DEALING WITH DRAMA
A Qualitative Study on Workplace Friendship Deterioration

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Abstract

Relationships are an essential factor for wellbeing. To create and maintain relationships is also a crucial part of many jobs. These relationships sometimes develop into friendships, which often have been viewed as positive for performance and wellbeing at the workplace. However, previous research mainly focuses on the upsides of workplace friendships. In recent studies, the importance to also investigate the dark sides of workplace friendships have been emphasized. One of these dark sides has been labeled workplace friendship deterioration, which is the phenomenon which will be studied in this thesis.

The study contributes to the research field of management with insights into coping mechanisms tied to the phenomenon. More specifically, the study focuses on organizational members within the service sectors. Therefore, the research question reads as follows:

**Which coping mechanisms are displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships are deteriorated?**

The theoretical point of departure provides a foundation for the study by presenting previous academic studies, discuss the relevance of concepts and interpret findings reported in previous studies. The theoretical framework introduces the theories of coping mechanisms and emotions. This forms a basis for the analysis and discussion of the findings.

The study is based on a qualitative research method. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with nine different respondents, all based in Umeå, Sweden. The interviews were transcribed and then coded with the software Nvivo.

The results of this study show that the coping mechanisms organizational members in service sectors display when workplace friendships deteriorate depend on the characteristics of the experienced situation. Depending on the situation, one of the main coping categories of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, adaptive coping, or maladaptive coping are adapted. These are more specifically expressed as distancing, confronting, talking to others, reaching out, informing manager, altering point of view, denying, and breaking commitment. The main coping and the expressed coping together form the displayed coping mechanisms. The process of coping with workplace friendship deterioration is found to consist of four stages. These are labeled as causes, emotions, main coping, and expressed coping.

Causes for workplace friendship deterioration, ordered from most to least commonly occurring, are toxic behavior, communication issues, different perceptions on tasks and responsibility, close relationships, polarization, injustice, organizational issues, management issues, differing moral and values, competition, differing ambitions and goals, and distractions.
Acknowledgements

To write a degree thesis is both a culmination and a challenge. It is our chance to display our gained skills to professors and peers, but maybe most importantly, to ourselves.

However, submitting this thesis does not mainly mark an end of reviewing articles and applying theories. Instead, as we leave the final thesis seminar, we will re-gaze on the lunch breaks outside Lindellhallen, meetings at the HHUS office, and infinite queuing outside the E-pub. It is impossible to separate the student life from the studies, and probably not desired to either. In August 2015 we pressed play, and in June 2019, it is time to roll out the credits.

We want to thank our friends for discussing method, theoretical framework, and coding systems when needed. Nonetheless, the highest service we did each other was to understand when to pause the thesis thoughts. We value all of our friends highly and look forward to continuing the journey together, from now as alumni.

Many thanks to our families, for love and support throughout our studies.

Furthermore, we would like to thank our interview participants who provided us with their thoughts and insights. This thesis would not have been possible without their willingness to participate and share their experiences.

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Umeå, Spring 2019
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1.0 Introduction

No two friendships are the same. However, the relationships we build with others are undoubtedly central to our lives. The concern we have for our friends take part within a broader set of morals and values, and the people we chose as friends often have the power to affect who we are and who we become (Helm, 2017). In this chapter, previous studies on workplace friendship will be presented. The dark sides of friendship will be explained, and further, the causes for deterioration will be presented.

1.1 Problem background

The problem background is presented in three subparts. First, the background of workplace friendship as a research area is mapped out. Second, friendships at the workplace are discussed to understand different types of friendships and how they affect the workplace. Lastly, we proceed to the dark sides of friendships and how they can be expressed at workplaces. The dark side that is most emphasized and explained is workplace friendship deterioration. When a relationship becomes worse over time, it is deteriorating.

1.1.1 Background of workplace friendship as a research area

The field of workplace friendship has been explored during the last four decades, partly taking off with research regarding how members of organizations form networks (Lincoln et al., 1979). Early researchers within the field were also Kram and Isabella (1985) who were among the first to address the friendship component of co-worker relationships by investigating the role of peer relationships in career development.

As pointed out by Venkataramani et al., (2013, p. 1037) contemporary research is primarily focused on the upsides of workplace friendships. By contrast, research on the downsides has often been neglected. Within the literature on the subject of workplace friendships, we identified a gap regarding the deterioration of workplace friendships (Berman et al., 2002, p. 227). Sias and Cahill also emphasize the need for future research to focus on the dark sides of workplace friendships instead of just the positive aspects (1998, p. 293). Therefore, we decided to research in the field of workplace friendship deterioration, which is one of the under-researched dark sides. The research gap pointed out in previous studies will be further elaborated upon in section 1.1.5.

1.1.2 Friendships at the workplace

Berman et al., (2002, p. 228) define friendship as a relationship that involves a connection, regular interaction and a mutual fondness of each other. Further, friendship is described as something that needs maintenance and trust. Friendships can differ in intensity and take place in different physical arenas. It does not necessarily only occur within the workplace, but somewhat outside of it as well. Moreover, it can involve any member of the group at the workplace regardless of interest or what type of responsibility the
individual has. In studies made by Guy and Newman (1998, p. 300) and Jurkiewicz and Brown (1998, p. 23), it is explained that friendships at the workplace involve commitment and a sense of shared values, norms, and interests. Also, essential aspects of friendships are openness, informality, and inclusiveness. These aspects have also become a vital part of new management strategies, which can be seen in the increasing value of teamwork (Zhu et al., 2016, p. 2098) at workplaces. Further, Berman et al., (2002, p. 217) describe how friendships at the workplace to decrease stress and increase communication among organizational members. Additionally, it helps both employees and their supervisors to complete assigned tasks, and it also enhances their ability to accepting different changes in their organizations.

A study made by Adams and Allan (1998, p. 123) shows how friendships at the workplace are usually narrowed down to specific events or occasions which are work-related. An example of this can be having a lunch friend. Workplace friends often can communicate openly about what they appreciate about each other but also their common interests.

Berman et al., (2002, p. 218) state that organizations and individuals can transmit many benefits to workplace friendships. These benefits include a developed social system for organizations that prioritize both formal and informal ways of communicating. Further, it also benefits the style of work, which can include having a more flexible structure for accomplishing a task. Shalala (1998, p. 287) and Terry (1993, p. 77) explain how friendships at the workplace are proven to increase support and resources that are beneficial for the employees. In turn, managers instill loyalty and also advocates for the individuals that support them. However, Shadur and Kienzle (1999, p. 485), state that there are different types of support and is only helpful if it has its base on shared values and interests. The support that is restricted to one's self-interests, such as: "I will support you because your project benefits me" is not helpful for the workplace in the long-term. This since organizations draw benefits from supportive employees that in turn create a more productive work environment.

In a study made by Pedersen and Lewis (2012, p. 478) it is explained how friendships at the workplace are beneficial for the well-being and satisfaction of the staff members both at work and in their private life. In addition to the personal benefits of workplace friendship, it also enables employees to be more productive and committed to the organization. This means that both organizational interests and personal interests can be addressed when friendships are facilitated at the workplace.

The authors of the articles above explain and describe how friendships at the workplace can be expressed positively. However, in order to understand deteriorated friendships at the workplace, a further examination of the darker sides is presented in the section below.

### 1.1.3 Dark sides of workplace friendship

As described in the section above, there are many benefits of friendships at the workplace. Nonetheless, the consequences are not always positive. Three of the darker sides can be categorized as conflicting characteristics, contradicting goals and distraction from tasks. One common denominator is that the friendship and the workplace goals seem to conflict with each other, regarding for example promoted behavior and usage of resources.
Conflicting characteristics
Ingram and Zou (2008, p. 180) explain that four qualities are common at most workplaces. These are formal roles, involuntary relations, exchange norms, and instrumental goals. These qualities are contradicting to the characteristics that are relevant for non-work related friendships. These characteristics regard informality, voluntary, communal norms and socioemotional goals. Further, Chandler (1977, cited in Pillemer and Rothbard, 2018, p. 637), Ibarra (1993, p. 58-9) and Weber (1968, cited in Pillemer and Rothbard, 2018, p. 637) explain how many organizations base activities and friendships on formal, and role-based communication. Even though intimate friendships exist at these workplaces, they are usually involuntary since they are work-related and one needs to interact with co-workers at the workplace.

Contradicting goals
Pillemer and Rothbard (2018, p. 367) further explain how friendships outside of a workplace are voluntary in a way where individuals have the opportunity to choose who to interact with. However, at the workplace, interactions are heavily dependent on tasks, team building and different departments in the organization. Also, Ingram and Zou (2008 p. 172) explain how instrumental goals are a vital part of both the teams’ and the individuals’ accomplishment at the workplace, which generally contradicts with the socioemotional factor of friendship. This contradiction can occur when friends collaborate on a project, and one party performs less than expected because of personal issues, the socioemotional support hinders the ability to give feedback to improve the performance of the project.

Distraction from tasks
Sanchez-Burke (2002, p. 920) explains that one reason for friendships being a negative part of the workplace is the distraction they cause. Focusing on personal matters distracts the involved parties from accomplishing and completing their assigned tasks. Bridge and Baxter (1992, p. 217) further explains that self-disclosure between friends is a fundamental characteristic of friendship. If one party in a friendship regularly engages in self-disclosure, the other party has to provide socioemotional support in order to maintain the friendship. If this is a continual issue, the socioemotional support will hinder accomplishing instrumental goals for the organization. Clark and Reis (1988, p. 622) continually discuss how interruption within close friendships makes it challenging to focus on work-related tasks and is damaging for the instrumental goals that need to be met at the workplace.

1.1.4 Deteriorated friendships at the workplace
As described in the previous section, there are indeed adverse outcomes tied to workplace friendships. To have friendships at work can lead to problematic situations for employees since the attributes and features connected to friendship often opposes the aims with their work roles. These contradicting attributes of employees’ friendships versus their work role aspirations can lead to workplace friendship deterioration. Deterioration is one of the many dark sides of workplace friendships that needs further research and investigation. Deterioration is a process where relationships become worse over time (Berman et al., 2002, p. 227). The section below examines why deteriorated friendships at the workplace occur and how they differ from non-work related friendships. The figure below shows five factors for workplace friendship deterioration.
As shown in the figure above, Sias and Perry (2004, p. 591) explain five factors as to why friendships at the workplace might deteriorate. The first factor is problem personality. This regards events when an employee cannot deal with another employees' personality. The second factor is distracting life events, which occurs when an employee brings their personal problems into the organization. Third, conflicting expectations concern events where employees have differing expectations on how to behave appropriately to one another. The next factor is promotion, which regards events where one of the partners in the relationship is promoted and thereby gains authority to the other partner. Lastly, betrayal is referred to as events where someone feels betrayed by the other party. It can regard betrayals such as sharing personal information with others.

Further, Sias and Perry (2004, p. 592) note that workplace friendships differ in nature from non-work friendships in a way where even if a friendship becomes deteriorated, the partners most likely still have to work together in the organization. This also explains why it can be challenging to disengage from workplace friendship. Further, they reported that partners in a deteriorated friendship tend to communicate in indirect ways. For example, they might refrain from topics that do not regard work-related issues. They also might avoid social affairs that are work-related. The study also showed that it was rare that individuals disengaged from friendship through direct communication, instead they used avoidance as described above in order to reduce the closeness of the friendship.

In summary, the studies above show that engaging in friendships at the workplace has a positive effect on the wellbeing of employees and that a stable support system provides opportunities and means to be more efficient. However, research has shown that there also are dark sides associated with friendships in the workplace. We know that there are
three main dark sides tied to workplace friendship, which are labeled as conflicting characteristics, contradicting goals, and distraction from tasks. Even though they differ in some ways, they all capture the problematic situations which can arise when goals and aims of a person's different roles conflict with each other (Pillemer and Rothbard, 2018, p. 637).

Moreover, previous research has found that there are five main factors which explain why workplace friendships deteriorate. These factors are characterized by employees showing problematic personality traits, letting life events distract themselves as well as their colleagues, having different expectations regarding occurrences at the workplace, and one of the colleagues gaining a new hierarchical position due to promotion. (Sias and Perry, 2004, p. 591)

Even though the field of workplace friendships is continuously gaining more attention, there are still many aspects which remain unexplored. In the next section, the research gap is further elaborated.

### 1.1.5 Research gap

As mentioned in section 1.1.1, previous literature has pointed out a research gap within the area of workplace friendships. Sias and Cahill (1998, p. 293) address the absence of studies which examines the development of workplace relationships. It is suggested that future research aim to investigate the phases and processes which occur in relation to workplace friendship.

Berman et al., (2002, p. 227) emphasize the importance of understanding friendship as a broader phenomenon, and states that scholars have yet to develop an effective and appropriate terminology for the research area. In addition, the dark sides of workplace friendship are pointed out as a suggestion for future research by Sias et al., (2011, p. 265). It is explained that studies which examine the negative aspects of workplace friendship are needed for a greater understanding of the phenomenon and its implications on employees, organizations, and workplaces in our society. Pillemer et al., (2018, p. 19) presents a similar view and suggest that future research should be directed towards the troublesome downsides of workplace friendship. It is described how increasingly social and connected organizational structures forces employees and managers to handle challenges which derive from close relationships.

An argument for this recommendation is that further research would make it easier for organizations and employees to optimize relationships which are founded at the workplace. Progress within the area is needed since organizations and organizational members today navigate increasingly social and connected workplaces (Pillemer et al., 2018, p. 19).

In summary, researchers within the field recommend that future studies examine the process of workplace friendships, the occurrence of workplace friendship as a broader phenomenon, develop an adequate terminology, and focuses at understanding the dark sides of workplace friendship. Thus, this thesis aims to contribute to the research area by investigating the dark sides of workplace friendship.
1.2 Thesis research question and purpose

1.2.1 The position of this thesis within the field of workplace friendship

The broader field of research this thesis contributes to is management. Within the field of management, it has been chosen to focus on the field workplace friendships. Since the subject is of high relevance, found interesting, and pointed out as a gap by previous research, it was decided to investigate workplace friendship deterioration. This will allow the study to adapt to a narrow perspective, which enables to establish a research question with a precise aim. Since the thesis is written within the program Master of Science in Business Administration and Economics with alignment towards Service Management, it is relevant to focus on workplace friendship deterioration within the service sector. The focus on a particular industry will also allow us to collect data in a more structured way. Additionally, it will make the findings more practically applicable to the target group.

Moreover, it was decided to specifically investigate how organizational members use different coping mechanisms when encountering workplace friendship deterioration. Therefore, the research will focus on the coping mechanisms displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships are deteriorated.

1.2.2 Research question

As mentioned above, the dark sides of friendships at the workplace is a field in need of more research. The need for further research is mainly directed at understanding processes, develop terminology, investigate the dark sides and analyze the phenomenon of workplace friendships as a whole.

Consequently, this thesis aims to investigate further how organizational members in the service sector cope with deteriorating friendships in the workplace. Previous studies emphasize the importance a further understanding of the dark sides of workplace friendship since it will allow organizational members to succeed in their quest of navigating an increasingly complex work situation (Pillemer et al., 2018, p. 19). Since
organizational members are the ones directly affected by deteriorated friendships, the research problem will be based on their perspective and which coping mechanisms they use to handle the issue. The aim to understand the coping mechanisms displayed in connection to workplace friendship deterioration derives from previous research recommendations to study processes tied to the phenomenon of workplace friendship (Sias and Cahill, 1998, p. 293). Hence, research focused on coping mechanisms displayed as a part of workplace friendship deterioration processes is established.

Therefore, the research question reads as follows:

**Which coping mechanisms are displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships are deteriorated?**

Other areas within this field that could have been chosen are for example managerial actions, causes, and attitudes tied to workplace friendship deterioration. However, the field of coping mechanisms displayed in connection to workplace friendship deterioration is viewed as the best fit for the suggested research gap. Moreover, the subject is of high relevance and possible to conduct a study of, despite the time limitation for this thesis. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation and the chosen research question is found to be highly relevant for our degree, the field of management as well as for society as a whole.

**1.2.3 Research purpose**

Firstly, the aim is that the insights from this thesis will help organizational members in practice to better understand the phenomena of workplace friendship deterioration and the coping mechanisms tied to the occurrence. This applies to both employees and managers who aim to gain a more thorough understanding of the coping mechanisms used by organizational members when faced with workplace friendship deterioration. Finally, our research aims to reveal gaps within this field which should be further explored. The hope is to contribute with complementary insights within the field of coping mechanisms which are displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships are deteriorated.

In summary, this thesis aims to contribute to the research field of workplace friendships, which is a part of the broader field of management. The research will have its primary focus on the coping mechanisms displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships deteriorate. Aim of the research is to reach guiding and assisting conclusions which can be of help for practitioners in their pursuit to better understand workplace friendship deterioration and the coping mechanisms tied to the occurrence.

**1.2.4 Delimitations**

The delimitations for this study mainly revolve around the population, literature and methodological procedures which will not be researched, reviewed or applied. It would have been interesting as well as relevant to collect data from a broader selection of study participants. Due to the nature of this degree thesis, it was, however, assessed as suitable to focus on organizational members within the service sector. As of the case with literature, there are many interesting articles and studies which could have been
incorporated as references to this study to attain a broader perspective. When evaluating the advantages versus disadvantages of a thorough literature search, it was decided to allocate time to find peer-reviewed and trusted sources which covered the previous research needed to build a foundation for this study. Due to time restraints tied to this thesis project, a thorough literature search is still worth to mention as a delimitation. The same is true for methodological procedures. It was decided to allocate time and resources to a proper qualitative data collection. However, we decided to delimitate the study to one method. Even though more kinds of data could have provided the study with interesting insights, it was decided to focus on one thoroughly conducted qualitative data collection rather than many different ones.

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows. In the upcoming chapter, preceding academic studies will be introduced to provide a deeper understanding of the subject. After that, the theoretical framework which presents the theories of coping mechanisms and emotions will be introduced. Chapter 4 consists of research methodology and methods, which present the methodological decisions and procedures of the study. Then, the findings of the collected data are presented. These findings are then analyzed and discussed in chapter 6. The conclusions of the study are presented in the last chapter, together with recommendations for future research.
2.0 Theoretical point of departure

In this chapter, previous academic studies within the field of workplace friendship, and workplace friendship deterioration will be presented. The distinction between platonic and romantic relationships will also be explained. The relevance of concepts and models will be discussed, with a focus on different types of workplace friendships, methods to maintain a desirable level of closeness in workplace friendships and causes of workplace friendship deterioration. The authors own interpretations of the findings reported in previous studies within the field will also be presented in the forthcoming chapter.

2.1 Literature search

One of the essential parts of research is the exploration of relevant literature which is applicable for the study. When finding relevant literature, it is of importance to critically review it and search for supporting facts from other sources. This in order to verify the facts and to get a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Sharp et al., 2002, p. 73).

The vast majority of our sources thus far have been collected from Umeå University’s database and Google Scholar. These databases have a significant number of peer-reviewed articles, textbooks, e-books, and reports. This provided us with the opportunity to examine different authors and their work. We have chosen to use peer-reviewed articles as a primary source throughout our thesis. This since Sharp et al., (2002, p. 75) explain how experts within the particular field already have inspected these articles. This indicates that eventual mistakes and inaccuracies have been reviewed and excluded from the work.

Additionally, textbooks and e-books are also used as sources for this study. These sources have predominantly been used when they are referred to in peer-reviewed articles. Sharp et al., (2002, p. 76) discuss that a disadvantage of relying too much on textbooks is that they usually are less recently updated and therefore might not be as applicable as peer-reviewed articles. However, textbooks available online are usually frequently updated and therefore a more reliable source.

