding of the skills and competencies required to perform effectively in the designated role (Godinho et al.,

2023). The encounter phase is especially critical. Rousseau (1995) states that at this stage, senior employees play a critical role as facilitators of integration, and those responsible for onboarding should not only focus on the new employee but also remember the information flow both ways. These people should ensure clear and coherent communication is maintained within the existing team, and in this way support a smooth and inclusive integration process. The final phase of the organizational socialization process is called the metamorphosis phase. This stage represents when an individual is fully integrated, actively engaged, and recognized as a permanent organization member. At this phase, the individual clearly understands their role and responsibilities and can carry out their duties with confidence and proficiency. The metamorphosis stage can be seen as the goal of any successful onboarding. (Godinho et al., 2023.)

2.4 The new hire's role in the onboarding process

Starting as a newcomer in an organization is commonly experienced as an exciting but stressful situation. Gardner and Kozlowski (1993) state that the initial stages of employment often expose newcomers to a range of uncertainties, such as ambiguity regarding expectations towards them, established communication practices, and the organization's norms and values. As individuals navigate this initial period of their employment, they progressively develop a deeper understanding of their work environment, and this enables them to interpret organizational characteristics and processes more like tenured colleagues gradually. This growing familiarity with the organization develops confidence in the new role.

Different personal characteristics can be helpful when adapting to new working environments and organizations. Klein and Heuser (2008, p. 292) explain that newcomers bring a range of individual differences that significantly influence the manner and effectiveness of their integration into a new organizational environment. One such individual characteristic, self-efficacy, is identified as one key factor of a new employee's integration into the social organization. High self-efficacy is associated with the

likelihood of actively engaging, seeking out information, asking questions, and participating in organizational activities. This, in turn, has been positively linked to how successfully newcomers adapt to the social and cultural dynamics of the organization and how effectively they comprehend their job-related responsibilities.

Personality traits affect and shape the socialization process. Klein and Heuser (2008, p. 293) found that extroverted individuals tend to be more assertive in acquiring organizational knowledge and initiating interpersonal connections within the workplace than their introverted counterparts. These findings indicate that both cognitive factors and personality traits have a significant role in explaining the differences in how newcomers adapt to a new social environment. On the other hand, introverted individuals might experience new working environments as more challenging and stressful due to the increased socializing and unfamiliar colleagues they need to get to know. Trying to build a clear picture of the organization and its colleagues can feel overwhelming for introverted employees, and it might take some time for these kinds of employees to find a sense of belonging and acceptance as part of the organization.

Newcomers who demonstrate proactive behavior are more likely to build a strong professional network by actively engaging in dialogues with colleagues and supervisors. These interactions can foster valuable relationships that support professional development and advance their careers (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012). Proactivity in the onboarding process provides other organization members with a clear picture of the new employee at an early stage, and that picture remains for a long time. First impressions create perceptions of each other, and proactivity is commonly viewed as a positive trait in an employee or colleague. Proactive newcomers can quickly absorb and adapt to new information, acquiring the skills necessary to excel in their role (Ashford & Black, 1996).

2.5 The organization's role in the onboarding process

The receiving organization holds responsibility in designing and implementing strategies, programs, practices, and tools that not only convey its core values and organizational culture but also deliver essential information regarding the new employee's role and responsibilities (Godinho et al., 2023). According to Godinho et al. (2023), these efforts are guided by four primary objectives: *compliance, clarification, culture, and connection*, which facilitate the socialization of newcomers and expedite their learning and adaptation within the organization (Godinho et al., 2023).

The company or organization of employment is responsible for providing onboarding, which is typically given by a supervisor or a colleague who works in a similar position to the newcomer or who has relevant experience and knowledge of the role. This person can be referred to as a social agent. The social agent typically provides official information about the job and also shares unofficial knowledge about the organization's habits and social rules. Individuals, as social agents within the workplace, play a key role in the socialization process, serving as sources of social support and networking opportunities (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). The support received from social agents is related to better well-being at work, more positive attitudes towards the company or organization, and other positive outcomes, including lower employee turnover (Hayton et al., 2012; Klein & Heuser, 2008).

If reactions and attitudes that a newcomer receives from social agents are not positive or encouraging, it typically signals to the newcomer that the company environment is unwelcoming and lacking in acceptance (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Social agents significantly impact the experience of newcomers and how their perception of the social atmosphere of the organization is shaped. The social agent often becomes the safe person that the newcomer relies on. Bauer (2013) advocates strategically using coworkers as mentors to facilitate newcomers' early adjustment and integration into the organization by offering informal guidance, practical advice, and emotional support. A supportive figure during the early stages of employment has been shown to enhance the

newcomer's sense of belonging and psychological safety—a sense of belonging further boosts self-confidence and willingness to engage both with colleagues and job-related tasks.

According to Harris et al. (2018), team members who act as social agents within the workplace play a vital role as information channels that facilitate the integration of newcomers. Their interactions with new employees are vital in conveying the norms, values, and behavioral expectations that define organizational culture. Through daily collaboration and informal information exchanges, team members provide newcomers with practical insights into how tasks are executed and how communication flows within the group, and also how social and professional relationships are maintained within the organizational context. These peer-level interactions are excellent in helping newcomers internalize their roles and the broader company environment. (Harris et al., 2020). Whether these interactions in the early stages of employment are supportive or dismissive significantly impacts the image the new hire forms of the organization.

Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013) emphasize that the first three months of employment are particularly critical, as this period lays the groundwork for long-term performance, engagement, and retention. During this phase, the degree to which newcomers feel welcomed, included, and supported by their team can influence their immediate confidence, competence, motivation, and commitment. On the contrary, any experiences of social exclusion or lack of support can hinder adaptation, reduce performance, and may lead to negative feelings and attitudes.

When colleagues and team members provide support for the newcomers, they significantly enhance a new employee's ability to access essential work-related information, resources, and informal knowledge that may not be written. This is often critical for successful role adaptation. This support may take various forms, including answering questions, offering guidance on navigating organizational procedures, sharing silent knowledge about workplace norms, and providing encouragement during challenging

tasks. Also, according to Scott et al. (2014), these supportive interactions serve a functional purpose and contribute to newcomers' psychological and emotional adjustment. When new employees perceive that their colleagues and the employer organization want to put effort and invest time in helping them to succeed, it strengthens their belief that the organization values and supports them. Team members' support encourages newcomers to show proactive behaviors, such as seeking further information and taking initiative in social and work-related interactions. Therefore, the organization, including the social agents and colleagues, plays a significant role in onboarding.

2.6 Successful onboarding and 4 C's framework

The primary objective of onboarding is to integrate newly recruited employees effectively into the organizational environment, according to Frögéli et al. (2023). These companies actively invest in providing their new hires a structured and comprehensive onboarding experience, experience revenue growth rates that are 2.5 times higher, and profit margins that are 1.9 times greater than those companies that do not put as much emphasis on comprehensive onboarding. Properly trained individuals are more likely to excel in their positions than those with inadequate onboarding (Weinstock, 2015). The way organizations engage with new employees from the very beginning significantly affects fostering employee retention and supporting optimal job performance (Maurer, 2019).

Maurer (2019) introduces a framework with 4 C's that ensures new hires' successful onboarding, compliance, clarification, culture, and connection. This framework emphasizes building social connections and internalizing responsibilities associated with the new role. Compliance encompasses legal and policy-related information that newly hired employees must comprehend, including legal rules, policies, safety regulations, and the code of conduct. The clarification part means that employees understand their specific responsibilities and the expectations associated with their role, and how their position aligns with broader organizational goals. It also includes success measures like goals and

KPIs, key performance indicators. The cultural dimension is about integrating the employees into the company values and making them aware of the norms, traditions, and language use of the organization. The connection component of the framework emphasizes the importance of building both formal and informal relationships within the workplace, which are crucial for achieving effective social integration and long-term organizational success. Connection encompasses team integration, peer support, mentoring, and networking. Networking happens both within the organization and with key stakeholders.

When organizations implement an onboarding strategy that prioritizes compliance and clarification while also addressing aspects of organizational culture and interpersonal connection, they build and facilitate high success potential (Bauer, 2010). Research examining the 4 C's model further has shown that new employees who undergo onboarding processes encompassing all four components tend to report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction, perceived support, and organizational commitment (Meyer, 2016, p. 35). The 4 C's framework is illustrated in Figure 2.

