# Managing the Managerial Availability Paradox

A Cross-sectional Study of Top Managers' Views on Their Availability

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# ABSTRACT

**Title:** Managing the Managerial Availability Paradox - A Cross-sectional Study of Nine Top Managers' Views on Their Availability

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**Key Words:** availability, identity, managerial work, paradox, unavailability

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to increase the understanding of managerial availability and the relating complexities of managerial availability as an aspect of managerial work.

**Methodology:** This research has an interpretative perspective. It was carried out with a qualitative approach and takes on a social constructionist point of view. The research's focus on subjective perceptions of managers and their personal views on availability therefore becomes a result of this ontological position where the managers, in relation to their surroundings, construct their realities. Nine semi-structured interviews with nine top managers have been conducted. The collected empirical material has been systematized, categorized and analyzed.

**Theoretical Perspectives:** The field of managerial availability has been examined in this research. Due to the lack of excessive theory and literature within this focus area, other relevant theories have been introduced. These are managerial work, discourse, identity and attachment theory. These have been used as analytical tools in analyzing the empirical material.

**Empirical Foundations:** To collect empirical material, nine semi-structured interviews with top managers in knowledge-intensive organizations situated in or close to the region of Skåne, Sweden, have been conducted.

**Conclusion:** The identified views on managerial availability as being (1) important, (2) inescapable and (3) a challenge help understand what constitute managerial availability and its significance in managerial work. The views are perceived to have a noticeable effect on how managerial work is carried out. The evident complexity of how managerial availability is viewed, defined as the "managerial availability paradox", was found to risk leading to stress, fragile personal identities and hampering managerial efficiency in managerial work. Three strategies of understanding how to cope with the managerial availability paradox were identified as (1) affect expectations, (2) rewrite the facts and (3) speech of defence.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Top managers and their activities are considered to be very important to an organization (Eriksson-Zetterquist, Müllers & Styhre, 2011). For example, managers formulate visions and guidelines, allocate resources, solve problems, plan and control activities, identify opportunities and act as a networker with internal and external parties (e.g. Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, 2014; Bagetta, Han & Andrews, 2013; Hill, 1992). Hence, managers make vital contributions to the survival and success of the organization (Bagetta et al., 2013). These activities are commonly referred to as 'managerial work' (Watson, 2006). During recent years, endless research and handbooks have been published regarding various features of what characterize a good manager carrying out managerial work (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014; Watson, 2006). However, on the other hand, it is also argued that there is no such thing as "optimal management" due to the fact that all individuals bring different opinions and identities to an organization and the fact that the world is emergent and constantly changing, e.g. originating from dynamic aspects of people, culture, relations and technology (Watson, 2006, Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2011). This is also noted in research of the very meaning of management itself being ambiguous, obscure and linguistically confusing (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014; Hales, 1993).

An organization is supposed to be looked upon as constituting of various sets of work arrangements that involve processes, understandings and relationships (Watson, 2006). For top managers, this will therefore include handling various demands and challenges put forward by colleagues, subordinates, superiors and external stakeholders. Through these social engagements, managers constantly shape and reshape his or her personal identity (Thomas & Linstead, 2002).

Evidently, top managers have much on their plate and there is much complexity to deal with in the managerial work. With big responsibilities, e.g. due to technology eliminating the need for middle managers (Gratton, 2011), this report argues for the importance of research in the field of managerial work of top managers in order to understand how this fact affect their managerial

work. It is assumed that with bigger and widened responsibilities comes the need to be present and available. Bolden, Hawkins, Gosling and Taylor (2012) describe difficulties of availability as an emergent dilemma that managers have to learn to deal with. This issue has been further discussed in, for example, the contemporary trade magazine *CFOWorld*. There, strategy consultant Peter Engström argues that there is an increased pressure from organizations that managers are to be increasingly available wherever and whenever, and as a result, the boundary between work and personal life has grown blurred (Engström, 2014). Hence, here, a potential challenge with the managerial work is noted. Due to new information and communication technology, time and place do no longer constitute limits in work context; the rules and standards emphasizing eight-hour workdays have transformed and do not any longer constitute the norm for managers. In fact, time and place no longer have any influence and consequently, managers are able to work from anywhere at any time of the day (Allvin, Aronsson, Hagström, Johansson, & Lundberg, 2006).

Furthermore, in contemporary trade magazines and corporate publications, is it common to read about top managers facing an increasing amount of demands, coming from both internal and external parties due to the modern workplace, including digital and mobile opportunities (Engström, 2014). These demands may very well be contradicting in relation to each other, and paradoxes in how to handle these various demands is thought to exist. In another publication, referring to a study with over 500 Swedish managers, almost half of them express that they are expected to be available during vacations and answer calls and e-mails within 24 hours (Telia, 2013). In addition, it is stated that in order to be a good manager, managers should be "working everywhere at all times", including on airplanes, in the hotel lobby, in the morning and before bedtime, as is described in the trade magazine *Chef* (2013). Other magazine articles discuss how managers' vacation does not imply isolation from work and that responsibility cannot be delegated to others (Chef, 2008). In this article, this fact is perceived differently among the interviewed managers; some are positive to this situation and view it as a natural part of their work, whilst others discuss how work related matters intrude on their free time (Chef, 2008). Hence, there are many viewpoints to take into consideration regarding managerial availability. It grows clear that there are many complexities for managers with regard to today's constant expectations of availability.

Further, Engström (2014) has discussed the coined expression 'internal corporate social responsibility' (iCSR) as well 'personal social responsibility' (PCR), discussed by the author and manager Stefan Wittrin (2014). These are quite new phenomena emphasizing the well-being of internal parties in an organization and concerns creating a culture of how and where to work. It is argued by Engström (2014) that an organizational culture accepting work outside the office should be adopted, but not constitute a demand from the organization. Thus, a framework or policy leading the way in how to work with iCSR should be developed within organizations (Engström, 2014). Consequently, the probabilities of having managers that might feel dissatisfied and stressed by the fact that they are always reachable and face demands of having to keep on working outside their office on their free time might become an organizational problem (Allvin, Wiklund, Härenstam & Aronsson (1999). This fact strengthens the complexity of availability and to live up to expectations of managerial availability as well as the need to ease the managers' complex situation.

## 1.2 Problematization

Due to the development of the managerial role facing many demands and expectations, as is described in the sections above, it is reasonable to understand that being a top manager today is a complex matter. From the manager's perspective, one of the many reasons for the role being complex is the various contradictions and expectations of managerial availability of managers when performing managerial work (Bolden et al., 2012). These expectations of managerial availability might further interfere with the managerial views of themselves, hence, interfere with how the manager identifies with the managerial role (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014). Despite the large amount of research in the field of management, there are still quite few studies concerning its practices, especially regarding the daily managerial work (Barley & Kunda, 2001, Fairhurst, 2007), e.g. managerial work regarding availability.

For the preparation of this research, former studies have been found which touch upon the area of availability. For example, managers who are inconsistent or unresponsive are often viewed by employees as being unreliable, and consequently, demoralize and lower the levels of motivation, involvement and job satisfaction, whilst by giving frequent check-ins and encouragement to

employees, chances of gaining employees' active support of organizational goals and objectives will increase (Hudson, 2013). Here, being responsive and encouraging are considered positive managerial characteristics, however, managerial availability as such is not regarded as the main focus. In the research by Hill (1992), it is explained that being a manager is as much "a position of dependence as of authority" (p.56), emphasizing that the social aspect of managerial work, i.e "being with the people" (p.57) is equally important as taking on the controlling role. This was considered to constitute a major challenge for managers to balance, especially if they were new in their role. In the same time, it becomes evident that without being available, activities of networking and controlling are perceived to be difficult, if not even impossible, to perform.

In this sense, managerial availability, which is discussed in contemporary trade magazines, is not enough stressed or processed enough in scientific literature in order to thoroughly understand this area. Emanating from the above sections, it is therefore believed that the demands of the manager to be available in different circumstances, for both colleagues, subordinates, superiors and external stakeholders, need more scientific focus. This includes how the managers themselves view their own availability, which could give interesting insights to the area of how managerial work is performed (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2010).  In this research, it is argued that availability is an essential part of managerial work with regard to availability constituting a elemental factor of how to practice previously described activities of managers. In order to make a contribution to theories with regard to the managerial work, the main focus in this research will be to get a deeper understanding of managerial availability.

## 1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to increase the understanding of managerial availability and the relating complexities of managerial availability as an aspect of managerial work.

Fulfilling this purpose is hoped to contribute to highlighting the importance of availability and its related matters. Availability is declared to be a vital, yet complex matter, hence, gaining deeper understanding in the area may help to better understand managerial work.

## 1.4 Disposition

This study is divided into six main chapters. In the first chapter, the introduction, which was covered above, a short presentation of the background to the studied area was followed by a problematization resulting in the purpose of the research. The second chapter will present the methodological approach and foundation of the study. The method will describe how the research has been conducted in practice. This implies how data has been collected and processed in order to analyze and present trustworthy and reliable empirical findings. In the third chapter, different theory will be presented. The theories aim to support and help create an understanding in the analysis of the empirical material. In the fourth chapter, the empirical findings will be presented and processed through an analysis and discussion with the help of the presented theories. Thereafter, in the fifth chapter, the results of the research will be put forward. Lastly, the conclusion will be presented in the sixth chapter in order to give an informed response to the purpose. Furthermore, recommendations for further research will also be presented.

# 2 METHOD

*This chapter will begin with presenting the ontological position of the research and thereafter the reasoning of having an inductive approach to the study. Next, the research design and methods for collecting empirical data will be described. Thereafter, the research questions are presented. Subsequently, the methods for presenting and analyzing the empirical data will be outlined. The chapter will end with a discussion around the trustworthiness of the research. This chapter aims to give the reader an understanding of how it has been possible to fulfill the purpose of the research.*

This research takes on an interpretative perspective, indicating that emphasis is on gaining extended knowledge concerning human behavior (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The focus of this research is to understand managerial availability as a part of managerial work. By talking to top-level managers, efforts of analyzing are made to understand what interpretations and actions about the area of availability that exist in the managerial work. Thus, information of individual emotions and experiences is also gained.

