Decentralized Dynamics: Analyzing the Distribution of Responsibility in Bottom-Up Networked Organizations

Written by:
Andleeb Siddiqui
Beatrice Göransson

Acknowledgement

Abstract

Title	Decentralized Dynamics: Analyzing the Distribution of Responsibility in Bottom-Up Networked Organizations
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Course	BUSN49, Degree Project in Managing People, Knowledge & Change
Authors	Andleeb Siddiqui & Beatrice Göransson
Supervisor	John Murray, Lund University, Sweden
Purpose	The purpose of this study is to examine how responsibility is distributed in a bottom-up and network forms structure.
Methodology	Our qualitative study followed the interpretivist tradition together with an inductive approach in one organization. The empirical data was collected at "Bright Solutions" through 8 semi-structured interviews over a two week period.
Theoretical Framework	This paper is examined through the lens of bottom-up approach and network forms (Park, Kim and Krishna, 2014; Powell, 1990; Podolny & Paige, 1998). Subsequently adding the distribution of responsibility (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003) in an organization that offers both bottom-up and network forms.
Conclusion	The examination of distributed responsibility resulted in key elements such as employee empowerment, trust and a relationship-based culture in order for the organization to maintain an adaptive and efficient structure.
Keywords	Organizational structure, Bottom-up approach, Network forms, Responsibility

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In today's rapidly evolving business environment, organizations are constantly challenged to adapt to changing market conditions, technological advancements, and shifting consumer demands. Robinson & Schroeder (2014) argues that managers have, over time, faced mounting pressure to achieve more with fewer resources, it has become increasingly evident to them that the current organizational structures and methodologies are insufficient to meet the expected outcomes. Organizational structure is important for the reason that an ineffective organizational structure leads to a tangled web of contradictions: role confusion, lack of coordination between functions, failure to foster idea-sharing, and sluggish decision-making burden managers with unnecessary complexity, stress, and conflict (Corkindale, 2011). When most people think about organizational structure they often think about the traditional hierarchical top-down organization, often for the reason that many organizations use this. Foss & Klein (2023) suggests that traditional hierarchical organizational structures, characterized by top-down decision-making and rigid bureaucratic processes, are increasingly being scrutinized for their limitations in fostering innovation, agility, and employee engagement. However Foss & Klein (2023) highlights the difficulty of balancing the two opposing forces; desire and need, in today's modern structure. According to the authors, desire points to empowerment and autonomy where companies are mobilizing their employees' creativity, helping them exploit their exceptional capabilities and knowledge. And the second points to the need to implement widespread managerial authority especially in an environment that is characterized by interdependent activities and rapid change in the organization (Foss & Klein, 2023).

The new demand on organizational structures has created an opening for structures such as bottom-up and network forms, putting more responsibility and demands on the employees. Wei, Yi & Yuan (2011) argues that Bottom-up learning emphasizes direct communication channels between top managers and frontline employees, facilitated through either formal or informal methods. Similarly, Park, Kim & Krishna (2014) suggest that there is a substantial relationship between employees and managers, and that employees' communicative behaviors wield significant influence over organizational effectiveness. Further Robinson & Schroeder (2014) presents that a

rising number of idea-centric organizations, in the contemporary landscape, excel in fostering ideas originating from the employee frontline, leading to exceptional performance levels. Even though this approach has become more popular in the 21st century, early scholars like Bush & Foreman (1991) and Powell (1990) have been arguing for flat organizations to be more efficient. They explain one concurrent model of innovation, network form as an organization, which comprises a hierarchical framework of functional specialists who are influenced in a manner consistent with traditional practices. It is argued by Snow, Miles & Coleman (1992) that an organization approaching a network form needs to be "flat" in the hierarchy to embrace decision-making and information flow, resulting in a more efficient and evolving organization.

1.2 Contextualization of problem

We can find a great amount of literature on organizational structure both on traditional hierarchies and more modern "flat" structures. Literature discusses bottom-up approaches in different aspects, organizations that are fully bottom-up in the entire structure (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014) as well as organizations that are traditional but are forced to develop bottom-up departments in order to keep up with the changing environment (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Similarly, previous literature discusses the need of network forms to achieve goals and more efficiency (Powell, 1990; Podolny & Paige, 1998). Traditional organizational structure in the form of top-down hierarchy is not a part of our research question, but it is necessary in this paper in order to understand the ground of the study.

The literature we found on network forms that were relevant to our study was done in the 1990's (Bush & Foreman, 1991; Powell, 1990; Podolny & Paige, 1998), and the more recent literature focuses on psychology and human brains as well as the gaming industry which is not relevant to our study. For this reason, we want to give a nuanced perspective on network-based organization together with bottom-up structure that is organized throughout the company. There are organizations that have a bottom-up approach and there are organizations that have network forms but there are rarely any organizations that do both. Equivalently, there is research that studies bottom-up approach and there is research that studies network forms, however, there is a lack of research that focuses on both the topics in one study. Therefore, we found an interest to dig deeper

in both these topics being used in an organization. With the help of this study we want to understand how an organization that adopts both structures function in the day to day operations. Since it puts a lot of emphasis on the employees we also want to understand who holds most responsibility and how much responsibility can one put on an employee.

In order to dig deeper into this we reached out to a company with 12 years of experience of structuring a company using both bottom-up and network forms. We believe that this company can help us find some answers due to their knowledge about the topics. They have been successful in running this type of an organization, giving us the opportunity to get insights on how this structure has helped them stay up to date in the market as well as how their employees perceive the division of responsibilities. Resulting in an understanding how decisions are processed and made in an upside down structure as well as how much responsibility can be put on employees.

1.3 Research question

The dominant view on organizational structure has been traditional top-down or modern and "flat" structures. The goal of the thesis topic is therefore to examine organizational structure from a bottom-up approach with an emphasis on network forms, to narrow the area down due to the time frame we are focusing on how responsibility is distributed. The aim is to explore how these structures are implemented, coordinated, and managed to foster innovation and employee engagement. As well as providing a nuanced understanding of how organizations navigate and optimize these organizational forms to adapt to changing market dynamics and meet evolving demands. In order for an organization to do these things decisions need to be made and responsibility needs to be handed out to streamline the flow of efficiency. The research question for this study is therefore:

'How is responsibility distributed in a bottom up networked organization?'

1.4 Thesis outline

This thesis comprises six chapters; *Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Empirical Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion*. In the introductory chapter, the authors provide background on the study's problematics, outline the research purpose, and state the research question. The second chapter introduces the theoretical framework and literature review, which encompasses perspectives on organizational structure, bottom-up approach and network forms, elucidating the organizing processes within an organization and the role of individuals in this context. The third chapter delineates the methodology, including the philosophical grounding, research strategy, method, case description, data collection, analysis process, and research quality assessment. The fourth chapter delves into the analysis of the empirical findings, which are categorized into three themes with subheadings and presented through excerpts. In the fifth chapter, the authors revisit these themes and discuss the empirical findings and relating it to the theoretical framework. The sixth chapter serves as the conclusion of the study, presenting the main findings alongside theoretical contributions. The authors also outline practical implications, reflect on limitations, and offer suggestions for future research.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, we delve into relevant literature on the topic that we are exploring to establish a foundation of existing knowledge. Our topic is based on how responsibility is distributed within networked organizational forms, which adopt a bottom-up approach. To illuminate the distinctive functions of bottom-up processes within such networks, it is essential to first clarify the nature of organizational structures to the readers. We start by exploring the concept of organizational structure. As mentioned by Clawson and Pitts (2008), an organization's structure forms the backbone of hierarchy, the distribution of authority, and responsibility. Thereafter, we delve into the concepts of top-down, bottom-up approaches, and network forms of organization, elucidating their operational dynamics within organizations. Next, we dive into the concept of responsibility within organizational structure, as outlined by Llewellyn (2003) and Roberts (1991), drawing on

its distinctions and implications, ending the discussion on the effects of hierarchical responsibility within organizations and the contrasting benefits of fostering shared responsibility among teams.

