

p136934 dissertation proposal

by Anne Margrethe Leirvik

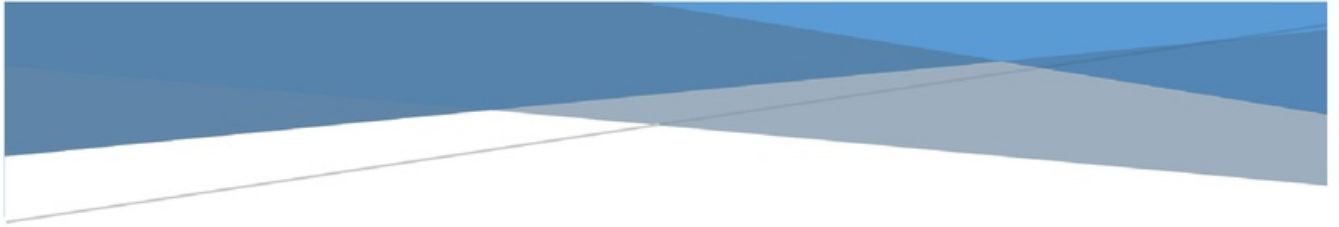
Submission date: 19-Nov-2015 07:21PM (UTC+0000)

Submission ID: 48798446

File name: 18463_Anne_Margrethe_Leirvik_p136934_dissertation_proposal_62121_945569812.docx
(216.66K)

Word count: 2672

Character count: 17424



RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Critically Analyse the Effect of Organisational
downsizing on Employee engagement in the
Norwegian Ship Design Industry

Anne-Margrethe Leirvik
P136934

Table of Contents

1.0.	Introduction	2
1.1.	Wärtsilä	2
1.2.	Background and Literature Review	2
1.3.	Rational	3
1.4.	Aims and Objectives	4
2.0.	Research Design and Methodology	5
2.1.	Paradigm	6
2.2.	Sample	6
2.3.	Data analysis	6
2.3.1.	Qualitative Data	6
2.3.2.	Grounded Theory	8
2.4.	Data Collection	8
2.5.	Limitations and Ethical Risks	9
2.5.1.	Time management	9
2.5.2.	Ethical Risks	9
2.6.	Reliability and Credibility	9
3.0.	Resources and Planning	10
3.1.	Resources and planning process	10
3.2.	Gantt chart	10
4.0.	References	12

1.0. Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to analyse the effect of organisational downsizing on employee engagement in a company in the Norwegian Off-Shore Oil and Gas Industry. Previous studies have been done to be able to analyse how employee engagement is affected in times where organisations are having to downsize due to economical restraints (Erickson & Roloff, 2007), however few in the recent years and with the turbulent times in the Norwegian Off-Shore Industry this topic is very current and this study aims to explore more in this field.

1.1. Wärtsilä

'Wärtsilä is a global leader in complete lifecycle power solutions for the marine and energy markets. By emphasising technological innovation and total efficiency, Wärtsilä maximizes the environmental and economic performance of the vessels and power plants of its customers (Wärtsilä, 2015)'.

The local ship design office at Fitjar, Norway, has agreed to work with the researcher in order to gain further knowledge on how the downsizing they are currently facing is affecting their employees.

1.2. Background and Literature Review

A lot of research has been done on the subject of Employee engagement and the effect on employees facing downsizing within their organisation (Grunberg, et al., 2000), however this research has mostly been focused on the American Manufacturing Industry within the last decade, with little or none research on the Oil and Off-Shore, heavy, Industry.

Downsizing has been defined as;

... A set of activities, undertaken on the part of the management of an organization and designed to improve organizational efficiency, productivity, and/or competitiveness (Cameron, 1994).