## 2.1 Ontological Position

Aligned with the purpose of this research; to increase the understanding of managerial availability, the research takes on a social 'constructionist' point of view. "Constructionism /…/ asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but they are in a constant state of revision" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.22). The research's firm focus on subjective perceptions of managers and their personal view on availability therefore becomes a result of this ontological position where the managers, in relation to their surroundings, construct their realities. Constructionism can be regarded in contrast to the opposing ontological position referred to as 'objectivism'. This position proclaims that social phenomena and their meanings exist independently of, or separately from, social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This viewpoint was therefore disregarded in this research due to its view of organizations being an objective constraining force rather than conceptualized as a

social negotiated order (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This research highly emphasizes social interactions between managers and other parties, as well as interpretations, in order to understand managers' behavior in their managerial work. This implies that the constructionist viewpoint was suitable in this research.

Hence, the research focus of this report takes on a constructionist viewpoint, as do the following choices of method, research design and empirical data analysis. Through nine semi-structured interviews with individuals in the management position of a variety of organizations, the aim was to provide an image conceptualizing their personal views and perceptions. This thereafter founded for further analysis, rather than visualizing a mere objective picture of how availability was practiced in their workplaces.

## 2.2 Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

There are predominantly two approaches of methodology in how to construct a research which both were considered in the research's initial state. The 'deductive research approach' has the notion that "theory generates empirics" and implies that previous theory and empirical findings are collected and revised afore conducting the empirical study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This approach is widespread in researches of natural science where conditions can easily be replicated (Jacobsen, 2002). However, when assessing the nature of this research due to the fact that it deals with human beings and social interactions, as when managers practice their availability, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that factors of personal emotions, perceptions and contexts will interfere with and complicate the mechanical viewpoint that constitute the deductive approach. In deductive reasoning, certain circumstances always generate certain predictable outcomes. Due to individuals being impossible to control and their actions being unpredictable (Watson, 2006), creating models and theories that predict social behavior becomes impracticable.

In light of the above discussion and the lack of presupposed expectations of the findings in the empirical findings, this research was driven towards favoring the alternative position; the 'inductive research approach'. In accordance with this approach, empirics were collected without any expectations and after categorization and analysis of the data, theories are constructed

(Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is regarded as one of the strengths of the inductive approach; that constructed theories are collected from the empirics, thus, the actual reality. Hence, "empirics generate theory" and this approach is therefore better suited when researchers are unsure of what constitutes relevant conditions (Jacobsen, 2002), as was the case in this study. The lack of previous literature of managers' views on their availability and the uncertain nature of the results thus suggested the inductive approach to be favorable in this research. During the whole research process, the actual empirical materials from the interviews lead the way and direction of the results and the generated theory.

By emphasizing the constructionist viewpoint, the findings of this research will constitute a way of understanding managers' perception of availability in their roles and working environment. Hence, makes the fact that it cannot be unerringly applicable in all type of circumstances or generate precise expectations of the outcomes less problematic (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

## 2.3 Research Design

### 2.3.1 Cross-sectional Approach

For this research, a cross-sectional design approach was chosen. This design entails that the data is collected from more than one case at a single point in time and which is thereafter "examined to detect patterns of association" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.53). Since the intention of this research was not to deepen into a single case only, hence only focus on the perceptions made by a single person or organization, it was established by the researchers that getting insights from multiple managers from different organizations would provide a broader picture of the study's area of interest and make possible to compare both similarities and dissimilarities found in the empirical materials and make the results more interesting.

### 2.3.2 Qualitative Research Approach

In accordance with the purpose of this research, i.e. to increase understanding of managerial availability, a qualitative research approach was favored through investigating managers' views on the subject. Qualitative research focuses on emphasizing of the words used in the empirical

findings when collecting and analyzing the data and aims to generate a new type of theory rather than to test a given hypothesis, which is often the case in quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Further, focus is on individuals' perceptions and experiences of the reality, hence their social construction of the reality around them (Bryman & Bell, 2011), which is closely linked to the purpose of this research. Furthermore, qualitative research is sometimes classified as being more flexible than quantitative research and the collection of data can be adapted according to the reality of the interview objects (Jacobsen, 2002). This was regarded in the semi-structured interviews which made it possible to pose follow-up questions and ask for clarifications in case of interesting and unanticipated answers.

## 2.4 Methods for Collecting Empirical Data

### 2.4.1 Sampling

In this research, the method of purposive sampling has been applied. This means that the selection of interviewees was not done on a random basis, instead, they were chosen for this specific research in order to ensure that the chosen interviewees would be relevant to the study, hence, be able to contribute to achieve the research purpose (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Due to the fact that this is a non-probability sampling approach, it is important to remember that the result of this research will only provide the interviewees' point of view, and as a result, not generate general assumptions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this research, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted. The respondents were strategically chosen based on criterion set by the researchers, for example positions held, professional experience and the fact that they were all active within private sector operating within knowledge-intensive industries. The knowledge-intensive industry was chosen due to many ideas of modern management emanating from this context (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). The sample of nine respondents constituted an appropriate amount in order to both encounter enough distinction and variation in the answers and allow sufficient time for analysis of the material.

The nine participating respondents came from different organizations and had between 15 and 30 years of professional experience from various positions. The research focuses on managers who currently hold, or who have previously held, top-management positions, e.g. CEO or

Country/Regional Manager. All managers work, or have worked in or collaborate with international organizations where technology can be seen to have an impact on how work is conducted. The full respondent guide, including e.g. years of experience, held positions and number of subordinates reporting to them can be viewed in Appendix 1.

From a convenience perspective, a geographical limitation was made and all top managers were situated in or close to the region of Skåne, Sweden, to simplify carrying out the interviews face-to-face. However, one of the interviews was carried out over the phone, this due to the respondent's full schedule. In order to receive honest and sincere responses, the researchers chose to let the respondents remain anonymous. The anonymity was assumed to provide security for the interviewees and protect them from both internal and external critique.

### 2.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Since the aim of this report is to obtain knowledge about the interviewees' views, experiences and in-depth reasoning around availability, solely using highly standardized surveys or interviews would not provide sufficient information in order to make visible all desired factors searched for. Instead, conducting semi-structured interviews was considered to constitute the most appropriate method in order to gain sufficient insight and interpret the different interviewees' experiences. Semi-structured interviews provide room for participants to communicate their individual views with regard to a certain focus (Bryman & Bell, 2011, Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), e.g. availability, and how they view their availability at their current, or previous, workplace.

The strength of semi-structured interviews lies is its flexible structure having many open-ended questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011), which implies that the interviewees, relatively freely, are able to describe availability in different situations which they have faced, both professionally and personally. Furthermore, this type of interviews provides the researchers with the possibility to ask follow-up questions on the interviewees shared experiences of availability (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### 2.4.3 Interview Preparation and Procedure

Prior to the nine interviews, an interview guide was created to function as an overview of the subjects to be addressed during the interviews. In addition, potential questions and follow-up questions were formulated (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The full interview guide is provided in Appendix 2.

The interview questions were created thematically. In order to get the best possible response, questions were formulated without the use of too academic or theoretical concepts that potentially could be perceived as foreign or unnatural to the interviewees. In addition, the reason for this was to create spontaneous and succinct answers (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

With the consent of the respondent, all interviews were recorded in order to capture all views and quotes not noted by the interviewers. The majority of the interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes with the exception of two interviews which lasted 40 and 85 minutes respectively. In the beginning of all interviews, a brief introduction of the research was presented. Due to the lack of detailed information on availability in literature, this study focuses on managers' personal views and perceptions of their own availability. The interviewers were therefore fairly incapable of giving, as well as actively chose not to give, more than a very brief presentation of the theoretical concept and frames of leadership theories as such, solely as a way of giving the respondent a hint of what the interview was going to evolve around. In this way, the respondents' answers were completely formulated in their own words and not influenced by theoretical terms or values. However, for those interviewees who desired more information, this was presented at the end of the interview. This was followed by questions regarding the interviewee's professional and educational background as a way to initiate building a relationship and create a secure atmosphere between the interviewers and the interviewee. Moving forward, the questions became more profound and covered the main topic of the research. At the end of the interview the interviewees were free to add information that, in their view, had not been covered in the interview and ask questions that arose during the interview, which is a good way of gaining additional insights to the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The interviews were tinged by open-ended questions to make it as easy as possible for the interviewee to express their own opinion and not being affected by leading questions from the interviewers (Halvorsen, 1992). To get a width and depth in the answers, for example probing, specifying and interpreting questions were asked. In addition, pauses were used to give space for the interviewees to reflect and amplify an answer (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Three researchers were present in all interviews, except for one where only one interviewer was present. Having many interviewers could be seen as an advantage as the joint collaboration of analyzing the data created a better overall understanding (Widerberg, 2002). On the other hand, it is supposed that the interviewer steers the interview, and that more than one interviewer could potentially constitute a disadvantage as the interviewee might feel more stressed in the rather exposed situation which might affect the quality of the answers (Mason, 2002). However, the opposite situation could potentially also occur; that the interviewee steers the interview (Mason, 2002). In regards to the latter, and due to the fact that all interviewees were top managers with extensive experience and being used to leading meetings etc., the researchers felt that being multiple interviewers was favorable in order to be able to steer the interview in the right direction and not let the interviewee take over.