2.1 Perspectives on Organizational structure

Organizational structure is a fundamental aspect of an organization as noted by Clawson & Pitts (2008). Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood referred to the term "structure" as an arrangement of any task that displays a certain level of durability and determination (1980). The authors described organizational structure's main characteristic as having a regular and constant pattern (Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980). Organizational structure indicates an 'enduring configuration of tasks and activities' (Skivington and Daft, 1991). More than this, it serves as a framework that establishes an organization's hierarchy, reporting lines, and authority and responsibility distribution is known as its organizational structure (Clawson & Pitts, 2008). This structure underpins how departments work together, allocate resources, and distribute tasks to meet organizational objectives (Clawson & Pitts, 2008).

2.1.1 Top-down approach/Traditional structure

Organizational structure can be classified into traditional structure and modern structure (Cummins, 2009). Here we will delve into the discussion of the traditional structure of organization. One of the key elements of a traditional organization is that it is centralized, here authority is delegated from the top-down; lower-level employees are considered as oil that run the machine (Cunha, Clegg, Gaim, & Giustiniano, 2022). As stated in, Cunha, Clegg, Gaim, & Giustiniano, (2022) the traditional organizational chart could have a pyramid-like shape.

The top-down approach in an organization is a management style where decision-making authority, strategies, objectives, and device plans are concentrated at the upper level of hierarchy (Mintzberg, 1979; Zheng, Yang, & McLean, 2010). Decisions are made by top executives and flow downward through the managers, who then pass on directives to the operational staff (Cunha, Clegg, Gaim, & Giustiniano, 2022). This approach is grounded in traditional structure, which promotes a clearly defined chain of command. The authors further states, in the top-down approach, senior management develops strategies and expects them to be executed by middle managers and lower-level employees without any alteration (Cunha, Clegg, Gaim, & Giustiniano,

2022). An organization where information flows from top to bottom typically has a rigid structure with defined roles and responsibilities. The top-down approach has certain advantages. Kotter emphasizes a well-designed hierarchy, such as a singular vision and uniformity in company policy across all levels, which can be essential in maintaining organizational coherence (2014). Moreover, in situations that require quick and decisive action, this approach can be very effective because it minimizes the time spent in consultations and discussions. (Mintzberg,1979). However, this approach does have several drawbacks; according to Mintzberg (1979) and Kotter (2014), it can invade creativity and innovation among lower-level employees as their input is generally not short or valued in the decision-making process. Also, this approach can lead to a lack of adaptability and responsiveness, as the rigidity of the structure might not allow the organization to pivot quickly in response to market changes or internal crises (Palmer & Dunford, 2002; Kotter, 2014).

2.2 Perspectives on bottom-up approach

Organizational leaders and managers are regularly searching for ways to make their organizations more innovative, competitive, and successful (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014). A bottom-up organizational structure is a management approach where decision-making and idea generation originate from lower levels of the hierarchy and flow upwards (Kim, Sting & Loch, 2014). In contrast to traditional top-down structures where directives and decisions come from upper management and filter down through various levels, a bottom-up approach empowers employees at all levels to contribute ideas, insights, and feedback that shape the organization's direction and strategies (Kim, Sting & Loch, 2014). Zhang and Bartol (2010) suggests that successful organizations excel in motivating employees to voluntarily share information and cultivate an innovative mindset by fostering quality relationships. This entails a bottom-up approach to building an innovative and effective organization, where individual employees are motivated to stay attuned to environmental cues and circulate relevant information within the organization (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014).

According to Park, Kim & Krishna (2014) employees are considered one of the organization's most strategic assets. They possess the capability and should actively contribute to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship within the organization through their information behaviors linked to their tasks and work routines. Wei, Yi & Yuan (2011) argues that in organizations with

low hierarchy it is easier for the employees to take initiative and be alert to opportunities outside of their own job scope, resulting in a more efficient and creative organization. Building on this, Park, Kim & Krishna (2014) suggests that for an organization to thrive, it is imperative to establish mechanisms through which employees can engage in managerial processes, aiding in the identification of emerging threats or opportunities and generating creative ideas for innovation. Employees' communicative behaviors wield significant influence over organizational effectiveness. Park, Kim & Krishna (2014) suggests that there exists a substantial relationship between employees' formal and informal information behaviors and organizational entrepreneurship, paving the way for a more innovative and successful organization. Further, it is crucial to comprehend the nature of employees' information behaviors, the circumstances under which they manifest, the value and roles they play in fostering innovation, and the strategies organizations can employ to boost employee motivation and leverage their information behaviors effectively (Wei, Yi & Yuan, 2011).

Park, Kim & Krishna (2014) argue for three management strategies for success in a bottom-up approach. Two of them, *employee empowerment and communication symmetry*, are of interest in this study since they are connected to the responsibility that is handed to the employees in the bottom-up structure. Empowering leadership, as proposed by Zhang and Bartol (2010), involves creating conducive working conditions where power and responsibility is shared, employees enjoy greater decision-making autonomy, and the leader expresses confidence in their capabilities. A fluid and flexible structure, according to Zhang and Bartol (2010) empowers employees to participate in decision-making, leading to higher satisfaction and support for organizational goals. Originating from participative management and employee involvement, empowerment fosters a participative organizational culture, symmetrical communication, equal opportunity systems valuing individual contributions, and high job satisfaction (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014). When employees perceive themselves as empowered and capable, they are more inclined to search for information, allocate resources, generate alternatives to solve problems, and exhibit creativity (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). Organizations often overlook employees as a strategic public, assuming that since they are already part of the organization, deliberate relationship-building is unnecessary (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014). However, effective communication is essential to ensure that employees understand their organizational value, fostering mutual understanding and engagement

(Zhang and Bartol, 2010) which is of importance when handing out responsibility. Overlooking this aspect can result in unpredictable shifts in employee attitudes and behaviors, underscoring the need for effective communication practices within functional organizations (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014).

2.3 Perspectives on Network organizations

A network organization is a flexible and decentralized structure that emphasizes collaboration and connectivity among its members, relying on interconnected nodes or units that communicate and cooperate to achieve common goals (Powell, 1990). Podolny & Paige (1998) explains it as a method of governance, consisting of multiple actors engaged in ongoing exchange relationships with each other. Unlike the traditional hierarchical organizations, these network organizations lack a central authority figure with the power to arbitrate and settle any conflicts or disagreements that may arise among the actors involved in the exchanges (Podolny & Paige, 1998). Powell (1990) asserts that a norm of reciprocity serves as a foundational principle within network forms of organization. Each participant within the network is driven by a sense of obligation towards others, rather than exploiting any established trust. Granovetter (1995) highlights a strong sense of trust and obligation among group members. He suggests that these groups form a moral community wherein trustworthy conduct is anticipated, normative standards are recognized, and opportunistic behavior is avoided. In a network organization, decision-making authority is distributed, allowing for rapid adaptation to changing environments and fostering innovation (Bush & Foreman, 1991). This model promotes agility, resilience, and responsiveness to complex challenges in dynamic environments.

Podolny & Paige (1998) proposes that a network organization consists of three functions; Learning, Legitimation & Status, and Economic benefits. Network forms of organization promote learning by maintaining a broader range of search routines compared to hierarchical structures, and they convey more comprehensive and intricate information than market mechanisms (Podolny & Paige, 1998). Similarly, Powell (1990) states that the most valuable information often doesn't come from the formal chain of command within an organization, or from price signals. Rather, it is acquired from someone with whom you have previously interacted and deemed reliable. Bush & Foreman (1991) highlights the importance for functional specialists to engage in networking

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and collaboration to effectively achieve the innovation goals. Network forms of organization have the potential to enhance learning by promoting the creation of novel information syntheses that differ in quality from the information previously contained within individual nodes. Instead of merely facilitating the transfer of information between nodes, persistent exchange relationships within the network may lead to the generation of new knowledge (Podolny & Paige, 1998). Consequently, the network itself becomes the focal point of innovation, shifting the emphasis away from individual nodes (Powell, 1990). Apart from learning, Podolny & Paige (1998) discuss legitimation and status, nodes with ties to reputable partners are not only beneficial to the focal organization but also to the entire organizational population by institutionalizing it. Meaning that a growing organization can take advantage of legitimacy or status from an actor (Podolny & Paige, 1998) for example when starting a new subsidiary the company already has status or legitimation that can be transferred over to the subsidiary.