At the beginning of this study, we examined previous research regarding friendships at the workplace and deterioration. We also examined the literature regarding the dark sides of friendships and how these are expressed at the workplace. A significant number of the peer-reviewed articles regarding these topics are classical and thus of older character. When proceeding to the process of establishing the theoretical framework, we agreed upon the relevance of investigating coping mechanisms and emotions. This since the research question heavily emphasis coping mechanisms and workplace friendship deterioration. Therefore, it was decided to focus on different mechanisms and emotions rather than the deterioration itself.
2.2 Distinguishing the difference between friendship and romance

Many kinds of relationships can be found in the workplace, for example, romantic and platonic friendships. In this thesis, only the latter will be further explored. Platonic relationships are non-sexual relationships. This distinction between romantic relationships and friendships are made in order to make the results more applicable and avoid a too broad focus. The aim is to keep the research concentrated solely on workplace friendship deterioration. When defining friendship, it is important to note that it differs from romance. Sias and Cahill (1998, p. 275) discuss how it mainly differs from an affectionate perspective. Friendships do have affection, love, and care as components. However, the distinction is that romance involves stronger attachment, sexual relations and in a traditional manner, also a sense of exclusiveness.

Distinguishing different relationships in the workplace is important. It makes it more transparent for the reader but also helps us when researching further. The focus of this thesis will be on deteriorated platonic relationships, namely friendships. This since conclusions from previous research indicates that further exploration of this field is needed (Sias and Cahill, 1998, p. 293).

2.3 The three primary categories of workplace friendships

According to Kramer (1994, p. 409), workplace friendships can be divided into three primary categories, depending on the level of trust and self-disclosure the parties experience. This categorization has also been brought up by Sias and Cahill (1998, p. 289). They found that the state of the relationship tends to change and mature into closer friendships over time, as the parties face personal and workplace centered difficulties together. The three workplace friendships categories defined by Kramer (1994, p. 409) are information peer relationships, collegial peer relationships, and special peer relationships. These categories are presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information peer relationships</th>
<th>Distinguished by little trust and self-disclosure. The main function of this kind of relationship is to exchange information about organizational and workplace topics. The relationship is largely kept within the work sphere.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collegial peer relationships</td>
<td>The second level of workplace friendship and showcase medium levels of trust. The participants in these kinds of relationships show an increasing tendency to discuss non-work-related topics at a moderate level of intimacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special peer relationships</td>
<td>Are characterized by greatly trustful and close friendships. The topics of discussion are a limitless mixture of professional and personal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
topics. The participants in the relationship consider each other as very close or best friends.

This categorization of workplace friendships is interpreted as a fluid process. As the colleagues’ face and overcome challenges together, they start to share more personal information and the relationship breaks out from the workplace boundaries into more personal spheres. This is, as previously stated, a change that happens gradually. Even though there are three defined categories of workplace friendship, friendships are intangible and continually evolving. Thus, defining specific workplace friendships in a precise way can be challenging.

2.4 Methods to maintain a desirable level of closeness in workplace friendships

When a relationship evolves and moves from one workplace friendship category to another, it is sometimes desired to maintain the previous level of closeness or to increase the closeness. Therefore, individuals use different methods to shape their relationships in the workplace. In this section, these different methods will be explained (Sias et al., 2011, p. 240).

2.4.1 Methods to limit personal discussions and refocus on workplace issues

Four primary tactics are used by employees to maintain control over the escalating closeness of workplace friendships. The tactics identified by Sias et al., (2011, p. 242) are used to prevent workplace friendships from getting too close and personal, and can be divided into four categories which are presented in a table below.

Table 2. Tactics to maintain control over escalating closeness. (Sias et al., 2011, p. 242)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoidance of interaction</th>
<th>Consists of one of the persons trying to avoid the other individual, for example by not attending meetings where the person is expected to participate in, not answer when a conversation is initiated and so forth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect conversational refocus</td>
<td>Used by deliberately, but indirectly, changing or refocusing the discussion topic towards less personal and more work-related areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct conversational refocus</td>
<td>Different from the previous tactic since it is used explicitly and directly in order to change the topic of discussion towards work-related and non-personal topics. Here, the party specifically mentions that she or he does not want to engage in personal discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>A transparent way to deal with uncomfortable closeness in workplace relationships. It refers to a direct and explicit conversation about the balance of workplace and personal centered issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4.2 Methods to maintain closeness and limit the risk of friendship disengagement

Sias et al., (2011, p. 243) present five central strategies to prevent workplace friendship deterioration. These tend to be used by employees in deteriorating situations who want to keep the other partner engaged in the friendship and are presented in a table below.

*Table 3. Tactics to prevent workplace friendship deterioration. (Sias et al., 2011, p. 243)*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating closeness</strong></td>
<td>A strategy where the personal aspects of the relationships are emphasized by the partner who wants to avoid friendship deterioration. It can be used by initiating an informal conversation which does not center around professional issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circumspectiveness</strong></td>
<td>Characterized by one of the partners being cautious of how they communicate with the other individual. The cautiousness is shown by avoiding topics that might make the partner uncomfortable and instead keep discussing issues that feel “safe” to bring up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deception</strong></td>
<td>Used when information is intentionally withheld or misrepresented by one of the individuals in the friendship, usually to avoid bad or negative news to reach the partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Openness</strong></td>
<td>Refers to straight forward discussions regarding the issues that are threatening the friendship. Statements of concerns regarding the current state of the relationship are brought forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-promotion</strong></td>
<td>Can be used by one party of the relationship when successes on the job are emphasized. Other topics that can be highlighted are how hard one person is working, or other accomplishments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 Causes of workplace friendship deterioration

Sias et al., (2011, p. 326) found that there are five main causes of workplace friendship deterioration. These causes are presented and explained in a table below.

*Table 4. Causes of workplace friendship deterioration. (Sias et al., 2011, p. 326)*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem personality</strong></td>
<td>Emphasizes one of the partners' tendency to showcase behavior or personality traits that are hard for the other person to accept. These can be but are not limited to, disrespect and selfishness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distracting life event</strong></td>
<td>Can contribute to workplace friendship deterioration if the personal life interferes with and/or harm one of the individual's performances at the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflicting expectations</strong></td>
<td>A cause of workplace friendship deterioration revolving around unequal expectations on how the partners in the friendship should behave towards each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promotion</strong></td>
<td>Leads to one of the partners gaining formal authority over the other. This may lead to difficulties for the partners to adapt to the new internal status balance. The change in authority can lead to workplace friendship deterioration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Betrayal</strong></td>
<td>A betrayal from one of the partners leads to loss of trust, which in turn can lead to workplace friendship deterioration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are the most common causes of deteriorated friendships in the workplace. Although it thoroughly explains how friendships can be deteriorated, it does not indicate in what way the members of the organization cope with the issues presented above. This thesis aims to research the coping mechanisms displayed by organizational members in the service sector. Therefore, the next section will strive to define services and the service sector.

### 2.6 Definition of service sector

Workplace friendship deterioration and the coping mechanisms displayed by organizational members will be researched within the framework of organizations belonging to the service sector. Due to this, section 2.6 will focus on the definition of services and the service sector.

#### 2.6.1 Defining service

A common way to define services is to distinguish them by intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability (Parry et al., 2011, p. 20). This is the definition used in this thesis for describing services. If what is being sold or delivered meets the criteria of intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability, the organization will be categorized as delivering a service. The four unique traits belonging to services will now be further explained.

**Intangibility**

Not all goods are tangible, and not all services are intangible. However, services are often impossible to try out before purchasing, and many services are not possible to capture physically. An example of this is an airplane ticket, which cannot be tried out before the service is delivered, and the customer carries through with the journey. In addition, the feeling or the benefits derived from the purchase cannot be captured in a physical item (Grönroos, 2015, p. 55).
**Heterogeneity**
When a service is delivered, both customer and employees affect the outcome of the service. Therefore, services offered to one client will not be the same as for the next one. This equals the criteria of heterogeneity (Grönroos, 2015, p. 56).

**Inseparability**
Services are not merely a product or a physical item, but rather a process which consists of a series of activities, which are produced and consumed at the same time. In this process, a magnitude of resources can be used. Examples are human capital, goods, information, systems, infrastructure, and so forth. These are often used in direct interaction with the customer and can not be separated from each other in the service delivery process (Grönroos, 2015, p. 55).

**Perishability**
When purchasing a service, it is common that the customer has proof that the service took place, but just in the form of traces from the interaction. For example, a customer will be able to show a ticket after completing a bus ride, but the bus ride itself will have perished (Grönroos, 2015, p. 56).

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**2.6.2 Defining service sectors**

One system used to categorize different sectors is the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE), which is the industry standard classification system used in the European Union. The first level of classification within NACE contains 21 categories, divided by alphabetical letters from A to U. There are three further levels which each contain additional categories, for example, the fourth level which contains 615 different sectors. To define the term “service sector” in this thesis is superfluous to use a classification which covers 615 different sectors. Therefore, it has been decided to use NACE level 1, which contains 21 different classes, to support our choices of organizations to investigate (Eurostat, 2008).
The classes within NACE level 1 that have been chosen for further exploration within the frames of this thesis are Information and Communication, Financial and Insurance Activities, Administrative and Support Service Activities, Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities, and Other Service Activities.

The reason for choosing these sectors is that they all incorporate the elements of intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability, which were stated in the previous chapter as typical for services.

![Diagram of chosen service sectors]

To summarize the second chapter, distinguishing platonic and romantic relationships makes it clear for what is to be further investigated at the workplace. Further, discussions regarding categories of friendships and how one can maintain different levels of closeness facilitates understanding of the interviewees’ relationships at their workplace. By understanding the different categories of friendships, it is easier to understand how deterioration can affect employees. These categories also can make it understandable why individuals cope the way they do. Finally, the purpose of defining service sectors was to establish which organizations that empirical data will be collected from. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework for the study is introduced.
3.0 Theoretical framework

This chapter’s main objective is to introduce the theoretical framework. The two theories of coping and emotions will be presented. For coping, this is done to explain what coping is and provide a clearer understanding of how it is linked to the research field. In regard to emotions, the aim is to define and categorize human emotions. Hopefully, this will allow the research findings to be interpreted consistently and accurately.

![Theoretical framework diagram]

3.1 Coping

Coping is defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or/and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.". This definition showcases that coping mechanisms are process-based (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, p. 141), which challenges the traditional perspective. Previously, coping was viewed as a personality trait which dictated how one would cope in all types of situations, no matter the character of the situation (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, p. 128). Additionally, different coping mechanisms are used to reduce varying forms of psychological concerns. This can relate to either aggravating happenings or daily stressful events. One can adopt coping strategies based on what one finds most suitable to decrease the psychological concerns. Whether a coping strategy is efficient or not, depends on its capability to decrease hardships (Snyder 1999, p. 5).

Further, Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 142) describe the coping process as primarily built on three aspects. Firstly, they state that one's own experience of one's behavior is linked to how one usually behaves or thinks. Next, what one does is then related to a specific context. Different coping strategies are connected to particular contexts. To understand coping mechanisms, one has to understand a person is coping with. A narrow context enables a greater understanding of how coping mechanisms are connected to particular events. Lastly, referring to coping as a process, one has to understand the change. This means one has to think and act differently depending on what a situation requires. It is a shifting process in the sense that one sometimes has to rely on a defensive strategy and other times on a problem-solving strategy. The latter is usually useful when there are at least two parties involved (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 142).
Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 150) note that there are two types of coping mechanisms. These are emotion-focused mechanisms and problem-focused mechanisms. Emotion-focused mechanisms appear when the situation is condemned, and thus, nothing can be done to repair it. On the contrary, problem-focused mechanisms are used in situations when the issue is considered repairable. When it is considered impossible to change the situation, the coping process becomes emotion-centered (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 156).

Additionally, it is explained that problem-focused strategies can be compared to problem-solving. However, problem-focused coping is broader than problem-solving. This since problem-solving is analytical and has a broader focus on the surrounding environment. The main difference between these two is that problem-focused coping involves strategies which are personal and focuses on the person, rather than the surrounding environment. The process of a problem-focused strategy is built on determining and understanding the problem. Next, one usually defines varying solutions to the described problem in order then consider which solution is most suitable for the individual and the situation (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 152).

Moreover, emotion-focused coping includes elements of avoiding, distancing, and distorting positive happenings and choosing who will receive attention. Emotion-focused strategies have similarities to defensive behavior, with the purpose of decreasing emotional concerns. It is further explained that emotion-focused coping has the ability to adjust the interpretation of a situation, yet it does not necessarily change the situation itself. This can be viewed as a form of reevaluation, and an example of this can be thinking: "I decided there are more important things to worry about.". This means that one changes the meaning of a situation rather than the situation itself (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 150).

Other forms of coping regard adaptive and maladaptive mechanisms. Individuals who conform to an adaptive way of coping usually engage in activities that instantly improve their psychological well-being. Adaptive coping consists of physical activities such as yoga and also having great social support one can turn to in stressful situations. On the contrary, individuals who conform to a maladaptive way of coping engage in situations that impair their psychological well-being. Their maladaptive behavior can lead to actions which involve low performance, misusing resources, stealing and disrespecting their coworkers at the workplace (Hendy et al., 2018, p. 1) For this thesis, the theoretical foundation of coping as a phenomenon is of considerable importance. The research question aims to investigate the coping mechanisms displayed by organizational members in service industries which experience workplace friendship deterioration. Due to this, it is crucial to understand the concept of coping as a whole.

In summary, coping can be carried out differently by the same individual depending on the specific situation one is facing. Coping is defined as a processed-based way to manage specific demands which arise due to internal or external circumstances. Two types of coping mechanisms are labeled as emotion-focused and problem-focused. The emotion-focused coping appears when the situation is condemned, and thus, nothing can be done to repair it. Therefore, the aim is to alter one's own emotions associated with the situation. On the contrary, problem-focused mechanisms are used in situations when the issue is considered repairable by altering the situation itself.
Moreover, there are adaptive and maladaptive mechanisms. Adaptive coping is characterized by an aim to engage in activities which increase psychological well-being. As a contrast, maladaptive mechanisms trigger behavior in situations which affect the individuals' psychological well-being negatively.

### 3.2 Emotions

To understand what causes workplace friendship deterioration, and which coping mechanisms are used by the concerned parties, it is essential to understand the different emotions humans have in their repertoire. Lazarus and Lazarus (1994, p. 8-9) divide emotions felt by humans into five categories. To interpret data provided by the respondents, it is crucial to have a clear theoretical background tied to the area of emotions. By using five categories defined by Lazarus and Lazarus, the aim is to provide a solid foundation for the interpretation of the findings. The categories are labeled as 1. *The nasty emotions*, 2. *The existential emotions*, 3. *Emotions provoked by unfavorable life conditions*, 4. *Emotions provoked by favorable life conditions* and 5. *The empathic emotions*. A summary of these categories is presented in a figure below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 The nasty emotions</td>
<td>• Anger, Envy, Jealousy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 The existential emotions</td>
<td>• Anxiety, Fright, Guilt, Shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Emotions provoked by unfavorable life</td>
<td>• Relief, Hope, Sadness, Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Emotions provoked by favorable life</td>
<td>• Happiness, Pride, Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 The empathic emotions</td>
<td>• Gratitude, Compassion, Those aroused by aesthetic experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7. Summary of emotions. Lazarus and Lazarus (1994, p. 8-9)*

The five main categories will be further explained and defined below.

#### 3.2.1 The nasty emotions

Within this category, we find anger, envy, and jealousy. They are called "the nasty emotions" since they all, in one way or another, share a desire to harm either others or oneself. Due to this, the emotions in this category can lead to a variety of problems for both individuals and society as a whole (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 13).
Anger is a strong emotion that makes us feel like we have great physical power and that it is needed to act out the emotion. Among all emotions, anger is the one associated with the lowest levels of control. Causes of anger can be personal insults and everyday frustrations that interfere with our goals. When humans grow up, adults often teach kids to hold back their anger instead of acting it out (Izard, 2013, p. 330).

Envy is a feeling of discontent, which is affected by the knowledge of someone else's possessions, qualities, or luck. Envy is also characterized by feelings of shame, failure, dissatisfaction with self, and longing for what another had (Bornstein & Haslam, 1966, p. 268). Jealousy, however, is defined by feelings of betrayal, distrust, rejection, threat, and loneliness (Bornstein & Haslam, 1966, p. 266).

### 3.2.2 The existential emotions

Anxiety-fright, guilt, and shame are all defined as existential emotions since the threats and questions they are founded upon are connected to the ideas we as humans have about who we are, our place in the world, and questions such as life and death. (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 41).

Anxiety is characterized by unease, concern, and worry. When there is a sense of anxiety, it is hard to relax and let go of disturbing thoughts. The worry might derive from the feeling of something being wrong with a specific situation or our lives in general. (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 46).

Guilt is an emotion which occurs when we feel personally accountable, and there is found to be a strong bond between the feeling of guilt and one's sense of personal responsibility (Izard, 2013, p. 424). Shame is often evoked by experiences that give us a sense of inappropriate self-disclosure (Izard, 2013, p. 418), but can also originate from the actions of other people (Izard, 2013, p. 424).

Both guilt and shame are feelings that punish deviant behavior, thereby contribute to a social control system. This can lead to both positive and negative outcomes, one of the positive being that individuals tend to be more altruistic and eager to show their moral worthiness and competence to others to avoid feeling shame or guilt (Greco, 2008, p. 119).

### 3.2.3 Emotions provoked by unfavorable life conditions

The feelings of relief, hope, sadness, and depression can all be connected to different stages of unfavorable life conditions. For example, the sickness of a close relative might throw us between states of sadness when the disease is found, then hope when a new treatment surface, followed by relief when the relative is declared healthy. However, some might be unlucky and have the disease striking again. If a relative then passes away, it is not uncommon to reach a state of depression (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 67).

### 3.2.4 Emotions provoked by favorable life conditions

A common denominator for happiness, pride, and love are that all of these are emotions that we want to share with others around us. Except for certain kinds of love, emotions in this category makes humans feel good. We want to experience more of these emotions
since they are associated with getting what we want and attain our goals (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 86).

Happiness can be defined as a product of high life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and a frequent positive affect (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005, p. 115). There are many different kinds of love. Some of them are parental love, love of siblings, and love of friends (Izard, 2013, p. 95). Love can be described as a strong feeling of deep affection for somebody or something. Pride is described by Cooley (1964, p. 232) as a form of social self-approval which emerges when a person feels like she or he is doing well compared to others who she or he seeks approval from and admire.

3.2.5 The empathic emotions

The empathic emotions consist of gratitude, compassion, and those aroused by aesthetic experiences. The similarity among these different emotions is found in their dependence on our capacity to empathize with others. (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 116)

Gratitude can be defined as the feeling humans experience when something good for us is happening, and we understand that someone else significantly contributed to this chain of events. This occurrence perceived as "good" can also consist of the avoidance of a negative outcome (Silton, 2018, p. 21). When someone is suffering, we can feel compassion with them if we feel like their suffering is unfair and that they deserve help and support. It is built upon awareness of another person's struggle and distress. When we previously have experienced similar events such as the one who is currently suffering, it is more likely that we feel compassion with them (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 125).

This categorization of emotions will be used to interpret collected data and draw conclusions from the respondents' experiences within the field of coping mechanisms in connection to workplace friendship deterioration.

The two main approaches for coping mechanisms, problem-focused, and emotion-focused can be connected to the different emotions presented above. For example, if one feels more empathic emotions, it is likely that they cope differently than someone feeling nasty emotions. If a situation in need of coping occurs, a person with empathic emotions ability to cope could have success with a problem-focused approach. This since they feel compassion and might have a greater understanding if one is dealing with distracting life events, which is one of the causes of deteriorated friendships at the workplace.
4.0 Research methodology and methods

In this chapter, the methodology of the study is introduced. First, the research approach and qualitative research are explained. Secondly, the method to collect data is presented, and philosophical perspectives are discussed. Lastly, the chapter is concluded with ethical considerations and a review of the literature used to support future findings.