## 2.5 Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to increase the understanding of managerial availability and the relating complexities of managerial availability as an aspect of managerial work. In light of the above discussion, two research questions were formulated in order to help fulfill the purpose of this research:

- *How do top managers view their availability in their professional role?*
- *How do top managers view the relating complexities of their availability in their professional role?*

## 2.6 Analysis and Presentation of Empirical Data

When analyzing the qualitative data, it was first systematized and categorized. This was done through simplification of the information in order to make it possible to deliver the most important factors to the reader (Jacobsen, 2002). This was cared for by transcribing the interviews from recordings which sorted the findings according to the themes in the interview guide as a first draft. In addition, the transcriptions allowed the researchers to go back in the interview to find key points made by the respondents. Furthermore, the data analysis was undertaken continuously as the data collection was still ongoing (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When carrying out the analysis, both similarities and dissimilarities among the respondents were cared for and searched for in the empirics. After having conducted the first half of the interviews, the attained material was reviewed and the questions in the interview guide were somewhat modified in order to better target the area of interest of the research, to make them better aligned with the key points found in the empirics as of then. This effort made the rest of the collected empirics more focused. The material was processed several times in order to code it into patterns and categories to fulfil the purpose of this report (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The categories found constituted three aspects of understanding availability. Availability is (1) important, (2) inescapable and a (3) challenge. Along with the empirics, these were further analyzed into understanding the complexity of managerial availability. In doing so, the researchers identified three examples of how to understand and cope with managerial difficulties, i.e. what in this report has been titled "the managerial availability paradox". These examples have been categorized; (1) affect expectations, (2) rewrite the facts and (3) speech of defence.

The empirical findings are presented using a combination of quotations and rendering of responses. When presenting the empirical data it is possible that the interpretations have been influenced of the researchers' prerequisite knowledge (Jacobsen, 2002), however, by using a large amount of quotations, the interpretations and arguments made are strengthened. In cases of many similarities in the empirics among the interview objects, efforts were made to highlight this in order to support the arguments of the analysis. Additionally, it was much emphasized to present the quotes in its context so as not to confuse the reader or make wrongful analyses of them. All interviews were conducted in Swedish and all quotations presented in this report have

therefore been translated to English by the researchers as close to the original statement as possible in order to fit the English language.

Throughout this report, to simplify the reading of the following sections, the top managers and their work have been referred to as "managers" and "managerial work".

## 2.7 Trustworthiness of the Research

Reliability and validity are two central definitions related to assuring quality in quantitative studies. However, these are not easily transferable to qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The reason for this lies in the primary purpose to interpret, instead of measure, something. Regarding interpretation, one cannot say that a single absolute description of social reality is feasible. Instead, in a research with a qualitative approach, trustworthiness is a common criterion suggested to be more suitable for assessing the quality of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

To depict the research in a credible way the interviewees agreed to the researchers recording and cite their opinions in the research, and the three researchers all analyzed the material separately and then jointly, this in order to avoid any misinterpretations. This also applied to the translation of quotes. To further live up to the criteria of trustworthiness, the researchers have kept a thorough documentation of the different phases of the research, for example information concerning how respondents were chosen along with transcripts from interviews, in order to be able to discuss the empirical material and avoid misinterpretations. Therefore, the respondent and interview guide are enclosed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Furthermore, the researchers have used numerous theoretical sources in order to secure the trustworthiness of discussed theories. Further, it is argued that by strategically select the participating respondents, the dependability of the research is reduced (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, the researchers argue that the participants held relevant and interesting information to contribute to the research field in an initial state, and the respondents were not considered to endanger the trustworthiness of the research. To further support the criterion of trustworthiness, the researchers have worked in different ways to avoid personal views affecting the research. The three researchers have all been present in the various phases of the research. In addition, through seminars with other peers and

supervisors holding external opinions on the research and its working process, new insights were gained and taken into account.

# 3 THEORY

*In this chapter, the theoretical framework is presented. It is the basis on which the upcoming analysis of managerial availability is built. First, the wide area of managerial work is described in order to give an understanding of what constitutes the foundation of the focus area of this report. This is where this research's contribution will lay. Thereafter, this dimension will be put in relation to other theories connected to managerial work. These are; discourse, identity and attachment theory. These following theories have been carefully selected with the purpose of assisting the analysis of the collected empirical data regarding complexities in managerial work to create an understanding of managerial availability.*

## 3.1 Managerial Work

*Emanating from this report's focus of managerial work, this section will describe this focus in order to give an understanding of the field. Managerial work is supposed to constitute the area in which managerial availability is found.*

The classical definition of management was made by Fayol (1921/1949) who concluded that management consisted of planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling. However, Watson (2006) further developed this notion in order to understand the wide managerial phenomenon of management. It is stated to consist of three related dimensions. Being a 'manager' describes the formal role given to certain people who hold the official responsibility of ensuring that all tasks undertaken in the organization will be conducive for the future (Watson, 2006). 'Management' is the "overall shaping of relationships, understandings and processes within a work organization to bring about completion of the tasks undertaken in the organization's name in such a way that the organization continues in the future" (Watson, 2006, p.167). Hence, the notion of management is most usefully described in terms of a function dealing with the overall managerial tasks that need to be fulfilled in every organization. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2014) have a similar view of management as handling change, setting strategies and networking. Further, 'managerial work' refers to the activity of managing. The managerial work relates to what actions are actually carried out in order to reach the organizational goals. The managerial work can include formulating visions and guidelines,

allocate resources, identify opportunities and act as a networker (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, 2014; Bagetta, Han & Andrews, 2013; Hill, 1992). This research will focus on and emphasize managerial availability as a prominent part of managerial work.

Organizational life is situational and different organizations will depend on different environmental characteristics (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2011). In the same manner, according to Watson and Watson (1999), "managers do not simply react to a 'given' world" (p.483). Hence, it is understood that managerial work is constantly affected and can be quite fluctuating due to these externalities. In relation to the research questions of this report, these assumptions might affect how managers view their need to be available in their professional role due to different internal and external demands. Today, in relation to the traditional definition, managerial work dedicates more time to talking, listening and persuading others to perform in different ways, hence, through these actions, managers are handling their dependence on other people (Watson, 2006). While further working with one's emotional intelligence, the manager can successfully operate in different social contexts in order to reach the desired objectives (Watson, 2006). Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify and deal with emotions originating from the manager himself and from others, often through "reading" other people's gestures, mimics and tone in the language used as well as exercising self-control (Ahltorp, 2014). Emotional intelligence is furthermore closely related to social intelligence and the ability of empathy, which regard the understanding of other's experiences of certain circumstances which in turn is closely related to concentration and presence (Ahltorp, 2014), hence, managerial availability.

## 3.2 Discourse

*In the following section, discourse will be described in order to create an understanding of how discourses affect the way managerial work is carried out and perceived by different parties.*

Organizations are, like many other social settings, an important scene for talk and other related use of language. This talk can constitute interactions between managers, subordinates and colleagues (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). It could be assumed that whether we are interested in organizations, individuals or even reality, they are all created and formed through discourses.

Watson (2006) defines 'discourse' as "a set of connected concepts, expressions and statements that constitutes a way of talking or writing about an aspect of the world, thus framing and influencing the way people understand and act with regard to that aspect of the world" (p.102). In addition, it is argued that a discourse cannot be seen as a reflection of the social world around us since it plays a pivotal role in creating that world (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Hardy, Lawrence & Grant, 2005).

In accordance with this research, it is helpful to talk about managerial work with the help of the concept of discourses because it can be seen as a tool in understanding of how we talk about patterns of contemporary change. For example, in contemporary trade magazines, such as *Chef,* which was described in the introduction of this report, it is argued that in order to be a good manager, managers today should be "working everywhere at all times". This could be understood as a discourse originating from various managers' framings and talk in regard to how it is expected to be available. In turn, managerial discourses can be used in order to create favourable outcomes for their own benefit and can also be looked upon as a strategic resource further influencing managerial behaviour and action (Hardy, Palmer & Phillips, 2000). Hence, the complexity of managerial discourses, and its effect on managerial work, is emphasized in order to further analyze the empirical material and understand managerial views of their availability.

## 3.3 Identity

*In this section, managerial identity is described. This notion is considered to constitute an important part of the manager's personality which may influence how the managerial work is performed, hence, how managerial availability is emphasized in practice.*

Managers' ability to influence the workplace is often limited by changes and developments in the organization's external environment and the attempts of managing depend on the ability to adapt to these factors (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014). Some people state that changing surroundings have put extra responsibility on managers today to be accountable for the survival and adaptation of the organization with regard to these externalities (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014). Due to this reasoning, it is quite difficult to come to terms with what really constitute 'management' in practice, resulting in vague and ambiguous descriptions. Much research has concluded that this

fact makes managers confused and tangled up in different perceptions of what is expected from them, especially when managerial discourses and organizational expectations are in conflict (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). Understanding managers and their actions is therefore much about understanding personal perceptions, values and ideas and how these are either permeating, disconnected from or unclear in relation to the managerial work and the relation a manager has with the employees (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014). Accordingly, many managers discuss their managerial efforts in their work in light of their personality and identity (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014).

Identity regards the notion of who a person is, or is not, in relation to others and concerns both the personal and social point of view (Watson, 2006). An overlapping of the personal and social identity is desired in order for identification with a certain group or category of people to take place (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006), e.g. managers. The recent development of managerial discourses and ideals today have, however, made manager's identities uncertain (Sinclair, 2011). The range of social idealizations of how a manager should "be": from strong to humble, from strategic to present, from result oriented to focus on creating good working atmospheres etc., have made the ideal speculatively impossible to achieve due to ideal collisions and external factors continuously changing the ideal (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014). Hence, it becomes realistic to believe that the modern view of management is both complex and problematic with regard to the managerial work and that individuals occasionally may feel puzzled and insecure about the meaning of management, e.g. in regard to managerial work. Feeling inadequate and experiencing difficulties in keeping up with demands of fast tempo and availability are not uncommon (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014). Therefore, creating and establishing a managerial identity can serve as a relatively safe and secure platform in times of this kind of contradictions (Hill, 1992). However, due to different expectations, keeping one's identity stable is difficult and therefore the identity work becomes an ongoing project where the manager is engaged in forming, repairing and strengthening the constructions of the identity in order to achieve a sense of distinctiveness and coherence (Kreiner et al., 2006). The continuous work with adjusting one's identity in order to balance the personal and social identity of a manager might however risk evolving into insecurity and fragility of who one is and undermine the confidence and self-esteem of the manager if not dealt with in an effective way (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2014).