One important study was the MacLeod (2009) report, *'Engaging for Success'*, which looks at the benefits of employee engagement to organisations and individuals. In the current business environment organisations are facing financial pressures which has led to them being forced to undertake cost-reducing actions such as downsizing the workforce to be able to survive (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). The process of downsizing affects all aspects of the organisations; from the managers who have to be the bearers of bad news, the ones who lose their jobs, and the survivors at shop-level; the employees who still receive their pay check at the end of the month. The effects of the changes on them are often identified as feelings of loss of control and uncertainty as a result of the fear for their own jobs. Potential effects on their work day is a bigger workload, longer days and fewer vacation days, as well as new work place relationships and co-workers and policies and procedures (Chipunza &

Berry, 2010). These factors can ultimately lead to stress and burnout, and be a costly affair for the organisation if not handled correctly. The external pressures faced by the off-shore industry in times of low crude prices (The Business Times, 2015)

1.3. Rational

This research will look at the Human Resource aspect of organisational downsizing and aim to guide Human Resource professionals in organisations in how it affects employee engagement, offering recommendations on best practice from an employee perspective. This study will aim to expand on previous studies that have been done about the effects on employees in times of downsizing, due to the lack of research on the impact of layoffs in the 21st century (Ramlall, et al., 2014) and especially research on the Norwegian Off-Shore Industry. This study is being undertaken in a currently interesting time period as the oil rich country Norway, where 86% of the total export in 2012 consisted of oil, gas and refined petroleum products (Ryggvik, 2015), face crude prices dropped by 40% over the last year (The Business Times, 2015). The offshore industry has announced more than 25,000 job cuts since the beginning of last year and the cuts are happening in companies involved in every aspect of the industry, from the companies hiring the rig workers to the companies designing and manufacturing the equipment for the rigs.

Wärtsilä Fitjar has been designing ships transporting equipment from main land to the rigs, and with the current low level of investment there is less work, forcing them into laying off employees as they face less projects coming their way. The industry are facing difficult times, speculating in whether the oil prices will return to the same as before the drop, from \$115 a barrel in June 2014 to below \$50 at the beginning of 2015 (Raval, 2015)- or if this is a new price level that the off shore oil and gas industry will have to adjust to. The research will aim to see if this is an additional concern and stress factor to the employees.

1.4. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study is to critically analyse the effect of Organisational Downsizing on Employee Engagement in a company in the Norwegian Off-Shore Industry.

1. Critically analyse academic literature on the effect of organisational downsizing on employee engagement
2. Identify the employee perception of employee engagement in the Norwegian off-shore industry after downsizing.
3. Evaluate the findings and highlight best practice of employee engagement within organisations in the Norwegian off-shore industry and make recommendations for managers to best deal with employee engagement in the aftermath of downsizing

2.0. Research Design and Methodology

Research has been defined as;

'A process of enquiry and investigation, it is systematic, methodical and ethical, and can help solve practical problems and increase knowledge' (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 3)

When undertaking a research project it is important to be aware of the different methods and stages of a project, and at the different levels. This was identified by Saunders et al (2009) with their Research Onion, as displayed below.

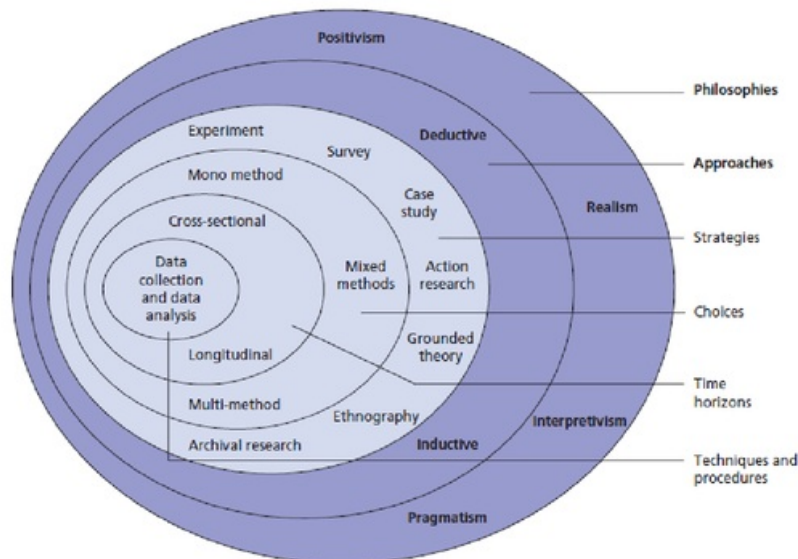


Figure 1. The Research Onion, (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 138)