4.1 Research approach

Saldaña et al., (2011, p. 3-4) explain how qualitative research methods differs from each other. It is a broad term that includes many different approaches. These approaches include interviews, videos, photographs, notes, and so forth. The goal of qualitative research also differs depending on the presented question. However, the outcome of this type of method usually consists of gaining awareness and a greater understanding of complexities regarding both individual and social structures. Qualitative research can be managed within different subjects of interests. It can range from business and sociology to healthcare and social work.

There are two ways of concluding within research in business. These two forms are induction and deduction. Induction is supposed to explore new information, whereas deduction is based on already known beliefs (Evans and Ove, 2013. p. 267). To further understand these approaches, Robson (2002, cited in Saunders, 2009, p. 125) explain them thoroughly. Deduction is an approach that is based on a hypothesis. This hypothesis is then used to explain the relationship between two or more variables. An essential characteristic of a deductive approach is that the idea needs to be practical — meaning, the facts that are found have to be quantitative.

Further, a deductive approach needs to be general. In order to generalize data, the number of participants needs to be sufficient. Robson (2002, cited in Saunders, 2009, p. 126) continues by explaining that inductive approaches are characterized by understanding a phenomenon. When using an inductive approach, it is common to research a specific context of an event. This indicates that it is appropriate to operate the study with a lesser number of samples than used in a deductive approach.

For this thesis, an inductive approach is used. This is primarily related to the nature of the research question, which aims to explore a phenomenon. The goal is to create a greater understanding of the coping mechanisms displayed by organizational members within service industries who experience workplace friendship deterioration. Thus, the aim is not to research general character, but rather to examine an event within a specific context. Due to this, an inductive approach is most suitable.
4.3 Philosophical perspectives

The philosophical perspectives can impact the research in various ways, depending on what perspective is best suitable for the specific research question. However, it is important to understand that one perspective is not superior to another. They are all context-based and solely dependent on what is wished to be gained from the research. From a practical point of view, it is, however, essential to understanding that a research question will not necessarily fit into any of the philosophies comprehensively (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108-9). In the figure below, the three philosophical perspectives are briefly summarized before a more thorough explanation is presented.

4.3.1 Axiology

This philosophical perspective regards the characteristics of ethical behavior. Axiology in research is the notion of what the researcher considers ethical and valuable (Killam, 2013, p. 6). It is further explained that its values are a part of every individual that in turn creates goals, knowledge, and opinions. These aspects of human beings then rule how one acts in varying situations (Allen and Varga 2007, p. 20). The values of an individual have a great influence on the entire research process, this especially if one desires to research with credibility (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116). An axiological characteristic for researchers is the ability to express one’s values in order to draw a conclusion about the character of the research and how it will be administered. Additionally, values will have a constant effect on the entire research process. This is especially visible in the research topic and the way one collects data. There is a clear reason why one prioritizes a research topic before another. There are also reasons that depict how one collects data, if one does not value interaction with humans, one will probably choose to collect data from surveys rather than interviews. (Heron, 1996, p. 122).

As researchers, we value human interaction and want the opportunity to try to understand social phenomenons. This led us to choose a qualitative approach and our research question. We want to investigate how individuals act when issues occur because we have an interest in human beings and how they act. The thesis will be written as a final examination for the degree Master of Science in Business Administration and Economics with alignment towards Service Management. Both researchers have studied this program from fall 2015 and are expected to graduate in spring 2019, which means that a total of eight semesters have been fulfilled within the frames of this program. This educational
background will, of course, affect how findings are interpreted and which conclusions that are made.

4.3.2 Ontology

From a researcher’s perspective, ontology is based on an assumption about the reality of nature. Ontology answers questions like "what is real?" and "what exists?" (Killam, 2013, p. 7). There are two aspects of ontology, objectivism, and subjectivism. Objectivism regards the belief that social entities such as moral and other aspects exist separately from human beings and their understanding of these social entities. Objectivism can be viewed as a part of management. Although managers operate differently depending on what organization they represent, the managerial process is similar in all settings. The hierarchy is built in a way where subordinates report back to the manager and in turn, the manager report back to their superiors. There is a common understanding of how this process is similar in most organizations; however, it can differ depending on the setting. This proves that objectivity is a social entity that exists and expresses itself in management. (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110).

On the other hand, subjectivism regards the belief that social structures are built on ideas and behaviors that social actors possess. It is further explained that subjectivism is a process based idea, meaning that social interactions are continually changing and therefore, social phenomenons change simultaneously. In order to understand social situations related to reality, it is vital to understand social constructionism. Social constructionism is based on the belief that our reality is established on social codes. For instance, individuals that serve as social actors in a study will have different understandings of a situation that have occurred at the same place for everyone. This since everyone bases their experiences on their reality and knowledge (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 111)

Our study has a subjective approach. This, since our interviewees, have different experiences and, therefore, different perspectives on their social reality. Since the respondents are of different genders, ages, backgrounds, and work in different organizations, they have a different perspective on their situation.

4.3.3 Epistemology

This philosophy investigates how the researcher and their knowledge is related. Further, it examines how a researcher gains knowledge and how objectively knowledge is perceived. Epistemology answers, "how is knowledge acquired?" and "how do we know what we know?" (Killam, 2013, p. 8). Saunders et al., (2009, p. 112-13) explain that epistemology regards the creation of knowledge which is adequate in a study. This can be seen when two researchers have differing views and opinions regarding the research process and how a study should be conducted. One researcher might have a more factual approach and relies on resources, numbers, and verifiable facts. On the other hand, another researcher might value feelings, attitudes, and emotions as a measurement. The first type of researcher embraces a positivist approach, while the latter embraces a interpretivist approach.
A study that has a positivist approach is built on "working with observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalizations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientist" (Remenyi, 1998, p. 32). Another characteristic of a positivist approach is that it is not based on the researcher's values and beliefs. Researchers that embraces this approach views themselves as an external part of the process. This since they believe that their actions cannot change or influence their data (Remenyi, 1998, p. 33). Further, Saunders et al., (2009, p. 114) discuss that although a positivist approach is commonly based on quantitative data, it is not impossible or unusual to use qualitative data collection methods.

An interpretivist approach is based on the notion that humans need to be understood as social actors. The main characteristic is that research is conducted on people rather than computers or other machines. The meaning of social actors in this context is how one interprets different social roles of other people in line with our thoughts and beliefs. The challenge with this approach is for the researcher to enter the participants' world and try to view their experiences through their eyes (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 115.)

Applied to this study, the findings are likely to be affected by the researchers' values, background, and ideas. Therefore, an interpretivist approach is most suitable. Since this study adapts a qualitative research method, it is unlikely that the researchers' previous experiences will not affect the interpretation and conclusion at all. Further, the study investigates human beings and how they act in social settings. Therefore, an interpretivist approach is most suitable.

4.4 Research design and strategies

Depending on how a research question is expressed, it determines the aim of the research. It can result in either an exploratory, a descriptive, or an explanatory method (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 138). An exploratory study aids researchers to understand a phenomenon. It answers what is happening in a particular setting, and researchers gain a new understanding of that specific issue. This way of conducting a study is especially applicable if one has an unclear idea of what causes the problem. The default way of conducting this form of study is researching literature, conducting interviews with experts within the specific field and also conducting interviews with a focus group (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 139-40). The definition of a descriptive study is “to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations” (Robson, 2002, p. 59). Saunders et al., (2009, p. 140) describes the importance of having an understanding of the researched event before collecting data. Saunders et al., (2009, p. 140-41) describe that an explanatory way of conducting research demonstrates a connection between different variables. The purpose of this way of studying a phenomenon is to explain the relationship between variables. One can collect qualitative data in order to explain, how, why, or what causes a problem.

We aim to answer the question and purpose by adopting an exploratory method. Since the goal is to investigate which coping mechanisms that are displayed by the respondents, an exploratory approach provides the greatest possibilities for understanding the issue. Further, qualitative research consists of multiple strategies that can be used when researching a topic. The strategies in qualitative research do not necessarily need to be separated but instead can be combined in one study (Saldaña et al., 2011, p. 4).
4.4.1 Ethnography

Ethnography includes examination and notes that regards social life, this to understand the culture of a group. This method consists of fieldwork that has been examined during a long period. This method was previously applied to studies regarding foreign people and their culture. This method has evolved, become more contemporary, and is multifaceted. It now examines culture in organizations, educational rooms, urban settings, and even in online communities. The definition of culture has been analyzed for many years and has different definitions for different people (Saldaña et al., 2011, p. 5). However, the most common definition of culture is defined as a tool that enables people to accomplish different things. He compares culture to computers, which can be seen as an informative tool where culture can be viewed as the software. Culture builds the structure of the "standard" settings that is a part of the everyday life of an individual (Erickson, 1997, p. 33). Essentially, the goal of ethnography is to study and research the standard circumstances of a community's way of existing (Saldaña et al., 2011, p. 6).

To some extent, an ethnographic approach is adopted. This since the interviews cover topics tied to, for example, the friendship culture at the respondents' workplaces. However, the main focus of the research is not on a particular group of people or a specific workplace. Instead, individuals with ties to different workplaces take part in the data collection. Therefore, an ethnographic approach is partially used, but not as a foundation for the whole study.

4.4.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is an approach that studies the true essence of a phenomenon. The background to this study is hermeneutic analysis. This means that phenomenology heavily depends on explanatory factors in order to interpret and understand the main point of a study. From a contemporary perspective, this method now has its focus on everyday events and the experiences of an individual. These experiences can differ from being minor to life-changing. However, the purpose of this approach is not to explore the specific lives of one group in particular. Rather, the purpose is to combine the mutual experience of that one group. Qualitative research with a phenomenological approach generally wants to gain an intimate and in-depth understanding of how individuals experience a phenomenon (Saldaña et al., 2011, p.8).

This method is partially applicable to the study. We study coping and how that phenomenon is expressed when friendships deteriorate at the workplace. However, the intention is not to have an explanatory approach but rather an exploratory approach.

Other methods that are not incorporated are grounded theory and case study. Grounded theory is based on comparing data and create a ground to then develop a theory (Saldaña et al., 2011, p. 7). The purpose of a case study is to gain a great understanding of a single case ((Saldaña et al., 2011, p.8). Thus, these two methods are not suitable for this study. The purpose is not to compare different data, develop our own category, nor focus on a single case. Therefore, we will not discuss these methods further.
4.5 Qualitative research

Most scientific research aims to answer questions by applying a predefined set of procedures. To collect evidence and understand a topic, produce findings that are unpredicted as applicable beyond the specific study are some of the main goals for scientific research. These characteristics are, therefore, also true for qualitative research, which is a method found to be extra useful when striving to attain knowledge about social contexts, values, and opinions. (Mack, N., et al., 2005, p. 1)

Workplace friendship deterioration is a field highly connected to social contexts, values, behaviors, and opinions. Thus, the study is positioned within the frames of a qualitative research study. To find an answer to the research question (“which coping mechanisms are displayed by organizational members in service industries when workplace friendships deteriorate?”), a qualitative research method provides the greatest opportunities for examination.

4.5.1 Interviews as data collection method

Within qualitative research, one of the empirical methods which can be used is interviews. These consists of information given from the interviewee to the researcher, concerning the issues the research focus on. In this case, it is not the interview process itself, which is investigated, but rather the issues and topics discussed during the interview (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 529).

When deciding on a qualitative research method, interviews are a common choice for researcher wanting to collect data on specific individuals. This data could contain personal histories, perspectives, and experiences. Interviews as a data collection method should especially be considered when sensitive topics are investigated (Mack, N., et al., 2005, p. 2). This study explores the respondents coping mechanisms associated with workplace friendship deterioration, which could be viewed as a sensitive topic due to its character.

Moreover, qualitative methods are also characterized by the usage of open-ended questions. Interviews offer the opportunity for the participants to answer with their own words, rather than making them choose from a set of fixed responses. This gives participants a better possibility to provide answers that are meaningful, unexpected by the researcher as well as rich and explanatory (Mack, N., et al., 2005, p. 4). Due to this, a qualitative method with interviews as a tool for data collection is a suitable choice for this study.

Even though interviews can be adjusted along the way, depending on the respondents' answers and reactions, it is common practice to follow a general script and cover a list of preset topics (Bernard, 2011, p. 156). We chose to use a general script; our approach to this will be elaborated upon in section 4.5.

4.6 Data collection

As previously mentioned, this thesis is carried out with a qualitative research method based on an inductive approach. The thesis adapts to an exploratory method, which is the
most suitable method to reach a greater understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Furthermore, the philosophical perspective decided upon is an interpretivist approach, partially ethnographic elements, and a subjective approach, due to the nature of the research question and purpose of the study. The data is collected through semi-structured interviews.

![Figure 9. Method overview.](image)

4.6.1 Interview selection criteria and participants

To answer the research question, "Which coping mechanisms are displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships are deteriorated?" respondents with a specific profile were reached. The criteria for participation was formed with a point of departure in the problem background and research question. With this basis, it was decided to reach out to people with professional experience of being organizational members within workplaces which operate in the service sector, which is defined by NACE level 1 (Eurostat, 2008). Since NACE level 1 is a broad categorization which includes a variety of different companies and organizations, it was of interest to interview respondents with experience from different kinds of organizations within the service sector. Therefore, all respondents came from different organizations and had different roles and tasks.

Another criterion for the selection of respondents was that their current workplace should have more than two employees, this since workplace friendship deterioration is the central theme of the interviews. To leave out small workplaces with few employees could eliminate nuances of our findings, but at least three people are needed at a workplace to build the kind of relationships which this study investigates.

The selection method used to find participants contain elements from several different sampling methods. Since all participants are selected thanks to the fact that they met specific criterion, purposive sampling aligns with the used approach. This method means to hand-pick participants who are suitable for the study due to their experience and knowledge regarding the topic (Denscombe, 2010, 35). Further, we asked respondents at the end of their interviews if they had recommendations of others with experiences of workplace friendship deterioration to share. This resulted in recommendations, which eventually led to interviews. Thus, a snowball sample was used to some extent. This kind of sampling takes place when respondents refer researchers to other potential interviewees (Denscombe, 2010, 37). Since all respondents were located in Umeå, elements of convenience sampling were present. To sample by convenience means to adjust the criterion for possible respondents according to the restraints of resources such as time or money (Denscombe, 2010, 38).
The ways the respondents were reached varied. In total, nine interviews were held. When handling the material derived from the interviews, confidentiality, and anonymity for the respondents is essential. To make the handling of confidential material easier, the respondents have not only been given fictitious names but also been divided numerically. The numbers are not given in the order the interviews were conducted, but rather randomly. The specific market the respondents' organization are working in will not be revealed, but rather the NACE category which the organization falls under. The same is true for the respondents' roles since, which are not named according to the respondents' organizations categorization of the employees' roles. Instead, the roles are given synonymous names which capture the essence of each respondent's current role.

*Table 5. Respondent information.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Interview location</th>
<th>Found via</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Emil</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Communicator</td>
<td>Respondents home</td>
<td>Professional contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Sanna</td>
<td>Human Health and Social Work Activities</td>
<td>Care provider</td>
<td>Respondents home</td>
<td>Personal contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Adam</td>
<td>Financial and Insurance Activities</td>
<td>Financial officer</td>
<td>Respondents office</td>
<td>Personal contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Andreas</td>
<td>Other Service Activities</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Respondents office</td>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 Karin</td>
<td>Administrative and Support Service Activities</td>
<td>Business developer</td>
<td>Respondents office</td>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 Niklas</td>
<td>Administrative and Support Service Activities</td>
<td>Business coach</td>
<td>Respondents office</td>
<td>Professional contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Alfred</td>
<td>Information and Communication</td>
<td>Sales manager</td>
<td>Respondents office</td>
<td>Found via website, contacted via email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.2 Description of interview approach

Semi-structured interviews were used as the main data source for this thesis. This method allowed us to capture the thoughts, experiences, and perspectives of the respondents. The approach also encouraged interviewees to speak widely regarding issues of interest and develop their thoughts and ideas (Denscombe, 2010, 175). The usage of a semi-structured interview design was also of preference since it let the interview questions and topic of discussion change and alter depending on the information that surfaced during the session (Denscombe, 2007, p. 176). It is appropriate to use a semi-structured interview approach when the research topic is exploratory by nature, and the research question aims to investigate a phenomenon. Due to this, the usage of semi-structured interviews was a suitable choice for this study.

The aim was to conduct as many interviews as needed to fulfill research saturation, which means that no new information is added from additional interviews. However, this thesis is written with time restraints, which did not wholly allow for this. Therefore, data is collected from nine interview sessions. Even though full research saturation was not reached, it allowed for an adequate coverage of the subject. All interviews were held in Swedish since both researchers and respondents are fluent in Swedish. Not all respondents are fluent in English, due to this, all interviews were held in Swedish to ensure consistency.

The interviews very carefully planned both regarding questions, setting, selection of interviewee, and so forth. An interview guide was developed with a basis in previous research within the field as well as the research question, which is crucial when conducting interview-based data collection (Denscombe, 2007, p. 188). The consistency of the interviews and coverage of essential topics were ensured by the interview guide (Bernard, 2011, p. 156). The guide consists of information about the goal with the interviews, a checklist before starting an interview (Appendix 1a-1b) and four divisions of interview questions (Appendix 2a-2b) covering the most important topics which needed to be discussed to answer the research question.

Moreover, the guide also contains guidelines for warm-up questions, appropriate break time, and suggestions for finishing questions. Both the interview questions and the checklist have been executed in English (Appendix 2a and Appendix 1a) and Swedish (Appendix 2b and Appendix 1b). This to make sure that the interview process remains transparent for anyone to access the study, regardless of skill level in Swedish respectively English. To have the interview guide and checklist in both Swedish and English also made sure that interviews progressed without pauses for translation of
questions or the checklist. The aim of the checklist (Appendix 1a-1b) and interview questions (Appendix 2a-2b) is to allow satisfactory data collection. This regards both researchers, participants, and the ability to answer the research question. The checklist and the interview questions in its English and Swedish versions together form the complete interview guide.

To ease the mind of respondents and provide a nice and open atmosphere, cookies and coffee were brought to each interview. Every interview session started with a briefing of the thesis subject, the interviewees' rights, what it implicates to participate in the study, and how different key terms are defined. After the briefing, the same information was provided in writing, and the participant signed a written agreement of informed participation (Appendix 3a-3b). The agreement of informed participation was written in both English (Appendix 3a) and Swedish (Appendix 3b) to ensure transparency of the content. One of the topics covered during the briefing was the usage of fictitious names and the confidentiality of shared information.

The next step was to switch on the sound recording equipment and start the recording. In most interviews, the cookies and the briefing session had allowed for enough small talk to make the participant feel ready for the interview. However, some short warm-up question was prepared in the interview guide if the situation would call for it. These were rarely used, and during most of the interviews, it was possible to start with the four sections immediately. The interviews lasted approximately one hour each.

![Diagram of interview material]

*Figure 10. Overview interview material.*
4.6.3 Main categories
For the data collection of this thesis, it was decided to use four primary categories, namely, background, friendship characteristics, causes for workplace friendship deterioration, and coping mechanisms. These categories have been chosen on the criteria that they reflect the theoretical framework and the research question. Below, the categories are visualized in a figure. After the figure, more in-depth explanations of the categories, their content, and relevance for the research question follow.

1. Background
It is of importance to cover the background of the interviewees to interpret their statements in the right context. This made it easier to analyze findings in relation to each other. Covered background factors are, for example, age, education, home town, and how the interviewee ended up in their current job position.