## 3.4 Attachment Theory

*In this section, attachment theory will be described. The theory emphasizes the relational aspects of managerial work. It is interpreted to touch upon the area of managerial availability which will help understand and analyze the empirical material.*

Attachment theory is often considered one of the most influenced empirically based theories of human behavior (e.g. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Cassidy & Shaver, 2008; Harms, 2011; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and describes how individuals in different settings relate to each other in a leader-follower relationship (Popper & Mayseless, 2003). The attachment theory constitutes of various behaviors that are activated throughout life and result in the liberation of stressful, uncertain or fearful circumstances (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980; Hudson, 2013). When activated, they can have the following characteristics:

- The individual (i.e. employee) seeks *proximity* to the attachment figure (i.e. manager) and can be both in actual or psychological form.
- The individual perceives the attachment figure as a *safe haven* that protects, comforts and supports in times of need.
- The individual perceives the attachment figure as a *secure base* that allows the individual to pursue his or her actions in a safe environment.
- The individual experiences *separation distress*, e.g. increased anxiety, in times of lengthy or undesirable separation from the attachment figure.

The attachment styles, i.e. interaction patterns, constitute the individual's personal rules, beliefs and assumptions for social behavior and interactions (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1988) and can be positive if they show factors of confidence, strength and flexibility, whilst rigid or chaotic thinking and hampering of personal and professional growth constitutes negative traits (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008). Further on, these directly influence the person's thoughts, feelings and behavior and can be the result from recurring experiences of achieving security or safety or concerning the managers' ability and willingness to be consistently available (Hudson, 2013). It is therefore likely that individuals' perception of their behavior will affect the relationships at the workplace (Keller & Cacioppe, 2001).

As mentioned in the introduction, literature and theories in regard to management, and as a result managerial work, do not put much explicit emphasis on managerial availability. However, even if not thoroughly defined in the attachment theory, it can still be interpreted that this theory identifies how a secure manager is available, attentive and supportive in order to help the employees to navigate in stressful situations and engage in various activities. Hence, it is perceived that availability could be seen an important element in the attachment theory, which explains why it is of use in this research.

# 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

*This chapter will carry out an analysis and discussion of the empirical findings collected from the nine semi-structured interviews with top managers. The findings are presented in the sections managerial views on availability and the managerial availability paradox. Managerial views of availability will be presented in three identified categories. These are: availability is (1) important, (2) inescapable and (3) a challenge. In a concluding section, a summary of these categories will be presented. Further, the second part will present three examples of how to understand and cope with the perceived managerial availability paradox: (1) affect expectations, (2) rewrite the facts and (3) speech of defence. Also, as a concluding section of this part, a summary of these categories will be presented.*

## 4.1 Managerial Views on Availability

*This section will present the three categories of how the managers viewed their availability. The three categories are: availability is (1) important, (2) inescapable and (3) a challenge. In the concluding section, a summary of the categories will be presented.*

### 4.1.1 Availability is Important

Early on in the interviews, it became evident that the manager's availability was of great importance for all respondents:

*"Availability is essential, that is; very important."* (Manager D)

*"Availability is important and having meetings with the staff is important."* (Manager A)

*"It is important for me and for my employees."* (Manager H)

*"It is super important, really, super important to let people feel that I am available, sure, they need to have respect for me not always having the time etc. but that they always feel that I am available, that is essential. Working in a company where the boss is unavailable is dreadful; when you feel you cannot contact the boss, it's terrible."* (Manager E)

*"Of course, you always have to be available."* (Manager C)

The above quotations explicitly state that the general view of availability was to highlight it as an important factor of managerial work. This can be connected to and support the discussion found in contemporary trade magazines. This is further in accordance with the attachment theory and role as a manager which emphasizes the importance of close relationships creating a sense of security and affect other people's feelings and behavior in a presumably positive way. The managers' reasoning regard both being available as such, but also letting the employees feel that you are available as a manager. It is interpreted that caring for the relational aspect of managerial work was highlighted. Availability was further viewed as related to being a "good" manager. Manager A emphasized that *"a good manager is someone who is always there and is available at all times. It is someone who you know you can call whenever and who listens".* In the same manner, Manager G stated: *"Arrogance does not belong to management. If you notice someone who really wants to talk to you, as a manager, my belief is you have to be there and be available".* Manager D and Manager F even believed that not being available was a reason to step down from your official role as a manager:

*"[If you're not available], then you're not a manager. I don't think so."* (Manager D)

*"In some way, it means everything. Availability is very important, especially when you're the manager. When it regards important stuff you have to be there, no matter what you're currently busy with, otherwise you don't belong in the role as a manager."* (Manager F)

The patterns of the importance of availability could be summed in the following quotation:

*"I'm the one who holds the ultimate responsibility and I cannot start blaming my employees if things go wrong. If he has come to me and asked for my help, I have to stand for it. That's what I get paid for."* (Manager C)

Here, Manager C recognized the importance of being available by highlighting the manager's official role as being ultimately accountable and responsible for all decisions and activities carried out in the organization. That is what Manager C believes he gets paid for; holding the ultimate responsibility. Consequences of missteps are, hence, formally blamed on the manager, i.e. not on the individual employee, and the manager therefore needs to be observant of and alert considering where and when his or her availability is needed in order to avoid such undesirable happenings. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that managerial failure to understand the importance

of availability may lead to occurrences that risk being detrimental both on a personal level, e.g. becoming a "bad" manager, and affect organizational effectiveness.

In conclusion, since none of the managers explicitly mentioned detailed work descriptions specifying availability, it is reasonable to believe that the managers' perceptions of their availability may instead be somewhat influenced by discussions in society, such as in contemporary trade magazines, stating that e.g. "good" managers are to be available no matter if they are at the office or away on vacation. It could be a mean to meet with external expectations in order to establish their managerial identity as being a "good" manager.

### 4.1.2 Availability is Inescapable due to Various Expectations

As mentioned in previous sections in this report, managers have to take into account many different expectations in regard to how to be available. It becomes problematic for the manager to evade various expectations of managerial availability. Much of this reasoning is believed to originate from the facilitated ability to be available due to development of information and communication technology (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2011; Weisband, 2008). This was also noted in the empirical material.

In order to present the managerial views in this category, it was necessary to divide them in three sections with separate headings. The inescapable expectations on managerial availability come from *organizational expectations on managerial availability*, *employee expectations on managerial availability* and *personal expectations on managerial availability*.

#### *Organizational Expectations on Managerial Availability*
Firstly, the managers described expectations on their managerial availability originating from the organization:

*"You do not have many reasons for not being available during vacations etc. since your e-mail is connected to your phone and you always bring it. /.../ If it is something urgent I believe it is expected for managers to be available. /.../ Your work tasks is first priority, and if something needs to be taken care of, you do that, even if it's the weekend."* (Manager C)

*"From his* [Manager E's superior] *perspective, you are expected to be available all the time. As a manager and leader you are expected to be extremely available."* (Manager E)

*"Work and spare time merge completely. I believe it's a part of being a manager."* (Manager B)

*"Work is constantly there, you have sold your soul to the company."* (Manager F)

Most of the managers shared the view that organizations today, maybe as a result of new technology, expect managers to be available 24/7, as is also expressed in contemporary trade magazines. Is was understood that the managerial availability was inescapable due to expectations from the organization. However, some of the managers also said that no demands from the organizations existed. Nonetheless, as they described it, these expectations were still understood to be present:

*"Not that I am aware of. I think we have a written e-mail policy, that you should reply within X hours. However, I do not even remember how many hours it is, but I think it is followed by everyone quite well." (*Manager G)

*"It* [to be available 24/7] *is not something that is expressed from the organization, but then if there's maybe some 'unspoken code', I am not sure. /.../ But then again, if I send a text message to another manager within the organization, I usually get a response the same night. I believe that kind of 'disturbance' is experienced by most of us."* (Manager B)

On the one hand, managers argued that availability was not something that was constantly expected, but at the same time Manager G said that the organization had policies for how fast you had to reply to an e-mail. This could be understood as a way for the organization to still control the managers' availability. Another aspect was interpreted from Manager B's answer; it could be assumed that it was the managers themselves who created this type of culture to be available, rather than policies set by the organization. It is a fine line because it could be interpreted as no organization seem to want their managers to work all the time, and do not explicitly demand managers to be constantly available. Still, however, if something goes wrong, the manager is to blame, as is previously discussed. Hence, he or she needs to be available on the phone or e-mail pretty much all the time.

It is interpreted that it has become the norm for managers to be constantly available. Manager E said: *"It is not something specified in your contract /.../ but this is not an 8-5 type of job"*. Hence,

it does not need to be formally written in managers' job descriptions but will be expected by managers anyway. It could be interpreted that an implicit contract regarding managers' availability exists. In this context, an implicit contract is a tacit agreement of what the manager is supposed to do in exchange of certain rewards (Watson, 2006). It is interpreted that the managers' job description only emphasize wide matters of managerial work, such as holding responsibility, however, it does not explicitly state how this should be fulfilled. The missing focus of availability in the job description highlights that a pronounced framework for this part of the managerial work is requested, as is discussed and suggested in contemporary trade magazines, especially in regard to the possibility to actually be constantly available. Instead, it appears that a discourse around managerial availability is presumed to constitute the foundation for the managerial behavior, i.e. form the implicit contract. This is presumed to be inescapable for managers and impossible to ignore.

### *Employee Expectations on Managerial Availability*

Secondly, the managers express how they believe their subordinates expect the manager to be available and what the consequences might be if he or she is not:

*"When you feel insecure, it is easy to ask the managers to come along /.../. If I'm not available to offer confirmation and support to the employees in difficult situations, they might not know how to act and behave in meetings etc."* (Manager A)

*"If you often get interrupted, this is a sign that things are not working as they should, or that employees do not feel safe to make decisions themselves."* (Manager D)

*"They feel security and they can affect the organization when given the opportunity to talk to me."* (Manager H)

The above quotes emphasize the expectations from employees on how managers should be available and in what situations. Further, Manager E shared a personal experience about a previous manager who was often unavailable and how this had affected her: "*You felt as if you were interrupting, and as a result, did not feel comfortable asking questions. He always got so irritated if you asked something".* Manager E argues that she has learnt from her old manager's mistakes: "*Definitely, it has affected me in the sense that I constantly work on showing that I am available."* Further, as previously argued by Manager G: "*If you notice someone who really*

*wants to talk to you, as a manager, my belief is you have to be there and be available".* This implies that the managers are presumably expected to accommodate the employees' expectations and demands of managerial availability.