The researcher will be addressing data collection and data analysis, the core of the onion, see section 2.3 and 2.4. Cross-sectional design will be approached through the qualitative research and a semi-structured interview. There will be a use of mixed methods, as a questionnaire will be distributed, quantitative data, in addition to a few more in-depth interviews, qualitative data. This will aid the researcher in interpreting the data collected, and the use of qualitative data can help explain relationships between quantitative variables (Saunders, et al., 2009). In this way the survey will give the researcher information about patterns or behaviours that can be studied more in depth in the interviews.

On the next layer of the onion one can identify that both grounded theory and survey will be used, in order to best understand and analyse the data collected. The study will be inductive and using the philosophical angle called Interpretivism.

2.1. Paradigm

For this study the use of the phenomenological methodology is most suitable, referring to the human way of making sense of the world, and called 'Interpretivism' on the Research Onion. The researcher must focus on the human aspect, rather than technological objects (Saunders, et al., 2009). This will be highly appropriate to the chosen research subject as Interpretivism research is good when researching organisational behaviour and human resource management (Saunders, et al., 2009).

2.2. Sample

When deciding on from who the data will be collected, in this research purposive sampling will be used, this involves;

'The sample is 'hand-picked' for the research. The researcher already know something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data' (Denscombe, 2007)

This will be an advantage as it gives the opportunity to get the most valuable and informative answers. The sample will be shop-level employees at the chosen organisation; Wärtsilä. First there will be approximately 20 interviews sent out to the employees, followed up by interviews of around 3-4 employees. This will be employees in the average age range between 30-50 years of age at Wärtsilä.

2.3. Data analysis

2.3.1. Qualitative Data

The study will also use qualitative analysis of the data collected, defined as;

'the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem... collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis ... establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation include the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change' (Creswell, 2013, p. 44)

This will be suited for the Human Resource related subject chosen for this project. The qualitative data will be the interviews and the transcripts from when the interviews were conducted, and they will be analysed to see if there are clear patterns or behaviours that are being repeated.

2.3.2. Grounded Theory

To get a good understanding of the qualitative data, the concept of 'grounded theory' will be applied. This has been explained as;

'An approach to the analysis of qualitative data that aims to generate theory out of research by achieving a close fit between the two' (Bryman, 2008)

This is appropriate to the research subject chosen as the previous theory and potential findings can lead to new understanding of the subject or particular aspects, highlighting a new course or different findings than expected.

2.4. Data Collection

There are several methods of collecting data, identified as;

- Secondary Data Collection
 - Case Studies
 - Interviews and surveys
 - Experimentation
 - Observation/Ethnographic
- (Lancaster, 2012)

In this research the data collection methods will be questionnaires created using the online survey tool Google Forms, distributed to the employees' internal emails, followed up by interviews of a chosen sample. This is an advantage because it has low or no costs and easily accessible (Katsirikou & Skiadas, 2010). The questionnaires will give the researcher a good number of data to analyse, and hopefully show a pattern of behaviour and reaction to the downsizing and employee engagement in the Norwegian Off-Shore Industry. It will be followed up a semi-structured interview of a few employees, done face to face. The data collected will be kept confidential, and it will be of high importance of the researcher that no names are identified in the final report.

2.5. Limitations and Ethical Risks

2.5.1. Time management

The limitations might be the accessibility to the sources of the primary data. The researcher has decided on a week to travel to Norway to conduct the interviews in the work place, this requires good time management to get the most out of the time planned for the interviews.