2. Friendship characteristics
As stated in the introduction, workplace friendships are built on different foundations and expressed in various ways (Berman et al., 2002, p. 228). They often differ in intensity and take place in different physical locations, and sometimes, friendships are limited to certain activities (Adams and Allan, 1998, p. 123). Thus, it is crucial to understand how friendships typically are carried out and expressed at the specific workplace.

3. Causes for workplace friendship deterioration
Even though there is a research gap regarding workplace friendship deterioration (Berman et al., 2002, p. 227), studies have been carried out within the field. The dark sides of workplace friendship revolve around, amongst other factors, contradicting goals (Ingram and Zou, 2008 p. 172) and distraction from role-specific tasks (Sanchez-Burke, 2002, p. 920). Other factors contributing to workplace friendship deterioration can be a problem personality, distracting life events, conflicting expectations, and promotion or betrayal (Sias et al., 2011, p. 326).
In summary, there are many possible reasons for workplace friendships to deteriorate. Therefore, it is needed to examine causes for the interviewees deteriorated workplace friendships. Have the respondent experienced workplace friendship deterioration, and if so, do the incidents fit the previously defined categories? Are there other reasons or explanations to be found?

4. Coping mechanisms
To answer the research question, we looked into the coping mechanisms which were displayed in connection to workplace friendship deterioration. Research has shown that coping is a process-based phenomenon which can be expressed in different ways from situation to situation by the same individual (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, p. 141). It is mapped how the interviewee dealt with daily tasks, operational work, colleague interaction, and information about incidents tied to the deterioration.

In summary, this division of the interview guide ensured a stable foundation for the interviews. The sections made sure that all relevant topics were covered and that the most important thoughts and experiences were captured. At the same time, the broad sections with more specific questions tied to each category allowed more attention to be paid to the information which surfaced in the individual interviews. The respondents' experiences all differed in some way, which made it crucial to be able to adapt to the individual interview session.

4.6.4 Interview settings
The setting of the interviews varied. Seven of the interviews were conducted at the respondents' office, but two of the respondents invited us into their homes. The shortest interview amounted a total of twenty-one minutes in recorded material, compared to the most extended interview, which resulted in one hour and eighteen minutes on tape. These are the two outliers; the rest of the interviews were held within a timespan of thirty-nine minutes to one hour and three minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and number</th>
<th>Interview length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Emil</td>
<td>One hour and eighteen minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Sanna</td>
<td>Thirty-nine minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Adam</td>
<td>Twenty-one minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Andreas</td>
<td>Fifty-seven minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 Karin</td>
<td>Forty-six minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 Niklas</td>
<td>Forty minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Alfred</td>
<td>One hour and three minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 Erika</td>
<td>Forty-eight minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 Veera</td>
<td>Fifty-two minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were both positive and negative aspects tied to using the respondents' offices as a location for the majority of interviews. Our perception is that it allowed the respondents to relax and feel comfortable with the interview situation. It is possible that the location affected the respondents' answers since colleagues could be in the adjacent room, the workplace could be the scenery for situations discussed during the interviews, and so forth.

Before the first interview, it was decided to conduct all interviews face to face. This to capture valuable information provided by through body language, facial expressions, and tonality. Therefore, all nine interviews were conducted face to face, and with both researchers presents on all occasions.

### 4.7 Data analysis

#### 4.7.1 Transcription

Once the process of documenting the interviews had begun, we proceeded with the transcription. The interviews and the transcription of them was an interconnected process, meaning that after each completed interview, a transcription was executed. This to retain the information which was received by the interviewees and establish an efficient process. The transcriptions were based on the recordings from the interviews and written in a textual manner (Appendix 4) to represent the interviewees' thoughts, experiences, and words appropriately. Transcribing the interviews in a textual way facilitated the forthcoming coding process since it made it more apparent how the different variables should be categorized.

All interviews were held in Swedish. Therefore, the transcripts are also in Swedish. For chapter 5.0 Findings, 6.0 Analysis and discussion, and 7.0 Conclusion, extracts of the transcripts will be translated into English.

#### 4.7.2 Coding

How qualitative data are coded, tend to impact the overall quality of the study (Strauss, 1987, p. 27). Still, there are many different approaches which can be used when coding qualitative data (Saldaña, 2015, p. 2). Coding of qualitative research material could be described as capturing the broader context of a contribution. For example, this could be done by dividing the transcript of an interview into different parts dependent on the topic.
These parts are then given a label depending on which subject they concern. This way of coding is called “Descriptive Code” by Saldaña (2015, p. 3) and aims to summarize the primary topic of the extract. A coding system developed by Strauss (1987, p. 27-33) is applied similarly. There, the information is grouped into categories, which can be presented in a table to get a comprehensive overview. The categories should reflect the research purpose of the thesis. Since many researchers have worked on refining existing coding systems, it is decided to instead use the existing methods rather than to create new ones solely for this thesis (Bernard, 2011, p. 312).

To maintain consistency, the categories within the coding system were explored and designed before the data collection. However, the coding scheme was altered and affected by the findings as the study proceeded (Saldaña, 2015, p. 8). Also, the names of the categories were in the beginning, not of central importance, since it is likely that they will be revised during the progress (Strauss, 1987, p. 30). Therefore, the divisions stated below were subject for change and development during the research process.

When the interview guide was created, and the interviews took off, four main categories with interview questions were developed. See the table below.

*Table 7. Categories for creating the interview guide.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories for creating the interview guide</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Friendship characteristics</th>
<th>Causes for workplace friendship deterioration</th>
<th>Coping mechanisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The categories in Table 7 are not the same categories which were used for the coding. They were used as a foundation for the coding categories since the collected data is derived from the original categories used in the interview guide. However, when the transcriptions were finalized, and the coding process started, new categories emerged since they better reflected the content of the transcripts. The final categories which were used during the coding are background, interaction and activities, deterioration experiences, and coping mechanisms. These four categories also contain subcategories, which will be presented and explained after the figure. The figure below summarizes and compare the categories used for creating the interview guide versus coding the interview transcripts.

*Table 8. Comparison of categories for creating the interview guide and categories for coding the interview transcripts.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories for creating the interview guide</th>
<th>Categories for coding the interview transcripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship characteristics</td>
<td>Interaction and activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34
The coding of all material was handled in software called Nvivo (Appendix 5). This software was a facilitative factor when coding and categorizing the transcribed material. It was decided to conduct parts of the coding separately to get a personal understanding and perspective of the interviews. We coded two interviews each and defined categories based on our thoughts and understanding of the transcriptions. This allowed us to analyze the material.

Once the separate coding was completed, we revised all the initial coding categories (Appendix 6a-6b) to decide which ones were of use and which ones were not. The following steps consisted of printing all of our separate categories and later assemble them and merge our categories into mutual headlines and subcategories (Appendix 7). In the figure below, the coding process is summarized into three steps.

In the table below, the final categories we adapted are presented. We based our coding categories on four headlines and then added subcategories that were found suitable for each category. The categories are based on a chronological timeline. First, their background and personality traits were examined to understand them as humans. Then, their social habits, if they have any relationships at their workplace and how they interact with their colleagues, were investigated. Based on the interviewee's responses, their deterioration experiences were examined. Once the investigation on their experiences of friendship deterioration at the workplace was completed, their coping mechanisms regarding the subject were examined.
Table 9. Coding categories.

1. Background  
   - Professional information and background  
     - Workplace  
     - Current role  

2. Interaction and activities  
   - Activities  
   - Interaction and collaboration  
   - Friendship culture  

3. Deterioration experiences  
   - Causes  
   - Professional impact  
   - Personal impact  
   - In retrospect  
   - Managers  

4. Coping mechanisms  

With the topic of this study in mind, some of the categories are intuitively understood, whereas others might be ambiguous to the reader. The category in retrospect reflects the interviewees' thoughts on how a previous situation would have been handled if it had occurred today. The category managers regard the interviewees' experiences on how managers acted in a specific situation. Other parties and colleagues refer to how colleagues and other parties handled a situation at the workplace. Lastly, the category aftermath focuses on what happened after the deterioration process.

4.8 Research ethics

When researching and collecting qualitative data, an ethical approach is important. All categories mentioned in the previous section contain questions which cover sensitive information, which makes ethical considerations crucial. This, since the central ethical dilemma, is the risk of exposing someone's identity when interviewing or collecting data in another way. Data that stands on its own is usually regarded as harmless, however, when one combines different data sets it has a more substantial risk of invading the participants' privacy (Mauthner, 2018, p. 5). Metcalf and Crawford (2016, p. 2) also note that although there is a consensual agreement between the parties, it is not guaranteed that no personal information will be compromised.

In the era of Big Data, the concept of ethical research is being questioned (Boyd and Crawford, 2012, p. 662). The ethical perspective has progressed from concerning more tangible aspects, such as physical pain to being more intangible and now instead regards the invasion of privacy. An altered perspective on ethical research makes data extremely connectable, reusable, and available. This enables the data to be applied to different contexts which might not be connected to the original study. Therefore, it is important to
understand that data is neither temporary or context based when conducting interviews (Metcalf and Crawford, 2016, p. 2).

It is vital to comprehend that the risk of invasion of privacy does not depend on what the data contains and how it is contained. Rather, it is of importance to understand how data is utilized and to who it is distributed (Metcalf and Crawford, 2016, p. 10-11)

In this study, the participants are anonymous when their data is presented and evaluated. Before participating in interviews, they were made aware of the nature of the study and that the final thesis will be uploaded on the portal DiVA. To ensure the participants' anonymity, we use coding of names and other information which disclose the interviewees' identity. Before the interviews, the respondents were informed of their right to discontinue the session at any time. It was also explained that the interviewee is free to choose which information she or he is willing to share during the session (Appendix 3a-3b).

Now, a concise summary of the research methodology will follow. This qualitative study was conducted with an inductive approach, which means that it aims to explore new information. The empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the philosophical perspective decided upon is an interpretivist approach, partially ethnographic elements, and a subjective approach. Since the aim is to investigate which coping mechanisms that are displayed by the respondents, an exploratory approach will provide the most considerable understanding of the issue.

Nine interviews were held, with a checklist, interview guide, and letter of informed consent as a foundation. The questions were created with the criteria that they should reflect the theoretical framework as well as the research question. The criteria for respondent participation was also created with a point of departure in the problem background and research question. All respondents, therefore, have professional experience of being organizational members within workplaces which operate in the service sector and have more than two employees. Most interviews were held at the respondents' offices, and the length of the recordings varied from twenty-one minutes to one hour and eighteen minutes. Then, the interviews were first transcribed and then coded within the software Nvivo. Due to ethical considerations, respondents will be anonymous when their data is presented and evaluated in the thesis. In the next chapter, the empirical findings will be presented.
5.0 Findings

In this chapter, the findings gathered in our empirical research will be presented. The data derived from the nine interviews will be introduced in four different sections, which are divided according to our coding categories. The main sections are presented in the figure below. In the upcoming sections, the findings tied to each separate section will be presented. Due to a wish to maintain the possibility to follow a chronological order, the sections “Aftermath” and “In retrospect,” which in the coding system were connected to the main section “Deterioration experiences”, will be presented lastly. This decision has been made to increase the readability for the reader.

Figure 13. Main sections.

5.1 Background

Below, the interviewees' backgrounds, personal information, and personal attributes are presented. This to create an understanding of the people involved in deteriorated friendships and how they cope in different situations. The data in this section derives from questions regarding the respondents' perception of themselves, their academic background, and previous work experience. The questions also focused on their current workplace as a whole. Also, we discussed their current roles and what they perceived as particularly positive or negative.

5.1.1 Personal background and information

The respondents are all between twenty-two to fifty years old. All interviewees live in Umeå, and except one who is from the northern parts of Sweden, all originally come from the south of Sweden. The ones who moved to Umeå did so for either academic or work-related reasons.

The interviewees describe themselves as driven, naive, open, social, considerate, curious, and being able to handle stress. These attributes are sometimes reflected in how they have acted in certain situations. For example, Andreas (CEO), describes himself as driven and explains that when he moved to Umeå, he did not have any connections, so he decided to start his own network. Additionally, he attended every network meeting in Umeå to increase his connections and learn from other experiences. Andreas (CEO) also thinks...
that he has a great social ability and a sense of openness, and thus, has the ability to meet and network with many strangers. Veera (CEO) describes herself as naive since she never realizes the real challenges of a task. This leads her to engage in tasks that have significant difficulties. However, she always completes the tasks since also is very driven. Other respondents who describe themselves as driven and curious explain that they like to try new things and work with different projects simultaneously. A few of the interviewees have worked on several jobs at the same time as they were studying at a high level. Niklas (Business coach) who consider himself as driven works full time at a company at the same time as he has a side-business.

Other common variables among the interviewees were to have an interest in sports and like to meet new people. A majority also enjoy trying new things and gaining new work-related experiences.

5.1.2 Professional background and information

Four out of nine respondents have a degree within Business Administration and Economics from Umeå School of Business, Economics, and Statistics. Other degrees that the interviewees hold is within nursing, airline business, IT management, and engineering. Out of nine respondents, one decided to take a gap year from his studies when he was offered employment. This goes in line with how he enjoys trying new things and gain new experiences within his working life. Two interviewees do not hold a University degree. However, both of them have studied the Social Science program in upper secondary school.

The interviewees possess diverse experiences in work life. Examples are bartending, researching at a University, working as Au Pairs, and within engineering. Some also have experience in personal assistance and within cruising. Further, among their previous employment, we find roles within retail, innovation, consulting, and entrepreneurship. A common denominator for the respondents is that they all share a willingness to experience new challenges and build relationships with people they meet at their workplaces.

5.1.3 Workplace

All respondents are currently employed at organizations which operate within service sectors, with the number of employees ranging from three to two thousand. The workplaces have many differences and varies from care homes to IT-management. All of them have physical offices located in Umeå.

Many respondents view the size of their organizations as both a positive and negative aspect. The biggest disadvantage, according to Emil (Communicator), is their big size. He experiences that communication tends to be unclear. For example, if many departments are involved in the same task, it is difficult to know who is supposed to solve the problem. However, he also mentions that their size makes it possible to have a variety of competencies within the same organization, which allows tasks regarding, for example, marketing to be completed in-house. Andreas (CEO) works within a small organization and mention its small size as a disadvantage since there are economic risks associated with being a small company. Overall, one of the main advantages described by respondents at smaller workplaces is that they have an opportunity to shape the
organization the way they desire. The main disadvantage is, however, also their small size, since everyone needs to take much responsibility, which can lead to a heavy workload. This is sometimes hard to balance with their wellbeing.

Overall human communication and varying tasks are also highlighted as a positive aspect of work. The exercise of public authority is viewed as a disadvantage since there are certain rules and regulations which organizations who exercise this have to relate to. Thus, change and revising can be a long process.

Diversity among employees is a valued trait, and the respondents experience that it gives them greater ability to solve problems at the workplace. Andreas (CEO) tells us that employees at his workplace are multidisciplinary in the sense that they all have different backgrounds. He explains that their diversity enables them to solve complex issues. This since they have the ability to view a problem from different perspectives and thus solve it accordingly. The team and colleagues at the workplace seem to be of high importance since many respondents appear to be happy and excited when they describe positive aspects of interacting with people they enjoy working with.

5.1.4 Current role

All respondents provide services to individuals, groups, or organizations. A common theme for the CEO’s is that they have a wide variety of tasks and fill many functions within the organization. For the respondents with roles within the innovation system, a crucial part of their job is to guide entrepreneurs and companies through processes and help them to identify and solve challenges. For the ones with roles within sales and marketing, communication, and relationship maintenance with partners and clients are important tasks. Sanna (Care provider) works at a care home and spend a great deal of her time at work by helping inhabitants at the care home with their daily lives and activities.

There is a spread of roles as well as workplaces among the interviewees. In the forthcoming sections, additional information regarding the interviewees’ workplaces and their relationships will be presented.

5.2 Interaction and activities

Interaction and activities are the second main category in our coding scheme. The category contains the subsections friendship culture, interaction and collaboration, and activities. The aim with this coding class is to cover how respondents interact with their colleagues, how common friendships are at the workplace, if the organizational members have any specific jargon among each other, which activities they participate in together, where these activities take place, and so forth. Examples of questions from this category are “how common is it that the colleagues at your workplace are friends?”, “how do your colleagues interact and talk to each other at the workplace?”, and “which activities have you participated in together with your colleagues?”

5.2.1 Friendship culture

A recurring theme is that the respondents have a more relaxed jargon with colleagues who are approximately the same age and at the same hierarchy level as themselves. However,
respondents who mention having a very relaxed jargon with some co-workers also say that they have a more professional and shallow relationship with other colleagues. With these colleagues, the conversational focus tends to be on topics tied to their professional roles and the workplace rather than matters of a private character.

There are a few respondents who say that it is common for the colleagues at their workplace to engage in activities together outside the workplace. In contrast, none says that they never attend activities with their colleagues outside the workplace. Most interviews reveal that engaging in activities with colleagues outside the workplace is not occurring very often. The relationships tend to take place within the work sphere, often in the form of lunches or coffee breaks together with their colleagues. Most view it as easy to find topics of conversation with their colleagues, varying from professional to private.

Many emphasize the importance of maintaining the relationships and making sure that everyone feels seen and heard at the workplace. Erika (Coordinator) and her colleagues try to visit each other's offices now and then to chit-chat and discuss different topics, both professional and private. However, she does not spend much time with her colleagues outside the workplace, except occasional after works. This appears to be the most common approach to friendships at the workplace among our respondents. They often talk and enjoy each other’s company, but the relationship is often bound to the workplace and occasional after works or other activities arranged by the organization.

In one interview, it is mentioned by Sanna (Care provider) that the friendship culture at her workplace has changed. Previously, many of her colleagues had private relationships with each other outside the workplace, but when many people quit, and new ones were hired, this changed. Nowadays, most relationships take place exclusively in the workplace. The same respondent has also witnessed many of her co-workers talking behind each other's backs, and she states that gossip and malicious comments are common.

The geographical location of one's home and its distance to the workplace seem to affect the relationships with co-workers. A workplace which is located far away from one's home might be an explanation of why relationships with co-workers mainly are carried out at the workplace.

In summary, the friendship culture at the respondents' workplaces varies. However, a common denominator seems to be the willingness to maintain a friendly relationship while at the workplace. Even though some respondents are very close to their colleagues, most engagements take place within the work sphere.

**5.2.2 Interaction and collaboration**

The respondents who are CEO’s are eager to establish a culture of co-creation and collaboration. At the workplace, they actively talk about how everything is going, how their employees are feeling, and what could be improved at recurring meetings.

Most respondents have much interaction with their colleagues. Many have workplaces with many different personalities and roles, which makes collaboration and
communication needed to move forward and reach final solutions. At all workplaces, a mixture of less formal meetings and more formal ones is described to be an essential factor in maintaining a satisfying collaboration with co-workers.

Multiple interviewees describe the importance of making sure that everyone at the workplace understands what is going on and is on the same page before making a decision. A common view is that everyone at the workplace has different competencies, so when something is up for discussion, it is a benefit to view it from different perspectives. Therefore, it is vital that everyone feel comfortable enough to share their opinion and communicate their thoughts.

“I try to work a lot with my colleagues, and listen and share and so forth, but of course it takes time, so it is important to have a functional process and structures, you need to give it time to have meetings and so on, and then you need to weigh the pro’s and con’s of being in meetings all the time or to be out and deliver to customers.” (Karin 05, Business developer)

To have an open workplace is viewed as important and desirable, it is also believed to be an essential factor in getting organizational members to dare to ask questions and talk about challenges.

“When you are furnishing a room at IKEA, you might get a letter from the headquarter in which a board of directors tells you how everything should look like. But we live in Umeå, and maybe that is not the way it works up here. So it is good to have some diversity in the room. There can be harsh words sometimes, but afterward, we eat cookies, go out and grab a beer and feel good about each other again.” (Alfred, 07, Sales manager)

5.2.3 Activities

In a table below, the activities mentioned by respondents in the interviews are presented and divided into eight main categories.

