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# Teachers' Time for Planning, Assessment and Development Connected to Staff Well-Being in Early Childhood Education

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## Abstract

The planning, assessment and development (PAD) of pedagogy carried out by early childhood education (ECE) teachers is an important quality factor in ECE. In Finland, the working hours reserved for PAD tasks for ECE teachers were increased from 8 to 13% in 2018. The purpose of this study was to investigate ECE teachers' and centre directors' perceptions of the impact of increased PAD hours on the well-being of ECE staff. Based on the mixed-methods approach, 325 ECE teachers and 107 ECE centre directors participated in the study. The results of the study indicated that, apart from the atmosphere in the work community, the impact of working hours on the well-being at work was positive. In particular, the reform has increased the well-being of teachers at work. The increased PAD hours have had only a minor impact on the well-being of all staff.

**Keywords:** early childhood education, planning, assessment, development, well-being

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out how early childhood education (ECE) teachers and centre directors perceive the links between increased planning, assessment and development (PAD) hours and the well-being of ECE staff. PAD work is seen as an important factor in the quality of ECE and pedagogy [1, 2]. In the basics of the *National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care* [2], the importance of pedagogy as a whole has become more important than before, which has increased the number of statutory responsibilities and planning of ECE teachers. In spring 2018, a new contractual regulation entered into force in ECE, both in the municipal and private sectors, which increased PAD work for ECE teachers, special teachers and centre directors from 8 to 13% [3].

The contractual regulation also defined guidelines for the organization of PAD hours. Firstly, PAD hours are intended for planning, assessment and development work outside the children's group, which is included in the rosters when the presence of an ECE teacher and pedagogical expertise in the children's group are not

necessary. There must be sufficient and suitable length of PAD hours, and the variation of the needs of PAD hours during the year is taken into account. In addition, the workplace must have sufficient calm facilities and equipment for working, and part of the PAD hours must also be available outside the workplace if necessary [3].

As the reform of working hours in PAD is fairly recent, research into its implementation and impact on ECE is still limited. Ranta, Tilli and Kettumäki [4] carried out a study on the implementation of PAD hours for ECE teachers. Their report showed that implementing PAD hours in accordance with the new policies is challenging. Other challenges in the implementation in particular included shift planning, adequacy of facilities and appropriate equipment, adequacy of personnel, and an understanding of the importance of PAD and the tasks involved. As the spring 2018 reform of PAD hours aimed to meet the increased demands of ECE teachers' work in addition to improving the quality of pedagogy and ECE [3], this study focuses on the impact of the increased PAD hours on the well-being of ECE teachers and the entire ECE centre staff.

### 1.1 Planning, assessment and development in ECE

Every child has the right to receive ECE and to participate in pedagogical activities that are planned, goal-oriented activities carried out by ECE professionals; the activities aim to support well-being and create the best possible conditions for learning and development [1, 2]. Documents guiding ECE, ECE curricula and information on the child's development, growth, learning and its content form the basis and objectives for pedagogy [2, 5–8]. Planning is carried out on many levels, including child group plans, individual plans and plans for the ECE centre environment ([7], p. 62–63).

Assessment is a key form of pedagogy that provides information on children, a group of children, the ECE centre environment and the operational culture [9]. This information, in turn, serves as a basis for the planning of ECE and for the development of activities [7], and it is carried out for both a longer and shorter period as a process that is constantly built and transformed by new information obtained through assessment [9–11]. The aim of ECE is to implement pedagogy that is child-centred and inclusive of children and that offers children unifying learning experiences [2]. By assessing the knowledge, strengths and aspirations of children collected through observations and documentation, as well as environmental development needs, educators form an idea of what kinds of pedagogical activities are needed, what objectives are set for activities and development, and how the competences and practices of ECE staff are developed [8, 12]. The goal-oriented implementation of planning, assessment and development is a key part of the national and international quality indicators for ECE [10, 12–14].

In Finnish ECE settings, an ECE teacher usually works for a team of educators with one or two childcare nurses or with a social educator specializing in ECE and a childcare nurse. Due to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care [1] and the basics of the *National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care* [2], the pedagogical responsibility of the ECE teachers has increased. The pedagogical responsibility of an ECE teacher includes the planning, assessment and development of the pedagogical activities of a group of children. Pedagogy is carried out in cooperation with the team [2]. The importance of ECE teachers' expertise for pedagogical quality has also been recognized internationally [15–17]. Therefore, in many countries around the world, ECE teachers are increasingly expected to act as the pedagogical leader in their teams and to participate in the pedagogical planning, assessment and development at the centre level [15, 16, 18].