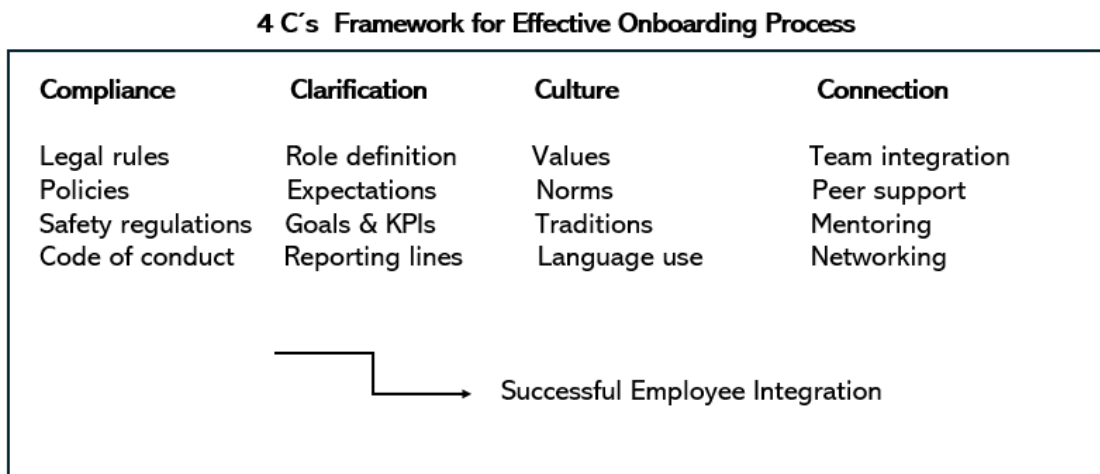


Figure 2. 4 C's framework adapted from Bauer (2010). AI inspired the Figure. (OpenAI, 2025)

2.7 Summary of the literature review

Proper onboarding is vital for a successful start in a new work environment. With successful onboarding, the new employee feels confident and capable in their new role and accepted in the social organization. The initial period of employment is often experienced with high levels of uncertainty, during which employees must adapt to unfamiliar systems, procedures, and interpersonal dynamics. A thoughtfully designed onboarding process can alleviate stress by providing clarity, support, and a sense of inclusion. Successful onboarding promotes retention and commitment to the company; poor or insufficient onboarding can result in confusion and isolation, potentially leading to early employee turnover.

Different characteristics, such as introversion, may pose more challenges in the social aspects of integrating into the new work society. At the same time, extroverted individuals may find it easier to establish new social ties with their colleagues and thus rapidly become insiders in the new organization. Although equally capable in task performance, introverted employees may be slower to initiate interpersonal interactions or may require more time to build trust with new colleagues. The social demands of a new work environment, such as frequent introductions, collaborative projects, and informal gatherings, can be experienced as overwhelming or draining. As a result, these individuals may find it more challenging to establish a sense of belonging, which can delay their full integration into the organizational community.

Recognizing the diverse needs of employees is vital for organizations to be able to provide inclusive onboarding strategies and practices. Uniform onboarding strategies are generally inadequate in meeting the varied expectations and requirements of different individuals. Instead, the onboarding process should be flexible enough for different personality styles, learning preferences, and ways of communicating. In practice, this could mean offering multiple channels for information sharing or creating opportunities for both group-based and one-on-one learning. Furthermore, assigning supportive mentors or onboarding colleagues who can guide the newcomer at an individual pace is important.

Ultimately, the hiring organization has the responsibility to provide effective onboarding. Employers must ensure that new employees are not only provided with the technical training and procedural knowledge but are also equipped with the tools and support needed to navigate the social and cultural dimensions of the workplace. This includes clear communication about role expectations and access to individuals who can provide guidance and support. A comprehensive onboarding process should be proactive rather than reactive, anticipating the challenges newcomers may face and actively working to reduce potential barriers to integration.

In conclusion, by addressing both the functional and interpersonal aspects of onboarding and acknowledging the influence of individual personality differences, organizations can create a strong foundation for long-term employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity. The conceptual framework guiding this research, understanding how newly hired employees experience the onboarding process and how this process supports or hinders their integration, motivation, and commitment to the organization, is presented visually in Figure 3.

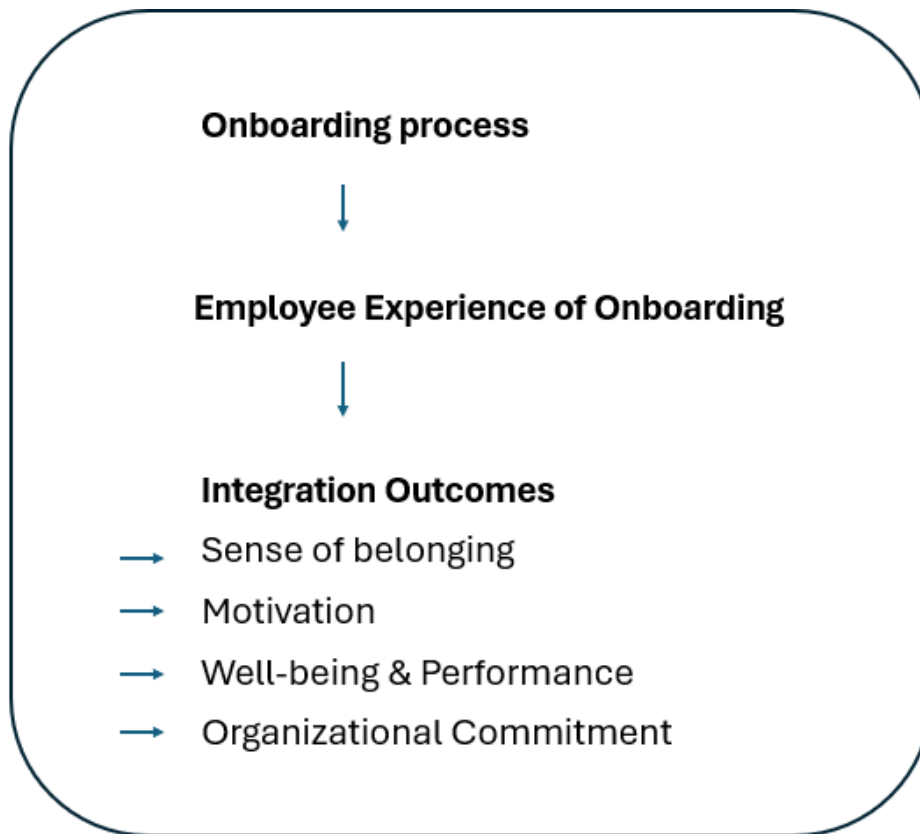


Figure 3. The conceptual framework.

3 Methodology

This thesis aims to gain a deeper understanding of how organizations can effectively facilitate the successful onboarding of new employees. Specifically, the research examines the key practices and processes that contribute to a positive onboarding experience, thereby supporting employee adjustment, engagement, and long-term organizational integration. The purpose is to understand employee experiences and the factors that have contributed to their successful or unsuccessful onboarding. In this chapter, we familiarize ourselves with and evaluate the research process.

3.1 Research approach

The research method employed in this study is a single-case study, and the research methodology is a qualitative method. The qualitative research approach can be viewed as a softer approach compared to the quantitative research approach, as it employs techniques such as interviews, observations, and interpretive analysis (Saunders et al., 2003). It is an inclusive and exploratory method to gain a deeper understanding of a specific topic by uncovering patterns, meanings, and insights. According to Harper (2011, p. 2), a qualitative research approach is often used in scholarly research thanks to its ability to generate a rich and nuanced in-depth understanding of complex phenomena and social processes. While quantitative methods primarily focus on numerical data and statistical generalizations, qualitative research, on the other hand, captures experiential and interpretive dimensions of human behavior. It enables researchers to examine how individuals construct meaning, navigate social environments, and interact with diverse cultural and organizational contexts. These are important themes to understand in the context of this research question, and therefore, a qualitative research method is employed.