In discussing the functions served by network forms of organization, it's crucial to consider their direct economic advantages in terms of both costs and quality (Podolny & Paige 1998). Powell (1990) also suggests that the adaptability of network forms to unforeseen environmental changes is an economic benefit. Further, Powell (1990) argues that by promoting greater communication than markets, network forms facilitate enhanced coordination in response to changes whose significance isn't fully captured by price signals. Additionally, because the boundaries of network forms are typically more flexible than those of hierarchies, adjusting the composition of network organizations to adapt to such changes is easier (Podolny & Paige, 1998). Bush & Foreman (1991) highlights that the constrained and slow nature of information flow limits the traditional firms capacity to handle change due to the need for information to go through the hierarchical ladder. As uncertainty and task autonomy rise, and the efficacy of rules and protocols diminishes, symbolizing a bottleneck of hierarchical structure. The network organization, as outlined by Powell (1990), is specifically crafted to address high levels of task interdependence and uncertainty. Unlike structures emphasizing integrator roles or matrix frameworks, the network organization relies on individual behaviors. Within this context, management practices and organizational climate foster a sense of responsibility in each individual to act as a gatekeeper, making it an intrinsic aspect of their role (Granovetter, 1995). Consequently, the liaison function becomes integrated into every individual's responsibilities, rather than being relegated to

designated individuals or groups (Bush & Foreman, 1991). This approach ensures the coexistence of both formal vertical and informal lateral structures across all organizational units and levels.

2.4 Responsibility

The Swedish language, interestingly, only has one word for responsibility and the term used in this thesis for the Swedish interviews is "ansvar". The English language on the other hand also has the concept "accountability" which the Swedish language lacks a commonly used word for. The translation for both accountability and responsibility is "ansvar" and in order to make a clear definition of responsibility in organizational structures we will use both concepts in our explanation, suggesting that the concepts are inherently linked.

Lindkvist & Llewellyn (2003) suggests that accountability typically implies instrumentality and external controls, whereas responsibility more strongly connotes morality and internal controls. Accountability as a concept emerged with specialization of a role: the differentiation of functions made the evaluation of specific tasks and duties both necessary and desirable. However, fulfilling a duty purely as an instrumental accountability can lead to neglecting the good or bad consequences associated with that duty (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003). According to Roberts (1991), this can result in a floating responsibility, where everyone has process-driven accountabilities but no one takes responsibility for the broader consequences, whether moral or instrumental. In a situation like that, an accountability system focused solely on blind instrumentality can disconnect organizational members from concerns about the organization's overall effectiveness. Responsibility, in contrast to accountability, more strongly connotes morality. It involves an individual's obligation to reflect on what constitutes reasonable action in a given situation. Therefore, responsibility is potentially more surrounding, involving a broader and longer-term consideration of events, and is closer linked to the act of discretion rather than merely discharging assigned duties (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003).

2.4.1 Hierarchy
Roberts (1991) highlights concerns about how accounting and hierarchical accountabilities foster "a sense of the self as essentially solitary and singular, nervously preoccupied with how one is seen." More broadly, these forms of accountability dominance tend to suppress moral values

within the organization. According to Roberts (1991), hierarchical accountability equates to individualizing accountability. Which reflects the idea that individuals subjected to hierarchical accountabilities will focus their attention upwards, adhering to accounting standards and measures set by their superiors, and may forget the interconnection between their co-workers and themselves (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of top management to formulate these role instructions together with rules into a coherent body of responses to various contingencies. As Grant (1996) mentions, this is a cost-effective coordination form. Employees can work independently, following the established rules, plans, and roles without needing to know or interact personally with their colleagues to perform their tasks effectively.

2.4.2 Communities

Lindkvist & Llewellyn (2003) argues that individuals experience a sense of significance as well as solidarity in communities. Solidarity encompasses feelings of togetherness, sympathy and trust, fostering a supportive environment where individuals feel connected to one another. This sense of community is characterized by mutual support and a shared commitment to common goals. Lindkvist & Llewellyn (2003) further suggests that within a true community, the foundation remains strong and stable when individuals interact as responsible human beings. Which implies that personal responsibility and moral conduct are crucial for the maintenance and growth of the community. Each member's actions and interactions contribute to the collective well-being, ensuring that the community remains cohesive and functional (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003). This concept of communal responsibility is often applied in workplace settings, particularly in team-based environments. These teams operate with a shared sense of purpose and accountability, reflecting the principles of solidarity and individual significance. In such settings, the success of the team depends on each member's responsible behavior and active participation, mirroring the dynamics of a well-functioning community (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003).

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter provides a summary of the relevant literature connected to our study. The literature is giving us information and knowledge about bottom-up and network forms but there is something we don't know about the two structures in combination. The literature is providing us with similarities in both structures. Beginning the chapter with an introduction to organizational

structure, our discourse transitions from a traditional top-down structure to a more inclusive bottom-up and networked form of organization. The traditional approach has been characterized as a hierarchical and centralized decision-making process that is critiqued as rigid and authoritative. As Mintzberg (1979) has noted, traditional structure enforces a unified goal and reduces lead time in decision-making, it hinders the participation and innovation of employees and prohibits adaptive responses to future unforeseen challenges. Whereas, the bottom-up approach, as discussed by authors like Park, Kim, and Krishna (2014), involves the empowering of lower-level employees by involving them in decision-making and acknowledging employees as important assets whose insights and engagements are important for an adaptive environment. Further broadening the discourse, the concept of a network form of organization where various nodes experience flexibility, flat organizational structure, decentralized authority, and a collaborative environment. Powell (1990) elucidates that these types of organizations leverage autonomy and a collaborative environment, which fosters a culture of mutual trust. This structure responds best to changing environments. Furthermore, the chapter explores the implications of responsibility for different organizational structures. Lindkvist and Llewellyn (2003) outline the critique of traditional structure and, conversely, promote a collaborative and trusting environment within a networked bottom-up structure.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, the authors delineate the methodology employed to address the research question. The chapter commences by elucidating the philosophical underpinnings and expounding on the authors' epistemological considerations for the study. Subsequently, it provides an overview of the research strategy and method, outlines the case and its contextual background, offers a comprehensive account of data collection and analysis procedures, before culminating with an examination of the research quality of the study.

3.1 Philosophical grounding

To gain a foundational understanding of the research, it is essential to address certain prerequisites, including the researchers' worldview and the philosophical underpinnings guiding the study. The philosophical framework sheds light on the origins of the research question and the study's context

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018), offering clarity to readers and enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Given that this study seeks to explore diverse perspectives and interpretations among involved actors, the underlying assumptions about knowledge are particularly relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Understanding these assumptions is crucial because they shape how different actors perceive, interpret, and respond to the social and organizational contexts being studied. The research question's outcome is influenced by how these varying viewpoints contribute to a broader comprehension of the subject matter, highlighting the importance of epistemological considerations (Styhre, 2013). By acknowledging that knowledge is constructed through individual and collective experiences, the study emphasizes the need to explore how actors' beliefs, values, and contextual understandings influence their interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). This approach allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the dynamics at play, ultimately providing deeper insights into the adoption of organizational structure. According to Prasad (2018) the interpretive approach sees human interpretation as the starting point to develop knowledge about the social world. During our interviews we started with general questions about organizational structure, responsibility and different processes in the company which gave the interviewees the possibility to give subjective responses due to their meaning creation and sense-making.

3.2 Research strategy

The aim of this study emerged from the researchers interest in the topic and while reading through a lot of research papers we struggled to understand why there is no paper investigating both bottom-up approach and network forms. As we understand it from our first meeting with "Bright Solutions" it has been getting more popular to structure the organization this way when it is for example a consulting firm. Since it is getting more popular to use this structure we decided that we wanted to investigate it further and to keep our focus in this area we decided to investigate the flow of responsibility. By establishing contact with "Bright Solutions", a company that turned the traditional organizational models upside down, it is possible to gain valuable insights into daily operations. Since the business landscape is recognized as a multidisciplinary domain, it is suggested that diverse forms of knowledge can be acknowledged and accepted as valid (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). At the same time, Styrhe (2013) argues that researchers also hold their own set of assumptions about knowledge. Accordingly, epistemological assumptions must be clearly defined,

addressing the connection between participants and researchers (Styhre, 2013), as well as the assumptions concerning knowledge and its validation, acceptance, and legitimization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Therefore, the communication, perception of knowledge, and the findings are contingent on the observer. In order to complete this study we formulated the research question as: *How is responsibility distributed in a bottom up organization*?