## 1.2 Well-being at work in ECE

There is a clear link between the organization of ECE work and the conditions in the working environment. Good working conditions affect well-being, particularly motivation and job satisfaction [12]. International studies have also increasingly shown that early childhood educators' well-being at work is linked to their ability to deliver quality ECE [19–23]. The educators' well-being and the quality of the interactions between the educator and children and the working conditions also have an indirect impact on the development of children [12, 21, 23].

Research sees well-being at work as a broad and holistic phenomenon. Well-being is influenced by a variety of physical, mental, social or organizational factors that an employee can experience as either negative, burdensome or positive [19–22]. The theory commonly used in research (e.g., refs. [20, 22]) is Demerouti et al.'s [24] model of job demands and resources that affect well-being at work. Job demands refer to the challenging, even stressful, qualities of work, while job resources are the qualities that can lighten the demands of work [20]. The work community can have both stress factors that negatively impact well-being at work and positive resource factors at the same time [20, 22]. The ECE sector has been described as demanding [21, 25]. In particular, burdensome stressors have been described, such as haste, lack of human resources and large groups of children [26, 27], ambiguity about the work tasks of different professional groups, a noisy working environment and conflict in the work community (e.g., ref. [26]). However, studies have shown that ECE also has factors that support well-being and make work feel rewarding despite its demands [21, 22, 25].

ECE work is very interactive, and the social environment, atmosphere and interactive relationships play a key role in well-being at work (see ref. [19, 21, 22, 25]). Studies show that the well-being of the individual is also important for the well-being of the entire work community. Motivated and healthy workers perform better in their jobs and are better able to utilize their own resources and commit to work [20], which, in turn, has a positive impact on the entire work community, including children and adults, improving the well-being and efficiency of the work community (see refs. [22, 28]).

To account for the diversity of well-being at work and the individual and community dimensions, the links between increased PAD hours and well-being at work were examined from two perspectives in this study. First, this study explores the impact of increased PAD hours on the well-being of teachers themselves, and second, it examines how the ECE centre directors understand that the increased PAD hours have affected the well-being of the entire work community. The perceptions were examined in terms of work motivation, coping with work, the social climate of the work community and organizational factors.

## 2. Implementation of the study

The study took advantage of the mixed methods approach. The data were collected through a questionnaire for ECE staff which contained both quantitative measurement-based sections and open questions to be analyzed qualitatively. Such a convergent design is used to find a view of the same research focus produced by quantitative and qualitative data and analysis. Presumably, research findings from quantitative and qualitative items can strengthen each other through “similar findings”, but they may provide new and different perspectives on the studied phenomenon ([29] p. 68–77).

In this study, the impact of increased PAD hours on the well-being of ECE teachers and all staff was studied through the views of ECE teachers and centre directors;



teachers assessed the impact on their own well-being at work and directors on the well-being of all staff at work. For this reason, separate information collection forms were prepared for the teachers and the directors of the ECE centres. The quantitative section included the same items for both the teachers and directors. The quantitative survey on well-being at work was developed using previous well-being research carried out in the context of ECE and focusing on four themes: well-being factors related to work motivation (4 items), work management and coping (5 items), the organization of teamwork (4 items) and atmosphere of the work community (3 items). Respondents were asked to assess whether the increased PAD hours have had a positive, negative or no impact on each factor of well-being at work. The qualitative section included some of the same open-ended questions for teachers and directors, while both also had their own questions. In the open-ended questions, only the directors were asked how the PAD hours have affected the management of well-being at work. Other open questions examined the importance of the increase in PAD hours for the quality and leadership of pedagogy. The answers to these questions were used in this study and addressed the changes caused by the increase in PAD hours from the perspective of well-being at work.

The research data were collected in ECE centres in 10 municipalities across Finland and from two ECE organizations in the private sector. A total of 325 ECE teachers and 107 ECE centre directors participated in the study. The data were collected using an electronic questionnaire. A link to the electronic survey was provided to the contact person of the organization, who sent the form links to the ECE centre's teachers and directors. Consequently, the investigators never had direct contact with the participants. The survey was carried out in February 2019, and participants had three weeks to respond to the survey. Among the ECE teacher participants, 87.1% ( $N = 283$ ) worked in the municipal ECE centres and 12.3% ( $N = 40$ ) of teachers worked in the private sector organizations. Regarding the two ECE teachers who responded to the survey, the information about whether they worked in the private or municipal sectors was missing. In turn, 73.8% ( $N = 79$ ) of the ECE centre directors worked in municipal ECE centres and 26.2% ( $N = 28$ ) in the private sector organizations.