When the aim is to gain in-depth information about the experiences and perceptions of newly recruited employees in the case company, the qualitative research approach is

justified. The research will be conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews, as this method allows interviewees to discuss their experiences openly. In addition, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to add relevant ad hoc questions based on the interviewee's words while following the pre-planned interview structure. The pre-planned interview structure, on the other hand, ensures that the research question is addressed and the study's purpose is fulfilled.

3.2 Data collection and case company

This empirical research was conducted in a Finnish liner shipping company. The company's headquarters are in Helsinki. The company has, in addition, two other offices in Finland and six other offices, all of which are located within Europe—employees of the case company work in Operations, Sales, Claims, Accounting, and IT departments. Four relatively new employees from three different departments, IT, Cost Accounting, and Operations, were interviewed for this research. All of them are from the Helsinki office. The research aims to understand their experiences and perceptions of the onboarding process they have undergone, and their experiences of becoming part of a new work organization. This way, we hope to understand the onboarding process from the viewpoint of a newcomer and to be able to give suggestions for enhancing the onboarding process and strategy, and this way also potentially make new employees feel more connected, integrated, and invested in the company. The four interviewees are introduced in Table 1.

Table 1. Interviewee information.

| | Department | Professional Title | Time spent in the company | Interview date | Interview length |
|---------------|------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Interviewee 1 | Operations | Traffic Operator | 9 months | 27.6.2025 | 22 minutes |
| Interviewee 2 | Accounting | Cost Accountant | 3 weeks | 27.6.2025 | 23 minutes |
| Interviewee 3 | IT | Software Developer | 14 months | 2.7.2025 | 24 minutes |
| Interviewee 4 | IT | Software Engineer | 16 months | 3.7.2025 | 37 minutes |

The interviews were qualitative, semi-structured interviews and the interview questions were crafted to cover all areas of the 4C's framework. According to Adams (2015), semi-structured interviews are particularly well-suited for research contexts where the objective is to gather participants' rich and detailed responses. This method involves using open-ended questions designed to encourage interviewees to reflect on their own experiences. One of the key strengths of semi-structured interviews is their flexibility, which enables asking questions that were not pre-planned, based on the respondent's responses. This enables the collection of nuanced data that does not necessarily emerge when using more structured interview styles.

Semi-structured interviews are also a good way of collecting data when the researcher wants to minimize response bias that occurs when survey respondents provide answers affected by someone else's expectations or opinions. Semi-structured interviews can

also avoid the possible peer influence, which can occur in group-based interview methods. By conducting one-on-one interviews, the researcher ensures that participants are not exposed to the views or reactions of other interviewees, and this way reduces the risk of false data. Adams (2015) notes that this methodological choice is particularly valuable when the goal is to obtain independent and authentic insights that reflect the individual's experiences, not ones shaped by group dynamics or social pressures.

3.3 Data analysis

Data analysis is an important part of qualitative research. There are various methods for collecting, documenting, and assessing qualitative data. One common method for analyzing the collected qualitative data is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method that involves identifying various themes within the collected data to construct a comprehensive understanding of the data. Thematic analysis is an effective technique to find similarities and differences in interview data. This is an effective method when researchers want to analyze and compare the perspectives of different respondents (Novell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017).

This study employs a thematic analysis approach to examine and interpret the data collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis, as demonstrated by Braun and Clarke (2006), is designed to identify, analyze, and report patterns and themes that emerge in qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic method for handling large amounts of qualitative data. It enables researchers to uncover both explicit and underlying meanings in the interviewees' responses. In this process, the interviewee data is coded and grouped into meaningful categories and themes. Thematic analysis helps organize complex and often unstructured qualitative data into a coherent and insightful form where similarities between different interview data are easier to distinguish.

This research aims to study the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees. Therefore, thematic analysis is a well-functioning analysis technique for this empirical research. Using thematic analysis, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the key topics and themes present in the research data. Key topics that emerged from the interviews in the thematic analysis were, for instance, the lack of general company-related information, a warm and welcoming work society, sufficient interpersonal support, and successful employee retention. All four interviews were transcribed. The transcribed data was then analyzed thematically. Color coding was used as a tool for analyzing data. Color coding is a technique where data is analyzed by categorizing its occurring relations and patterns with different colors. Color coding can be a helpful technique when analyzing large amounts of data. (Fisher 2010)

3.4 Reliability and validity of the results

The researcher is responsible for the trustworthiness of the methods and data collected. To ensure the overall success of the research, it is essential that the researcher carefully considers both the reliability and validity of the chosen research method (Saunders et al., 2003). Wallendorf and Belk (1989) emphasize the importance of evaluating the quality of research, as it demonstrates the trustworthiness of the research results.

Reliability concerns the consistency and stability of the research findings over time and across different contexts. A reliable study produces similar results when repeated under comparable conditions. This indicates that the procedures used to collect and analyze data are dependable and replicable. Validity concerns the extent to which the research findings accurately reflect the phenomenon being studied and whether they truly represent what they are intended to measure (Saunders et al., 2003). Validity is about how genuine and accurate the research results are. Validity ensures that the conclusions drawn are based on solid evidence and a proper alignment between the research objectives, data collection methods, and interpretation of the data. Validity goes beyond

simply carrying out the research correctly. It considers whether the results are meaningful and appropriate in relation to the real-world context of the study.

Both reliability and validity are essential to the credibility and trustworthiness of any academic research. Reliability ensures that the results are consistent and not affected by random errors or personal bias. Validity, on the other hand, confirms that the results accurately reflect what the study aimed to investigate and are relevant to the research questions. While reliability focuses on the consistency, stability, and precision of the data collection process, validity focuses on whether the conclusions drawn truly make sense based on the evidence collected. In other words, reliability ensures the technical soundness of the research procedures, and validity ensures the interpretative integrity and conceptual accuracy of the study's results. For research to be robust and trustworthy, both aspects must be adequately addressed throughout the research design, data collection, and analysis phases. (Saunders et al., 2003.) A study lacking in either dimension risks producing misleading or inconclusive findings.

Research integrity is an important concept in all academic research. Integrity encompasses the fundamental principles and practices that ensure quality, credibility, and ethical soundness. Research integrity is the foundation for responsible research conduct and plays a key role in building trust among researchers, participants, institutions, and the broader public. Upholding research integrity involves committing to honesty, transparency, accountability, and rigor throughout all stages of the research process. Importantly, research integrity is applicable across all academic disciplines and sectors. It is not confined to a specific field or methodology but is relevant to every form of scholarly work. Research integrity covers the whole research from inventing the initial research question and designing the study, through data collection and analysis, to publishing results. Maintaining high ethical standards at each stage ensures that the research process and its outcomes are trustworthy and valuable to the academic community and society. (Research Integrity Office, 2025.)

The trustworthiness of research can be considered to consist of the following five factors: *credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, and authenticity* (Lincoln & Guba,

1989). Reliability involves assessing the research methodology, the methods used in data collection, and the study results to determine the validity, accuracy, and credibility of the findings. Several factors influence the credibility of research. The research methods must be appropriate for the research question and enable the study to achieve its purpose by giving valid, credible, and reliable results. Additionally, the study results must be presented accurately and clearly, with any limitations and potential biases being transparently addressed. (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989.) Dependability refers to the degree to which the findings of a study can be consistently reproduced under comparable conditions (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), assessing dependability is wise if the study assumes there can only be one objective reality relative to the research question. This is called a positivist philosophy. However, outside of positive philosophy, assessing dependability is a challenging task.

According to Drisko (2024), transferability refers to making broader conclusions from research findings by considering how the results might be relevant or applicable to other situations. The concept of transferability involves moving beyond the immediate scope of the research to explore its potential relevance in different but comparable contexts. Transferability and generalization are closely related. Generalization typically refers to the application of findings to a larger population based on statistical representativeness, and transferability focuses more on the meaningful applicability of findings across various settings. (Drisko, 2024.) Schreier (2017) explains that transferability is especially an important concept with qualitative research, where in-depth analysis of data collected from individual and unique settings cannot easily be generalized to a larger scope.