The attachment theory could be seen as providing guidance in understanding this behavior as it describe that the manager should constitute a "safe haven" and a "secure base" for employees and not cause "separation distress". In regard to the notion of "safe haven", Manager A clearly describes how she, through her availability, aims to eliminate feelings of insecurity among her subordinates. Further, Manager G emphasized how you always strive to give the impression that you are available if someone urgently needs to talk to you, hence provide a secure base for the subordinate. In the example described by Manager E, the negative aspect of separation distress is clearly illustrated. This could include being physically there, i.e. face to face, over the phone or simply contactable through e-mail. It grew evident that the relational aspect of managerial work was highlighted as cared for. In this manner, this dimension of managerial work is affected by how managers are expected to be available for the employees. Since networking and caring for relations is an essential part of managerial work, expectations from employees with regard to managerial availability is argued to be inescapable to run from.

### *Personal Expectations on Managerial Availability*

Finally, the managers put expectations and pressure on themselves regarding how they should be available for other parties:

> *"It's like being the coach for the Swedish soccer team, you cannot start blaming the team, the responsibility lies on the coach and it's important to talk about 'us' instead of 'me and them'."*
> (Manager C)

> *"In the role I have, I feel it's my responsibility to notice when things aren't working as they're supposed to, I should not only get this knowledge from them* [the subordinates]. *I feel that's my responsibility. I put that pressure on myself because it's how I want things to be."*
> (Manager B)

> *"It's important that you have an 'overall view' as a boss, to know how they* [the subordinates] *feel and so on."* (Manager E)

Furthermore, in relation to the above quotes, Manager A describes a situation where she has not met with one of her subordinates situated in another city in a long time. She feels the need to go there and visit him. The interviewers ask if it is for her own sake or for the subordinate's sake, and received the response: *"I want to meet them because it makes me feel better. Through checking in with him and making sure he is fine, I feel good too".*

It was noted that managers put pressure on themselves to be available. This is presumed to be related with the importance of availability, perceived by the managers explained in previous sections, as well as their personal perceptions, maybe related to the relational aspect of managerial work. The managers argue that even though the subordinates should come to them if something is wrong or if problems arise, they believe it is still the manager's inescapable responsibility to make sure the subordinates are content. It is interpreted that managers care for how the subordinates feel and what may worry them. The manager cannot do this if he or she is not available. Other aspects to why the managers feel they have to be available and why it affects the managerial work is because it makes them feel better, or because they believe that it is part of the managerial role. By acting beneficially for the subordinates, the managers perceive themselves as "good" managers, hence, strengthening their managerial identity. There are, hence, many inescapable personal expectations that need to be taken into consideration.

### 4.1.3 Availability is a Challenge

In accordance with the various and endless descriptions in literature of what constitutes managerial work and responsibilities, all respondents confirmed that they have many endeavors to balance and strategically plan in order to be able to act beneficially for their companies. It was evident that their high positions, in combination with their experiences and knowledge, made them much coveted and closely connected with both internal and external parties in terms of e.g. constituting the "face of the company" and the "to-go-to person" in cases of uncertainty. Handling this role and various assignments puts pressure on the managers to decide upon how to dedicate his or her available time based on certain factors. Knowing to whom, when and how to be available becomes a challenge for the managers. These challenges of managerial availability

are divided into the following headings described below: *the challenge to request unavailability, the challenge of prioritizing* and *the challenge of uncontrollable availability or unavailability.*

### *The Challenge to Request Unavailability*

First, it was noted by the researchers that a presumed managerial challenge was to demand unavailability. During the interviews, the topic of unavailability was discussed in order to understand the managers' views on the opposing extreme of availability. Interestingly, many of them stressed the importance of sometimes being unavailable in their managerial roles. Manager B stated: "*At the office I don't want to have it that way; that I should need to turn off my availability. If there's something in particular, I work from someplace else",* implying that when situated at the office, availability is key, but still emphasizing the need to be unavailable from time to time. Manager B, and some of the other managers, further explained:

*"If I am to prepare for an important presentation, then it is difficult to focus on that if I, at the same time, have people running in and out of my office and the phone is ringing off the hook. Then you need to set aside one hour and then check afterwards if something has happened during that hour. That's how you need to do it, otherwise the work gets overwhelming."*
(Manager F)

*"Sometimes I need to lock the door, for example if I'm working with something where everyone is not involved, or if I don't want to be bothered all the time /.../ It happens that I leave the office, maybe to find a café and work from there." (*Manager E)

*"Sometimes when I need time to think, for example when going through a written contract, I need peace and quiet and then I might go home instead. Here at the office it risks being a little too much; people are always hanging in the doorway, you know."* (Manager B)

The above quotes clearly describe times of when the managers do not wish to be disturbed, hence they favor being unavailable before being potentially available. They need to actively "switch off" their availability in order to complete their own tasks that comes with the managerial work. Therefore, on some level, these answers are legitimate with regard to literature describing what constitute managerial work and today's increased workload. However, the managers emphasized being unavailable so much that they on occasion abandoned the workplace and the employees in favor of completing their own tasks in isolation. The particular expression used by Manager F; that the work otherwise gets 'overwhelming', is perceived to explicitly indicate that demands of

being available is challenging to align with the individual desires to be so. Other managers stated:

*"I need to base everything on myself and on what works for me. I could be available 24/7, but that will make me ill and it won't work in parallel with my personal life and family situation, but I still try to find my inner balance and possibility of being available."* (Manager E)

*"You should be available, but not for everything. You have the right to be 'off' sometimes. /.../ It's not even possible to be available all the time. I need to sleep, work out and have my own spare time."* (Manager D)

This could be seen as taking the challenging aspect one step further. The above quotes expressed another point of view stating that being constantly available for external and internal parties, often perceived to be expected by the organization, was in fact impossible. Personal aspects were highlighted as sometimes conflicting with the perceived expectations on managerial availability. It grew clear that the managers had a strong viewpoint with regard to this aspect and that their self-awareness was high. This confirms that meeting the organizational needs of managerial availability might actually conflict with the personal well-being which sometimes requests managerial unavailability, both with regard to personal and professional matters. What then became the challenge was how to balance the strong personal needs with the ones of the organization. Manager F stressed this challenge of demanding unavailability when he emphasized: *"You have to decide upon your own limits since it's actually possible to turn off your cell phone, although, I've never done it myself"*. This implied the same reasoning regarding the importance of setting your own boundaries, even though the managerial identity and dedication towards the organization in this case seemed to be valued higher than the personal desires. Thereby, the challenge of dealing with the difficulties of balancing organizational expectations of managerial availability and personal demands of managerial unavailability is highlighted.

### The Challenge of Prioritizing
Second, the challenge of prioritizing how to practice the managerial availability was found in the empirical material. Manager F stated:

*"You need to learn that you cannot be available for everyone all the time. You can be available for one person at a time and that can become many meetings during one day, but otherwise you lose focus and it won't end well."* (Manager F)

Manager F had a very diplomatic answer regarding how managers view the necessity to prioritize whom to be available towards. Nonetheless, Manager F really put his finger on the unavoidable managerial struggle of how to allocate his or her available time. In the discussion that followed, as well as during the other interviews, many different notions and challenges of this aspect were discussed. The importance of prioritizing clients was noted. For example, Manager H explained:

*"The clients always come first – they're the ones who pay our salaries. It's important that all employees prioritize in that way and understand that this may interfere with other stuff from time to time."* (Manager H)

Going further into the discussion, some managers even viewed clients to be more important than their own employees and their personal need to be unavailable:

*"If a client calls you answer right away /.../ you might even answer even though you would rather be unavailable. /.../ I am very available when it regards clients. The clients are kings and queens."* (Manager B)

*"The clients pay the salaries and there's no point in having the employees love me if the clients are pissed, so they always come first. /.../ Marginally, I could be able to /.../ go home early on Fridays and feel like 'wow, now I'm free', but if a client calls I can hear myself saying 'yes, of course!', when my brain is screaming 'no!'. You don't want to miss out on anything."*
(Manager F)

The empirics did not show any support regarding explicit expectations of prioritizing originating from the organization as such, hence this notion in relation to the quotes above, suggest that managers did their own interpretation of what type of prioritizing was necessary. It became evident that the managerial role as networker and caring for relationships inside and outside the organization was in focus, as has been mentioned earlier. The majority of the respondents considered clients to be the most important party in times of prioritizing, which could be regarded as positive from an organizational survival point of view, indicating that managers value their position and care for the organization. This, in regard to the actual money that the clients bring to the organization, but also relating to the notion that it could lead to missed

opportunities. It is possible that missing an opportunity to catch a new, or failing to act upon requests posed by a current, client is regarded as a sign of being a "bad" manager which would, in effect, be harmful with regard to the managerial identity. Furthermore, even though clients were generally regarded as 'kings and queens', one must not neglect that being on good terms with the subordinates was still emphasized as very important:

*"For me, it's much about the gut feeling and to dare to trust it, 'who should get my attention now?' /.../ Then, it's also much about being clear towards the rest of the team; 'now I did this prioritizing because of this and that'. Communication is extremely important."* (Manager G)

*"If I am to miss a performance review with an employee, the sky needs to fall down, there really needs to be a crisis. Respect."* (Manager F)

In the above quotes it is visible that the relationship with the employees had a prominent value in the managers' reasoning of prioritizing. Even if the manager for some reason is not available, he or she still desires to inform the employees about this condition. This shows signs of the managers' empathy, and part of emotional intelligence, towards the ones close to you in the organization and to respect their personal values and needs. Manager F's description of using the gut feeling when prioritizing, was in accordance with a statement from Manager E: *"I 'tune in' my availability depending on the circumstances of that particular day. It concerns everything from clients to employees",* who further emphasizes the fact that employees may very well be as important as the clients. Also, that the manager's personal views are to be taken into consideration when prioritizing. The very much different reasoning regarding prioritizing the managerial availability towards clients or employees is therefore perceived as a big managerial challenge. Without clients there is no source of income, but without satisfied employees there is no one to deliver results and take care of the clients. At the same time, the challenge is further deepened in the need to take the manager's personal needs into account.