Table 10. Final categories, activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final activity category</th>
<th>Illustrated by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eating and drinking (20 mentions)</td>
<td>Dinner (6 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch (2 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barbeque (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coffee and tea breaks (4 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After work (4 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drinking beer (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network days (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gratitude days (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Competing (10 mentions) | Competitions (1 mention)  
| | Pentathlon (1 mention)  
| | Basket (1 mention)  
| | Wheelchair floorball (1 mention)  
| | Soccer (2 mentions)  
| | Floorball team (1 mention)  
| | Running races (3 mentions)  
| Collaborating processes (9 mentions) | Workplace meetings (5 mentions)  
| | Group work (1 mention)  
| | Lectures (1 mention)  
| | Planning days (1 mention)  
| | Workshops (1 mention)  
| Entertainment (6 mentions) | Cinema (1 mention)  
| | Bowling (2 mentions)  
| | TV games (1 mention)  
| | FIFA (1 mention)  
| | Board game nights (1 mention)  
| Physical and mental wellbeing (4 mentions) | Meditation (1 mention)  
| | Sport (1 mention)  
| | Healthcare investments with PT training sessions (1 mention)  
| | Gym (1 mention)  
| Traveling (3 mentions) | Traveling (1 mention)  
| | Inspiration travel for work (festivals, skiing) (1 mention)  
| | Conferences (1 mention)  
| Parties (3 mentions) | Staff parties (2 mentions)  
| | Christmas night (1 mention)  
| Personal celebrations (3 mentions) | Baptisms (1 mention)  
| | Birthday celebrations (2 mentions)  

To summarize, there are some recurring themes of the activities the respondents participate in together with their colleagues. For example, eating and drinking together is by far the most common activity. Within that category, we find having coffee breaks, attend after works, have dinner together, eat lunch, and so forth. Many of the respondents also participate in activities which revolve around different forms of competing, for example being part of a sports team or running races with colleagues. Collaborative processes in the form of meetings are prevalent for most of our respondents. It is rather common for workplaces to arrange activities that revolve around physical and mental well-being or entertainment.
Some of the more unusual, but still occurring, activities that respondents participate in together with colleagues are personal celebrations such as attending baptisms or birthday parties. To travel and party together is also among the three least common activities, but a few of the interviewees mention it as occurring at their workplaces.

5.3 Deterioration experiences

This category of questions aimed to capture the respondents’ own experiences of workplace friendship deterioration. Subdivisions are causes, professional impact, personal impact, Managers, and Other parties and colleagues. With questions such as “What is your experience of workplace friendship deterioration?”, “How did the deterioration process look like?”, and “What were the main causes for the deterioration?” we worked towards an understanding of the respondents’ own previous experiences.

5.3.1 Causes

When respondents shared their deterioration experiences, we tried to capture the essence of the deterioration by mapping causes, which led to the deterioration. Even though the processes at first appeared to be vastly different, patterns of similarity emerged when more data were added. In the table below, deterioration causes mentioned by the respondents are lined up and divided into main categories. Worth noting is that some deterioration causes have been experienced by the respondents themselves, whereas others are derived from the respondents’ experiences of co-workers’ friendships with each other.

The deterioration causes were first divided by respondent (Appendix 10), then by cause (Appendix 9), and lastly, in main categories presented in the table below.

*Table 11. Deterioration causes, final categories.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deterioration causes</th>
<th>Illustrated by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toxic behaviour (14 mentions)</td>
<td>Gossip and colleagues talking behind each other’s backs (3 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lies regarding co-worker behaviour (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manipulation (2 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hypocrisy (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malicious comments (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One people influencing others (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of self-awareness (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Territorial guarding (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guarding information (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power greediness (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dividing into groups (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Communication issues (10 mentions) | Bad communication (5 mentions)  
|                                      | Missing information (2 mentions)  
|                                      | Different perceptions on workplace rules (2 mentions)  
|                                      | Different geographical locations (1 mention)  |
| Different perceptions on tasks and responsibility (10 mentions) | Different perceptions on which tasks and areas each person is responsible for (2 mention)  
|                                      | Different perceptions on how tasks should be carried out (2 mentions)  
|                                      | Co-workers who do not finish tasks (4 mentions)  
|                                      | Different perceptions on how tasks should be prioritized (2 mentions)  |
| Close relationships (8 mentions)    | Love drama (2 mentions)  
|                                      | Old relationships (ex-partner) (1 mention)  
|                                      | Difficulties to separate a personal and professional relationship (1 mention)  
|                                      | Relatives (2 mentions)  
|                                      | Careful because of a friendship (1 mention)  
|                                      | Conflict avoidance (1 mention)  |
| Polarization (8 mentions)           | Different perceptions (2 mentions)  
|                                      | Different mindset (1 mention)  
|                                      | Different opinions (1 mention)  
|                                      | Different language (1 mention)  
|                                      | Different personalities (2 mentions)  
|                                      | Different culture (1 mention)  |
| Injustice (8 mentions)              | Unfair division of labour (2 mention)  
|                                      | Treating colleagues differently (1 mention)  
|                                      | Reward co-workers differently (1 mention)  
|                                      | Different salaries (2 mention)  
|                                      | Unfairness (1 mention)  
|                                      | Ones work goes to waste (1 mention)  |
| Organizational issues (7 mentions) | Uneven power balance (1 mention)  
Not able to attend discussion due to workplace hierarchy (1 mention)  
Hierarchy (1 mention)  
New colleagues in a set work group (1 mention)  
Having to satisfy different stakeholders (1 mention)  
Bad culture fit (1 mention)  
Rotating hierarchies (1 mention) |
| Management issues (6 mentions) | Difficulty to make decisions (2 mentions)  
Bad leadership (1 mention)  
Unclear decisions (1 mention)  
Lack of structure (1 mention)  
Different perceptions on leadership (1 mention) |
| Differing moral and values (4 mentions) | Different perceptions on workplace values (2 mentions)  
Different perceptions on moral values (1 mention)  
Different political opinions (1 mention) |
| Competition (4 mentions) | Applying for the same position as a colleague (1 mention)  
Promotion (2 mentions)  
Jealousy (1 mention) |
| Differing ambition and goals (3 mentions) | Different level of ambition (2 mentions)  
Different expectations (1 mention) |
| Distractions (2 mentions) | Distracting life events (1 mention)  
Bad times for the organization (1 mention) |

A common theme that immediately appears when analyzing the table above is that differences often play a big part in workplace friendship deterioration. Whether it is about different perceptions of how tasks should be carried out or different level of ambition, these different views or perceptions seem to be a part of many deterioration processes.

**Toxic behaviour**

There are many kinds of toxic behavior which can set off a deterioration process. A few examples are territorial guarding, manipulation, power greediness, gossip, and colleagues talking behind each other's backs.
“Well, it can be situations where people feel like they have a territory where they want to keep the control to themselves, or do not want to let go of information, they might think that they own the question and that no one else should work with that question, or it can be because of power, information is power. If you then do not have common ground values at the workplace, which decides on how to view these situations, if that is not clearly outspoken then everyone can interpret the situation themselves and then we will have conflicts.”
(Karin 05, Business developer)

Communication issues
The root of the deteriorating situations was, in many cases, bad communication, lack of communication, or missing information. These factors have also been present in Erika 08’s work life. She explains the reasons for a deterioration process she was involved in;

“I would say that it depended on different views on how to lead and manage a group, and how to communicate. Mistakes in communication and different opinions which led to irritation. Nothing private, but mainly things that happened at the workplace.” (Erika 08, Coordinator)

Another similar example is brought up by Adam (Financial officer), who explains that missing information and lack of communication led to a deterioration friendship between his two colleagues. They are working with teenagers, and when the colleagues were asked a question by one of the teenagers, they gave different answers.

“One of the teenagers wanted to play videogames, and my colleague did not know that he is not allowed to play videogames, the other colleague knew. So, one said yes and the other said no, which made the teenager irritated. This led to a conflict between the colleagues, which started a fight in front of the teenagers. That is not good, and after that it has been kinda awkward between these colleagues. Still is.” (Adam 03, Financial officer)

Faulty communication and missing information are frequently occurring at many workplaces and one of the most common reasons for deteriorating relationships. Faulty communication can arise due to factors which might be hard to control, for example, different geographical locations within a team.

Different perceptions on tasks and responsibility
Different perceptions on which tasks and areas each person is responsible for are likely to direct workplace friendships into deterioration. When colleagues disagree on who should do what and who have a responsibility regarding specific areas, irritation might arise.

“I felt like I needed to work more weekends than him (former colleague and friend, then manager). That was a huge problem then, but earlier (when the friendship was good) a maybe would not had cared that much. And stuff like that. He was not a good leader, he did not know how to handle his professional versus friendship relationship with me maybe he felt. I am not sure, we have not talked about it. Maybe he felt like he gave me more responsibility and room to grow, but for me it just felt like he made me take over his dirty tasks.” (Emil 01, Communicator)
Different perceptions of tasks and responsibility can consist of differing views on how tasks should be carried out, who should carry out the task, and how one should prioritize tasks. Co-workers who do not finish tasks is an occurrence which tends to affect workplace friendships negatively.

**Close relationships**
Sometimes, working together with relatives and friends can be challenging. Andreas 04 tells us about a deterioration process which involved a friend’s partner;

“We had an intern at the company, I got to know a person whose husband wanted to have an internship, and back then I was alone at the company so I said yes. I felt early on that this is not going to work. ... It was a double problem, because there were two relationships, the one to the wife and the one to her husband. In this case both relationships deteriorated due to the conflict.” (Andreas 04, CEO)

Alfred 07 understand why some companies have rules against romantic relationships in the workplace. When he worked within the travel industry, he witnessed a deterioration process where a romantic couple broke up because one of the parties fell in love with the other one's best friend, who also worked at the same company. The situation escalated, and finally, the betrayed partner committed suicide. The incident affected the whole workplace and crew on many levels, both professionally and privately.

Emil 01 have also experienced deterioration at the workplace as a result of love drama.

“I had a manager who got into a (romantic) relationship with a girl at our workplace. Then he started, because as I mentioned it used to be us two and we had a really tight friendship, he started to prioritize her on all good shifts and I had to work seventeen weekends in a row. I get that it was a difficult situation for him as well, how to balance it, but I do not think that he handled it very well.” (Emil 01, Communicator)

Except for love drama, difficulties in separating a personal and professional relationship can also be an ulterior cause for deterioration. When having a close personal relationship with a colleague, it might become more difficult to deliver tough decisions and negative information.

**Polarization**
Polarization occurs when colleagues have very different perceptions, mindset, opinions, language, personalities, or culture. Alfred (Sales manager) explained that language largely affects his relationships at work when he speaks to colleagues on the phone. He has a strong accent, and often they do not understand what he means if they are not talking face to face.

**Injustice**

“I was really content when he got the position as manager, because he was a friend of mine and it was clear from the start that we were going to do it together. A big problem then was that I got to take over his tasks but did not get extra salary
for it, he received the paycheck for the work but I got a lot of new tasks. The biggest issue was when I had to develop new material. I do not have a problem with it and it was really fun, but I got too much responsibility for the task even though I did not get extra pay for it which made it into a big irritation in our relationship.” (Emil 01, Communicator)

From this quote, it is clear that injustice in the form of faulty promotion and different salaries contributed to the deterioration. Emil (Communicator) describes how lower salaries than colleagues, not getting recognition for their work, and similar injustices negatively affected his relationships at work.

Organizational issues
Andreas 04 believes that there are many things which potentially can damage, improve or in other ways affect a relationship;

“I have had relationships where I have been in a position of power, or power sounds wrong, but as founder and manager you still have a position of power. Then there might be a person who is not fitting into the culture you are trying to establish. The base is, I want to build a company which is unique. If you then come in with thoughts and patterns which fit into companies that might be bigger, maybe that will not work in a smaller company. You need different experiences that work well together. Then there have been moments when I have felt that it is not going to work. It creates a gap.” (Andreas 04, CEO)

This emphasizes the cultural and personal fit that is needed to avoid deterioration. Moreover, he also has experiences where hierarchies have been a key factor for deterioration.

“It might be a situation where a person expects something else but does not say anything, which makes it hard for us to meet expectations. It has a lot to do with communication really. But in a power position it is also hard, for the other person as well, because we might not be on the same hierarchical level even if I see it that way, which can make a relationship a bit more distant.” (Andreas 04, CEO)

How an organization is set up can also affect the relationships within it. For example, groups where all members have worked for many years, can be drastically affected if the dynamics change by adding or removing organizational members.

Management issues
Managers and their ability to lead, organize, and influence the workplace can be a part of deterioration processes. Some of the respondents describe that bad leadership, unclear decisions, and lack of structure affected their workplace friendships negatively. Many respondents have experiences of managers not taking action. However, when they took action, they tended to have a positive impact on the situation.

Differing moral and values
To have completely different values than a co-worker often influences the relationship negatively. The respondents who have experienced this emphasize that the differing values often play an important role when trying to find a solution after a disagreement.
If the colleagues do not share the same moral and values, it might be harder to reach an agreement.

**Competition**
Competition seems to affect workplace friendships negatively when co-workers want the same thing, but only one is achieving the goal. Examples are applying for the same position, getting promoted, receiving different rewards, and so on.

**Differing ambition and goals**
Veera 09 talks about the importance of having the same ambitions and view on how to finish tasks.

“The production was too low, for us it is all about coding. That is what it is all about and if nothing happens I am in a role in the middle between financiers and developers, my co-workers. This leads to high pressure, and if it does not work I have to solve it.”

(Veera 09, CEO)

To have similar perceptions on the goals, ambitions, and quality that should direct the work is crucial. When these perceptions widely differ, it often creates a foundation for conflicts to arise.

**Distractions**
Distracting life events can also be a key factor to workplace friendship deterioration. Niklas 06 tells us;

“Of course, things can happen in your life which makes it hard to deliver to usual standards, which makes you stop fulfilling your tasks.” When we asked for examples, he said “It can be that you have a lot of stuff to do, something happens within your family or such, life happens. With that said, it would have been much easier for us as colleagues to handle it if this person had told us and communicated with us. Then we could have helped, and the person could have prioritized in a different way as well.” (Niklas 06, Business coach)

In summary, there are many reasons for workplace friendship to deteriorate. The three most common causes among the respondents were toxic behavior, communication issues, and different perceptions of tasks and responsibility. These causes are displayed by colleagues who gossip, manipulate, fail with communicating correct information and cannot establish common expectations. Even though the causes vary, workplace friendship deterioration is a pervading outcome.

**5.3.2 Professional impact**
Professionally, a deteriorated workplace friendship might influence people who are involved in talking badly about the other involved parties to others. Even so, most respondents stated that they were not much professionally affected by the deterioration. When the parties of conflict are occupied with separate tasks, most feel that they could continue with their daily work, even though the dynamics were not ideal. Some of the respondents could even see positive aspects of the process since they learned about
themselves and others. In summary, most do not believe that the deterioration affected their professional accomplishment negatively to any considerable extent.

“Sometimes I might ask myself if I can quit my job, then I realize that no, I cannot. Damn. But I have learnt a lot, now I will get to learn how to recruit. Everything depends on how you view it, I could say that everything is shit and that life sucks, or I could view it as an opportunity to learn how to recruit, which is something I have never done before.” (Veera 09, CEO)

However, there are examples of situations which had a great negative impact on respondents. Earlier in Veera 09’s career, she worked at a school, and then a manipulative co-worker affected her professional confidence.

“It affected me a lot since I had not worked as a teacher before. I did not have any education so I was kinda insecure in my role, and then her mean comments made me even more insecure.

... I had bought cinnamon buns for my class the first day, because I wanted to sit down, eat some buns and get to know them. Then, she (the colleague) waited in the teachers break room after everyone else had left. She started to walk out, opened the door and then turned to me, it was my first day of work, and she turned to me and said, “you should not think”, and then she smiled and continued, “you should not think that by buying cinnamon buns you can get anyone on your side, just so you know”, and then she walked out.” (Veera 09, CEO)

She explains how incidents like this made her self-confidence in her profession as a teacher drop and that it became hard to structure her thoughts and understand what was happening. This is one of the few experiences our respondents shared, which had a substantial negative professional impact. Most others describe how they forgot about the incident relative quickly, but at first, after it happened thought about quitting the job. After a while, it became easier for most respondents to socialize with colleagues again. Even though, there were often still some tension for quite some time.

The mood of the whole group and the atmosphere of the workplace is easily affected when one or two people have a conflict; it influences the whole crew and changes the atmosphere. There also seem to be differences in how these situations affect people, depending on how much experience they have. Karin (Business developer) explains that a 55-year-old probably has more self-confidence and self-assurance than a 25-year-old who just entered the working life. Respondents who have had to terminate staffs’ contracts says that it is never fun for a manager to fire someone. They would never like to do it, but sometimes have to.

Altogether, the respondents are affected to different extents. Some seem to be affected professionally by the situation during a more extended period, whereas others easily brush it off and continue with their tasks. The same respondents seem to have been affected differently at different positions, showing that the professional impact from a deteriorated workplace friendship might vary from workplace to workplace, relationship to relationship, and situation to situation.
5.3.3 Personal impact

Personally, friendship deterioration negatively affected many of the respondents. One example is Andreas (CEO) who found it sad when the relationship with a previous employee deteriorated. The main reason was that he had gone an extra length to try and make their relationship work. He had gone beyond what he perceives as healthy for himself and the company, which left him extremely disappointed when the friendship ended. Veera (CEO) explained that her experience with deteriorated friendships affected her badly since she does not like when people feel bad because of her. However, she believes that terminating her staff members contract was the right decision since always telling her colleague that they did not deliver enough would have hurt them as well. She describes herself as an empathic person, and thus, she was continually thinking about the other parties in this situation. A situation which affected many respondents a lot on a personal level was when they put in extra time and effort but only gained adverse reactions and deterioration as a result. Situations like this induce feelings of being betrayed, let down and undervalued.

“Of course, one becomes sad when things do not function at the workplace”
(Karin 05, Business developer)

Worth noting is that Karin (Business developer) also adds that one can be impacted differently depending on how much experience one has. She perceives herself as colder now compared to when she was inexperienced in the working life. However, when the deterioration occurred, she felt annoyed, frustrated, and upset. Even so, her experience helped her understand and put the situation in perspective so that she could compare it to other situations she has been in.

In contrast, not all respondents felt personally affected by friendship deterioration. Some expressed that they felt rather indifferent and easily could walk away from the situation without experiencing much negative personal impact.

5.3.4 Managers

This section will cover how the interviewees’ current or previous managers have acted during and after deterioration has occurred at their workplace. A few of the interviewees are managers themselves, and their experiences will be presented as well.

The majority of the interviewees did talk to their managers when deterioration occurred. They usually went to their closest manager to explain the situation to get advice on how to act further. Only two of the interviewees experienced that their manager took action. Erika (Coordinator) described that her closest manager booked a meeting with the involved parties in order to discuss the issues at hand. This manager also made sure to follow up on the situation regularly. Sanna (Care provider) told us that her manager was on her side during an argument that leads to deterioration. This manager had told her not to worry about the situation and that she was doing a great job. Alfred (Sales manager), who is a manager himself, had a meeting with involved parties in a deteriorated friendship. He sat down with the involved parties and explained that the situation was not acceptable and that one has to act directly when a situation occurs in order to solve it. Once this was communicated to the involved parties, he experienced that everyone at the workplace gained new energy.
The remaining interviewees that communicated the deterioration to their managers experienced that not enough actions were taken. Many of them experience that their managers said that they would have an action plan and facilitate the deterioration process. However, in reality, managers did not handle situations with enough firmness. A clear example is Karin (Business developer) who were involved in a situation, and the manager only said “yes, yes, yes” but never acted on it.