The study is conducted from an interpretive approach that is commonly associated with human interpretation as the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world (Prasad, 2018). The interpretive approach is a broad concept that corresponds to a specific viewpoint regarding organizational reality. This viewpoint asserts that reality is socially constructed or imbued with meaning through individuals' interpretations and understandings of events (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). For numerous communication scholars, the origins of meanings and interpretations are found within language, texts and symbols (Prasad, 2018). Due to our lack of knowledge it was important for us to study the respondents language and symbols to avoid any misinterpretations. Embracing an interpretive approach highlights how individuals convert social occurrences into narratives, texts and discourse that play pivotal roles in organizational operations. By conducting the interviews with an interpretive approach we could identify possible hints either positive or negative and ask follow-up questions to get more equitable knowledge that is of importance when answering our research question. We didn't want to forget that this type of organizational structure is getting popular and the company being interviewed are proud of their organization. However, it is the perception of the employees that can get a more honest picture of how it really is working in their day to day operations. The interpretive approach highlights the significance of naming or categorizing in shaping social contexts and emphasizes the connections among symbols in forming structures and conveying significance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Thus, interpretations emerge from actions and interactions mediated by language, symbols, and texts (Prasad, 2018).

3.3 Case context

The chosen organization for this research study is a company operating in consulting, located in Sweden and will in this study be called "Bright Solutions", due to their anonymity. The company was founded in Sweden 2012 and has since then continued to develop companies all over the world. Today the company employs over 850 specialist consultants apart from the core company

that employs around 10 people which is the CEOs, founders, salespeople etc. The organization is today structured with one core company and 36 subsidiaries, the organization is strategized with a bottom-up structure giving responsibility to the CEO's of each subsidiary. To be more precise, it is a decentralized organization with three levels: Group CEO - CEO of each subsidiary - consultants. They are characterized by their way of finding the biggest talents and building companies around their employees. Instead of putting employees in companies they are letting them develop their competencies and continuously develop their personal brands. Their methodology is to let their employees unravel new ways of thinking on both group and individual level, by consistently surpassing their own personal best, they can guide their clients towards exceptional breakthroughs. Besides putting the employees first in their bottom-up approach the company also applies network forms by empowering the employees and letting them be responsible for the organization's goals and values, emphasizing collaboration and connectivity among their members. We encountered an exceptional opportunity to explore the daily operations undertaken by individuals across different departments, as well as the potential boundaries surrounding this process, by addressing the questions of "what" and "how" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Departing from a focus solely on outcomes when evaluating the structure, we expressed interest in acknowledging creative attempts irrespective of the outcomes within this project.

3.4 Inductive approach

The interpretive approach seldom starts with theory; instead, it favors an inductive approach to theory development and pattern formation. Induction involves using various empirical cases to establish connections and shape theory, which can be seen as somewhat risky due to its reliance on specific instances (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). On the contrary, deductive reasoning applies general principles to specific cases, often criticized for overlooking fundamental trends and patterns (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). During the initial stages of the inductive approach, no hypotheses are formulated, and the researcher remains uncertain about the type and nature of the research findings until the study concludes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Various empirical sources are utilized in this inductive study to acquire insights and understanding of the subject matter. The study intends to use both theoretical and empirical sources, according to Alvesson & Sköldberg (2018) building on the interchange between theoretical and empirical aspects commonly shape interpretations that are related to the research field. Unlike the deductive and abductive approaches, the inductive method is seen as more interactive and realistic, aligning well with the typical progression of research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). In the context of this study, this means that the initial interest in the topic stemmed from existing literature where we didn't find any research investigating bottom-up and network forms in one paper. One of the authors also had an internship at a company that uses bottom-up and network forms in their organizational structure, which also strengthened the interest in the topic. While empirical findings informed and guided the study's direction through greater understanding from the conducted interviews, allowing us to form and categorize what we found important for this subject. Ultimately connecting back to the research objectives by leveraging organizational knowledge.

3.5 Research Method

3.5.1 Exploratory Research

Selecting an appropriate research design is crucial for the success of a study where exploration is a primary approach in the social sciences, particularly in management and business research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2018). An explorative research design is often preferred when there is ambiguity about the study's outcome, and preliminary information is utilized in the design phase to achieve deeper insights into the problem at hand. Since this study delves into organizational structure in the form of a bottom-up approach, focusing on network forms and decision-making dynamics, it is essential to explore the diverse understandings and knowledge of various actors. This can be achieved through information gathering, constructing observations, and subsequent theorization (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2018). Accordingly, the exploratory research design justifies the selection of a qualitative approach and is closely associated with the abductive approach taken in this research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2018).

As recommended by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018), an exploratory design was employed, leading to the formulation of a broad research question rooted in the literature, after a more

thorough consideration it was clear that we needed to narrow our question before the interviews started. The research question was continually reassessed and reframed throughout the study. Drawing from the collected data, the research objective could be adjusted, allowing the study to be directed accordingly to our main topics; structure, responsibility and influencing factors. Given the aim of the study the outcomes heavily rely on the openness and reflexivity of the participants, rendering the data somewhat unpredictable. The purpose of having open and reflexive participants in this study is to be able to gather enough information that gives us an idea on how to answer our research question. Consequently, the study is not constrained by rigid structures; instead, it allows us to be open about the topic and change the research question throughout the study as we did in the beginning. As well as keeping open dialogues with the respondents allows us to change the path during the interviews, possibly allowing us to change the direction in order to answer our research question. Meaning that the empirical findings are guiding the trajectory of the research.

3.6 Data collection

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

Sampling is seen by Creswell & Creswell (2018) as an important aspect in research design, referring to a process of selecting, in this case, a group of people from a company to be included in our study. In qualitative research, the purpose of sampling is to ascertain which individuals and how many should participate in the study. Rather than aiming for statistical representation, the selection is guided by the research objectives, focusing on purposive sampling to gather valuable insights and materials conducive to theorization (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). According to Bell, Bryman & Harley (2019) a purposive sampling approach involves strategically selecting participants for interviews in alignment with the research project's objectives and the participants who can best address the research question. However, the selection criteria should encompass diverse perspectives on the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The authors, at the outset of the project, established criteria to engage individuals from different departments within the organization. This approach aimed to enrich the empirical foundation to offer a comprehensive understanding of their creative endeavors.

In the beginning of the study, we had a meeting with one of the Partners at "Bright Solutions" to outline the scope and plan the research study. This meeting laid a strong foundation for understanding the project's feasibility and how the company could support us in addressing the research question. Through mediation at the meeting, the interests of the partner and us were reconciled, leading to a refinement of the research question. Additionally, discussions were held regarding potential interview candidates, resulting in the selection of eight individuals. While a sample size of eight individuals may appear modest, it can be considered advantageous. As highlighted by Bell, Bryman & Harley (2019), as long as the sample encompasses sufficient diversity, emerging patterns that may arise are expected to hold significant interest and value, embodying essential themes.

3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

According to Alvesson & Sköldberg (2018) the optimal method for data collection is interviews due to their real-time interaction, allowing researchers to access the beliefs and opinions of participants directly. Alvesson & Sköldberg (2018) underscores the value of interviews in qualitative research, suggesting that they offer a powerful means to comprehend the meanings and subjects of life worlds. Similarly, Bell, Bryman & Harley (2019) posits that interviews serve to illuminate relevant contexts, thereby facilitating the production of situated knowledge. Moreover, interviews are prized in qualitative research for their inherent flexibility, which can yield more comprehensive results (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Given the epistemological approach and explorative design of this study, which emphasize close exchange between researcher and interviewee, interviews were chosen as the primary method for data collection.

The literature covers three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews are utilized to gather qualitative data, with semi-structured interviews allowing researchers to prepare themes and topics to be addressed (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). In this study, preparation involved creating an interview guide based on the literature review. According to Bell, Bryman & Harley (2019), using a semi-structured interview guide facilitates adjustments and permits follow-up questions during the interview process. As a result, the central questions in each interview may vary, reflecting individuals' diverse experiences. Moreover, the sequence of questions might be contingent upon the flow of conversation, enabling

reactive questions to be incorporated. During the interviews, we employed the "what" and "how", explained by Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018), in the questions to elicit open-ended responses suited to the study's objectives. Consequently, flexibility played a significant role throughout all interviews, allowing for exploration of unexpected areas and providing insights into the interviewees' values, meanings, and perceptions. This does not suggest that we relinquished control over the direction of the interviews to the interviewees; rather, it demonstrates that flexibility served as an important mechanism for enhancing the value of the interviews.