### *The Challenge of Uncontrollable Availability or Unavailability*
Third, during the making of this report is has grown clear that managers' availability is essential for organizations and its employees. Nonetheless, not even top managers and CEOs can personally decide upon all variables affecting their availability:

*"An example of this type of situation is when you enter a meeting with a subordinate and you've done a certain judgment on how long the meeting should last, but then it develops into something that means 'shit, we need to discuss this so, so, so much more and it needs to be done NOW', Then you just feel 'shit!', I mean, when you just don't have the time for the unplanned prolonged meeting. It hurts so damn much to need to say 'no, sorry, I'm no longer available because now I really need to go' /.../. Then you violate all aspects of availability, really. It's so hard. Insufficiency, that's what you feel, 'damn, I want to be at two places at once' and it hurts not being able to be that."* (Manager D)

Difficult situations can appear where managers simply cannot be available the way they desire, and are forced to increase, limit, adapt or prioritize their availability against their will. In the same manner, Manager A stated: *"Sometimes you really feel insufficient"*, emphasizing the pressure and expectations to carry out all parts of the managerial work requested by the organization, but it can surely also be related to contradictions with the manager's personal desires and expectations on herself. In the above quote by Manager D, it was stated that she felt 'insufficient' when she was not able to be at two places at once. Apart from the feelings of dissatisfaction, it could further be understood as very stressful. Also, Manager C described the need to be constantly available as a *"constant stress"*, as did Manager E: *"It is extremely stressful that you have the office with you in your pocket and that you can always answer the phone"*. The somewhat uncontrollable, pressuring factor of constant availability is thus interpreted as a challenge for manages to deal with in order to carry out their managerial tasks and find their own identity in order to function as a manager.

Once again, the notion of self-awareness was also highlighted in this matter: *"People who cannot set their own limits will be available 24/7. In the long run it won't work"*, stated Manager E. It is perceived that insecure or inexperienced managers, who lack insight in a certain matter or in themselves and who easily get affected by others' need for them to be available, will experience a challenge in handling their own availability. What it is that 'won't work', as expressed by Manager E, is interpreted as the situation of when demands from the personal and social identity, as well as personal and others' expectations on the manager, do not sufficiently overlap. Further; *"It's very hard to learn /.../, you want to have all the glory for yourself, especially for a young manager. You want to be perceived as a competent manager. It is difficult to balance"*, stated Manager C. Hence, it risks evolving into even further insecurity and instability of who a person is, as well as undermined confidence and effectiveness of the manager. Also, Manager F said: *"It*

*is also a stress in your personal life; you're supposed to be the world's greatest dad and then CEO of a big company"*, thereby stressing the availability challenge and how the self-awareness with regard to availability needs to cover all parts of live, thus not solely the professional sphere. When the manager do not carry the power to single-handedly control his or her availability, the challenge of how to balance life grows clear.

### 4.1.4 Summary of Managerial Views on Availability

First, managerial views confirmed managerial availability to be very important. This was due to the managerial perception of availability constituting a prominent part of managerial work. A general perception was that you have to be available in order to be perceived as a "good" manager. Second, the managers viewed managerial availability as inescapable due to various expectations originating from the organization, the employees and the manager himself. The expectations were not explicitly built upon work descriptions, rather, they were influenced by personal perceptions of the parties as well as discussions in society. Third, views of managerial availability being a challenge has been noted. This view includes the challenge of requesting unavailability, prioritizing and to be exposed to uncontrollable factors affecting availability or unavailability. It is perceived to be impossible to be constantly available. This relates to the challenge of finding the right balance between professional and personal life as well as being exposed to situations you cannot control.

In conclusion, managers are exposed to pressure and expectations of managerial availability that need to be navigated through in their managerial work. Hence, the importance of availability, being inescapable, and at the same time constituting a constant challenge, therefore becomes an inescapable paradox of managerial work that managers need to learn to try to cope with, both for the sake of organizational survival, but also for the sake of manager himself. Not being able to combine, or if not successfully overlapped, expectations on how a manager should be and personal perceptions as a manager will create an identity conflict. The next part of this chapter will take on examples of different strategies to understand and cope with the paradox of managerial availability.

# 4.2 The Managerial Availability Paradox

*In this section, examples of strategies to understand and cope with the presumed managerial availability paradox will be presented. Three main strategies in managerial practice were found. These were: (1) affect expectations, (2) rewrite the facts and (3) speech of defence.*

As elaborated in former sections of the chapter of analysis, there is a paradox relating to managerial availability. This paradox originates from the managerial views that availability is important, yet impossible to live up to due to various aspects. Simultaneously, the managerial identity is challenged due to discourses in society which challenges the personal values and beliefs. The resulting difficulties with the managerial availability paradox thus risk leading to stressful situations and uncertain and fragile personal identities which in turn indicates that the effectiveness of the managerial work might get hampered. In order to cope with the paradox, three main strategies in managerial practice were identified in the empirical material.

## 4.2.1 Affect Expectations

How managers are most fruitfully available, and meet the expectations from the employees, depend on the individuals they manage. It is important to be clear in how you, as a manager, are capable of being available towards the employees. Hence, managers set a standard that affects subordinates behavior. It was interpreted that managers played a pivotal role in how it was expected to be available within organizations. Their behavior affected the organizational culture and, as a result, the subordinates' expectations of managerial availability. Hence, employees' expectations are inescapable in the managerial work. As a result of this, it could be argued that managers actively need to consider their own behaviors in regard to availability.

The first strategy in order for managers to cope with the paradox of availability was presumed to lay in their ability to affect others' expectations. Culture constitutes of shared meanings and values of the appropriate ways to think and behave within a social setting (Watson, 2006), e.g. what the expectations regarding managerial availability look like. The aim was to affect the organizational culture to make others' expectations of managerial availability the new norm of thinking and behave, by trying to align the subordinates' and organization's expectations with the

manager's own viewpoint. Furthermore, although all organizations have their own unique organizational culture, larger organizations may also have subcultures which are created within the various management teams and which may conflict with each other, but still co-exist with the overall organizational culture (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). In regard to availability, this could imply using various means to affect and set expectations of how subordinates and managers are to be available within the organization. Two means were noted in the empirics:

***"How you want it to be"***

Many of the managers believed they were expected to be available in a certain way with regard to their managerial role. What could also be understood from the interviews was that the many managers perceive themselves to have a responsibility to be a role model. Manager B said, "*I also think it* [the managerial availability] *is related to your personality, how you want to be".* Manager D and Manager G further expressed:

*"The managers' behavior set the norm. /.../ The challenge is to depict a 'role-model illusion' on how to behave within the specific organization, and what is reasonable." (Manager D)*

*"I don't want to have a culture where everyone is working 24/7 on weekends /.../. Then I, as a manager, have to act as a role model. I don't open my laptop on weekends, and if I for some reason do, I don't let the rest of the team know that I have been working over the weekend."*
(Manager G)

In the above quotes, the managers believed that their own behavior set the norm within the organization, which evidently made being a manager an even greater responsibility as managerial behavior and beliefs were perceived to be copied by subordinates. As a result of this, it could be argued that managers played a pivotal role in how it was expected to be available within organizations and actively need to consider their own behaviors in regard to availability. Furthermore, it could be interpreted as a way of how a manager can affect the subordinates by showing how it is supposed to be, and thus trying to align the organizational culture's key values, the subordinates' values with their own personal values. Thereby, managers legitimate their own behavior. Manager A said: *"You create the culture within your team, it varies from country to*

*country"*. It could be argued that the subcultures were in some cases more important than the overall organizational culture in regard to expectations of availability. This, due to the fact that the managers were active within large organizations with different departments and global reach. In regard to availability, expectations within the subcultures, rather than the overall organizational culture, were interpreted to be easier to affect. Further, Manager A explained:

> *"It is because of the culture that we have, after 6 p.m. it is sacred time, unless it is really important, we don't call each other /.../. We delay e-mails so that the receiver does not get the response until in the morning after unless it is crucial or very urgent, just because people will read them anyway and you start processing what you have read /.../. You have to plan this dialog which reflects how we relate to things."* (Manager A)

It was interpreted that Manager A believed that there was a negative effect for involved parties within the organization if you were expected to be available after work hours, and because of this, she had formed this type of culture. It could be that the manager preferred this behavior and then legitimized it by creating this type of standard within her team. Her preferences of how to practice availability was, hence, legitimized by acting as a role model for these preferences. She was perceived to aim to influence her subordinates to set the same expectations of the managerial availability to make it a part of the subculture.

### *"It becomes a shared value"*

It was perceived to be very important not to set expectations, in regard to how you should be available, if they are not possible to live up to. The goal is to create a culture that everyone within the organization can embrace through shared values and beliefs. For example, by expressing how, when and why one needs to be available, Manager D argues that you can shape the expectations in regards to availability, for example:

> *"Availability for subordinates is about prioritizing and delegating. What responsibility is out there and how do we prioritize our questions? /.../ Tell your subordinates what ideal image you have. For example, if I say that my goal is to be available /.../ then they have rightful demands to tell you ´now I need you´, then it becomes a shared value."* (Manager D)

> *"You have a responsibility as a manager to set the right expectations, find the right levels* [of availability] *and reason with everyone involved in order to find the right balance in regards to what is reasonable and what works."* (Manager D)

*"You have to be street smart, try to think about how you want it to be, then I have to turn it down a notch since I'm aware I could be seen as a bit extreme. Everyone does not want to live as I do, you have to find a balance."* (Manager E)

All of the described actions in the quotes above could be seen as ways to affect the subordinate's expectations. This is done by including and empowering them in how the culture should look like with regard to availability. However, there is a potential danger of influencing the expectations if the manager does not realize that the subordinates will not embrace the managers' individual personal values which the manager aims to transfer to the culture. When Manager E talks about being 'a bit extreme', she refers to the fact that she responds to e-mails in 34 seconds. By having self-awareness, Manager E limits this danger of influencing others in a negative way, through understanding that not everyone embraces situations the same way as she does. Hence, she acknowledges that her personal preferences for how to practice her managerial availability cannot in all cases be fully transmitted to subordinates' expectations, as it might not suit their personal values and preferences.