5.3.5 Other parties and colleagues

This section aims to cover which role other parties and colleagues, who were not a direct part of the conflict, had in different situations. Some of these experiences derive from when the respondents have acted as bystanders to deterioration processes, others from how other parties have acted in regard to the interviewees own conflicts.

An often occurring phenomenon in connection to workplace friendship deterioration is grouping. There seem to be a tendency to create tight groups with a few colleagues when conflict arises. This could be viewed as a way to find allies and gain the upper hand in the conflict. Another example of how other parties are affected is the frequent occurrence of gossip in connection to deterioration. This often affects other parties and colleagues, but can also be executed by these bystanders. In that situation, it is described as being hard to balance being a good friend and not becoming too involved in other peoples’ conflicts.

Overall, the experience of our respondents is that the whole workplace is often affected negatively by deterioration. Feelings which surface include irritation, being upset and frustrated. For some of the respondents, other parties played a big part in the workplace friendship deterioration since they could take sides, approve or dismiss arguments, and influence managers. An intense deterioration process or conflict appears to have the ability to reduce the efficiency of the workplace as a whole since a large quota of the staff sooner or later will be concerned by the ongoing process.

5.4 Coping mechanisms

5.4.1 Coping mechanisms

All respondents spoke about how they have coped with the effects of workplace friendship deterioration. Some also had experiences from coping with other colleagues deteriorated friendships or valuable insights in how their colleagues had coped in previous situations. This investigation of coping mechanisms aims to describe how workplace friendship deterioration is dealt with by the involved parties. It could also be described as how the parties adjust to an incident or situation to make it acceptable, bearable, or manageable. The main coping mechanisms mentioned by each respondent are summarized in the table below. After the table, situations, where the coping mechanisms were displayed, will be exemplified.

The final categories, which were established after merging initial categories, are presented in the table below. The categories were first divided by respondent (Appendix 11), then
by coping mechanism (Appendix 12), and lastly as seen in the table below, in final categories.

Table 12. Coping mechanisms, final categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final coping mechanism category</th>
<th>Illustrated by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distancing (12 mentions)</td>
<td>Became quiet (4 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Backed off (3 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changed friend group (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quit job (4 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronting (10 mentions)</td>
<td>Open arguments (3 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confrontation (3 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talked to the colleague (3 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen arguments with colleagues’ similar experiences (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to others (7 mentions)</td>
<td>Talked to other colleagues (5 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talked with partner (2 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching out (5 mention)</td>
<td>Tried to stay in contact (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proactive arrangements (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apologize (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tried to mediate (2 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informing manager (4 mentions)</td>
<td>Talked to manager (4 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altering point of view (4 mentions)</td>
<td>Changed own perspective (2 mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separate people and problem (2 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denying (4 mention)</td>
<td>Ignored issue (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faked a smile (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blamed others (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking commitment (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Walked away and left unfinished tasks (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manipulated hours (1 mention)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories of coping mechanism displayed in connection to workplace friendship deterioration which will be used from now on will be used in this thesis to present findings are distancing, confronting, talking to others, reaching out, informing manager, altering the point of view, denying, and breaking commitment. These eight categories together cover all the coping mechanisms mentioned by the respondents during the interviews. Now, each category will be further explained and exemplified with the respondents' experiences as a basis.
Distancing
Out of all coping mechanisms, distancing is the most commonly mentioned by the respondents. Karin 05 describes her approach like this;

“It depends on how important I believe that the issue is. If it is not that important, then I fend off, because I do not think the conflict is worth it. ... I back off and then I evaluate the conflict, if it is worth it, I will take it. Otherwise I will look elsewhere, change job.” (Karin 05, Business developer)

When Adam 05 was in a situation where two co-workers had a conflict with each other, he tried to take a step back.

“I decided to stick to the teenagers, which I often do anyway. But now it got even more so because I thought that I did not want to interfere with their conflict.” (Adam 05, Financial officer)

“I believe that some people have it easier to walk into conflicts. I don't really like conflicts, so I tend to stay away and try to solve it.” (Niklas 06, Business coach)

In summary, to use distancing means to step back from the colleague or situation which contribute to the deterioration.

Confronting
With two fewer mentions than previously introduced distancing, the coping mechanism Confronting is the second most commonly displayed among the respondents. To use confronting as a coping mechanism means to bring up the issue for discussion with the concerned parties.

Sanna 02 talked to one of the colleagues who were a part of the deterioration process.

“We talked to the guy, because he was the one who started everything. He was really, I do not remember everything we said, but I remember that we had, that we talked with him. He was very sad and apologized.” (Sanna 02, Care provider)

Karin 05 have also confronted a colleague. We asked her if she have any experiences of a colleague holding on to information to gain power. She answered;

“Yes, I walked up and said that this is not okay, but sometimes that might not work and then I need to go back to the manager and she or he need to tell everyone how this workplace is structured.” (Karin 05, Business developer)

Talking to others
Five of the respondents mention that they talked about the deterioration with other colleagues, and two says that they discussed the issue with their romantic partners at home.
“Personally, I have a relationship, yes, I have a wife at home, and of course it is brought there (the conflict), if something is a frustration at work I will take that issue home. Discuss things, or at least we do, we discuss things that happen at work and such. In that regard, I took it with me home.”
(Niklas 06, Business coach)

When we asked other respondents if they had talked about the deteriorating process with their co-workers, it appeared to be a common way to cope. Most stated that they tried to limit the discussions not to cause more harm, but they felt a need to talk about it. A great deal of the discussions with colleagues took part shortly after the conflict, and after a while, the conversations faded in intensity. Talking to others was described as being similar to therapy, a tool that can be used to deal with the issue but also to learn from the situation to not repeat it.

**Reaching out**
To cope by reaching out can be described as trying to stay in contact, talk with, or apologize to the concerned colleague. For two of our respondents, the act of reaching out occurred after the deterioration had peaked. One of the situations were experienced by Sanna 02 when her colleague reached out to her with a phone call where he apologized for what had happened. Andreas 04 have tried to reach out himself, but with a disappointing result.

“I have tried to maintain some kind of contact, tried to contact again, at least to her who I was friends with first, but it did not go very well.” He also adds, “I have sent these messages, so if the person wants to stay in contact they can, I am who I am, I am very open, but I am not forcing anyone to talk.” (Andreas 04, CEO)

Veera 09 tries to take proactive action and reach out before a deterioration process starts by taking every chance to ask her staff about the situation at the workplace.

“I check their pulse very often, take every chance I can to ask what is shit and how I can do stuff better. Then I have at least given them the chance to impact, then if they take that chance, that is up to them. But they can never say that I did not ask or did not do anything.” (Veera 09, CEO)

**Informing manager**
When telling a manager or supervisor about the concerns one has regarding a situation with a colleague at work, it is in this study labeled as coping by informing manager.

“We needed to find a solution, and when the person still did not act on it, we understood that we needed to take it to next level within the organization. Push the problems upwards one could say.” (Niklas 06, Business coach)

“I walked up to the main manager and said that I were not content with my current manager, and then when she (the main manager) spoke to him (current manager) he just said that things like this happens sometimes.” (Emil 01, Communicator)
“It was brought up quickly, we made our closest manager aware that there were some problems and the manager quickly set up a meeting to talk about how we should solve it to avoid unnecessary irritation.” (Erika 08)

Altering point of view
To alter one's point of view is a coping mechanism which focuses on how oneself viewed the problem.

Alfred (Sales manager) says that he always strives to separate people and problem. He might not like everyone he works with but does not view that as crucial for being able to carry out his tasks. He believes that one can choose not to be bothered by the person, as long as the problem does not interfere with the professional role.

Veera (CEO) tried to change her perspective when dealing with a manipulative colleague.

“I learnt to deal with that kind of person. At the end, I could walk around and think ‘well okay, she is like that, fun, wonder what she is thinking today’ and like ‘oh my god, I wonder what is going on in her brain, wonder what the next thing that will pop out of her mouth will be’, but that way of thinking took a long time for me to build up, but I understood that I am not the one who is bad, but rather she is manipulative.” (Veera 09, CEO)

Denying
Sanna (Care provider) experienced that her co-worker tried to deny their part of the incident,

“We got to know what had happened, so it was very awkward for a while, because they denied what they had said. My cousin asked why they had said that cousins should not work together, but then they said that they never said that. Just like ‘no, we never said that, they are lying’. " (Sanna 02, Care provider)

Emil (Communicator) faked a smile at the beginning of the deterioration since he did not want to interfere with the atmosphere at the workplace. He understood that reacting to the conflict could affect other colleagues as well. However, after a while, he could not deny the situation anymore.

Karin (Business developer) have had colleagues who ignore the issues. When we asked her to exemplify a situation where co-workers have not changed their behavior after a confrontation she said,

“Yes, they then ignore it and continue as usual. ... They believe that they did not do anything wrong or that they have more important stuff to focus on, so, they do not act.” (Karin 05, Business developer)

Breaking commitment
One of Andreas (CEO) colleagues chose to break commitments after the deterioration. He explains,
“I turned out that everything just got worse, so we had to say like it is and tell him that he could not continue at the workplace. So, this date it will end and this is the rules for termination and you are expected to work the rest of the month. Everything was clearly stated, but it still ended with this person not owning up to it but rather just walking away.

... He came to work and did not do anything. He wrote his hours wrong in the time table and everything, which is very obvious for us since we can see everything people do (in the computer systems) so for us it was clear that the hours were not correct. We did not say anything about it though, let it be the way it was, but it was sad because then that relationship, and the other (to the interns’ wife) was lost, it ended up being like we had done something wrong but we thought that we did everything that could be done right, right.” (Andreas 04, CEO)

In summary, all of the respondents share experiences of how they and their colleagues have displayed coping mechanisms in association with workplace friendship deterioration. In total, eight categories which each represent a coping mechanism, were established. The three most common ways to cope appeared to be distancing, confronting, and talking to others. Two of the least common, but still occurring displayed coping mechanisms were denying and breaking commitment. Between the three most common and the two least common categories presented above, we find reaching out, informing manager, and altering point of view. These findings will be further analyzed and discussed in chapter 6.

5.4.2 Aftermath

The aftermath of the deterioration causes and coping mechanisms described above are somewhat similar between all of the interviewees. The common denominator is that the deteriorated relationships never fully recovered. Emil (Communicator) told us about how his manager scheduled him to work seventeen weekends in a row, which lead him to confront the manager. Before this manager stopped working at the workplace, the relationship was very infected. However, when some time had passed, they could become friends again. Another interviewee, Andreas (CEO), told us how the friendship he was in completely deteriorated. Although they could greet each other if they encountered each other, it was always a strange feeling. He also had a friendship since before with the other party’s wife. This automatically led to that friendship deteriorating as well, and until this day, neither of the two friendships have recovered.

Sanna (Care provider) explained that the atmosphere at her workplace was strange for a long period of time. This since her colleagues had denied what they had said about her and she knew what they had said about her. Although they admitted their part in the deterioration, it was still strange for her at the workplace. However, her manager has been supportive of her, and this has led to her still working there as a part-time employee.

Other interviewees experienced that other employees at the workplace had to take on a heavier workload because of the deterioration. This type of aftermath is connected to deteriorations that has led to firing employees from the workplace. However, the most common aftermath for all the interviewees is frustration, increased workload, and not being able to repair the relationship fully. Only two of the interviewees felt like they could
continue the friendship when they had gained perspective and distance to the deterioration.

5.4.3 In retrospect

In retrospect, the majority of the interviewees would have acted differently and additionally would have wanted the involved parties to act differently as well. The common denominator was communication. They would have appreciated straight communication instead of talking behind closed doors. Sanna (Care provider) would have wanted the other parties to be constructive and give her feedback if they wanted to change at the workplace. In turn, she would have confronted them directly instead of ignoring the issue. She believes the deterioration would not have been as severe. However, she realizes that her type of workplace is characterized by gossip, and she is not sure it would have worked the way she would have wanted to. Other interviewees wish that the involved party or parties would have communicated personal issues. This since he explains that personal issues can have important impacts on deteriorated friendships. If it were communicated, other employees would be able to have a greater understanding of tasks not being completed and deterioration could be avoided. Another interviewee, Adam (Financial officer), do not think the deterioration would have been handled differently. However, he wishes that the altercation would have happened behind closed doors.

Other interviewees would have wanted the workplace to implement systems that prevent and solve deteriorations that can occur in the workplace. However, she realizes that deteriorations are individual, and it is hard to implement systems that are suitable for every individual.

5.5 Summary of findings

The data which emerged regarding interaction and activities, deterioration experiences, and coping mechanisms are believed to be of highest relevance for the research question. Thus, the summary of findings will focus on these categories. The respondents' backgrounds are not summarized in this section.

For interaction and activities, a clear pattern among the respondents emerged. It appears to be common to have good relationships with co-workers, with which topics of both personal and professional character are discussed. However, it is less common to spend time with colleagues outside the workplace. If this occurs, it is often within the frames of an activity arranged by the workplace. These events often include dining together, for example, lunch or dinner, and drinking some beverage, for example, beer or coffee. Additionally, it is common to exercise or compete with colleagues outside the work sphere. Most respondents aim to have a friendly relationship with their colleagues, which includes communicating a lot, sometimes engaging in activities together outside their ordinary tasks, and making sure that everyone has a shared perception of workplace phenomenons.

Moving on to deterioration experiences, all respondents have experiences of workplace friendship deterioration. Most have been both in a deteriorating relationship themselves, as well as witnessed one or more deterioration processes between colleagues. All agree that deterioration is something which they want to avoid, and they believe that the best
way to avoid deterioration situations is to communicate with colleagues. A recurring view on communication is that it is essential to talk about issues as soon as they appear, rather than keeping quiet and hope that the issue will solve itself.

The three most common reasons for deterioration are toxic behavior, communication issues, and different perceptions of tasks and responsibility. These causes can be exemplified by for example gossiping, territorial guarding, bad communication, working at different geographical locations, co-workers who do not finish tasks, and different perceptions on how tasks should be carried out. Even though these situations can be sources of irritation and sadness, most respondents state that they have been able to move on after the deterioration. There has been some personal impact, often consisting of reflection, disappointment, and thoughts about their current work situation. However, these situations have also been a source of learning, and some respondents say that they gained valuable experiences. Professionally, it appears common to get distracted from specific tasks and become quieter at work during a deterioration process. Most respondents have been able to carry through with their tasks in a sufficient way during the deterioration.

Regarding coping, all respondents have had to adjust to an incident or situation at the workplace to make it acceptable, bearable, or manageable. The most common way for respondents to cope with workplace friendship deterioration is distancing. This coping mechanism is exemplified by becoming quiet, faking a smile, or quit the current job. The second most common coping mechanism is found to be confronting, in which the individual might participate in an open argument or talk to the colleague about the issue. Next to confronting, talking to others were mentioned as a common way to cope. Many respondents explained that they often talk with other colleagues or their romantic partners at home about deteriorating friendships at the workplace. This seemed to provide respondents with a therapeutic experience, and it also appeared to limit irritation and frustration tied to the deterioration.

Even though the interviewees' experiences vastly differed at first glance, similarities emerged when data from all nine interviews were put side by side. This led to the establishment of several main categories tied to each theme. In the upcoming chapter, the findings are analyzed and discussed with the studies theoretical framework of coping mechanisms and emotions as a foundation.
6.0 Analysis and discussion

In this chapter, the findings from the empirical research, which were presented in the previous chapter, will be discussed and analyzed. The basis for this discussion and analysis are the theoretical framework. Firstly, revolving the empirical findings connecting to coping mechanisms. After that, the findings are evaluated in relation to emotions. These two sections then provide the foundation for the last chapter, consisting of conclusions for the study.

6.1 Coping as a practice

When studying the literature, we found four coping mechanisms individuals use depending on the situation. These are problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, adaptive coping, and maladaptive coping. Further, we found different causes for deterioration based on previous studies which are presented below. In the forthcoming section, we relate the theories of coping and causes for deterioration with the empirical data we have identified.

Previous studies show a variety of causes for deteriorated friendships at the workplace. Pillemer and Rothbard (2018, p. 637) describe them as employees having incompatible characteristics, contradicting goals and being distracted from completing tasks. These causes influence employees’ role in relation to their different perceptions on goals and how tasks are completed. These causes can be related to the interviewees who had personal and task-related issues at their workplace. Another study made by Sias and Perry (2004, p. 591) displays other common causes for deterioration at workplaces. These causes are problematic personalities, distracting life events, different expectations and promotion. These theoretical causes also regard personal and task-related issues. Thus, we can see a pattern in previous studies regarding deterioration at the workplace. The common denominator is that they are related to the person rather than organizational or managerial matters.

The findings in section 5.3.1 show the interviewees’ causes for their deteriorated friendships. From these causes, we can see common patterns that relate to personal, task-related, organizational and managerial issues (Appendix 15). Thus, we have identified two additional causes for friendship deterioration at the workplace. The causes we identified are related to organizational and managerial issues (Appendix 15). These causes for deterioration then have an effect on how the interviewees coped in their deteriorated friendships.

When reviewing the findings related to causes for deterioration and displayed coping mechanisms, respondents are found to adapt to the four coping mechanisms mentioned in literature. Coping mechanisms are viewed as situational (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, p. 128), and indeed, the findings show that displayed coping mechanisms depend on the characteristics of the deterioration. The causes and coping mechanisms exemplified in the
sections below derive from both the interviewees’ first-hand experiences, but also situations they witnessed on their workplaces with other colleagues.

**Emotion-focused coping**

Becoming quiet, backing off and quitting the job, have been categorized as distancing (Table 12). Since emotion-focused ways of coping involve distancing oneself from others, the people who coped by distancing adapted an emotion-focused way to cope with the deterioration experience. Emotion-focused coping can also involve certain defensive traits (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 150). It is arguable that becoming quiet and backing off is a way of acting defensive since one does not communicate the issue but rather adopt a passive-aggressive approach.

Emotion-focused ways of coping include choosing who receives attention (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 150). The interviewees who talked to other colleagues chose to not communicate with the parties who were involved in the deterioration. Thus, the respondents who talked to others adapted an emotion-focused coping. Further, coping by faking a smile is viewed as denying and avoiding the situation, since involved parties are not made aware of their true feelings. By denying a situation, one avoids confronting the situation, and thus, emotion-focused coping is adapted (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, p. 150).

Our findings show that Emil (Communicator), Sanna (Care provider), Adam (Financial officer) and Karin (Business developer) all became quiet as a coping mechanism, which is categorized as a denial. Thus, they adopted an emotion-focused coping mechanism. Further, they experienced similar deterioration causes, which lead to this displayed coping. Examples of these are communication issues, different perceptions on tasks and responsibility, and management issues (Table 11).

**Problem-focused coping**

Open arguments, talking to managers, and trying to stay in contact are all associated with the coping mechanisms labeled as confronting, informing managers, and reaching out (Table 12). Since problem-focused coping mechanisms are characterized by problem-solving and an aim to understand and solve the expressed issue (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 152), these coping mechanisms have a problem-focused approach.

As previously mentioned, the adapted coping mechanism differs depending on the situation. The empirical data show that deterioration which arises from communication issues, differing perceptions on tasks and responsibility, and managerial issues lead to problem-focused coping. These types of deteriorations can be perceived as repairable by communicating the issue, and thus, the respondents have adopted a problem-focused approach.

**Maladaptive coping**

Maladaptive coping is characterized by low performance, abusing resources, and being disrespectful to co-workers. These coping mechanisms are categorized as breaking commitment (Table 12). When Andreas (CEO) was involved in a conflict, the other party coped by walking away and leaving unfinished tasks and manipulated hours. To deal with a deteriorated situation this way is viewed as maladaptive coping.
Deterioration caused by differing moral and values, toxic behavior and polarization can be viewed as non-repairable. This can especially be seen in Andreas’ (CEO) case where the friendship could not be recovered. Therefore, these causes for deterioration result in either emotion-focused or maladaptive coping.