The quantitatively analyzed part of the study produced an overview of the well-being at work experienced by teachers and all staff. Well-being at work in general was approached from the perspective of both respondent groups. The information allows teachers to assess their own well-being, while ECE directors assess the well-being of all staff. In addition, the data analysis made it possible to combine the data of teachers and directors, thereby examining whether there is a difference in the responses of teachers and directors and whether they may place different emphases on different issues. To analyze this, descriptive statistics methods were used. It was therefore possible to examine whether the increase in PAD hours in the informant groups is perceived as positive or negative for well-being at work, or in such a way that it has no effect. Although this study systematically only allows for the examination of the links between variables, the links are reported as impacts in order to maintain "genuine" assessments of the impact of the increased PAD hours carried out by the informant groups.

The answers to the open questions were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which was carried out theoretically so that open responses were first approached in a data-driven manner based on the content; finally, the results of the analysis were compared with the existing theoretical concepts [30]. The texts on well-being at work were coded using the Atlas.ti 8.4 program. Based on their similarities, the codes were grouped into two main categories. The first category included impacts on the individuals' work motivation and coping with work. The second category is about the impact on the atmosphere and functionality of the work community. Both categories included themes that highlighted, firstly, the positive impacts of increased PAD hours and, secondly, the negative impacts on well-being at work.

Finally, the results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses were examined in parallel. Based on the analysis, while the quantitative and qualitative data partly confirmed the same conclusions, the qualitative data also supplemented and deepened the quantitative data. In addition, the qualitative data provided information on themes that were not included in the quantitative data.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Work motivation

The study examined how the increase in PAD working hours is linked to the enthusiasm of ECE teachers and all staff for work, dedication to work, appreciation of work and enjoyment of work. **Table 1** shows that the increase in PAD hours has largely had a positive impact on these factors. In terms of dedication to work and appreciation of work, the views of teachers and directors were along the same lines. However, teachers assessed the impact of the increase in PAD hours on enthusiasm for work and enjoyment of work more positively than directors reported for all staff.

In the qualitative data, enthusiasm for work, dedication to work and enjoyment of work were expressed in teachers' reports of how they had better time to take care of their assigned duties and also invest in the quality of the work due to the increased PAD hours. According to the teachers, the development of the pedagogical activities of the children's group and the competence of the educator team have increased since the change. Deepening into the key tasks of the work has increased teachers' work motivation and dedication to work, as well as the appreciation of work. According to the teachers, the work has become more meaningful, which was reflected in the following examples in the data:

*More time for implementation, information searches, new ideas. You get excited about work when you're inventing something new. The meaningfulness of the work is maintained, and enthusiasm is reflected in good ECE. (Teacher 90)*

*Working is more meaningful, there is a taste for doing it! (Teacher 62)*

*I personally appreciate my teaching and pedagogical leadership in the team. (Teacher 34)*

Work motivation	ECE teachers (%)				ECE directors (%)			
	Positively	No effect	Negatively	In total	Positively	No effect	Negatively	In total
Enthusiasm for work	67.7	21.7	10.6	100% (N = 313)	49	33.3	17.7	100% (N = 102)
Dedication to work	63.4	29.5	7.1	100% (N = 309)	55.9	37.2	6.9	100% (N = 102)
Appreciation of work	64.6	28.6	6.8	100% (N = 311)	58.8	34.3	6.9	100% (N = 102)
Enjoyment of work	61.2	27.9	10.9	100% (N = 312)	46.0	35.0	19.0	100% (N = 100)

**Table 1.**  
ECE teachers' and directors' perceptions of the impact of increased PAD working hours on the factors of work motivation.