In conclusion, there are many ways for the managers to affect others' expectations, above, two ways are mentioned. First, a "secret" way is to act as a role model with the aim of subordinates copying your behavior and beliefs with regard to availability. Second, a "visible" way is portrayed. Through interaction and empowering of subordinates, a dialogue will arise creating a joint effort in establishing the desired expectations with regard to how managers should be available.

### 4.2.2 Rewrite the Facts

A second strategy perceived to be used by the manager in order to cope with the managerial availability paradox was found in how they formulated the facts of availability to the employees and other parties. In various manners, the empirics show how managers stress the importance of always being there for their employees in times of insecurity, whilst they may not actually be able to be so at all times. In order to not be regarded as a potentially uncaring and disrespectful manager, they rewrote the facts in order to explaining why they could not live up to the expectations of availability at those particular moments.

### *"I want people to grow"*

One pattern found to explain managers' unavailability was to rewrite it into something beneficial for the employees. Manager C said: "*It's about trust, I cannot come along just to make sure they perform well at the meetings*". In addition, Manager F stated: *"It is better to let people grow by letting them find solution for themselves"*. These quotes emphasize efforts of showing faith in others and showing reverence for others' spare time as well as a contribution to the employees' self-esteem and personal growth. In a sense, they rewrite the unavailability into benefiting the employees' balance of professional and personal life.

In the similar way, Manager C stated: "/…/ *it is a way to build and lift him* [the employee] *for the future*" and Manager E emphasized: "*I want people to grow with their task. /.../ I love when people make decisions, that you get pleasantly surprised when things happen without you knowing it, even though things go down the drain"*. Also Manager A had a similar point of view: *"I love to see my subordinates grow and believe in themselves /.../. It's extremely satisfying to see your team develop and leave their comfort zone"*. Here, the managers describe how their choice to be unavailable will help the employee to become a better member of the organization, hence, justifying their unavailability by rewriting it into an effort of empowering the employees and giving them a chance to grow, both on a professional and personal level. Manager E's statement even declares that employee learning and efforts of self-managing is more valued than the negative effects of their potential misdoings, which the manager herself often is responsible to solve. Manager A gave an example of when she was unavailable:

*"Yesterday I had a double booking; my subordinate said I had to attend a joint meeting with him but I also had another appointment with an important client. Then, I told him 'I'm confident you can do it', and that he could give me feedback later because I had this other meeting."*
(Manager A)

Also here, Manager A described the importance of letting employees take their own initiatives, as well as sometimes having to give them a little push in the right direction by using supporting comments such as "I'm confident you can do it". The unavailability of a manager is hence rewritten into meaning and constituting something positive for the employees. Without

experiencing an unavailable manager, subordinates will never learn for themselves. In a sense, by being unavailable in certain situations, the manager does the employee a favor.

### *"He would go nuts"*

In respect to the above sections favoring the need to rewrite the unavailability in order to lift and empowering the employees, there is also another perceived aspect which implies rewriting the managerial unavailability in terms of not questioning the personal skills of a senior and competent employee:

*"If I was to ask him* [the employee] *every other hour: 'how're you doing?', he would go nuts. I'm not supposed to put my nose into his work, instead, he comes to me if he encounters any problem. He has more expertise than I do and if I was constantly questioning his work he would start to wonder if I doubted him."* (Manager C)

*"The difference lies in the need, /.../ he would wonder what was wrong with me because he knows how to do his job."* (Manager F)

These quotes are interpreted to justify the managerial unavailability by rewriting it into complying with the personal needs and requests demanded by the employee in order to make the employee feel authorized and competent. By doubting, or being perceived as doubting, the employee's competences, it might risk resulting in negative consequences to their relationship. Hence, the manager rewrites the unavailability into something positive and appreciated by the senior employee which the manager can use to explain his or her unavailability.

### *"People want you as a hostage"*

Other patterns in the empirics revealed rewritings that indicated how employees who demand too much managerial availability are not perceived as performing their tasks in a good, or even ethical, way. *"I don't think availability needs to be that you throw everything aside and run for the rescue"* Manager I said, indicating that employees who require an excessive amount of managerial availability need to be "saved" and might not be capable to carry out their work. Also Manager G had a similar viewpoint: *"People want you as a hostage",* referring to cases where employees tend to send a copy of every e-mail, that the employee sends in a day, to the manager. Here, Manager G indirectly refers to the employee as a "kidnapper", which is perceived as

indicating that the employee is taking advantage of the manager's availability in a negative way. Hence, the employee is abusing the managerial availability as a guarantee of confirmation to their every action, as well as being an action to distance yourself from the responsibility. In a sense: "I have now told the manager, now it is his or her responsibility". Manager D explained:

*"It's easy to lose focus and get stuck in the 'simple availability', meaning, answering the phone or e-mail which can be misused so that everyone constantly wants confirmation. It becomes so easy to do that kind of check, but then you're on the wrong track. That kind of availability is completely out the window."* (Manager D)

In these three described cases, the managers are perceived to indicate that an employee who is not reflective and does not respect the managerial work and need to be unavailable is understood to constitute something negative. When unfoundedly demanding the manager's attention, they are acting in an unethical manner at the expense of misaligned managerial work. By letting the employee understand this perspective, the employees are presumed to change their behavior in order not to have themselves or their actions rewritten into meaning something negative. This way, it is possible that the managers' need to be constantly available will to some extent decrease, hence relieving the manager from some of the pressure of availability and thus comes closer to cope with the managerial availability paradox.

### 4.2.3 Speech of Defense

The third strategy of coping with the managerial availability paradox will be described in this section. In comparison to expectations with regard to managerial availability, there are times when managers are "too" available for the organization and the employees, and times when they are not available enough. Through, what the researchers have chosen to define as, "speeches of defense", the managers defended their behavior of not satisfactory meeting the various expectations of managerial availability.

**"I love to work a lot"**

It was noticed that many managers felt happy about their work situation, which affect their willingness to work and being available. This is stated in the following quotes:

*"I'm that kind of person, to me, this is not just a job, it´s a lifestyle."* (Manager E)

*"I love to work a lot, it's my passion /.../ I don't mind working a lot but it's important to know your own boundaries."* (Manager A)

*"There were no demands* [of responding on an e-mail right away]*, but if I did it, it was because I wanted to, even if it was in the middle of the night."* (Manager F)

In the above quotes, it is understood that managers surpass the organization's and the subordinates' expectations of being available due to the fact that they love their job. In addition, Manager E stated the following about the willingness of being "too" available which comes from her earlier experiences of having an "unavailable" manager;

*"It has affected me to become a manager that clearly shows that I'm available, perhaps not in the middle of the night, but definitely at work and in the evenings. I believe that's positive. You learn how it´s not supposed to be."* (Manager E)

In conclusion, in order for these managers to defend their behavior, towards themselves and others, they argue that this behavior is a choice, personally made by them, through the argument saying that their job is their passion and lifestyle. Manager E stated that she knew how not to behave with regard to managerial availability, hence she defended her behavior of being very available with a negative personal experience. The belief of knowing the "correct" way of practicing availability, as well as working towards acting accordingly, is perceived to become a part of her lifestyle and personal motivation. Hence, managers are perceived to defend their level of availability by stating "this is me and I cannot live truthfully in any other way" which makes it difficult for others, e.g. subordinates, to legitimize expecting something else from their manager.

In relation to the strategy emphasizing affecting the expectations, this strategy does not expect subordinates to copy the managerial behavior or beliefs. Only acceptance for the behavior to, as stated by manager F, *"'live to work' instead of 'work to live'"* is requested. This is exemplified by Manager E stated: *"As long as you provide clear guidelines for how you are available, I do not believe it creates any problem. /.../ If I respond to an e-mail after 34 seconds, they* [the employees] *know that an equally fast response is not expected from them"*.

**"The entire team will gain"**

Like any other employee, managers must have their own free time and the possibility to turn off their availability towards the organization in order to relax and get the energy needed to manage their work. As Manager D mentioned; *"It's not even possible to be available all the time. I need to sleep, work out and have my own spare time. Otherwise, I won't survive"*. This is interpreted as if the manager does not feel well, she will not be able to manage the team. In this sense, the same way managers defend themselves for being "too" available, they also defend themselves and their choices of sometimes not being available enough. How to not be constantly needed at work was defended by emphasizing their personal needs. In the same way, the managers used this speech of defence to be unavailable in order to handle certain professional tasks more urgent than being available for the employees in a particular moment. For example, Manager G explained:

*"The entire team will gain if I focus on writing a key report or preparing an important presentation. There is an understanding and they would rather offer their help to get it done than demanding my availability at that particular moment. Instead, it's okay to talk later."*
(Manager G)

In this sense, Manager G argues that unavailability might actually improve the managerial, and as a result the organizational, efficiency. Through his unavailability and isolation, Manager G has the possibility to complete his important work, hence carry out work that will profit the whole team and organization. It also indicates that managers need to get some time alone in order to catch up with their own tasks or to prepare for future work, which might consequently steel available time from the employees. This is in accordance with the previous quote of Manager H which was stated in an above section:

*"The clients always come first – they're the ones who pay our salaries. It's important that all employees prioritize in that way and understand that this may interfere with other stuff from time to time."* (Manager H)

The researchers comprehend Manager G's and Manager H's quotes as speeches of defence and the potential negative consequences are defended by the managers as necessary means in order to accomplish the overall managerial goals. Therefore, despite the behavior, they still identify themselves as being "good" managers.