**Adaptive coping**

Adaptive coping is characterized by using social support and exercise to deal with a situation (Hendy et al., 2018, p. 1). Among the respondents, this is for example displayed by Alfred (Sales manager) who immediately acted by providing social support to the group when the dynamics had deteriorated at his workplace. Similar approaches were also shown by Andreas (CEO) who provided exercise opportunities for the staff and Veera (CEO) who promote walks in nature when problems surface. Veera (CEO) also work proactively with open communication to facilitate discussions when a problematic situation arises. This could be seen as the usage of social support within the workplace.

Further, Niklas (Business coach), Erika (Coordinator) and Alfred (Sales manager) displayed similar coping mechanisms and causes for deterioration. They used confronting, informing manager, distancing, and talking to others to cope with the situation. In connection, their deteriorated friendships were caused by toxic behavior, communication issues, and different perceptions on tasks and responsibility. Thus, they have used problem-focused, emotion-focused, and adaptive coping mechanisms.

In summary, the coping mechanisms displayed by respondents were influenced by how and why the deterioration situation occurred. This strengthens the view of coping mechanisms as dependent on situational factors. In the forthcoming section, the interviewees’ expressed emotions and how they relate to causes for deterioration will be further explored.

### 6.2 Expressed emotions

The categorization of emotions allows for a consistent analysis of the emotions described by the respondents. Without established definitions, it is mainly subjective what it means to feel for example sadness, jealousy or happiness. Therefore, the categorization of emotions developed by Lazarus and Lazarus (1994), which are elaborated in the theoretical framework, will be used to interpret and analyze data derived from the interviews.

When respondents shared their experiences of workplace friendship deterioration, they contributed with their personal view of the situation. The conflicts with colleagues were often described in a way which let us understand that the respondents themselves dealt with feelings such as anxiety-fright, sadness, and relief during deterioration processes. However, a majority of respondents described how the party they had a conflict with felt emotions such as jealousy and guilt. One example of a respondents own feeling during the deterioration is Karin (Business developer) who said that she does not like to have a worrisome feeling in her gut when she goes to work, a statement which we categorize as feeling anxiety-fright. Another statement in regard to this is described by Alfred (Sales manager) who says that the whole team was re-energized and relieved when the
termination of one employee solved a conflict. Further, Sanna (Care provider) felt sad when she experienced that her workplace friendship was deteriorating.

Among the examples brought up by respondents regarding how the other party participating in the deterioration felt, we find Sanna (Care provider) who states that her colleague experienced a sense of jealousy and guilt towards her. These two emotions impacted the co-worker to start the conflict, but also to apologize afterward. This is also exemplified by the staff member hired by Andreas (CEO), who did not deliver to expectations and therefore had his contract terminated. When not being able to meet goals, a sense of anger and guilt might arise. These feelings are categorized as belonging to nasty and existential emotions. The nasty emotions share a desire to harm either oneself or others, whereas the existential emotions make us question who we are and our place in the world. When the staff member had his contract terminated, he started to lie about the hours he had worked and did not execute his tasks per his and Andreas (CEO) agreement. This response could be viewed as an expression of guilt derived from not meeting set standards, which then manifested in anger which made him decide to harm the workplace and its resources.

In summary, the feelings experienced by respondents and their view of how the other party felt seemed to differ. Since we only got to hear one side of the story, it is impossible to make a well-grounded judgment regarding the causes of this disparity. However, possible reasons could be the nature of the described situations. Since the respondents shared their subjective experiences of workplace friendship deterioration, the conflict and their emotions tied to the situation might affect how they described the course of events in the interviews. Regardless, it is, without doubt, apparent that there is a vast spectrum of emotions which might arise in connection to workplace friendship deterioration, and that these emotions affect how one cope. Thus, the theory of coping mechanisms as situational is further supported by these findings.

Figure 14. Abstraction of deterioration causes.
7.0 Conclusion

In this final chapter, quality criteria are evaluated, conclusions are drawn and the result is compared to research question and purpose. With this in consideration, conclusions will be drawn regarding how well the study reached the research goals. The findings of this study will be summarized and contributions are discussed. Finally, recommendations to practitioners, limitations, and suggestions for future research are pointed out.

7.1 Main findings

This study aimed to answer the research question “Which coping mechanisms are displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships are deteriorated?” Further, one goal was to facilitate understanding of workplace friendship deterioration and coping mechanisms for organizational members in practice. The study aims to contribute with insights within the field and recommend gaps for further research.

The conclusion reached by this study is that coping mechanisms are situational. Moreover, the expressed coping mechanisms are found to be distancing, confronting, talking to others, reaching out, informing manager, altering point of view, denying, and breaking commitment. All of these can be categorized as belonging to one of the main coping categories which are labeled as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, adaptive coping, or maladaptive coping. The main coping categories and the expressed coping together form the displayed coping mechanisms. In the figure below, the eight different kinds of expressed coping are visualized.

![Figure 15. Expressed coping.](image)
Data deriving from the interviewees allowed us to identify a process of workplace friendship deterioration which consists of four stages, ranging from cause of the deterioration to final displayed coping mechanism. Below, the process and its four steps are elaborated upon. At the end of this section, the process is visualized by Figure 16.

**Step one** is labeled as “Cause” and consists of twelve different causes to workplace friendship deterioration identified in this study. Ordered from most to least commonly occurring, these are found to be toxic behavior, communication issues, different perceptions on tasks and responsibility, close relationships, polarization, injustice, organizational issues, management issues, differing moral and values, competition, differing ambitions and goals, and distractions. These are the causes of all situations of workplace friendship deterioration described by respondents in this study.

**Step two** is labeled as “Emotions,” and aim to capture how organizational members feel when experiencing the causes described in step one. This categorization of emotions consists of the five main categories presented in the theoretical framework. The categories are the nasty emotions, the existential emotions, emotions provoked by unfavorable life conditions, emotions provoked by favorable life conditions, and the empathic emotions. This categorization was established by Lazarus and Lazarus (1994).

**Step three** of the process is labeled as “Main coping” and showcase four ways of coping showcased by the respondents as a response to emotions and causes of workplace friendship deterioration. The four ways of coping were presented in the theoretical framework. These coping mechanisms are labeled emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping, adaptive coping, and maladaptive coping.

**Step four** is named “Expressed coping” and aim to describe the coping mechanisms displayed by the interviewees. Ordered by most to least commonly occurring, these are distancing, confronting, talking to others, reaching out, informing manager, altering point of view, denying, and breaking commitment. These are the ways the respondents coped with all the workplace friendship deterioration situations they shared during the interviews.

Further, our analysis shows that deterioration caused by differing moral and values, toxic behavior, and polarization can be viewed as non-repairable as described in Andreas’ (CEO) case in section 6.1. Thus, these causes lead to either emotion-focused or maladaptive coping. Four interviewees described their causes for deterioration as communication issues, different perceptions on tasks and responsibility as well as management issues. These causes led them to conform to an emotion-focused way of coping. In the previous section, emotion-focused coping was adapted by interviewees whose deteriorations were caused by similar reasons. The three most common causes for workplace friendship deterioration are toxic behavior, communication issues as well as different perceptions on tasks and responsibility (Table 11).

In addition, distancing, confronting and talking to others are the three most common coping mechanisms displayed by the interviewees (Table 12). As further described in section 6.1, distancing is labeled as an emotional-focused way of coping. Confronting methods are connected to problem-focused and adaptive ways of coping mechanisms.
Lastly, talking to others is an adaptive way of coping since this way of coping is characterized by social support. This analysis shows that organizational members in service sectors who experience workplace friendship deterioration adapt to four main ways of coping depending on the situation they experience. These four main ways of coping are emotion-focused, problem-focused, adaptive, and maladaptive coping. Then, the displayed coping is categorized into eight sub-categories of expressed coping. Ordered by most to least commonly occurring, these are distancing, confronting, talking to others, reaching out, informing manager, altering point of view, denying, and breaking commitment.

The process of workplace friendship deterioration from cause to expressed coping are visualized in Figure 16.
Figure 16. The process from deterioration cause to expressed coping mechanisms.
7.2 Contributions

An objective of this study is to help organizational members in practice to understand workplace friendship deterioration and associated coping mechanisms. We also aimed to contribute with insights within the field and reach guiding and assisting conclusions. This study's ability to meet these preset objectives are presented below.

First, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how organizational members cope with workplace friendship deterioration. This is shown through the mapping of causes leading to deterioration and the establishment of expressed coping mechanisms, which adds to previous literature. By adding the expressed coping mechanisms shown by respondents to the theories of main coping categories found in previous research, we managed to create a foundation for an understanding of displayed coping mechanisms.

Second, a contribution of this study is a developed vocabulary which will provide future researchers with a more effective and precise terminology. The first step of dealing with an issue is to understand it, and therefore the mapping of displayed coping mechanisms is likely to facilitate greater possibilities for practitioners to deal with friendship deterioration at the workplace in the future.

Third, we found that coping mechanisms are displayed differently depending on the specific situation leading to the deterioration. In the analysis, patterns of connection emerged amongst deterioration causes and coping mechanisms. These patterns primarily regard toxic behavior, communication issues, and differing perceptions of tasks and responsibility, and their association with problem-focused, emotion-focused, and adaptive coping.

Lastly, we have identified additional causes for friendship deterioration which are managerial and organizational issues. These causes are not presented in previous literature. We can see that the identified causes are common for our interviewees and thus important for organizations to understand and realize.

In summary, the contributions made by this study consist of a deeper understanding of displayed coping as a phenomenon, a developed terminology for the field, additional causes for deterioration and establishment of coping as situational in this context. The contributions will help practitioners to understand workplace friendship deterioration and associated coping mechanisms, provide guiding and assisting conclusions as well as present insights in the field. Consequently, the study is believed to have met its preset intents.

7.3 Recommendations to practitioners

An intent with this study is to provide practitioners with insights of workplace friendship deterioration and the coping mechanisms associated with the occurrence. The reason for this aim is to provide managers and employees with enhanced abilities to limit the occurrence of workplace friendship deterioration. In addition, this research strives to provide recommendations for these stakeholders regarding how to act when deterioration situations emerge.
First, we recommend managers to be aware of courses of events with characteristics such as toxic behaviors, communication issues, and different perceptions of tasks and responsibility. This recommendation derives from the findings which show that these are the three most common causes for deterioration. To act on behaviors which incorporate these causes, might limit the risk of workplace friendship deterioration.

Second, the findings indicate that communication issues are one of the most common causes of deterioration. However, the data also shows that communication is not one of the most commonly displayed coping mechanisms. This could be viewed as a discrepancy, which practitioners such as managers and employees should attempt to overcome by establishing an emphasis on communication at the workplace.

Third, it is also indicated that managers often do not act at all when deterioration situations arise. Although informed about the deterioration, many situations brought up by the respondents were not handled adequately by managers. However, when the managers did act, it often had a considerable positive impact on the situation. Therefore, we would recommend managers to take action and quickly respond to deterioration processes within their organizations. Also, findings indicate that employees appreciate communication with their manager when workplace friendship deterioration arise. Thus, we recommend managers to observe processes which involve employees at the workplace, and to strive to meet the needs of communication amongst organizational members. Practitioners should not be afraid or feel insecure about communication and confrontations at the workplace since the findings indicate that parties involved in deterioration appreciate communication.

In summary, our recommendations to practitioners are to be aware of courses of events with certain characteristics, establish an emphasis on communication within their organizations, and for managers to take action and dare to bring deterioration up for discussion. These recommendations provide practitioners with insights into workplace friendship deterioration and coping mechanisms associated with the occurrence. Moreover, it facilitates the establishment of proactive arrangements and provides recommendations for how to respond to deterioration situations. Hence, the study is concluded to fulfill its predetermined objectives.

7.4 Societal implications and ethical considerations

In today's society, an increasingly part of everyday social interactions take place within the work sphere. Jobs with emphasis on personal relations become more common when computers and intelligent software automate many administrative tasks. As a result, workers are expected to bring more of their personal qualities and traits into their professional roles. In a world with more connected and social workplaces than ever before, it is difficult to separate personal and professional parts of our lives.

This leads to vulnerability for organizational members who experience troubling situations concerning their relations at work. When a conflict with a colleague emerge, it is no longer self-evident whether the incident will have the most personal or professional impact. Therefore, it is of high importance to continue the research in the field of
workplace friendship deterioration. For organizations around the globe to avoid a negative impact on staff by proactive arrangements, constant attention to the dark sides of friendship is needed. Conflicts and deterioration will never be entirely eliminated, but through enhanced communication, efficient coping and early discovery, the negative impact can be limited.

7.5 Quality criteria

Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability are all of importance for qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 68). Together, they enable valuation of a study’s trustworthiness (Bryman & Bell, 2012, p. 390). Thus, they are essential to keep in mind when evaluating a study and its results. Below, four factors of trustworthiness will be introduced and explained. This is done to allow a critical examination of the conclusions, contributions, and recommendations which are presented in the upcoming sections.

**Credibility** is, to a certain extent, a result of the effort and time that is invested in iterate and regular examination. When a researcher spends plenty of time observing an occurrence, she or he will be able to assess whether a situation and its qualities are within or outside the ordinary (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 109). When there are many different possible ways to describe reality, it will be the trustworthiness the researcher manages to achieve which will decide how accepted the conclusion will be for others (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p. 381). Since we investigated friendship relationships which were built by at least two parties, the credibility of this study could be questioned. Only one individual’s perspective was heard, and thus, it is impossible to fully understand how the other party perceived the situation. However, the interviewees also described their flaws and mistakes which provide credibility to their stories.

**Dependability** is of high importance since it is a significant part of making sure that the research is possible to recreate and that the findings are consistent (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 246). Dependability, or external reliability, capture to which degree a study can be replicated. Internal reliability can be described as whether, when there are two or more observers present, the research members will agree on what they are observing (Bryman & Bell, 2012, p. 390). We held all of the interviews together and discussed each interview directly afterward. We both perceived the interviews in similar ways and had aligned understandings of the described deteriorations and coping mechanisms.

**Transferability** means that the results would be achievable and transferable if the data were collected within another context or at other populations (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 411). Qualitative research often contains intense studying of a population or course of events, which might lead to a focus on unique occurrences. This might affect the results ability to transfer to other settings (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p. 382). We solely focused on organizational members within the service sector, thus, it is not certain that the findings can be applied to other industries. However, analysis of our data shows that coping mechanisms depend on the situation at hand. Therefore, there is a possibility that our data could be transferred to other settings and populations which share characteristics with the service sector.
**Confirmability** aims to describe whether the researcher has affected the findings, that is, how subjective or objective they have been able to withhold themselves. In other words, confirmability can be described as how well the result aligns with the collected data. (Bryman & Bell, 2012, p. 392). As previously mentioned, both authors of this study were present at all interviews, which makes it less likely that we as individuals affect the findings. Open questions were used not to affect the respondents’ answers.

The four quality criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability are of high importance when evaluating a study. When planning, gathering and evaluating data for this thesis, it has been crucial to reflect upon for example our objectivity versus subjectivity.

### 7.6 Limitations and future research

Regarding the limitations of this study, we want to point out the limited selection of participants. Nine respondents form the basis for the empirical findings. In an ideal scenario, the experiences from a more extensive number of respondents would form the basis for the study. The respondents shared their own subjective experiences of workplace friendship deterioration, which is a limitation since the research solely focused on one party's side of the described situations. It would have been of interest to interview the respondents' colleagues and other concerned parties to get a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the deterioration situation.

The data is solely collected from organizational members who are based within the service sector, which limits the applicability of the study’s results. To investigate more sectors would have made it possible to analyze and draw conclusions regarding the different sectors similarities, differences and the causes of these. To research more segments would have added depth to the study and allowed broader applicability of the results. These limitations derive from constraints tied to the nature of this degree thesis. Since the study is conducted as a degree thesis, there is a time constraint of 30 ECTS or one semester associated with the research. Thus, previously mentioned limitations of the number of respondents, partial data, and isolated sector derive from this time constraint. However, similar limitations are likely to arise regardless of the amount of time one could distribute for the complement of a study.

For future research, we see a need to explore the topic of this study further, but with a broader approach. This could be done by comparing coping mechanisms displayed by organizational members from different sectors to each other, collect data from more respondents, and in other ways stretch the scope. An insight which derived from this research is that it would be of interest to study workplace friendship deterioration with data from all parties involved in the situation. In this study, only one party's view was brought forward which limited analysis and credibility of conclusions. To collect data from all involved parties would allow a more in-depth analysis, more reliable findings, and possibly new insights. Moreover, valuable insights could be derived from research with emphasis on effects that arise from ineffective coping mechanisms. Similar areas in need of further research are management challenges and managerial attitudes associated with workplace friendship deterioration.
8.0 Reference list


Helen M. Hendy, S. Hakan Can & Pamela Black (2018) Workplace Deviance as a Possible “Maladaptive Coping” Behavior Displayed in Association with Workplace Stressors, Deviant Behavior


Jonathan St. B. T. Evans & David E Over (2013) Reasoning to and from belief: Deduction and induction are still distinct, Thinking & Reasoning, 19:3-4, 267-283


9.0 Appendix

Appendix 1a: Interview guide part one - Checklist English.

Research question:
Which coping mechanisms are displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships are deteriorated?

Larger questions of the study:
• How do organizational members cope with workplace friendship deterioration?
• Which different kinds of coping mechanisms are displayed?
• What affects the choice of a specific coping mechanism?
• How does the coping affect the organizational member?

Broad areas of knowledge that are relevant to answer these questions:
• Management
• Workplace friendship
• Dark sides of workplace friendship
• Workplace friendship deterioration
• Coping mechanisms
• Service sectors

Checklist before starting an interview:
Inform participant about...
• the purpose of the research
• what is expected of a research participant, including the amount of time likely to be required for participation
• expected risks and benefits
• the fact that participation is voluntary and that one can withdraw at any time with no negative repercussions
• how confidentiality will be protected
• the name and contact information of an appropriate person to contact with questions about one’s rights as a research participant
• It is okay to ask for a break at any time

The final thesis will be accessible for the public

Paper
Pencil
Recording equipment
• Battery, space, turned on
Water

Explain that we want to know what they think and what their observations are
Explain why we think that their experiences and thoughts are relevant for this study
Tell them that they can interrupt us if they want to add something throughout the whole interview
Ask for permission to record and to take notes and collect informed consent
Appendix 1b: Interview guide part one - Checklist Swedish.

Frågeställning:
Hur hanterar anställda inom servicesektorn fallerande vänskapsförhållanden på arbetsplatsen?

Övergripande frågor för studien
- Hur hanterar anställda vänskapsförhållanden som fallerar på arbetsplatsen?
- Vilka typer av coping mechanisms uppvisas?
- Vad påverkar valet av en specifik coping mechanism?
- Hur påverkar copingen den anställda?

Områden som är relevanta för att besvara dessa frågor
- Management
- Vänskapsrelationer på arbetsplatsen
- Negativa sidor av vänskapsrelationer på arbetsplatsen
- Vänskapsrelationer på arbetsplatsen som fallerar
- Coping mechanisms
- Servicesektorer

Checklista inför intervju
Informera deltagaren om…
- Syftet med studien
- Vad som förväntas av intervjudeltagaren, inklusive estimerad tidsåtgång
- Förväntad risk och nytta med deltagande i studien
- Att deltagande är frivilligt och att deltagaren kan avbryta intervjun under hela processen utan negativa konsekvenser
- Hur materialet hanteras konfidentiellt
- Namn och kontaktuppgifter till oss
- Det är okej att be om en paus vid alla tillfällen
- Den slutgiltiga uppsatsen kommer att publiceras på uppsatsportalen DiVA

Papper, penna
Telefon med inspelningsmöjlighet - Batteri, lagring, påslagen
Vatten
Förklara att vi vill veta vad dem tycker och vad deras observationer är
Förklara varför vi tycker att deras erfarenheter och tankar är relevanta för studien
Berätta att de kan avbryta oss under hela processen om de vill tillägga något
Be om tillstånd att spela in och ta anteckningar
Samla in underskrift om informed consent
Definiera fallera och läs upp frågeställningen på engelska
Appendix 2a: Interview guide part two - Questions English.