Confirmability assessment determines if the study results have emerged from the interviewees as intended or from the researcher's interpretations. Integrity assessment determines whether the collected data is accurate or not. Wallendorf and Belk (1989) suggest that familiarity between the interviewee and the interviewer diminishes the risk of false information being provided, and a good interviewing technique with adaptability and sensitivity is needed. They also state that reducing interviewees' worry by assuring the anonymity of their replies can allow them to provide more honest and accurate

research data, especially when they find research topics sensitive. (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989.) To maximize the anonymity of the interviewees in this study, the case company is left unmentioned. The case company is left unmentioned in this research.

Authenticity is the fifth factor and was introduced by Lincoln and Guba later than the four previous factors. Authenticity was introduced in their 1989 work, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, which expanded the concept of trustworthiness. Authenticity refers to the extent to which qualitative research fairly, accurately, and meaningfully represents the participants' experiences, perspectives, and voices. It extends beyond traditional criteria of trustworthiness, such as credibility or dependability. Authenticity is based on the belief that qualitative research should not only seek to explain or describe social reality but also do so in a manner that is ethically sound for participants. In this thesis and empirical research to guarantee authenticity, the case company is not introduced, to ensure the interviewees could feel as anonymous as possible, and this way feel safe to provide honest answers and interview data.

4 Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the empirical study are presented. The results are discussed in light of the purpose of this thesis. The research question of how newly recruited employees perceive and evaluate onboarding strategies is addressed through the data collected in the empirical study, in this case, the four qualitative interviews. The interview respondents are four individuals of different ages and with various professional titles, but they all started working in the case company within 0.1 – 1.3 years before the interviews took place. Two of the interviews were conducted in Finnish, and two in English, depending on the language in which these employees primarily work, and felt most comfortable answering in. All four interviews were transcribed.

According to Bansal and Corney (2012), the acquired qualitative data should not only be described, but also shown. This enables the reader to trace the connection between the raw data, the researcher's analysis, and the subsequent development of theoretical insights. For this reason, samples of the interview data are shown to support the presented insights. First general impressions arising in the interviews concerning the onboarding process are presented. Then the comprehensiveness of the process is discussed, as well as all three main themes of successful practices in this case company. After that, we take a look at the problematic areas in the onboarding process and give suggestions for future onboarding on both the employer and employee side, based on the data gathered in the interviews. At the end of this chapter, the empirical results are summarized in the form of cross-case analysis, and the final conceptual framework is presented.

4.1 How did the employees experience the process?

The overall impressions concerning the onboarding process among all four respondents were generally positive. According to respondent 1, the most important part of onboarding was learning the everyday practices and use of systems necessary for their tasks, rather than rare or exceptional cases and situations. They state being happy with the

role-specific training they received. They also felt that they received enough support during the onboarding process.

“I received onboarding for the job itself, and from that perspective, it was good.” (R1)

“You always get help if you ask.” (R1)

Respondent 3 mentioned that as a software developer, one beneficial part of the onboarding process for them was to understand the commercial side and business objectives of the company, in addition to the role-specific tasks.

“It was probably when we looked into the database, and I could see what business objects we are talking about and going to work with.” (R3)

All respondents reported feeling somewhat confident in their job. Respondent 1 mentions having some ambiguity when first starting in the new job and emphasizes that confidence and professional identity were strongly shaped through practical work. From their viewpoint, the typical uncertainties that come with starting a new job are expected. For instance, learning to use the systems is a typical challenge in the beginning. Respondent 1 shared that the ability to work independently brings a sense of confidence as well as repetition that naturally comes with work. Knowing a person in the new organization beforehand and being familiar with the business field were mentioned as confidence-boosting factors at the beginning of employment.

“Of course, there were tasks that were unclear at first, but they became clear over time.” (R1)

“When you learn to do something yourself without needing assistance, you start feeling more confident. Also, repeating tasks brings confidence.” (R1)

“In the beginning, the fact that I knew something already about shipping companies thanks to my previous job gave me some sense of confidence. In addition, knowing one person in our team beforehand helped a lot and lowered the barrier to asking questions.” (R1)

Respondent 3 mentioned not feeling automatically confident when first starting because there were some completely new things to learn in the beginning. They shared that the capability to work both independently and in group settings has brought a sense of confidence at work.

“Of course not, because I had to learn the new domain.” (R3)

“It is an interesting question. Maybe the capability of working independently and also in a team. But yeah, first comes the independent work and then comes the teamwork.” (R3)

Respondent 2 mentioned that assistance from the supervisor was available and prompt. They saw this as a clear strength in the overall onboarding experience. Respondent 2 mentioned that overly complex system architecture sometimes brings difficulties.

“Yes, my immediate supervisor always runs over to my office if I just ask.” (R2)

“One of the control systems is perhaps a bit unnecessarily complex.” (R2)

Respondent 3 describes the onboarding process as efficient and well-organized, exceeding their initial expectations. The respondent mentions that the first impression of the new work environment was absolutely positive. Respondent also mentioned that a well-prepared technical setup and resources were in place from day one. They mentioned that the most helpful part of the onboarding was working directly with systems and tools,

such as the company database. Early exposure to fundamental work tools helped contextualize responsibilities and other aspects, enhancing job clarity and confidence.

Some respondents experienced a heavy amount of new information to be learned in a relatively short time. This suggests that more time would be needed for the tool-specific training to enable a more relaxed pace for learning. When asked if they already feel like they have absorbed and learned all the necessary information and role-specific skills, respondent 2, who had only worked in the company for a couple of weeks during the time of the interview, replied that they had not yet learned everything necessary. This is also expected as the interviewee was still very new to the company at that point. They also brought up that supporting guides and example materials would have been beneficial in the initial part of training.

“I don’t feel that I have, because there’s a lot of material, a lot of small things to remember.” (R2)

All four respondents spoke about the interpersonal assistance being available. This reflects a highly supportive environment where employees feel safe and encouraged to seek help when needed. While formal onboarding may have lacked structure in some respondents’ experiences, the informal support systems appear to have played a significant role.

4.2 Comprehensiveness of the onboarding

In several interviews, respondents mentioned that they were given all the role-specific instructions and they were taught the key elements of their position, but more general company-related information concerning rules, standard practices, and company culture would have been welcome and appreciated. A common experience among the respondents was that the onboarding process lacked completeness. Three out of four

interviewees expected a more comprehensive introduction to corporate structure, organizational norms, practical details, well-being resources, and company culture.

“Yeah, I think there were... There was for sure missing parts. Like, for example, I did not even know that we have some kind of well-being area or team.” (R4)

“There are some specific things that might be maybe good to know. Also, I am not sure if I got some information about it, but I am pretty sure there was some missing information that would have been nice to know.” (R4)

“Let’s put it this way. In my previous job, I did not receive any good onboarding, and I thought I would receive a more comprehensive onboarding here. I received a good onboarding concerning my job and tasks, but not concerning the company itself.” (R1)

“Because, for example, it is fine my onboarding technically, but of course, all these things that I mentioned, like culture and values and all of that. I think that is a thing that is missing.” (R4)

One of the respondents shared that while task-level expectations were communicated effectively, organizational or performance-based evaluation criteria may not have been fully explicit during the onboarding process. Also, another respondent from the same department shared that they are unsure how success is measured. This highlights a potential gap in goal setting during the onboarding process or the difficulty in setting success measures in specific areas like IT, programming, and software development, in this case.

“Onboarding gave a clear understanding of what is expected from me... Success measurement, I do not know exactly.” (R3)

“I do not know how success is measured, though, or more specifically, I do not know if there is a success measure in the IT or development area in here, so that will be 50/50, I guess.” (R4)

Respondent 2 described the onboarding process and orientation as insufficient or lacking in certain areas. They mentioned that onboarding helped them understand the company’s values and norms to some extent, but not comprehensively. Respondent mentioned that the topics concerning their role were covered on a somewhat accelerated schedule, and as a result, the onboarding process had not been comprehensive and thorough. Due to the limited scope of the orientation, new employees have found it necessary to take personal initiative in gathering relevant information and documenting key details independently.

“I have found the onboarding process a bit disorganized. It has felt like there is no clear plan concerning what things will be taught and in which order.” (R2)

4.3 Successful onboarding practices

From the results of the empirical study, we can distinguish three main themes of successful practices that occur in the onboarding process in the case company. These themes are interpersonal support, social inclusion, and employee retention.