On the other hand, the additional resources allocated to teachers for PAD tasks were also seen to have a negative impact on the motivation and enjoyment of work by other professional groups in the work community. In the following example, the teacher describes his concern, in particular, about the weakening motivation of childcare nurses at work:

*Overall, the increase in the PAD period is a good thing, but we should have thought about resourcing it. If the nurses “patch up” all the planning time, their motivation to work will inevitably decrease. (Teacher 10)*

The impact of PAD hours on enthusiasm and enjoyment of work was also highlighted in the answers where teachers and directors described that changes related to PAD working hours have not yet been made to work in practice. Unimplemented PAD hours and the difficulties and challenges related to organizing it caused dissatisfaction for both directors and teachers, but especially for teachers.

3.2 Managing work and coping with work

The assessment of the impact of increased PAD hours on work management and coping with work included five sections: balance between skills and goals, a feeling of capability and sufficiency, stress, workload and coping with work (Table 2). A large proportion of both teachers and directors showed that the increased PAD hours have positively impacted the balance of staff skills and goals. Moreover, both teachers and directors rated the impact on a feeling of capability and sufficiency as largely positive. In terms of stress, workload and coping with work, the results were similar to the previous one. All the results showed that teachers experienced the impacts of the increase in PAD hours on work management and coping with work more positively than the directors assessed the impact for all ECE staff.

Teachers explain the positive impact of increased PAD hours on the balance of skills and goals, as well as the feeling of capability and sufficiency. With increased

Work management and coping with work	ECE teachers (%)				ECE directors (%)			
	Positively	No effect	Negatively	In total	Positively	No effect	Negatively	In total
Balance between skills and goals	50.3	32.4	17.3	100% (N = 312)	42.0	36.0	22.0	100% (N = 100)
Feeling of capability and sufficiency	56.9	25.4	17.7	100% (N = 311)	43.1	26.5	30.4	100% (N = 102)
Stress	44.7	34.0	21.3	100% (N = 309)	27.5	34.7	37.8	100% (N = 98)
Workload	44.6	33.9	21.5	100% (N = 307)	26.3	39.4	34.3	100% (N = 99)
Coping with work	59.0	27.2	13.8	100% (N = 312)	38.4	39.4	22.2	100% (N = 99)

**Table 2.**  
*ECE teachers’ and directors’ perceptions of the impact of increased PAD working hours on work management and coping with work.*

PAD hours, teachers have more opportunities to develop their skills. Skills, in turn, was seen as a support to meet the demands of work, as shown by the following quote: *"There has been time to have access to documents and the law and to comply with them in own work, so responsibility has improved"* (Teacher 23).

The perceptions of directors and teachers differ when they assess the impact of the increase in PAD hours on work management and coping with work. Directors felt more negative impacts of the increase in PAD hours in all aspects of work management and coping than teachers experienced. For example, in terms of stress, according to one ECE teacher (Teacher 146), increased PAD working hours *"ease the feeling of stress at work when there is little more time to carry out tasks that are responsible, such as curricula."* On the one hand, some teachers felt that with the increased PAD hours, the expectations placed on them have increased, thereby increasing their sense of stress. Directors, on the other hand, felt that the change in working hours has increased stress throughout the staff.

ECE teachers showed that increased PAD hours have reduced the burden of their own work. Directors' views on the impact of the increase in PAD hours on the staff's workload varied; some felt that the increased PAD hours negatively impacted the workload of all staff, while others realized that the change had been positive, i.e. reduced the burden on the staff. In terms of coping with work, ECE centre directors experienced the impact of the increase in PAD working hours to be positive rather than negative. However, teachers considered their impact on coping with work to be clearly more positive than the directors.

In the qualitative data collected from teachers, better coping with work and reduced workload experienced by teachers were associated with the structure of work, that is, better manageability and feasibility of work. One teacher (127) recognizes the following:

*"Now during working hours, [PAD] has been allowed to do the work, and it has reduced stress and brought a new flow to the work. I used to spend a lot of my own time because I always had pedagogical responsibility, and it seemed that the planning time was not enough for the curricula planning, preparing and evaluating activities and studying new things, etc."*

Teachers also felt that a calm and concentration-supporting environment was meaningful for efficient, high-quality work. In addition, teachers describe how they are now better able to focus on children when working in a child group, and they do not need to think about planning, assessment and development tasks at the same time: *"The working day clearly consists of work in a group of children and PAD working time. When you're in a group of kids, you're just there for them, and everything else is done elsewhere"* (Teacher 274).