Eight interviews were conducted during a two week period, and a meeting was also held in advance of the study to assess the practical relevance and academic feasibility of the intended research question. In the initial interviews of the study, we identified certain emerging themes, which were subsequently incorporated into the interview guide for subsequent interviews. Thus, we deliberately pursued a strategy of promptly transcribing and analyzing the interview material, as advocated by Bell, Bryman, and Bell (2019) and by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), aiming to highlight the emergence of key themes. All interviewees are employed in various departments within the company. We chose to do interviews with two people working as CEOs of different subsidiaries and then six people working as consultants, giving us insights from the different levels of the company. However, due to the relatively small size of the organization, more information about the interviewees will remain undisclosed to ensure confidentiality. The interviews were conducted at the company's headquarters, a few of them needed to be conducted via Zoom due to the lack of time for both the respondents and the authors. Although the inability to conduct all the interviews in person poses a challenge for qualitative research, we acknowledged certain advantages. Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) emphasize the importance of considering the interview setting to ensure that interviewees can freely express themselves without interruptions or concerns about being overheard, thus feeling safe and comfortable. These concerns were addressed by conducting interviews through Zoom, offering flexibility and allowing interviewees to choose a setting according to their preference. Moreover, it mitigated potential logistical challenges associated with traveling to and from the site, which was deemed efficient in terms of time management.

3.7 Analysis of collected data

As outlined by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), a key challenge in qualitative research lies in the rapid accumulation of substantial amounts of data, often characterized by inherent disorder, as described by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018). Recognizing this, we predetermined a suitable strategy for analyzing the empirical material before commencing the study. Given the need for meticulous handling of the disordered data, thematic analysis emerged as a common and preferred approach, as emphasized by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2018). Thematic analysis involves the systematic exploration of data to identify recurring themes, patterns, transitions, metaphors, and analogies within transcripts, offering considerable flexibility in analyzing diverse qualitative data types (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019), a crucial requirement for this study.

Due to the time constraints of the interviews, it was essential to initiate the analysis promptly. Immediate transcription of interview transcripts following each session facilitated early awareness of emerging themes, aligning with the recommendations of both Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) and Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), and allowed for adjustments to the interview guide for subsequent sessions. Additionally, insights were drawn from Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), underscoring the importance of conducting thorough analysis between interviews to maximize their value. We commenced the analysis by thoroughly reviewing each transcript multiple times to familiarize ourselves with the material. Coding and thematic exploration were facilitated using NVivo software, enabling efficient organization, storage, and coding of all transcripts, notes, and relevant materials pertaining to the case.

3.7.1 Sorting, reducing & arguing

We drew inspiration from Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018) regarding their approach to analyzing the material, which involved breaking down the process into three stages: sorting, reducing and arguing. Employing this approach, we were provided with a structured method for understanding large datasets and developing analytical concepts.

In the first step, we started sorting our data by putting it in categories to get some sort of sense of how we could divide it into categories. When reading through our transcribed interviews we got the opportunity to identify repetitive responses which allowed us to code it into two themes;

structure, responsibility and influencing factors. As outlined by Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018) this approach helps us get familiar with our data and sort out what is important and what is of less importance, resulting in a more efficient process. After the first round of coding, we went back to our transcribed material to further divide it into subcategories where structure naturally landed in the bottom-up approach and network forms. Influencing factors that recurred in our process was trust, freedom and relationship-based culture. In the reducing step, an open coding process was employed to make our material workable, wherein codes encompassed single words, sentences, phrases, and metaphors used by the respondents.

Additionally, the use of NVivo software provided various tools, such as text search functionalities, to display all occurrences of specific words or phrases in the transcripts, as well as doing frequency searches to identify the most repetitive words in the text. These tools enhanced the reducing process and introduced a different dimension compared to manual reading. This procedure was repeated for all transcripts, and in the subsequent phase of analysis, we began identifying connections between the appearing themes. Various matrices were constructed in NVivo, allowing for visualization of how different codes and concepts were interconnected. The primary benefit of using matrices was the facilitation of understanding how a particular concept related not only to one theme but to a variety of themes. In the last step, arguing, we needed to start explaining how our empirical data was in line with the presented literature. An important step that according to Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018) allows us to understand the message of explaining or understanding the uniqueness of the study.

3.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, we outline the comprehensive methodology that was utilized to address the main research question of our study, beginning with the philosophical grounding and proceeding through the detailed steps of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. We begin the chapter by establishing the philosophical framework that underpins our study, emphasizing the interpretive approach, which prioritizes human interpretation as a fundamental aspect of understanding social realities. This section highlights the relevance of epistemology considerations, noting that the study explores how individuals' perceptions and their interactions within an organizational setting contribute to a broader understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Our research strategy is driven by a desire to explore the relatively understudied area of bottom-up organizational structure and network forms, particularly in firms like Bright Solutions, a consulting firm in Sweden, known for their bottom-up and network organizational structure, which serves as the case study for this research. Additionally, we provide details of the process of engaging with the company and set a clear, focused research question on how responsibility is distributed within a decentralized organization. The methodology section continues with a discussion of the inductive approach adopted in the study. This part of the chapter emphasizes the flexible, responsive nature of this approach, which is well suited to the exploratory nature of the study.

Our study employs semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method to allow for in-depth discussions and a nuanced understanding of our participants' perspectives. the data collection. This was done by executing eight semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders within the company, discussing the adaptive nature of the interview process. Finally, the chapter details the rigorous process of data analysis, starting with the sorting of data into meaningful categories through thematic analysis using NVivo software. This section outlines the stages of sorting, reducing, and arguing to redefine the data into coherent themes and subcategories that align with the research objectives and questions. Overall, the chapter describes each step of the research methodology and justifies the choices made in the context of the study goals in the investigation of the decentralized organization structure at Bright Solution.

4 Empirical findings

In this section, we have included the data that has been collected from interviews with consultants and CEOs of the subsidiaries. The empirics have been divided into two categories, which can be described as *Structure, Responsibility and Influencing factors*, and each category includes subcategories in which the narratives of employees whom we have interviewed are presented. For it to be helpful for the readers to navigate between the categories, we have presented statements given by the employees. And at the end of each main category, a final section is included, which involves a description of our own interpretation as well.

By providing first-hand accounts and perspectives of the interviewees, we aim to highlight how networked organizations with bottom-up approach distribute responsibility, in our findings. These insights will explore themes such as autonomy, highly skilled employees, trust, and structure, which are essential for fostering an environment of innovation and adaptability in a rapidly changing business environment.

Furthermore, to ensure that our respondents' privacy is preserved, we are referring to our interviewees by the fictional names given by us to them mentioned in the Appendix A, we have also modified some words. The modifications are minor, enabling us to retain the authentication of our interviewees' insights while making sure that the information presented to our readers remains clear and comprehensible.

4.1 Structure

In exploring how responsibility is distributed in Bright Solutions, this section delves into how the employees view and distinguishes the structure of the company by implementing a bottom-up approach as opposed to traditional top-down structure. The purpose of this analysis is to uncover how responsibility is distributed and the underlying reasons why employees bottom-up approach, and to discuss the impacts it has on their operations and decision-making processes. By interviewing and examining the first-hand accounts of consultants, and CEOs within the organization, we aim to highlight the factors of decentralized structure, such as increased autonomy, flexibility, and responsiveness, which contribute to a more dynamic and adaptive business environment.