4.3.1 Interpersonal support

When asked about how easy it is to ask and get help, all respondents stated without hesitation that they always receive help and support when needed, both from peers and managers. The presence of accessible colleagues or mentors is seen as a key element in the effectiveness of onboarding, which in turn reflects positively on social integration

and workplace culture within the company. Respondent 2 mentions that the most important aspects of his experience were the practical instructions and discussions with the supervisor. Respondent emphasizes the need to understand why things are done in a certain way and expresses gratitude for the assistance provided by the supervisor. Respondents 1 and 3 mentioned a supportive atmosphere that encouraged asking questions and learning during their onboarding and training process.

"You always get help if you ask." (R1)

"There are colleagues in our team that I can ask for help, and of course, there are other people too that assist when needed, but yes, always someone is willing to help." (R1)

"Yes, my immediate supervisor always runs over to my office if I just ask." (R2)

"Yeah, yeah, mostly. Sometimes I do not get answers immediately, but of course, this is because the colleagues are busy, but almost always I get an answer." (R3)

4.3.2 Social inclusion

All respondents praised the social environment at the workplace and shared that they have felt welcome from the beginning. According to the empirical research, a proactive attitude in social settings has helped with integration into the organization. Respondent 1 says that becoming part of the social circle at the workplace has been an easy task, and colleagues within the same department have been helpful. They recommended an open-minded approach and emphasized the importance of early social integration for newcomers.

"There are great people here... I have honestly had a good time." (R1)

"I would say I have been taken along very well. I have nothing bad to say about that. Nice people are working in here." (R2)

"Yes, it was absolutely fine. Everybody was friendly and welcoming, and they asked even a few weeks later how I feel, how it is going, and so on." (R3)

Respondent 3 shared that language barrier and introverted personality traits sometimes can slow down integration. Respondent 1 shared the same view that, as an introverted person, it is often more challenging to socialize with new people.

"I came from a foreign country, and I do not speak the language well. And I have never worked in English before." (R3)

"It is always more difficult for introverts to fit in." (R3)

"I get along well with all people in general, and that makes it easier. But being an introvert makes it more difficult to engage and socialize with people you do not know beforehand." (R1)

Despite the above-mentioned minor challenges, all respondents shared how they felt welcomed and supported when starting in the new organization, and joining the organization was easy. Respondent 3 mentioned that working with like-minded people speeds up the integration process among colleagues within the same department.

"It was that programmers tend to like each other because their minds are similar, so working with like-minded people is good." (R3)

4.3.3 Employee Retention

When asked about the sense of loyalty towards the company and plans to stay, all four respondents provided positive responses and stated that they would be happy to stay in the company. Two months after the interviews took place, three interviewees are still working in the case company. The employment contract of one of the interviewees was terminated during the probation period from the employer's side because the employee was not seen as the right fit for the position. Based on the interviews, the onboarding processes of the four respondents appear to have successfully promoted a sense of loyalty and inclusion, which are both key objectives in employee hiring and employee retention strategies. Therefore, it can be stated that the case company has succeeded in creating a working environment where employees are willing to stay.

4.4 Problematic areas in onboarding

According to respondent 1, the onboarding process did not provide information about the company's values, rules, or standard practices, leaving a significant gap in understanding the organizational culture. Respondent 1 also expressed that they would have benefited more from a better-structured orientation. Additionally, it was noted that some essential information, which should be included in the onboarding process and provided to new employees, was missing.

"I expected it to be more comprehensive here, but it really wasn't."(R1)

"I didn't get any sort of info package that covered all of that." (R1)

Respondent 4 highlights one key challenge they found in the onboarding process, not the lack of information itself, but the inefficiency of information delivery. Even though

information, content, instructions, and documents exist, their discoverability and usability are areas for improvement.

“We have places where we have documents, but it is confusing, or that is the thing that could be easier to find. “ (R4)

“We do not need, at least in this company, you do not need a big onboarding process, but it would be very helpful to have a little easier access or knowledge on those things.” (R4)

Respondent 2 stated that they found the onboarding process to be disorganized and rushed, requiring self-directed learning. According to them, support is available, but the systems and documentation need improvement. Respondent 2 mentions that the onboarding would have been much more effective if they had been provided with clear documentation and case-based materials, since the lack of concrete guidance and practical examples made learning somewhat challenging.

“I have found the onboarding process a bit disorganized. It has felt like there is no clear plan concerning what things will be taught and in which order.” (R2)

“It would have been much easier and better if there were guides with example cases.” (R2)

The lack of documentation and guide materials led to the need for new employees to spend time and energy creating their own notes and reference materials, which the organization could have provided.

“It’s been a bit difficult, because I’ve had to do a lot more myself... just to create notes and guides for myself.” (R2)

4.5 Suggestions for future onboarding

In this section, we take a look at the suggestions arising from the interviews for successful onboarding practices, both for the employer and employee sides. In the conclusions chapter of this thesis, the managerial implications are discussed in more depth.

4.5.1 Suggestions for the employer

Respondent 1 expresses a wish for the organization to take a more proactive role in providing information to new employees. It was also mentioned that enhancing the depth and integration of company values and culture into the orientation would be valuable. Respondent 2 mentioned that there is a need within the organization for systematic and explicit onboarding materials, as the lack of documentation has made the learning process more difficult. New employees would benefit from example cases and clear descriptions of the processes.

“It would have been significantly easier if instructions had been provided with example cases to illustrate the process.” (R2)

According to respondent 3, consistent and timely support is important for the new employee to be provided and available. The company should build mechanisms to maintain high standards in onboarding processes even during busy periods. Respondent 4 suggested that it would be a great idea to have one person dedicated to providing newcomers with proper onboarding. They also mentioned that having easier access to all important company-related information would be needed and helpful.

“My advice will be more for the company; can we find someone, like a specific person, who can do a proper onboarding?” (R4)

“We have places where we have documents, but it is confusing, or that is the thing that could be easier to find.” (R4)

4.5.2 Suggestions for the employee

Advice that the respondents would give to future employees at the beginning of their employment is to remain calm, as onboarding may be information-heavy or fast-paced, and to stay patient while learning new things.

“Just stay calm and go with the flow.” (R3)

Respondent 4 suggested that it is also beneficial to give it a little time to become familiar with everyone within the organization. Three out of four respondents emphasized the critical role of self-directed learning and personal initiative during the onboarding process. They highlighted the ability to seek out information independently. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of having the confidence and courage to ask questions when encountering challenges or uncertainties. This proactive approach to problem-solving was perceived as one key factor for successful integration into the organization. Both respondents, 1 and 2, emphasized the importance of taking responsibility for one's learning. This advice reflects the earlier discussed point that onboarding lacked formal guidance and that success largely depended on self-initiated effort. According to respondent 1, it is essential for the new employee to be open and proactive, and to have the courage to ask questions and try to get to know their new colleagues.

“I feel you always must be proactive. I always try to further things, and I try to ask everything unclear, whether they are stupid questions or non-stupid questions.” (R1)

“Ask all company-related questions you might have.” (R1)

“Take lots of notes.”(R2)

4.6 Summary of the findings

To summarize the findings of the empirical research and responses collected in the qualitative interviews among the case company’s employees, Table 2 encompasses the major themes and topics raised in the interviews. By employing a cross-case analysis and treating each interviewee as an individual case, this approach facilitates a systematic comparison of participants' experiences, enabling the identification of both commonalities and distinctions across the data.

Table 2. Summary of the main themes of the empirical research responses.

| | Interviewee 1 | Interviewee 2 | Interviewee 3 | Interviewee 4 |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Received sufficient support | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| Expectations concerning onboarding were fulfilled | PARTLY | PARTLY | YES | PARTLY |
| Found the onboarding comprehensive | NO | NO | YES | NO |
| Has felt welcome in the new organization | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| Wants to stay in the case company | YES | YES | YES | YES |

Table 2 clearly shows that the social atmosphere in the case company has been experienced as welcoming and supportive in the sense that new employees can ask and receive help and support when needed, and all the new employees have felt welcome in the organization. Employee retention can be seen as one of the main goals when hiring new employees. The case company has succeeded in employee retention in the sense that all interviewees expressed they would like to stay in the case company. One interviewee found their onboarding process comprised all the needed and valuable information, three of them found some parts missing. Three interviewees out of four did not state that they were completely content with the onboarding they received.