On the other hand, PAD hours outside teachers' child groups are seen as rather contradictory when considering the workload on the whole educator team and group of children. Teacher 15 analyzed that *"this is like a double-edged sword if we have to leave the child group at the same time we are needed in the group in the middle of the day due to the planning time."* Directors were also concerned about how the increased absence of teachers from the group affects the rest of the team's workload and exhaustion. The issue also made the directors ponder from the viewpoint of how smaller human resources and the absence of a pedagogically educated teacher from the group affect the work with children and, consequently, their safety and well-being. Director 66 even questioned PAD working hours, writing: *"Is the teacher's responsibility and discretion for children's well-being diminished at the expense of the PAD time?"*



3.3 Organization of teamwork

The impact of teachers’ increased PAD hours on the organization of teamwork was examined by assessing four sections: the clarity of roles and tasks, possibilities for utilizing strengths and skills, experiences of creativity and freedom at work, and possibilities to develop and influence (**Table 3**).

The extra PAD hours have clarified the roles and duties of different professional groups in ECE centres. The majority of both teachers and directors felt that PAD had a positive impact on clarifying the roles and tasks of different professional groups in the work community. Qualitative data also showed that the increase in PAD hours clarified the job images of different professional groups, thus supporting the effectiveness of cooperation among the ECE centre’s education teams.

*Everyone knows their role and their job, which clarifies the structure of the whole day. There seems to be time for the children. And planning work is in everyone's interest. It will be up to the director to enable the PAD period. (Director 5)*

In particular, directors pointed out that PAD hours clarified the role and pedagogical responsibility of teachers on the team. According to the directors, it is also important to pay attention to clarifying the tasks of other professional groups and to realize that the strengths of other team members will be utilized in the activities.

Both teachers and ECE centre directors perceived that the increased PAD hours have positively impacted the utilization of strengths and competences in the work community. Teachers and directors felt that the increase in PAD hours has supported the utilization of the skills and strengths of different professional groups at work. According to the teachers’ and directors’ assessments, the additional PAD hours have strengthened the experiences of creativity and freedom at work. However, almost the same number of directors expressed that the change has not affected staff creativity and freedom. The qualitative data from teachers described that opportunities to brainstorm and develop pedagogical activities had improved.

According to both respondent groups, the increase in PAD working hours has mainly had a positive impact on the possibilities of developing and influencing the work of the ECE staff. Teachers pointed out the extra hours have supported

Organization of teamwork	ECE teachers (%)				ECE directors (%)			
	Positively	No effect	Negatively	In total	Positively	No effect	Negatively	In total
Clarity of roles and tasks	51.8	30.5	17.7	100% (N = 311)	56.7	19.2	24.1	100% (N = 104)
Strengths and skills	68.5	26.4	5.1	100% (N = 311)	60.8	32.3	6.9	100% (N = 102)
Creativity and freedom at work	64.6	25.7	9.7	100% (N = 311)	44.5	43.6	11.9	100% (N = 101)
Possibilities to develop and influence	61.7	30.5	7.8	100% (N = 308)	55.0	36.0	9.0	100% (N = 100)

**Table 3.**  
*Early childhood education teachers and directors’ perceptions of the impact of increased PAD working hours on the organization of teamwork.*

the development of both their own competence and the pedagogy of the children’s group. Directors also expressed the same point of view: with more PAD hours, teachers are able to spend more time studying, evaluating and developing matters. The possibilities for development and influence for teachers were perceived to have increased because the teachers are now better able to detach from the group of children and participate in pedagogical discussion with other staff outside his or her own educator team. In particular, increased cooperation between teachers was seen as important from a professional and developmental point of view regarding pedagogy in ECE.