4.1.1 Bottom-up over Top-down approach

4.1.1.1 View about Structure of the employees

In the analysis of the organizational structures as described by our separate respondents in the interviews, a consistent theme emerges, which indicates a preference for the *bottom-up approach* within the core company and its subsidiaries by the respondents. Each respondent's varying insights confirm that the core company operates with a *decentralized and non-hierarchical structure* and lacks a rigid top-down chain of command. The interviewees mention that the entire

organization adopting a bottom-up approach implies the application of this approach uniformly throughout the organization. Teressa, who is working as a consultant for nearly a decade now, describes the structure as:

> *"We follow bottom-up; in my experience, all the subsidiaries of ours follow the bottom-up as well."*

Kevin, also working as a consultant, aligning with Teressa, shares his view about the company adhering to a bottom-up approach. This approach typically means that decision making and idea generation, which will be discussed further in the findings, are flowing upwards, in this case, from the consultants to CEOs. In this statement, Kevin further explained how the organization involves consultants as a key part of the main activities. These consultants play a vital role in deciding the company's strategies and helping to develop its brand. Furthermore, consultants are important because their ideas and work directly influence how the company grows and its direction.

Frank, who agrees with both Teressa and Kevin's statement while further adding:

> *"We are a very decentralized organization with three levels: Group CEO – CEO of each company – consultant. The companies are also very decentralized, having only the CEO and employees''*

Frank breaks it down even further, indicating the different levels of hierarchy. By embracing this, they significantly reduce the layers of management. Frank's statement reflects that a lack of middle management highlights a commitment to maintaining a flat organizational structure. Though he mentions that some of the subsidiaries within the group have grown into larger companies than others, the CEOs might need assistance with some tasks, like checking reports, but they don't act as bosses over the employees, which sustains the decentralized, non-authoritarian structure.

While discussing their views on the structure, the respondents dove deep and indicated that the bottom-up approach *promotes autonomy* and interconnectivity among teams. Patrick, working as the CEO of one of the subsidiaries mentioned:

"Our consultants have first-hand insights into the issues and opportunities they face, and with the autonomy to act, they can implement solutions quickly and efficiently.."

In this statement, Patrick shares the most comprehensive overview, by emphasizing on autonomy and interconnectivity, the interviewee acknowledges the importance of teams having the freedom to take decisions and the necessity of having efficient communication channels that reflect a more collaborative environment. Consultants who are providing services in the front line have first-hand insights about any issues they face, having autonomy, they can quickly implement solutions with the immediate need of the clients and changing market environment.

4.1.1.2 Aspects of a traditional top-down structure that are missed

Being asked, even though they operate in a structure that operates bottom-up approach, do the interviewees miss any aspects of a traditional or top-down approach, the responses from the interviews offer a diverse perspective on what aspects the respondents miss from traditional organizational structures. It appears that each viewpoint touches on different elements, ranging from absence of clear line of authority, lack of coordination, clients' perception and operational efficiencies. Julia, another consultant, responds:

"[...] that while the infrastructure has many benefits, some individuals might miss the clear lines of authority and predictability that are typical of traditional hierarchical structures".

Further suggesting, which aligns with the opinion of other respondents, that a balance between flexibility and structure is critical. The respondent however clarifies by saying that even though clear lines of authority can simplify decision making and role clarity yet they may also hinder the flexibility necessary to respond to complex and dynamic business environments, so any day employees in our organization personally do not favour a traditional structure. This sentiment, in some way, aligns with studies that have shown that traditional structures provide clarity in roles and accountability for top management, but at the cost of potential rigidity and slow response times (Palmer & Dunford, 2002; Kotter, 2014). While Julia expresses satisfaction with the flat structure.

Patrick and Frank slightly differ. Patrick emphasizes that the aspect that he misses of a traditional structure is that as CEOs of subsidiaries has to be responsible for certain tasks that are usually taken care of department wise in traditional structure. Also, from one of the CEO, Patrick's, perspective,

> *"Our central business has the ambition to be tight, efficient, and lean. Much of what is usually found as central functions in traditional organizations (HR, legal, IT, sustainability, etc.) ends up being the responsibility of the companies and subsidiary CEOs, which is not always completely optimal".*

Whereas, Frank's concerns indicate that such structures can face practical challenges in implementation, particularly in scenarios requiring coordinated action across multiple units. The absence of hierarchy can sometimes impede the organization's ability to act cohesively, affecting its efficiency and professionalism.

Felix one of the aspects of traditional structure that he misses and highlights it as a significant challenge in a networked organization is the absence of a central coordination role, to be more specific he mentioned:

> *"We lack a common "key account manager" function. We could use a coordinator, we try to solve it anyway, but sometimes we can appear scattered to the client".*

He is mentioning of a specific role of *key account manager* comes from the fact that when they meet big and important clients and those clients require multiple services that Bright Solutions has to offer, this requires them to have a *key account manager* to help coordinate the projects, as Felix is afraid they appear to be scattered in front of the client. They have several different brands, and all their competitors have a traditional structure, as stated by Felix. Comparing their situation to a traditionally structured organization, where, due to layers of hierarchy, a dedicated manager typically oversees multi-faceted projects involving various departments, in contrast, a networked organizational structure often lacks central coordination, sometimes leading to potential disorganization when handling complex projects that require an extensive amount of cohesion and collaboration. As noted by Felix in his statement above, he perceives that a lack of central coordination might make them look scattered, which affects their *clients' perception*.

'It's like selling Lego pieces where we have over 30 boxes of Lego pieces that look the same and are very skilled, but when putting together 4-5 different ones into something, there's no one to take responsibility for it'.

Felix's narrative further touches upon the informal or ad hoc manner in which responsibility is distributed in networked organizations. He elaborates that the responsibility of coordinating, which requires efficiency and professionalism, across different units often falls to individuals who assume these roles as a 'side responsibility', which does not have a formal recognition or alignment with their primary roles. No single person wants to explicitly take accountability for the integration of services or client management because it has no recognition and requires it to be done efficiently and professionally.

4.1.2 Motivation to adopt a network form of organization

The responses obtained from the interviews of different respondents provide insight into the motivation behind the adoption of a network form of organization over a more traditional hierarchical structure. The decision to implement a network structure appears to be motivated by factors which include the desire for adaptability, maintaining an innovation-friendly and, benefits of small and large companies, in a changing environment (Bush & Foreman, 1991). One of the respondents highlights the primary driver for adopting the network structure from his perspective as the need for greater *adaptability* and faster responsiveness to complex challenges.

Teressa, criticizing traditional structures for their rigidity and slowness, *''we don't believe traditional organizational forms are up to date. The hierarchical traditional form is seen as a legacy from industrialism, which works great if you have masses of workers producing items'';* which are seen as obstacles in a continuously changing environment and customer needs, this reflection resonates with academic research that suggests that organizational structures as networks can benefit from flexibility, enabling them to respond more effectively to environmental changes and uncertainties. (Buse & Foreman, 1991). As the distribution of responsibility is more fluid in a networked organization, consultants at Bright Solutions do not have to wait for directives from any chain of commands; instead, they can proactively respond to the changes. Similar to Teressa,

Frank highlights a critical shortcoming of traditional structure: the tendency to treat individuals as mere numbers than individual talents;

> ''*We didn't think the traditional structure was an appealing organization for the "rockstars." There are rockstars in such traditional organizations too, but they are never seen, they become anonymous and viewed as a number executing a task. When working with specialists, we felt we needed to find a structure that supports them with everything they need. How can we create an organization that supports these individuals to become as successful and excellent as possible? In reality, it's only the consultants who bring in money to our business…… […].*

Frank, mentioning 'rockstars' who single-handedly deal with the client and are the main money generators in the business, has decentralized decision-making. This distribution of responsibility empowers these rockstars to make decisions that affect their work and organization; nonetheless, such empowerment is linked to adaptability to dynamic market changes.

From the interview material, we found something interesting, Paul, another CEO, elaborated for us, that the company tries to keep the good qualities of both a *small and a large company*. They keep the good qualities of a small company while also benefiting from being a large company

> ''*[...] the idea here is that while small companies are agile and can quickly adopt changes, they often like the resources and security that larger organizations have. On the other hand, big companies have plenty of resources and stability but can sometimes be slow to react because of their size and complex structures*''.