Figure 4 presents the final version of the conceptual framework, developed based on the empirical findings. The onboarding process in the case company consists of two key dimensions, structured orientation and social integration. While the social dimension was consistently described as welcoming and supportive, contributing positively to employee motivation and a strong sense of belonging, the informational components of onboarding were perceived as partially lacking. This partial satisfaction affected the overall onboarding experience but did not hinder employee retention, which appears to be supported primarily by the positive social environment and the perceived organizational culture. The framework presents both strengths and developmental areas in the current onboarding practices of the case company.

Final conceptual framework

Onboarding Process

- Structured Orientation & Training (Partially Incomplete)
- Social Integration (Strong)

↓

New Employee Experience

- Feeling Welcome
- Access to Help & Support
- Clarity of Role & Tasks (Some gaps)
- Overall Satisfaction with Onboarding (Mostly partial)
- Comprehensiveness of the onboarding (Only partial)

↓

Outcomes

- Sense of Belonging
- Motivation
- Organizational Commitment & Retention

Figure 4. Final conceptual framework: New Employee Onboarding Experience in the Case Company.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, the findings of the conducted empirical research are discussed in the light of the literature and previous studies. This chapter is meant to answer the research question of this thesis: How do newly hired employees perceive and evaluate onboarding strategies? The findings of this empirical research show that new employees perceived the amount of support and assistance as sufficient and felt welcome in the new organization. New employees, however, evaluated the onboarding process in the case company as somewhat disorganized and incoherent, and described it as incomplete in some parts. According to the empirical research, the case organization has managed to create a sense of belonging, motivation, organizational commitment, and employee retention.

Even though Klein and Heuser (2008, pp. 292-293) state that individual differences and personality traits like introversion may complicate integration processes, this empirical study shows seemingly positive results of integration among newcomers who describe themselves as introverts or partly introverted persons. Half of the respondents described themselves as introverts, and half of the respondents described themselves as at least partly introverted. All of them integrated very well into the new social organization. However, some interviewees mentioned that introverted characteristics sometimes delay their process of forming relationships with new colleagues, so this part of the empirical results of this study does align with Klein and Heuser's work. The empirical results indicate that social inclusion and sense of community have been strong in the case company. The sense of community is an energizing factor for the employees and is specifically important in today's work life because it is an important factor in creating an atmosphere where organization members feel psychologically safe to share their thoughts, creative ideas, and innovations (Martela, 2015).

The empirical data collected in this study confirm Bauer's 4 C's theory of effective onboarding. All four dimensions, compliance, clarification, culture, and connection, are needed to provide a comprehensive onboarding. New employees find the onboarding incomplete when some dimensions, culture mostly in this case, are neglected. Even

though some areas would be handled with great success, like the connection in the case study, it does not balance out the lack of other dimensions. Godinho et al. (2023) emphasize how organizations are responsible for providing information on their values, organizational culture, and the necessary information about the new employee's role. The empirical evidence from the case study shows that the case company managed to mainly provide sufficient information and guidance concerning the newcomers' roles, but did not sufficiently provide knowledge of the company culture and values. Luukka (2020) states that every company has an organizational culture, even though it was not explicitly described on paper. Kulmala and Rosvall (2023) state that individuals have a natural ability to sense the distinctive features of the corporate culture even when they are not explicitly communicated or explained.

Kulmala and Rosvall (2023) state that there are four main factors contributing to company culture: common understanding of the big picture, structures and procedures, sense of community, and facilities and services at the workplace. According to them, company culture is a shared phenomenon that can not exist only for one person but happens in interactions between people in the organization, and shared culture is often experienced through shared expectations and unwritten standard practices within the organization. However, individual organization members can choose to act towards or against the organizational culture. (Kulmala & Rosvall, 2023.) Company culture is also pervasive, including different departments and organizational levels. It can be seen widely as habits, rituals, stories, and pictures, and affects employees' motivation and attitude. (Kulmala & Rosvall, 2023.) According to Luukka (2020), organizational culture happens if it is not intentionally managed. Perhaps in the case of the company, the company culture is not clearly described and managed, and therefore also not part of the onboarding.

Luukka (2020) states that there has been a trend of quality management in Finland for a long time, and it makes sense as quality is something much more concrete, where the aim is to minimize errors, also known as quality deviations. Managing culture, on the

contrary, is something way more abstract and therefore a more challenging thing to manage. (Panu Luukka, 2020, Chapter 2.) Luukka also talks about how company culture is often described as a company's DNA, because it is something that affects everything the company is, and what the company can become. However, they disagree with this view because of its fatalism. Luukka opposes this description by adding the fact that culture can be changed and managed, but DNA not. (Panu Luukka, 2020, Chapter 2.) Kulmala and Rosvall (2023) state that company culture is very enduring and long-lasting, affecting individuals' thinking and behaviour long-term, sometimes even too long-term if culture is not actively managed.

Sivonen (2022) suggests that the company's values and mission are possibly even more important factors in the future for shaping organizational culture in companies. They are factors that do not change constantly, but are factors that create a solid and stable base for the company's agile work culture. Oakes (2021) describes culture as a fabric keeping the company together and enabling it to thrive. If there are gaps in the culture, it affects all organization members negatively, including employees and managers, but also stakeholders like customers. (Oakes, 2021.)

In their work, Cooper-Thomas and Andersen (2006) share that social agents can be found to be more important providers of information for newcomers than official structured orientation programs. However, this empirical study demonstrated that even though employees received sufficient support from their social agents, their colleagues and superiors in the case company, they still felt the need for a more formal, well-structured orientation program. Therefore, the empirical findings of this study do not fully support Cooper-Thomas and Andersen's view on the importance of social agents in the onboarding process. Keino (2023) states that employees who receive proper onboarding are more productive in less time. Similar observations came up in this research, as it was shared that new employees' learning would have been more efficient if guiding materials and example cases had been available and if onboarding and teaching had been more planned, organized, and systematic.

According to the organizational socialization theory, the process of onboarding can be divided into three different phases: the pre-entry phase, encounter phase, and metamorphosis phase (Godinho et al., 2023). One of the interviewees was in the encounter phase, which can also be called the accommodation phase, after working a couple of weeks in the company when the interview took place. In the encounter phase, the new employee is entering the new work environment, observing the organizational culture, and starting to learn how to perform the everyday job functions. One of the interviewees was somewhere between the encounter and metamorphosis stage, perhaps recently shifted from the encounter to the metamorphosis phase after completing nine months of working in the company. Two of the interviewees who had, during the time of the interviews, worked for the company for over one year were both in the metamorphosis stage. This final stage, according to Godinho et al. (2023), is a stage where an employee is considered a permanent member of the organization who is committed to the company's values, understands their duties, and can confidently and independently perform in their role.

Rivera (2024) suggests that proactivity from the newcomers' side during onboarding is important for a successful process and integration. Results of this empirical research confirm the same phenomenon. All interviewees expressed having been proactive during their onboarding, and proactivity helped them a lot in the process. Furthermore, half of the interviewees explicitly mentioned proactivity as the most important guideline for new hires starting in the company. Some of the interviewees experienced that taking the initiative on their own learning was much needed to learn their tasks.

Godinho (2023) talks about three different organizational socialization strategies used in onboarding processes: *content and information*, *organizational tactics*, and *integrative trends*. When emphasis is placed primarily on content and information, the organization easily distances itself from the responsibility of effectively integrating new employees,

and this way shifts the burden onto the newcomers. In such cases, new employees are expected to take the initiative in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge. This emphasis on proactivity can lead to an excessive individualization of responsibility, whereby the new employee is accountable for their learning. In the context of the case company, the responsibility for one's learning was not solely on the new employee, but proactivity was required because they felt all the needed information and instructions were not handed to them automatically. The organizational socialization strategy used in the case company would mostly fall into the integrative trends. Integrative trends tactic combines aspects of both organizational tactics and content and information. This tactic has the aim of integrating the new employees actively while also giving them space to demonstrate their own initiative. (Godinho 2023.)