2.5.2. Ethical Risks

There is also the possibility that the answers from the interviews might not be extensive enough, as some might find it intimidated to be interviewed about a sensitive subject. As a social researcher there is a duty to work in a way that minimize the prospect of any harm to the participants (Denscombe, 2010), thus all employees will receive consent forms in advance explaining the topics that will be explored, giving participants a chance to quit the survey at any point, in order to avoid physiological implications.

2.6. Reliability and Credibility

Bryman (2008) identified that, while reliability and validity is important in a research project, in a social research using qualitative data the ability to do exact measurements can be more difficult. Therefore, within this the idea of Credibility has had more focus. It is important that the researcher is perceived by the participants in the study as fair and open. This can be achieved by good practise by the interviewer and members having access to the results after the study has been published, so they can see that the interviewer has acted professional by not publishing any names and that in the published research the interviewer has correctly understood the social context and responses (Bryman, 2008).

3.0. Resources and Planning

Resources and planning is a vital part of any research project (Armstrong, 2006), in order to be able to get a conclusive understanding of the subject area various sources will be used to access information and knowledge to help reach the aim and objectives of this research.

3.1. Resources and planning process

Primary data will be collected through practical sources, such as HR managers at Wärtsilä who will provide information about the company and its policies, and allow the researcher to conduct interviews with the employees. Theoretical sources will be accessed through books in the library, academic journals and the internet in order to aid the researcher, these are also referred to as secondary data. It is important that the literature used is relevant to the subject matter, aims and objectives (Oliver, 2012).

3.2. Gantt chart

The attached Gantt chart on the next page, delineating the dates that will be followed, will aim improve time management, and be a part of the planning process outlining the proposed actions and their anticipated time scales (Armstrong, 2006). The final hand in date for the project will be 5th May. When undertaking a big research project such as the Dissertation it is important that the researcher is able to manage time well and get the work done in a timely matter to not be overwhelmed by tasks and deadlines. The Gantt chart will be an advantage while researching the chosen subject.