### *"Make yourself superfluous"*

An efficient strategy to loosen the managers' workload and need of being available, and at the same time increase the organizational efficiency and boost the employees, was interpreted below:

*"Delegate as much as you can /.../. Focus 100 % on making yourself superfluous, then you'll get a reasonable work situation and have the possibility to look to the future. This way, you can be available when you need to be available and allocate time on those things. /.../ Learn to empower your subordinates, that's the foundation in all organizations. Like a funnel, you know."*
(Manager C)

*"Make sure you delegate as much as possible, I make sure the responsibility does not lay on me /.../. It's pure pleasure when I see others like that, who can be on vacation [etc.] whenever because their departments function anyway. The top manager is not needed for the daily work /.../. Availability is important, but should be used for the long term and strategic matters, like: 'How are you supposed to develop in order to develop a certain competence?' It's like the maintenance of a machine; it will break down if you don't maintain it."* (Manager D)

These above quotes state that empowerment is a way to delegate decision-making authority concerning operational and routine activities to subordinates. This indicates that the managerial role and work of a top manager is not supposed to be occupied by daily matters. Instead, the manager is to be available in order to handle questions that are out of the ordinary and to take care of strategic activities in regards to the organizational development. This could be interpreted that, in a sense, the manager should be available for employees, e.g. in case of situations that the subordinates are unauthorized to solve without help from the manager, but should not have to be available. Manager I described this desired situation as: *"I never feel nervous that they'll just sit there not knowing what to do just because I'm not there"*. This could be interpreted as she has empowered her subordinates to be working on automotive which then allows her to focus on other endeavors. In the same way, from Manager C's and Manager D's perspectives mentioned above, they defend their unavailability and choice to empower the employees with the reasoning that many questions are in fact not the manager's main task to deal with. The managers defend their unavailability by arguing that the employees should be able to work and take decisions by themselves in certain circumstances. The managerial expertise should be used in more advanced situations. It is possible to believe that empowering the employees might set a standard of

decision making within the organization which will in turn better align expectations of how and for what managers should be available.

### 4.2.4 Summary of the Managerial Availability Paradox

Three strategies of coping with the perceived managerial availability paradox have been identified. First, managers affect and set the right expectations to better fit his or her desires. Second, managers rewrite the facts of their behavior. This emphasizes justifying their managerial behavior of not meeting the expectations by highlighting positives outcomes from it. Third, speeches of defence were observed. Here, the manager defends his or her behavior of not satisfactory meet expectations of managerial availability. It was defended by using terms of personal passion and be beneficial for the organizational efficiency. These three types of strategies are, hence, interpreted to be understood as actions to legitimize the managers' choices of availability and unavailability, hence, constitute strategies of how to cope with the managerial availability paradox.

It was comprehended that is it possible to adopt more than one strategy to cope with the managerial availability paradox. The many subordinates with different characteristics, as well as in different circumstances, which constitutes a natural part of the managerial work, forces the manager to navigate among various strategies in order to achieve the most suitable practice of managerial availability in that particular situation. Hence, there is not just one optimal way of how to be available, nor how to cope with the managerial availability paradox. It depends on the organization and the people within it.

# 5 RESULT

Managers on various levels in an organization have an important task of carrying out numerous activities defined as managerial work. The managerial work is supposed to include much complexity, contradictions and even paradoxes. A fairly unexplored area of managerial work constitutes managerial availability in the notion of how the managerial availability is viewed by managers and what significance it has to managerial work. In this research, nine semi-structured interviews with top managers from different organizations have been conducted in order to first understand how managers view their availability in their professional role. Three views of managerial availability were identified and categorized. In relation to the managerial work, managerial availability is (1) important, (2) inescapable and (3) a challenge. The importance of managerial availability was explicitly described in the top managers' quotes relating to managerial work. The factor of incapableness was highlighted through explanations of various expectations on managerial availability originating from the organization, the employees and the managers themselves. The challenging aspect of managerial availability was identified in portrayals of difficulties in requesting unavailability, prioritizing how and to whom to be available and to be exposed to uncontrollable factors affecting the managerial availability or unavailability.

Taking the research one step further, it was also desired to understand managers' views with regard to the relating complexities of their availability in their professional role. The managerial views on managerial availability were perceived to be in conflict with each other. This emphasized the complexity of availability as an aspect of managerial work. For example, whilst managerial availability was considered a highly important aspect of managerial work, it was also viewed as a constant challenge. A conflict of interest in the managerial work with regard to managerial availability was therefore presumed to exist and was defined as the "managerial availability paradox". The difficulties with the managerial availability paradox was perceived to risk leading to stressful situations and uncertain and fragile personal identities which, in turn, risk hampering effectiveness of managerial work. Therefore, in order to also understand how managers cope with the managerial availability paradox, three strategies in managerial practice

were identified. The three strategies are: (1) affect expectations in order to fit his or her personal desires, (2) rewrite the facts, which implies justifying the managerial unavailability by highlighting it as having other positive effects and (3) speech of defence, emphasizing how the behavior of not meeting the expectations in relation to managerial availability was defended in various ways, such as constituting factors of personal passion or critical elements of organizational efficiency.

# 6 CONCLUSION

*This chapter will begin with presenting the conclusion of the results of this research and how they can be related to the report's purpose. Thereafter, suggestions of future research will be discussed.*

## 6.1 Conclusion of the Research

In the introduction of this research, a description of managerial availability as an aspect of the complex managerial work was presented. In the problematization, research in managerial work was highlighted to be of great significance, as well as the fairly lacking focus on managerial availability in theory today. In relation to this, the purpose of this research was to increase the understanding of managerial availability and the relating complexities of managerial availability as an aspect of managerial work.

The identified views on managerial availability as being (1) important, (2) inescapable and (3) a challenge, thus, help understand what really constitute managerial availability and its significance in managerial work. The views are perceived to have a noticeable effect on how managerial work is carried out. Simultaneously, the evident complexity of how managerial availability is viewed, defined as the "managerial availability paradox", also contribute to understanding the importance of highlighting managerial availability. Lack of sufficient effort or understanding in how to cope with the managerial availability paradox is understood to risk leading to stress and fragile personal identities of the managers, as well as leading to hampering managerial efficiency in managerial work. Three strategies of coping with the managerial availability paradox were identified as (1) affect expectations, (2) rewrite the facts and (3) speech of defence.

It is possible that the views and strategies identified in this research are found in other companies as well. The top managers interviewed come from large companies with similarly build organizations which imply that other companies with corresponding characteristics might find this research useful in regard to understand their own managerial work. Nonetheless, it is

reasonable to assume that basically all types of companies face various demands of managerial availability, e.g. due to fast technological development. The strategies identified in this research might help understand managerial behavior which does not comply with various expectations on managerial availability and also give examples of how not to risk being burnt out as a manager with regard to constant demands of availability. This notion could help other organizations to realize the importance of finding the right levels of how to be available. One way of doing this could be by implementing a framework for how people within the organization are expected to be available. This, in order to reduce the risk of ending up with an unhealthy workforce.

## 6.2 Further Research

This research opens up for further research in other focus areas. First, it is suggested to extend this research into including a greater amount of managers in order to get richer empirical data and, as a result, further understand managerial availability as an aspect of managerial work. Second, a new focus can be taken, hence, taking managers from new sectors into account. This could include middle managers, company owners, project managers, managers with other levels of experience as well as including the public sector in order to see if there are any differences or similarities with could assist in creating a cadre for what constitutes managerial availability and how it is most effectively carried out. A broader focus could also be put on the global factor; how does managerial availability differ in different sectors of a globally spread organizations as well as between different organizations in different countries. Third, it could be interesting to take the perspective of how employees view managerial availability, as well as their own need to be available. Fourth, by focusing on longitudinal studies, the evolution of how managerial availability is practiced, as well as what factors have come to affect it, could be further studied.

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# APPENDIX 1: Respondent Guide

| Respondent | Sex | Age | Education | Current Position(s) | Previous Position(s) | Years of professional Experience | Maximum Number of Direct Subordinates | Maximum Number of Indirect Subordinates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manager A | Female | 39 | B.Sc.Chem. + MBA | Regional Manager | General Manager | 15 | 14 | 280 |
| Manager B | Male | 42 | M.Sc.E.E. | CEO COO Chairman | Consultant Manager | 16 | 8 | 112 |
| Manager C | Male | 52 | M.Sc.E.E. | Vice President | Vice President General Manager | 27 | 120 | N/A |
| Manager D | Female | 48 | M.Sc. Business Administration and Economics | Chairman Board Member | CEO COO Supply Chain Manager | 24 | N/A | 400 |
| Manager E | Female | 42 | B.Sc. IT | CEO | Business Area Manager | 15 | 100 | 100 |
| Manager F | Male | 53 | M.Sc. Business Administration and Economics | Chairman Board Member Partner | CEO COO CFO | 30 | 25 | 1200 |
| Manager G | Male | 53 | M.Sc. IT | Global Senior Manager | Project Manager Product Manager | 26 | 19 | N/A |
| Manager H | Male | 57 | M.Sc. Business Administration and Economics | CEO | CEO Vice President | 25 | 150 | 40 |
| Manager I | Female | 42 | M.Sc. Business Administration and Economics | Global Purchasing Manager | Other | 15 | 6 | 10 |

# APPENDIX 2: Interview Guide

**Background**
1. First, is okay if we record this interview?
2. Please describe your professional background up until today.

**Role as Top Manager**
3. How would you describe a "good" manager?
4. How would you describe a "bad" manager?
5. How would you describe a typical workweek, what would it look like?

**Availability**
6. In what ways does the organization expect you to be available?
    a. In what ways can you affect these expectations?
7. Is it difficult to separate your professional and private life, if so, in what ways?
    a. In what ways have this changed over the course of your career?
8. In what ways are your employees able to reach and contact you?
9. In what situations do you feel the need to be available towards your employees?
    a. Describe ways can you be available for them?
    b. Describe in what way your availability benefits them?
10. If time is an issue, how do you manage your different tasks?
11. What tasks are most important?
    a. Describe how you (or someone else) decide(s) this?
12. Are there situations when you feel that you are insufficient, if so, in what situations?
13. Do you have any experience/examples of situations when your presence at the workplace has affected those around you?

**Issues and Risks**
14. In what ways do you think an unavailable manager would affect the employees?
    a. Have you experienced a manager like this yourself? If so, please describe.
15. Is there any situation related to your (expected) availability that you perceive to be particularly difficult to live up to?
    a. How do you handle this situation?

**Future**
16. Describe how the need to be available has changed during your professional life.
17. What do you think the expectations of managers' availability will look like in the future?