6 Conclusions

This chapter concludes the study. Managerial implications are presented, and the chapter also discusses the limitations of the study as well as suggestions for future research. The core objective of this thesis was to answer the research question: How do new employees perceive and evaluate onboarding strategies? Building upon an analysis of existing literature on the topic, the focus was to collect data, insights, and real-life experiences with empirical research and qualitative interviews. Through the interviews at the case company, we discovered new insights into onboarding and data supporting the existing literature on the topic.

6.1 Managerial implications

The results of this empirical study suggest that the case company has managed the integration of new employees into the organization very effectively. The atmosphere has been experienced as welcoming and encouraging. The colleagues share assistance and support when needed. On the other hand, the documentation of processes in some departments could be improved, allowing new employees to benefit from a more efficient and more precise onboarding process. It would be recommended to pay attention to the documentation of processes and to create guide materials within all departments.

In addition to the role-specific instruction materials, a general company-related onboarding material could be beneficial. This way, the company's general rules, procedures, and company information could be shared more systematically to ensure that all new employees receive important information, regardless of their department. To ensure a smooth, organized, and well-executed start in the company for every new employee, it would be recommended to make a comprehensive and logical onboarding and training plan beforehand. This way, the person responsible for teaching newcomers would have a detailed plan and would also be able to reserve the time needed for the process.

6.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Sample size is a regular challenge in research, especially in qualitative research that focuses on individual experiences and studying them in depth. This detailed in-depth analysis of individual perspectives sets limits on how broadly the results can be applied. This problem arises mainly in case studies, including this study. Findings that arise in case studies are always specific to the context and individuals participating in the study, and therefore, transferring findings to a larger population or generalizing them is challenging, if not problematic. Small sample size limits drawing conclusions about a larger population.

Schreier (2018) points out that even though case studies would involve several participants, they usually involve only one case company or organization, and this way limits the possibilities to generalize the findings. According to Schreier (2018), focusing on transferability when talking about qualitative research brings value and helps to reconceptualize generalization as transferability takes the highly contextualized nature of qualitative studies into account. Transferability does not try to generalize the findings into a larger population but aims to find out if the findings of one case with its unique characteristics apply to other cases with different characteristics, too. (Schreier 2018.)

This study provided important insights into the experiences of new employees. However, the study has some limitations, considering that the results are only from one singular company and its four employees. Results cannot be generalized as such. The characteristics of the case company may not reflect other organizations, so the findings may not apply to different organizations operating under different conditions. A wider sample of interviewees from different departments, companies, and industries would result in more comprehensive and reliable data. Another limitation to consider is the scope of the interview and the fact that out of 23 interview questions, nine were open-ended. This might have limited the interviewees from expressing their views to some extent and

from acquiescing to simple responses with many of the questions, which potentially led to incomplete understanding. In any case, the results of the study are valuable information for the case company in question.

For future research, it could be suggested to study larger samples from different companies and organizations across different industries. For the case company, it would be beneficial to pay attention to the suggestions that arose in this study and then perhaps conduct similar research in the future with new employees to see if the results can be improved. A similar study could be conducted as multiple case studies, and this approach has the potential to yield more comprehensive findings and broader insights.

References

- Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. *Handbook of practical program evaluation*, 492-505. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19>
- Ashford, S. J. & Black, J. S. (1996). Proactivity during organizational entry: The role of desire for control. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(2), 199. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.81.2.199>
- Bauer, T. N. (2010). Onboarding New Employees: Maximizing success. SHRM Foundation's Effective Practice Guidelines Series. Retrieved 2025-09-22 from https://penedulearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Onboarding-New-Employees_Maximizing-Success.pdf
- Bauer, T. N. (2013). Onboarding: The power of connection. Onboarding White Paper Series. SuccessFactors. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4980.6163>
- Berkelaar, B., & Harrison, M. (2019). Organizational Socialization. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.127>
- Boyd, D. Corporate Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility for Business Attainment and Progress. *TalentDevelopment & Excellence* Vol 9, No.2,2017,01-06.
- Brown, R. (1997). Organizational commitment: Clarifying the concept and simplifying the existing construct typology. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 49(3):230-51. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1996.0042>
- Caldwell, B. G. & Caldwell, C. (2016). Ten classic onboarding errors–Violations of the HRM-employee relationship. *Business and Management Research*, 5(4), 47-55. <https://doi.org/10.5430/bmr.v5n4p47>
- Carlos, A. R. & Muralles, D. C. (2022). Onboarding in the age of COVID-19. *IFLA journal*, 48(1), 33-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035221103541>
- Chao, G. T. (2012). Organizational socialization: Background, basics, and a blueprint for adjustment at work. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199928309.013.0018>
- Chillakuri, B. (2020). Understanding generation Z expectations for effective onboarding. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-02-2020-0058>

Cohen, A. (2007). Dynamics between occupational and organizational commitment in the context of flexible labor markets: A review of the literature and suggestions for a future research agenda. Institut Technik und Bildung, Universität Bremen.

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-410893>

Cooper-Thomas, H. D. & Anderson, N. (2006). Organizational socialization: A new theoretical model and recommendations for future research and HRM practices in organizations. *Journal of managerial psychology*, 21(5), p.493.

Davila, N. & Pina-Ramirez, W. (2018). *Effective Onboarding*, American Society for Training & Development. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.

European Commission (2011). A Renewed EU Strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility. Retrieved 2025-09-20 from

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0681>.

Fisher, C. (2010). Researching and writing a dissertation – An essential guide for business students (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall.

Drisko, J. W. (2024). Transferability and generalization in qualitative research. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 35(1), 102-110.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315241256560>

Frögéli, E., Jenner, B. & Gustavsson, P. (2023). Effectiveness of formal onboarding for facilitating organizational socialization: A systematic review. *PloS one*, 18(2),

e0281823. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0281823>

Giles, B. (2022). *Onboarded: How to bring new hires to the point where they are effective, faster*. [Audibook]. Evolution Partners Pty Ltd.

Godinho, T., Reis, I. P., Carvalho, R. & Martinho, F. (2023). Onboarding handbook: An indispensable tool for onboarding processes. *Administrative sciences*, 13(3), 79.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13030079>

Hayton, J. C., Carnabuci, G., & Eisenberger, R. (2012). With a little help from my colleagues:

- A social embeddedness approach to perceived organizational support. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(2), 235-249. <https://doi-org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.1002/job.755>
- Harper, D. (2011). Choosing a qualitative research method. *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners*, 83-97. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119973249.ch7>
- Harris, L., Cooper-Thomas, H., Smith, P. & Smollan, R. (2020). Reclaiming the social in socialization: A practice-based understanding of newcomer adjustment. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 31(2), 193-211. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21384>
- Hemphill, L. & Begel, A. (2011). Not seen and not heard: Onboarding challenges in newly virtual teams. 131.107, 65. Retrieved 2025-09-22 from <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Not20Seen20and20Not20Heard20MSR-TR-2011-136.pdf>
- Kammeyer-Mueller, J., Wanberg, C., Rubenstein, A., & Song. (2013) Support, undermining, and newcomer socialization: Fitting in during the first 90 days. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(4), 1104-1124. <https://doi-org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.5465/amj.2010.0791>
- Keino, J. Exploring and identifying onboarding challenges in a medium-sized IT-company: Case study. 2023. <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe20231219155659>
- Khan, M.S., Khan, I., Kundi, G.M., Khan, S., Nawaz, A., Khan, F., & Yar, N.B. (2014). The impact of job satisfaction and organisational commitment on the Intention to leave among the Academicians. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 114–131. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v4-i2/610>
- Klein, H. J. & Heuser, A. E. (2008). The learning of socialization content: A framework for researching orienting practices. In *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* (pp. 279-336). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-7301\(2008\)27](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-7301(2008)27)