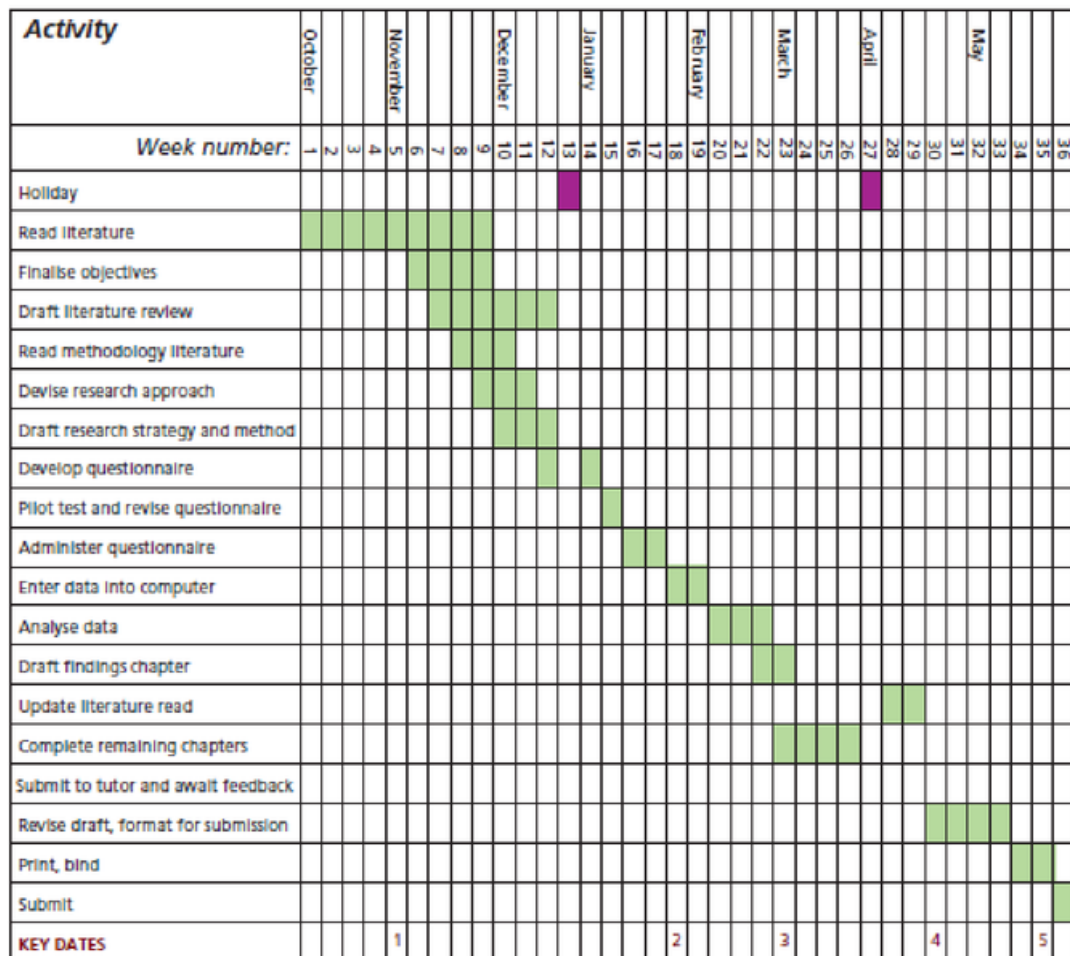


Figure 2. Gantt chart (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 45)

4.0. References

- Armstrong, M., 2006. *A Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Bryman, A., 2008. *Social Research Methods*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cameron, K., 1994. Strategies for successful organizational downsizing. *Human Resource Management*, 33(2), pp. 189-211.
- Chipunza, C. & Berry, D., 2010. The relationship among survivor qualities – attitude,. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(5), pp. 604-613.
- Collis, J. & Hussey, R., 2009. *Business Research; a practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students*. 3rd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Creswell, J., 2013. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd..
- Denscombe, M., 2007. *The Good Research Guide - for small-scale social research projects*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Denscombe, M., 2010. *Ground Rules for ocial Research*. 2nd ed. London: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Erickson, R. & Roloff, M., 2007. Reducing attrition after downsizing: Analyzing the effects of organizational. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 15(1), pp. 35-55.
- Gandolfi, F. & Hansson, M., 2011. Causes and consequences of downsizing; Towards an integrative framework. *Journal of Management & Organisation*, Volume 17, pp. 498-521.
- Grunberg, L., Anderson-Connolly, R. & Greenberg, E., 2000. Surviving Layoff - The effect on Organizational Commitment and Job Performance. *Work and Occupations*, 27(1), pp. 7-31.
- Katsirikou, A. & Skiadas, C., 2010. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries; Theory and APplications*. Athens: International Society for the Advancement of Science and Technology.
- Lancaster, G., 2012. *Research Methods in Management*. Oxford: Routledge.
- MacLeod, D. & Clarke, N., 2009. *Engaging for Success*, London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
- Oliver, P., 2012. *Succeeding with your Literatrue Review - A Student Handbook*. Maidenhead: McGraw Hill Education.
- Ramlall, S., Al-Sabaan, S. & Magbool, S., 2014. Layoffs, Coping, and Commitment: Impact of Layoffs on Employees and. *Journal of Management and Strategy*, 5(2), pp. 25-30.
- Ryggvik, H., 2015. A Short History of the Norwegian Oil Industry: From Protected National Champions to Internationally Competitive Multinationals.. *Business History Review*, 89(1), pp. 3-41.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhil, A., 2009. *Research methods for Business Students*. 5th ed. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- The Business Times, 2015. Norway turns on production tap as oil rout erodes revenue. *The Business Times (Singapore)*, 16 10.

Wärtsilä, 2015. *This is This is Wärtsilä*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.wartsila.com/about>
[Accessed 13 11 2015].