3.4 Atmosphere in the work community

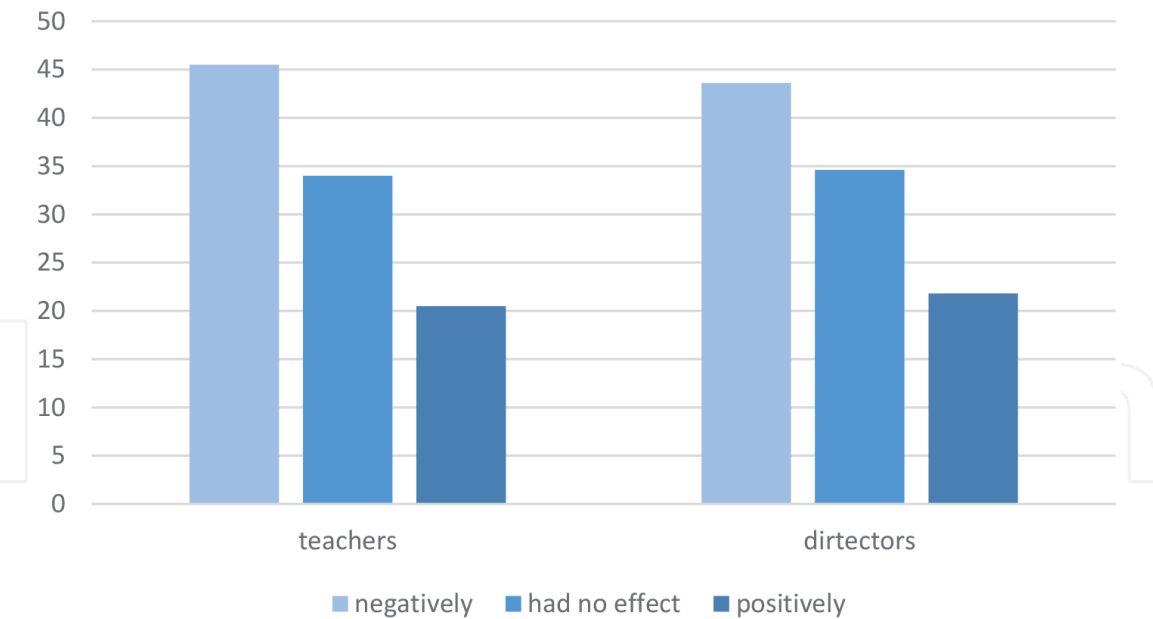
The impacts of the increase in PAD hours on the atmosphere of work communities in ECE were approached in three sections: a sense of appreciation and trust in the work community, the emotional atmosphere of the work community and interaction and communication. The overview of the link between increased PAD hours and the atmosphere in the work community, as created in **Table 4**, showed that the increase in working hours was either seen to not have had an impact on the atmosphere of the work community or was seen as negative. However, an interesting exception of the impact on the atmosphere in the work community is that nearly half of the directors believe that increased PAD hours have positively impacted appreciation and trust in the work community. One-third of teachers also felt that the increase in PAD hours had positive effects on both appreciation and trust in the work community, as well as on interaction and communication.

Among all the elements of well-being at work studied (**Tables 1–3**), the emotional atmosphere of the work community was the only factor that both teachers and directors felt was mostly negatively affected (**Figure 1**).

Qualitative data reinforced the finding that the appreciation of work has increased: *“The work of ECE teachers has received more appreciation, which supports well-being. Teachers are allowed to plan their work; their duties have become clearer”* (Director 2). However, qualitative material showed that as the role of teacher has strengthened and appreciation has been gained, childcare nurses have begun to feel that their work is no longer appreciated. The following example shows how childcare nurses, according to the ECE director, find a resource allocated to teachers as unequal:

Atmosphere	ECE teachers (%)				ECE directors (%)			
	Positively	No effect	Negatively	In total	Positively	No effect	Negatively	In total
Appreciation and trust in the work community	34.4	47.5	18.1	100% (N = 299)	44.9	33.7	21.4	100% (N = 98)
Emotional atmosphere of the work community	20.5	34.0	45.5	100% (N = 303)	21.8	34.6	43.6	100% (N = 101)
Interaction and communication	33.9	42.4	23.7	100% (N = 304)	36.6	45.6	17.8	100% (N = 101)

**Table 4.**  
*Perceptions of ECE teachers and directors about the effects of increased PAD working hours on the atmosphere in the work community.*



**Figure 1.**  
*Perceptions of ECE professionals regarding the effects of increased PAD hours on the emotional atmosphere of the work community.*

*The increase in PAD time has clarified the job description of the ECE teachers, underlining the importance of pedagogical responsibility. When dealing with the changes, it should be remembered that they affect the work of all members of the work community, not just teachers. Childcare nurses said that they feel that their skills are not appreciated, and that they have to be responsible for the group very much when the teachers are planning. (Director 34)*

Both groups of respondents interpreted the deterioration of the atmosphere as partly due to the fact that different professional groups have different views on the need for PAD hours and their significance. According to directors and teachers, childcare nurses in particular seem to have a negative attitude towards working hours.