- Korte, R. & Lin, S. (2013) Getting on board: Organizational socialization and the contribution of social capital. *Human relations*, 66(3), 407-428.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726712461927>
- Kulmala, S. & Rosvall, P. (2023). Yrityskulttuuri käytännössä: Konkretiaa tavoitekulttuurin johtamiseen. Alma Insights.
- Lamba, S., & Choudhary, N. (2013). Impact of human resource management practices on organisational commitment of employees. *International Journal of Advancements in Research and Technology*, 2(4), 407–423.
<https://doi.org/10.30780/IJTRS.V04.I09.004>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1989). *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. [https://doi-org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.1016/8755-7223\(92\)90119-J](https://doi-org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.1016/8755-7223(92)90119-J)
- Luukka, P. (2020) Yrityskulttuuri on kuningas.: Mikä, miksi ja miten? Alma Insights.
- Maurer, R. (2019). New employee onboarding guide. Proper onboarding is key to retaining, engaging talent. Society for Human Resources Management. Retrieved 2025-09-22 from <https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/topics-tools/news/technology/NewEmployeeOnboardingGuide.pdf>
- Martela, F. & Jarenko, K. (2015). *Draivi: Voiko sisäistä motivaatiota johtaa?* s.121. Talentum.
- Meyer, A. M. (2016). The impact of onboarding levels on perceived utility, organizational commitment, organizational support, and job satisfaction. Doctoral dissertation. Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville
- Mäkinen, E. (2024). How to successfully onboard a newcomer in a hybrid workplace. p. 82. <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2024050928776>
- Nowell L., Norris J., White D. & Moules N. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 16, no. 1. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Rivera, J. TD: Talent Development. Jul 2024, Vol. 78 Issue 7, p. 50-55. Retrieved 2024-12-26 from New Job, New Beginning. - EBSCO.
- Oakes, K. (2021). *Culture renovation: 18 Leadership actions to build an unshakeable company*. McGraw-Hill-Ascent Audio.

- OpenAI. (2025). *ChatGPT* (Aug 1 version) [Large language model].
<https://chat.openai.com/chat>
- Paré, G. (2007). The influence of high-involvement human resources practices, procedural justice, organizational commitment, and citizenship behaviors on information technology professionals' turnover intentions. Volume 32. No 3. p.326-357. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105960110628687>
- Reza, M. M. H. (2019). Impact of Human Resource Management Practices on Organizational Commitment of Employees.
<https://doi.org/10.30780/IJTRS.V04.I09.004>
- Rousseau, D. 1995. Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements. New York: Sage Publications.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231594>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2003). Research methods for business students. Essex: Prentice Hall: Financial Times.
- Saunders M., Lewis P. & Thornhill A. (2019). Research methods for business students (8th ed). New York: Pearson.
- Schreier, M. (2017). Sampling and generalization. The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526416070.n6>
- Scott, K. L., Zagenczyk, T. J., Schippers, M., Purvis, R. L., & Cruz, K. S. (2014). Co-worker exclusion and employee outcomes: An investigation of the moderating roles of perceived organizational and social support. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51(8), 1235-1256. <https://doi-org.proxy.uwasa.fi/10.1111/joms.12099>
- Sivonen, O. (2022). Yrityskulttuurit murroksessa: Inhimillinen työelämä ei rakennu pelkällä itseohjautuvuudella. Luku 1. Alma Insights.
- Stein, M. & Christiansen, L. (2010). *Successful Onboarding*. McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing.
- Stobierski, T. (2021). What is corporate social responsibility? 4 types. Harvard Business School Online. Retrieved 2025-09-20 from
<https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/types-of-corporate-social-responsibility>
- UKRIO Research Integrity Office (2025). Retrieved 2025-06-01 from

<https://ukrio.org/research-integrity/what-is-research-integrity/>

Van Maanen, J. E., & Schein, E. H. (1977). Toward a theory of organizational socialization.

Retrieved 2025-09-21 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5175507_Toward_a_Theory_of_Organized_Socialization.

Wallendorf, M. & Belk, R. W. (1989). Assessing trustworthiness in naturalistic consumer

research. Association for Consumer Research. Retrieved 2025-09-22 from

<https://www.scribd.com/document/298864007/Assessing-Trustworthiness-in-Naturalistic-Consumer-Research>

Weinstock, D. (2015). Hiring new staff? Aim for success by onboarding. The Journal of

Medical Practice Management: MPM, 31(2), 96.

Williams, C. (2007). Research methods. Journal of Business & Economics Research (JBER),

5(3). <https://doi.org/10.19030/jber.v5i3.2532>

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questionnaire

Background information

What is your current title, department, and start date in your current role?

Can you briefly tell me about your role?

What is your previous work history like?

What is your educational background?

Skills and Competence

1. Do you feel that you have already learned the knowledge and skills needed for your job?
2. Do you have someone in your work community you can turn to for help and advice when needed?
3. Did onboarding give you a clear understanding of what is expected from you in your role and how success is measured?

Confidence and Trust in Your Own Abilities

4. Do you feel confident in your work?
5. Did you feel confident in your new job right when you started in the new role?
6. What factors give you a sense of confidence in your work?
7. What factors contributed to your sense of confidence when you first started your job here?

Work Community

8. How were you welcomed into the new work community?
9. Do you feel like you belong to the organization?

10. What factors have made it challenging to become part of the group?
11. What factors have made it easier to become part of the work community?
12. Would you describe yourself as an extrovert or an introvert?
13. Do you feel that your personality traits have influenced how easily you have integrated into the work community?
14. Do you feel engaged with the company you work for?

Onboarding

15. What were your expectations of the onboarding process before you started?
16. How did your actual onboarding experience compare to those expectations?
17. Do you feel that you were proactive during the onboarding process?
18. Did your onboarding trainer provide you with the necessary knowledge and skills for your role?
19. What parts of the onboarding process were most helpful for you? Why?
20. Were there any parts you found confusing, unhelpful, or missing?
21. Have you felt that you receive help and support when needed?
22. Did onboarding help to get familiar with the company's values, norms, and company culture?
23. What advice would you give to someone starting their onboarding tomorrow in this company?

Appendix 2. Haastattelurunko

Taustatiedot:

Nykyinen titteli + osasto + aloituspäivä nykyisessä työssäsi?

Kertoisitko lyhyesti työnkuvastasi?

Millainen on aiempi työhistoriasi?

Mikä on koulutustaustasi?

Osaaminen

1. Koetko oppineesi jo työssäsi tarvittavat tiedot ja taidot?
2. Onko sinulla työyhteisössäsi joku, jolta voit kysyä apua ja neuvoja?
3. Antoiko perehdytys sinulle selkeän käsityksen siitä, mitä roolissasi sinulta odotetaan ja miten onnistumista mitataan?

Itsevarmuus ja luotto omiin kykyihin

4. Tunnetko olosi itsevarmaksi työssäsi?
5. Tunsitko olevasi itsevarma heti kun aloitit uudessa roolissa?
6. Mitkä tekijät tuovat sinulle itsevarmuuden tunnetta työssäsi?
7. Mitkä tekijät loivat itsevarmuuden tunnetta, kun aloitit työssäsi?

Työyhteisö

8. Miten sinut on otettu osaksi uuteen työyhteisöön?
9. Koetko kuuluvasi joukkoon?
10. Mitkä tekijät ovat tuoneet haasteita osaksi joukkoa pääsemistä?
11. Mitkä tekijät ovat helpottaneet pääsyä osaksi työyhteisöä?
12. Kuvailisitko itseäsi ekstrovertiksi vai introvertiksi?

13. Koetko, että näillä luonteenpiirteilläsi on ollut vaikutusta osaksi työyhteisöön pääsemisessä?
14. Koetko olevasi sitoutunut yritykseen, jossa työskentelet?

Perehdytys

15. Millaisia odotuksia sinulla oli perehdytyksen suhteen?
16. Miten saamasi perehdytys vastasi odotuksiasi?
17. Koetko olleesi proaktiivinen perehdytysprosessin aikana?
18. Onko perehdyttäjäsi antanut sinulle tarvittavat tiedot ja taidot työtehtävääsi koskien?
19. Mitkä osat perehdytyksestä ovat olleet sinulle tärkeimpiä tai hyödyllisimpiä ja miksi?
20. Liittykö perehdytykseen tai työssä aloittamiseen teemoja tai osa-alueita, jotka koit hankaliksi tai epäselviksi?
21. Oletko kokenut, että saat apua ja tukea tarvittaessa?
22. Auttoiko perehdytys tuntemaan yrityksen arvot, normit ja yrityskulttuurin?
23. Mitä neuvoja antaisit henkilölle, joka aloittaa uudessa tehtävässä tässä yrityksessä huomenna?