By empowering individuals and teams to make decisions independently rather than receiving directives from a central authority. As this kind of autonomy fosters innovation and responsiveness, as team members react to changes and opportunities without waiting for approval from different layers of management. By distributing responsibility in this manner, the consultants

can work independently, enhancing both flexibility and speed in processes and decision-making. Kevin adds to it by saying:

> ''*[...] using a network form of organizational structure, we are set up more like a network than a traditional hierarchy. In this setup, different parts of the company are connected like nodes in a network, allowing for easier and quicker sharing of ideas and knowledge. So this structure helps a company maintain innovative and entrepreneurial traits often seen in smaller companies while still enjoying the advantages of a large company, like having resources and stability.* **having the best of both worlds''.**

While the distribution of responsibility allows for autonomy and quick action, being part of an organization with multiple nodes or teams, almost over 30 in Bright Solutions' case, within the network have access to more resources. These resources might include a wider talent pool, and advanced technology tools. This aspect of the networked structure ensures that while teams have the autonomy to innovate and move quickly, they are also supported by the stability and resources typically associated with larger companies.

4.2 Responsibility

When structuring a bottom-up and network organization, the organization relies heavily on employees to take on significant responsibilities. This reliance fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among the staff. When asked a general question about how responsibility is distributed in the company, all respondents provided similar answers, underscoring a consistent understanding of the organizational structure. Frank, one of the respondents stated:

> *"The ultimate responsibility lies with the group CEO for all the companies, including the core company and the respective subsidiaries which are majority-owned by the core company. In the daily operations however, it is the CEO of each company that has*

the delegated responsibility, essentially all responsibility as long as they generate a positive result."

This response highlights the dual layers of responsibility within the organization. While the group CEO holds the overarching accountability, daily operational responsibilities are delegated to the CEOs of individual subsidiaries. This delegation empowers subsidiary CEOs to make critical decisions, fostering an environment where they are accountable for their results, thus promoting a results-driven culture. Furthermore, the respondents emphasized that they have significant responsibility in their day-to-day operations. This shared sense of responsibility is bolstered by the commonality of roles among employees, which enables them to support each other effectively. This collaborative environment not only enhances the efficiency of operations but also builds a robust support network within the organization. The ability to lean on one another for guidance and assistance ensures that employees are not working in isolation, but rather as part of a cohesive team that is collectively striving towards the organization's goals. This structure is integral to the success of a bottom-up and network organization, as it leverages the collective strengths and expertise of its members.

Julia, another respondent, also highlighted that if necessary, they can seek support from the core company. This flexibility is a critical component of the organizational structure, providing an additional layer of security and resource availability for the subsidiaries. She elaborated on how this support mechanism functions, emphasizing that while subsidiary CEOs are empowered to manage their operations independently, they are not isolated in their efforts. The core company serves as a strategic backbone, offering resources, expertise, and guidance when complex challenges arise that require more than what the subsidiaries can handle on their own. A similar discussion with Paul reinforced the idea saying that:

> *"While the subsidiaries operate with a high degree of autonomy, they are still integral parts of a larger organizational ecosystem. This interconnectedness allows for the sharing of best practices and innovative solutions across the entire network, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organization".*

Responsibility in this context is multifaceted, balancing autonomy with support, and is central to the effective functioning of a bottom-up and networked organization. The delegation of responsibility to the CEOs of each subsidiary is a cornerstone of the organizational model, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability at the local level. This empowerment allows subsidiary CEOs to make decisions that are closely aligned with their specific operational realities and market conditions, even though at the same time the group CEO has a small responsibility in each subsidiary. This dual structure of delegated authority and available support creates a dynamic where responsibility is both a privilege and a shared burden.

In order to dig deeper in the area of responsibility we wanted to ask about each of the respondents' own opinions on how they perceive the responsibility that is handed to them, we saw some different answers to the question. In the overall perspective the respondents started by saying that the responsibility is giving them the opportunity to be more efficient in their decision making since they don't need to ask for approval from the core company. Paul added to this by saying that this empowerment allows for rapid adjustments and innovations that are necessary in dynamic environments. However, we also found some deviant answers at personal level when analyzing our material. Teressa mentioned that in her position she is doing well but she has noticed that it is hard for some positions since the company has some central functions that are missing. She supports her colleagues by saying that it is hard for the subsidiary CEO's to be familiar with all the laws and requirements which exist in all the areas. Frank expressed that he sometimes in his position feels a bit frustrated, he explains:

> *"My responsibility is to ensure that everyone's results are good, my job is to suggest what they should do to improve but sometimes there is a long gap between action and result. […] My responsibility becomes a bit shaky as the only one who has authority and responsibility is the group CEO, the rest of us in the core company only have authority based on respect that might be created through our experience and knowledge. [...] And if i were going to start giving directions then i would take away their responsibility which leads to them relying on me going forward and all the responsibility ends up in my lap. So while I feel frustrated that it is like this, I don't want to change it either. "*

Frank's comments highlight a critical tension within the organizational structure. On one hand, the decentralized model promotes autonomy and swift decision-making, which are beneficial for operational efficiency and innovation. On the other hand, it can also lead to a sense of isolation or a lack of cohesive direction among subsidiary leaders. Frank's frustration stems from the delicate balance he must maintain: providing guidance without undermining the subsidiary CEOs' autonomy. His authority is inherently limited by design, relying on respect and expertise rather than formal power, which can complicate his efforts to drive consistent improvement across the subsidiaries.

Moreover, the core company's reluctance to centralize control reflects a deliberate strategy to preserve the bottom-up dynamic of the organization. However, this approach can sometimes create challenges in coordination and consistency, as indicated by the varied experiences of the respondents. As stated by Taylor *"While the system encourages responsibility and self-sufficiency, it can also lead to gaps in support and an uneven distribution of knowledge and resources"*. In conclusion, the perception of responsibility within this organizational framework varies among the respondents. While many appreciate the empowerment and efficiency it provides, others point out significant challenges, particularly related to the lack of centralized support and the nuanced balance of authority. These insights underscore the complexity of managing a bottom-up and networked organization, where the benefits of decentralization must be weighed against the potential drawbacks of insufficient support and coordination.

In order for a bottom-up and a network structure to function it is important to allow the employees to have responsibility, but it is a lot at stake for the company when giving this responsibility to the employees. When asked how they cope with this Frank suggested that ensuring employee accountability and behavior within the organization is not solely reliant on traditional hierarchical control mechanisms. He contrasts this approach with the current structure, which emphasizes autonomy and flexibility.

> *"The alternative would have been a traditional hierarchical organization with multiple control instances above us to constantly ensure that the employees do what they have agreed upon. […] We now feel that you can do the right thing in different ways and not*

everyone wants to do it the same way. One way is fun and full of energy, where it's enjoyable for one CEO, but for another, it would be a death sentence. "

In the absence of strict hierarchical control, Frank believes that employees can still be motivated to uphold their responsibilities through alternative means. He highlights the importance of allowing employees to approach their roles in ways that align with their individual strengths and preferences. This acknowledgment of diversity in work styles and motivations reflects a more adaptable and inclusive approach to fostering employee accountability and commitment. Julia adds to this by emphasizing the inherent alignment of incentives within the organization.

"[...] But all the CEO's have a clear incentive within that they have a stake in the business and are chosen from the start because they are entrepreneurs and want to develop and grow the business."

She suggests that all CEOs within the company have a vested interest in the success of the business. By having a stake in the business, CEOs are inherently motivated to fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to the growth and development of the organization. Julia's perspective underscores the significance of intrinsic motivation and entrepreneurial spirit in driving employee engagement and commitment. It also implies that when employees have a personal stake in the outcomes, they are more likely to demonstrate accountability and initiative in their roles. Overall, Julia's insight reinforces the idea that fostering a sense of ownership and investment among employees can be a powerful driver of responsible behavior and performance within the organization.

4.3 Influencing factors

The main themes that surface from these responses are highly educated individuals with the right mindset, how trust plays a role, and relationship-based culture. We are emphasizing these elements as they are related to the distribution of responsibility in a network form of organization in several ways. Analyzing the responses from the interviews provides a nuanced view of the key factors that are considered when forming agile subsidiaries; each perspective sheds light on different dimensions that are considered crucial in establishing and running a subsidiary effectively.