*It has not yet been achieved for all professional groups to see that a properly used PAD time would support the whole community. (Director 10)*

*Childcare nurses are embittered by the fact that ECE teachers have the right to plan. They feel it's away from them, and they're not appreciated. It affects the atmosphere of the team a lot. (Teacher 73)*

This contradiction, in turn, affects teachers' feelings and consciences to use PAD hours in accordance with the law, as described in the following example: "The problem is that you can't hold it without everyone or someone in your neighborhood and own team feeling bad, which completely ruins the atmosphere, and you can't hold the whole PAD" (Teacher 67). In addition, the directors pointed out that there have also been various attitudes towards PAD working hours in ECE at different levels of administration. It has made it difficult to agree on the working time practices.

*As a leader, I think I have been wondering about the negative attitude of the administration and some colleagues towards the PAD period. It has not been internalized enough, which is what evaluation and development means. (Director 6)*

Despite the weakened atmosphere, the impact of increased PAD hours on interaction and communication in the work community was seen by both respondent groups (**Table 4**) as more positive than negative. However, most teachers and directors believed that the reform has not affected interaction and communication. In the qualitative material, interaction and communication were highlighted in critical comments about the non-inclusion of staff team meetings to the teachers' PAD hours.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study examined experiences within ECE centres on how the increased PAD hours of ECE teachers have affected the well-being of ECE centre staff at work. The results showed that the increase in PAD hours has generally strengthened well-being at work in ECE. The increased PAD hours have particularly enhanced well-being at work for ECE teachers, while the change has strengthened the well-being of all ECE staff less. The results also showed that the increase in PAD hours has negatively impacted the atmosphere of the work community, that is, it has increased conflicts and experiences of inequality.

With stronger well-being at work, teachers' increased PAD hours can be seen as having had a number of positive impacts on ECE. Based on this study, the increase in PAD hours has been able to support the ability of ECE teachers to respond to the increased responsibilities and expectations assigned to them. Increased PAD hours have supported teachers' pedagogical work from two perspectives: it has strengthened their ability to carry out their work during working hours, thereby also strengthening their ability to cope with work. In addition, with the increased hours, the importance of pedagogy and pedagogical expertise in ECE have become clearer, which has also contributed to supporting teachers' work and work motivation. The previous research also showed the importance of employee well-being for the quality of work (see refs. [19–21]).

With the increase in PAD hours, the teachers' work and pedagogy are appreciated more. The increase also seems to be linked to an increase in pedagogical awareness. It has strengthened the perceptions of ECE teachers both around the importance of pedagogical work and the relevance of their own professional work in the implementation of pedagogy. PAD working hours have increased cooperation between teachers, which, in turn, had a positive impact on their well-being at work, their sense of work community and collegial peer support.

For all staff, the impact of the increase in teachers' working hours has been rather limited. However, in the entire work community, well-being factors related to work motivation have increased. Similarly, the organization of work and teamwork was seen as positive. On the other hand, the reform had a debilitating impact on the emotional atmosphere of work communities. Although the increase in PAD hours strengthened staff resources in PAD and thus positively impacted well-being at work, it has caused problems within the work community. Teachers' working hours have increased the uncertainty of other educational professional staff about their own expertise and role. This may explain the negative impact of the reform on the work atmosphere that was highlighted in the study. Teacher absences from the child groups during PAD hours place a burden on other educators from that group. Previous studies have also seen the lack of human resources as a burden on staff [26, 27].

This study revealed clear challenges in organizational development to the leadership of pedagogical planning, assessment and development, especially human resources management. The increase in PAD working hours has brought tension



into the atmosphere of the work community. The challenge of leadership is to tackle them, clarify the roles of different professional groups in practical work and strengthen pedagogical leadership to involve all actors. The relevance of the competences of different professional groups should be strengthened from the perspective of ensuring the overall development and well-being of the child. Clear roles based on competence profiles increase the functionality of the educator teams and the well-being of the staff. Good organization of ECE and the clarity of work tasks are important factors that affect well-being at work [12, 26].

The evaluation of this study must consider that directors assessed well-being at work from the perspective of the entire work community. Teachers' assessments of their own well-being at work were more positive for most factors than those of the entire staff. While it is important to include directors in this study, it can be considered a limitation to exclude other people as respondents. In any case, this study demonstrated the need to examine the impact of the change in teachers' work not only from the teachers' point of view but also from the perspectives of other employees in the work community. In this study, quantitative and qualitative data supported each other, confirming findings and providing mutually explanatory or complementary perspectives.

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