**Interview questions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm up question (choose one)</th>
<th>How was it to find your way to this location, did it go okay?</th>
<th>How was your morning? Traffic okay?</th>
<th>Have you participated in interviews or surveys before?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Level: 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic: Background</th>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>Question 4</th>
<th>Question 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>Name, age, city?</td>
<td>How would you describe yourself?</td>
<td>When was the last time you studied, what subject did you study then?</td>
<td>What did you do before starting at your current workplace?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td>How did you start at this job?</td>
<td>Could you tell us about your workplace?</td>
<td>How many employees?</td>
<td>How is the workplace organized?</td>
<td>What do you think about the workplace? Main pros, main cons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>What is your daily tasks?</td>
<td>Which parts do you enjoy the most?</td>
<td>Are any parts particularly challenging?</td>
<td>How much do you interact with colleagues in your role?</td>
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<td>Level: 2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Friendship characteristics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friendship culture in the workplace</strong> (overall)</td>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of relationships exists in your workplace?</td>
<td>What kind of activities are colleagues engaging in together?</td>
<td>In which physical settings do the workplace friendships take place?</td>
<td>How common is it that colleagues at your workplace engage in friendships with each other?</td>
<td>How do the employees at your workplace talk and engage with each other?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewee workplace friendships</strong> (interviewee specific)</td>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of relationships are you a part of in your workplace?</td>
<td>Which activities do you engage in together with your colleagues?</td>
<td>In which physical settings are your workplace friendships played out?</td>
<td>Is it common for you to engage in friendships at the workplace?</td>
<td>How do you engage and talk with your colleagues?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAK/REVIEW</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to take a break?</td>
<td>Do you have any thoughts or questions so far?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Causes for workplace friendship deterioration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Experience of workplace friendship deterioration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How common is workplace friendship deterioration in your workplace?</td>
<td>Does friendship deterioration affect your workplace, if so, how?</td>
<td>What is your experience of workplace friendship deterioration?</td>
<td>How do you feel about workplace friendship deterioration?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Causes for deterioration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Question 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>How was the relationship when the friendship deteriorated?</td>
<td>How did the friendship come to deteriorate?</td>
<td>How did the deterioration process look like?</td>
<td>What were the main causes for the deterioration?</td>
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<td>Do you have any specific workplace friendship that you want to base your answers to the rest of the questions on?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topic: Coping mechanisms</strong></td>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>Question 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping mechanisms</td>
<td>How did the friendship deterioration affect you?</td>
<td>How did you cope with the friendship deterioration?</td>
<td>How did it affect you personally/privately?</td>
<td>How did it affect you professionally?</td>
<td>Did the deterioration affect others in the workplace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping mechanisms</td>
<td>How did the other person act?</td>
<td>How did you act?</td>
<td>Did the managers notice, and if so, did it cause them to act?</td>
<td>How do you wish that the situation would have been handled?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did you feel when the friendship deteriorated?</td>
<td>How do you think that the situation would have played out if it happened today?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Finishing question</strong> (choose one/or multiple)</td>
<td>Now we are moving towards the end of the interview, how did it feel?</td>
<td>Anything you want to add?</td>
<td>Do you have any thoughts or ideas on how we could improve or change the interview setup?</td>
<td>How can we reach you?</td>
<td>Do you have any thoughts or questions about the interview?</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix 2b: Interview guide part two - Questions Swedish.

Intervjufrågor:

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nivå: 1</th>
<th>Fråga 1</th>
<th>Fråga 2</th>
<th>Fråga 3</th>
<th>Fråga 4</th>
<th>Fråga 5</th>
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<th>Fråga 4</th>
<th>Fråga 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hur ser relationerna ut på din arbetsplats?</td>
<td>Vilka typer av aktiviteter brukar ni kollegor delta i tillsammans?</td>
<td>I vilka sammanhang (fysiska platser) brukar arbetsrelaterade vänkaper utspela sig?</td>
<td>Hur vanligt är det att kollegor på din arbetsplats är vänner med varandra?</td>
<td>Hur pratar och interagerar dina kollegor med varandra på arbetsplatsen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAUS/ UTVÄRDERING</td>
<td>Vill du ta en paus?</td>
<td>Har du några tankar eller funderingar hittills?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ämne: Anledningar till fallerade vänskapsrelationer på arbetsplatsen</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erfarenhet av fallerade vänskapsrelationer på arbetsplatsen</th>
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|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anledningar till vänskapens avslut</th>
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<tr>
<th>Hur såg processen ut när vänskapsrelationen fallerade?</th>
<th>Hur kom det sig att vänskapen tog slut?</th>
<th>Vad var de huvudsakliga anledningarna till att relationen föll samman?</th>
<th>Hur var förhållandet när vänskapen fallerade/tog slut?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nivå: 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Åmne: Coping mechanisms</td>
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<td>Fråga 1</td>
<td>Fråga 2</td>
<td>Fråga 3</td>
<td>Fråga 4</td>
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Appendix 3a: Informed consent English.

Workplace Friendship Thesis - Interview Information

We are two students at Umeå School of Business, Economics, and Statistics, who during spring 2019 are writing our one-year master thesis. The thesis is written within the field of management. The purpose of the thesis is to research which coping mechanisms that are displayed by organizational members in service sectors when workplace friendships are deteriorated.

To collect data about this subject, we will conduct interviews with people who have experience of working within the service sector. The interviews will be recorded, and the final thesis will be published at the thesis portal DiVA. All respondents and other participating parties will be sent the final result of the study upon request.

Interview participation is voluntary, and even after the interview is started, it can be canceled at any time upon request. If a participant wants to exclude any part of the interview, that wish will be obeyed. Personal information, for example, name and name of the workplace, will be confidential and not visible in the final thesis. All participants will be anonymized. This is done to eliminate the risk that the shared information is traceable to the interviewee.

The interviews are expected to last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The questions will to some extent be pre-set, but departures might occur when it is believed to benefit the study.

If any questions arise, please contact menal.suliman@gmail.com and/or jennyuneby@gmail.com

Kind Regards,
Jenny Uneby and Menal Suliman
Umeå School of Business, Economics and Statistics

I have read this information and hereby give my consent for participating in this interview study,

____________________________
Full name:
Date:
Location:
Appendix 3b: Informed consent Swedish.

Vänskapsrelationer på arbetsplatsen - Intervjuinformation

Vi är två studenter på Handelshögskolan vid Umeå universitet, som under vårterminen 2019 skriver vår magisteruppsats inom Civilekonomprogrammet med inriktning mot Service Management. Uppsatsen skrivs inom forskningsområdet management. Syftet är att undersöka hur anställda inom service sektorn hanterar vänskapsrelationer som fallerar på arbetsplatsen.

Datainsamling kommer att ske genom intervjuer med personer som har erfarenhet av arbete inom service sektorn. Intervjuerna kommer att spelas in, och det slutgiltiga resultatet att delas via uppsatsportalen DiVA. Alla respondenter och övriga intressenter kommer att delges det slutliga resultatet vid förfrågan.

Deltagande i intervjuer sker på frivillig basis, och även efter att en intervju är startad kan den vid förfrågan avbrytas. Om en deltagare vill exkludera någon del ur intervjun, kommer förfrågan att beviljas. Personlig information, exempelvis namn och namn på arbetsplats, kommer att hanteras konfidentiellt och ej vara synlig i den slutgiltiga uppsatsen. Alla deltagare kommer att anonymiseras. Detta görs för att minimera risken att information som delgetts är spårbar till intervjudeltagaren.

Intervjuerna förväntas ta cirka 45 minuter till en timme i anspråk. Frågorna kommer till viss del att vara förbestämda, men sidospår kan förekomma vid tillfällen då det anses gynna studien.

Vid frågor, kontakta gärna menal.suliman@gmail.com och/eller jennyuneby@gmail.com

Vänligen,
Menal Suliman och Jenny Uneby
Handelshögskolan vid Umeå universitet

Jag har läst denna information och godkänner härmed att delta i denna intervjustudie,

______________________________
Namn:
Datum:
Plats:
Appendix 4: Textual transcription of interview 04.

J.U: mm, ehm, och hur mycket skulle du säga att du interagerar och samarbetar med dina kollegor på arbetsplatsen.

A: skulle ändå säga att det är på en väldigt hög grad eftersom vi jobbar väldigt mycket med kultur, till exempel nu har jag säljansvar eftersom jag är VD och har varit här längst. Men vi vill ju föra över den kompetensen och kunskapen och så till de andra. Så vi har ju till exempel månadsmöten där vi går igenom hur går det, hur känns det, hur mår vi, vad har gått bra och så vidare. Just nu på agendan är sälj, hur blir man bekväm med sälj om man inte varit säljare innan. Vi lär av varandra som är en del av värderings grunden som vi har och kommer från hip-hop "each one, teach one", det handlar om att alla är lärare och alla är elever beroende på vem som pratar, den som pratar är läraren och alla kan lära sig något. Eh, så att vi interagerar på olika sätt. Vi behöver inte alltid interagera fysiskt utan digitalt också där vi ser hur det går för alla.

Appendix 5: Nvivo.
Appendix 6a: Individual coding.

Appendix 6b: Individual coding.
Appendix 7: Final coding.
Appendix 8: Example of coded category - “Aftermath”
### Appendix 9: Deterioration causes, initial categories and number of occurrence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deterioration causes</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Promotion (2 mentions) | Emil 01  
Karin 05 |
| Treating colleagues differently (1 mention) | Emil 01 |
| Unclear decisions (1 mention) | Emil 01 |
| Love drama (2 mentions) | Emil 01  
Alfred 07 |
| Bad leadership (1 mention) | Emil 01 |
| Different perceptions on which tasks and areas each person are responsible for (2 mentions) | Emil 01  
Karin 05 |
| Difficulties to separate a personal and professional relationship (1 mention) | Emil 01 |
| Different level of ambition (2 mentions) | Emil 01  
Veera 09 |
| Lack of structure (1 mention) | Emil 01 |
| Reward co-workers differently (1 mention) | Emil 01 |
| Different salaries (2 mentions) | Emil 01  
Karin 05 |
| Difficulty to make decisions (2 mentions) | Emil 01  
Andreas 04 |
<p>| Jealousy (1 mention) | Sanna 02 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Contributors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatives (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Sanna 02, Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossip and colleagues talking behind each others backs (3 mentions)</td>
<td>Sanna 02, Erika 08, Veera 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perceptions on how tasks should be carried out (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Sanna 02, Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perceptions on workplace rules (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Sanna 02, Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different expectations (1 mention)</td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perceptions on workplace values (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Karin 05, Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different geographical locations (1 mention)</td>
<td>Karin 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perceptions (2 mention)</td>
<td>Niklas 06, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perceptions on how tasks should be prioritized (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Niklas 06, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lies regarding co-worker behaviour (1 mention)</td>
<td>Sanna 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not able to attend discussion due to workplace hierarchy (1 mention)</td>
<td>Sanna 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing information (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Adam 03, Karin 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad culture fit (1 mention)</td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Mentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneven power balance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers who do not finish tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial guarding</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guarding information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different personalities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power greediness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New colleagues in a set work group</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careful because of a friendship</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying for the same position as a colleague</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocrisy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distracting life events</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad times for the organization</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different culture (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different language (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different mindset (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old relationships (ex-partner) (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perceptions on moral values (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dividing into groups (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One people influencing others (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different political opinions (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ones work goes to waste (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotating hierarchies (1 mention)</td>
<td>Erika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different opinions (1 mention)</td>
<td>Erika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perceptions on leadership (1 mention)</td>
<td>Erika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness (1 mention)</td>
<td>Erika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfair division of labour hours (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Emil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having to satisfy different stakeholders (1 mention)</td>
<td>Veera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malicious comments (1 mention)</td>
<td>Veera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict avoidance (1 mention)</td>
<td>Veera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of self awareness (1 mention)</td>
<td>Veera</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 10: Deterioration causes, divided by respondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Deterioration causes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Emil</td>
<td>Promotion, treating colleagues differently, unclear decisions, love drama, unfair division of labour hours, bad leadership, different perceptions on which tasks and areas each person are responsible for, difficulties to separate a personal and professional relationship, different level of ambition, lack of structure, reward co-workers differently, different salaries, difficulty to make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Sanna</td>
<td>Jealousy, relatives, gossip and colleagues talking behind each other’s backs, different perceptions on how tasks should be carried out, different perceptions on workplace rules, lies regarding co-worker behaviour, not able to attend discussion due to workplace hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Adam</td>
<td>Different perceptions on how tasks should be carried out, different perceptions on workplace rules, missing information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Andreas</td>
<td>Different perceptions on workplace values, bad culture fit, bad communication, hierarchy, different expectations, uneven power balance, relatives’, difficulty to make decisions, bad communication, co-workers who do not finish tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 Karin</td>
<td>Territorial guarding, guarding information, different perceptions on workplace values, different perceptions on which tasks and areas each person are responsible for, missing information, different personalities, manipulation, power greediness, new colleagues in a set work group, different geographical locations, careful because of a friendship, promotion, applying for the same position as a colleague, different salaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 Niklas</td>
<td>Different perceptions, different perceptions on how tasks should be prioritized, co-workers who do not finish tasks, hypocrisy, distracting life events, bad communication, bad times for the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>07 Alfred</strong></td>
<td>Different culture, different language, different mindset, old relationships (ex-partner), different perceptions on moral values, co-workers who do not finish tasks, bad communication, dividing into groups, love drama, one people influencing others, different political opinions, one’s work goes to waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08 Erika</strong></td>
<td>Different opinions, rotating hierarchies, gossip and colleagues talking behind each other’s backs, different perceptions on leadership, bad communication, different perceptions, unfairness, different perceptions on how tasks should be carried out, unfair division of labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09 Veera</strong></td>
<td>Co-workers who do not finish tasks, bad communication, different level of ambition, having to satisfy different stakeholders, manipulative, malicious comments, conflict avoidance, gossip and colleagues talking behind each other’s backs, different personalities, lack of self-awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 11: Coping mechanisms, divided by respondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Coping mechanisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>01 Emil</strong></td>
<td>Faked a smile, became quiet, talked to manager, open arguments, talked to other colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>02 Sanna</strong></td>
<td>Denial, apologize, blamed others, became quiet, talked with other colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>03 Adam</strong></td>
<td>Changed friend group, became quiet, tried to mediate, backed off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>04 Andreas</strong></td>
<td>Quit job, walked away and left unfinished tasks, manipulated hours, tried to stay in contact, talked with other colleagues, change own perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>05 Karin</strong></td>
<td>Became quiet, backed off, talked to manager, ignored issue, open arguments, quit job, confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>06 Niklas</strong></td>
<td>Talked to the colleague, confrontation, talked with partner, strengthen arguments with colleagues’ similar experiences, backed off, talked to manager, talked with other colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>07 Alfred</strong></td>
<td>Talked to the colleague, confrontation, open arguments, quit job, tried to mediate, separate people and problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08 Erika</strong></td>
<td>Talked with other colleagues, quit job, talked to manager, talked with the colleague, talked with partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09 Veera</strong></td>
<td>Proactive arrangements, change own perspective, separate people and problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 12: Coping mechanisms, initial categories and number of occurrence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping mechanism and number of occurrence</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talked to other colleagues (5 mentions)</td>
<td>Emil 01, Sanna 02, Andreas 04, Niklas 06, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became quiet (4 mentions)</td>
<td>Emil 01, Sanna 02, Adam 03, Karin 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to manager (4 mentions)</td>
<td>Emil 01, Karin 05, Niklas 06, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quit job (4 mentions)</td>
<td>Andreas 04, Karin 05, Alfred 07, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open arguments (3 mentions)</td>
<td>Emil 01, Karin 05, Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backed off (3 mentions)</td>
<td>Karin 05, Niklas 06, Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation (3 mentions)</td>
<td>Karin 05, Niklas 06, Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to the colleague (3 mentions)</td>
<td>Niklas 06, Alfred 07, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Name 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to mediate (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed own perspective (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked with partner (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Niklas 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate people and problem (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Veera 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faked a smile (1 mention)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial (1 mention)</td>
<td>Sanna 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologize (1 mention)</td>
<td>Sanna 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blamed others (1 mention)</td>
<td>Sanna 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed friend group (1 mention)</td>
<td>Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked away and left unfinished tasks (1 mention)</td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulated hours (1 mention)</td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to stay in contact (1 mention)</td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignored issue (1 mention)</td>
<td>Karin 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen arguments with colleagues’ similar experiences (1 mention)</td>
<td>Niklas 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive arrangements (1 mention)</td>
<td>Veera 09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix 13: Workplace activities, divided by respondent.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Workplace activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Emil</td>
<td>After work, dinner, competitions, pentathlon, floorball team, soccer team, board game nights, cinema, gym, often team building focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Sanna</td>
<td>Dinner, coffee and tea breaks, workplace meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Adam</td>
<td>Workshops, sport, FIFA, Christmas night, staff parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Andreas</td>
<td>Monthly meetings, barbeque, bowling, dinner, healthcare investments with PT training sessions, running races, after work, coffee breaks, lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 Karin</td>
<td>Workplace meetings, TV games, bowling, dinner, wheelchair floorball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 Niklas</td>
<td>Meetings, group work, lectures, after work, planning days, running races, coffee breaks, birthday celebrations, beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Alfred</td>
<td>Baptisms, birthdays, dinner, football, basket, traveling, inspiration travel, festivals, skiing, conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 Erika</td>
<td>Thursday coffee break, lunch with the different departments, after work, staff parties, running races</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 Veera</td>
<td>Morning meetings, casual Friday meetings, family days, gratitude and network days, dinner, meditation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 14: Workplace activities, divided by activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace activities</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After work (4 mentions)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Niklas 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner (6 mentions)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sanna 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veera 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karin 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitions (1 mention)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentathlon (1 mention)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floorball team (1 mention)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board game nights (1 mention)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym (1 mention)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema (1 mention)</td>
<td>Emil 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee and tea breaks (4 mentions)</td>
<td>Sanna 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Niklas 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace meetings (5 mentions)</td>
<td>Sanna 02, Karin 05, Veera 08, Niklas 06, Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops (1 mention)</td>
<td>Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport (1 mention)</td>
<td>Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIFA (1 mention)</td>
<td>Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff parties (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Adam 03, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas night (1 mention)</td>
<td>Adam 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbeque (1 mention)</td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare investments with PT training sessions (1 mention)</td>
<td>Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running races (3 mentions)</td>
<td>Andreas 04, Niklas 06, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Andreas 04, Erika 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV games (1 mention)</td>
<td>Karin 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Karin 05, Andreas 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair floorball (1 mention)</td>
<td>Karin 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work (1 mention)</td>
<td>Niklas 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures (1 mention)</td>
<td>Niklas 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning days (1 mention)</td>
<td>Niklas 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking beer (1 mention)</td>
<td>Niklas 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthday celebrations (2 mentions)</td>
<td>Niklas 06, Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptisms (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basket (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveling (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration travel for work (festivals, skiing) (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences (1 mention)</td>
<td>Alfred 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation (1 mention)</td>
<td>Veera 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network days (1 mention)</td>
<td>Veera 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude days (1 mention)</td>
<td>Veera 08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>