4.3.1 Empowerment of Highly Educated Individuals

To ensure a productive discussion ahead, the initial remarks address the perceived prerequisites for fostering a bottom-up and network organization. A prevailing consensus among the interviewees is that empowerment of the employees play a crucial role in influencing a successful structure. This empowerment is closely tied to the distribution of responsibility, which fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among employees. The following quotes from Julia and Kevin offer insights into their perspectives on how employees are nurtured:

> *"We focus on the employees and we can pretty much shape our role to fit ourselves as a person. Meaning that we are mainly focusing on having the 'right' people so that we can have a great culture within the company."*

> *"The strength lies in the fact that there is room for entrepreneurs, who can create based on their conditions, which keeps the drive going. We have the possibility to adapt to our staff, meaning that we are creating a culture and activity style that suits the majority of the staff even if it differs from the other subsidiaries."*

The most definite message of these quotes is the emphasis on the employees, allowing them to be themselves at the same time as giving them the opportunity to grow. This sense of growth is fundamentally tied to the delegation of responsibilities that enable employees to shape their roles and contribute effectively. In order to make sense of the ambition of the company, the interviewees were asked about the core values of the organization. According to Teressa, the core values are explained as the individuals having the main focus. "*We find good people with good ideas that we believe in, and then we build companies around them*". This quote is further backed up by Paul, emphasizing the importance of people as a fundamental element in the process of forming agile subsidiaries. According to Paul, it is crucial to get people with the right mindset on board. The organization tries to focus on identifying individuals who not only have innovative ideas but also

possess the potential to transform these ideas into business operations. When asked about how the organization finds the 'right' people, the common answer was headhunting of successful individuals with a great reputation who have the aspiration to be at the forefront, being a pioneer who wants to develop and learn more. This discussion was also brought up by Patrick, arguing that the reason for headhunting is to find the person with the right mindset to handle the responsibility that is entrusted to them in this structure. Felix adds to this by saying:

> *"[...] It is also up to the parent company to be very careful who they invest in, otherwise, we face double the problems, which we have before where it didn't work out and the employee didn't thrive in our business. If an employee isn't prepared for our structure or culture they will feel too alone since we don't support every step."*

This argument underscores the importance of not only identifying talent but also ensuring that they are a good fit for the organization's unique structure and values.

Respondent Julia alludes to a cultural shift from *"top management to self-leadership"* that the respondent thinks is aligned with emerging management trends that encourage employee engagement, empowerment, and the decision-making process. This approach suggests that harnessing the collective intelligence of an educated workforce helps the company stay innovative. Julia further elaborated that responsibility plays a crucial role, as employees are entrusted with significant decision-making power, reinforcing their engagement and commitment.

Respondent Patrick offers a slightly different perspective that complements Julia's viewpoint. Highlighting how it is not just important for higher-level people with the right mindset; they also need to have the right leadership to run these subsidiaries. From Paul's experience:

> *"To run a subsidiary effectively, it should be greatly influenced by the leader's capability to manage and drive the subsidiary's goals".*

As outlined above the organization puts a lot of value in their employees but in order for the organization to thrive they also put a lot of value to the customer demands. All the respondents implied that it is the customer that drives the business. Kevin said that they try to be as close to their customers as possible to be able to listen where the market is going and therefore the customer

demands are important. Paul adds to this by saying that customer demands and competitive pressures are significant key elements to innovation, together with internal factors such as empowered decision-making and cross-pollination of ideas across the different subsidiaries.

Teressa adds another layer by introducing specific factors that affect the formation of agile subsidiaries. The respondent mentions the terms scalability, autonomy, responsiveness, and the ability to innovate as critical factors. Elaborating even further, scalability ensures that the business can grow without being hampered by its initial structure or due to changes in market conditions. As also noted by Teressa, they want individuals with the ability to respond quickly to market changes without the need for constant oversight from the parent company. Responsiveness and innovation are closely linked, as they emphasize that the subsidiary should be able to quickly respond to what their customers need and be able to innovate to take the lead in making new changes. The ability to innovate and respond effectively is largely due to the autonomy and responsibility given to employees. From all this, we grasped that ultimately, it all comes down to having independent and competent people who are best at doing what they do by being innovative, utilizing their autonomy to make decisions and maintain, and ensuring growth can be managed effectively. This is aligned with Bush and Foreman (1991) explanation of components that form a network organization, in this case, where the subsidiaries are driven by a sense of obligation toward the core company at the same time as they empower their employees which is needed in the bottom-up approach (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014).

4.3.2 Trust, freedom and Relationship-based structure

4.3.2.1 Trust

From the interviewees' responses, it is evident that the organization wants people with the right mindset who are capable of innovation. To establish a structure where employees are responsible for their own operations, it is crucial for the core company, specifically the group CEO, to place trust in their employees. This trust is additionally essential for both the CEOs of subsidiaries and the consultants; without it, their efforts may not reach their full potential. Respondents reveal a set of interlinked factors that are considered essential and work as glue for their teams. The terms that kept recurring during their responses were trust, freedom, and friendship.

"[...]I would say trust, shared purpose, and the freedom to experiment and take ownership are critical in maintaining cohesion and commitment among team members". - Paul

" I would say trust and friendship, building genuine friendships that as a manager I really care about my colleagues[...]". - Felix

Trust is the cornerstone that was mentioned by all interviewees, considering it to play a fundamental role in team dynamics. Trust within their teams' context typically involves a belief in the ethical standards of one's colleagues that they will act in the best interests of the team and the organization. The respondents thoughts about trust aligns with Granovetter (1995) where the author argues that in order to form a moral community trustworthy conduct needs to be anticipated in order to foster innovation and adapt to the environment. The respondents' thoughts on trust underscore its importance in creating a supportive environment, encouraging open communication and collaboration. Trust allows team members to feel secure in taking risks, experimenting, and making decisions autonomously, which are all vital for a bottom-up and network organization. This culture of trust enables employees to embrace responsibility, driving innovation and operational efficiency.

By fostering trust, the organization empowers its employees, ensuring that they are not only responsible for their tasks but also feel a sense of ownership and commitment to the company's success. This trust-based framework is integral to maintaining high levels of engagement and productivity, ultimately contributing to the organization's overall performance and growth. Taylor continues a discussion on the importance of trust, emphasizing the critical role of trust in maintaining the structure of the organization:

> "In order to have an organization structured in this way it is important to have trust, and if someone misbehaves it is discovered if a customer complains, people resign or the results fail to materialize."

He suggests that trust serves as a foundational element, enabling the organization to function effectively. Further he suggests that trust is not just a matter of interpersonal relationships but also a practical necessity for ensuring accountability. Teressa further elaborates on the benefits of trust within the organization. She highlights that by trusting the employees, there is a reduced need for constant measurement and control.

> "By trusting the employees, we don't need to measure and control all the time, which saves both the CEOs and the employees a lot of time."

This trust-based approach saves both the CEOs and the employees valuable time and resources that would otherwise be spent on monitoring and oversight. Teressa suggests that trust empowers employees to take ownership of their responsibilities and make decisions autonomously, knowing that they have the support and confidence of their leaders. This approach not only enhances efficiency but also fosters a more positive and empowering work culture where employees feel valued and trusted to perform their roles effectively. Overall, Teressa's perspective underscores the idea that trust is not just a virtue but also a practical strategy for optimizing organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

4.3.2.2 Freedom

Freedom is another critical factor highlighted in the interviews, which can be connected to previous responses that show how, in a bottom-up approach, the employees have the autonomy to make decisions. Felix emphasizes that providing team members with the autonomy to try new approaches and assume responsibility for projects is vital because this encourages innovation, and not just that, but they have a personal investment in the work. Kevin adds to this sentiment by saying trust and freedom are the primary ingredients for a successful team dynamic. Freedom also comes with great responsibility. Patrick expands on this notion by emphasizing the distributed nature of responsibility within the company:

> *"Responsibility is highly distributed within the company, with individuals and teams*
> *empowered to make decisions based on real-time information and their understanding*
> *of the broader mission and goals".*

He describes how individuals and teams are empowered to make decisions autonomously, guided by their comprehension of the broader organizational objectives. Julia further elaborates on the organization's approach to decision-making, emphasizing the anchoring of staff in the decision-making process.

This approach suggests a collaborative bottom-up approach, where decisions are not made in isolation but are guided by alignment with the organization's overarching goals and values. Employees are granted the freedom to make decisions independently or involve their colleagues as needed. This suggests that decisions are not needed to be made in isolation, instead it can be guided by ensuring that the team members are on board with the chosen course of action as well as that the decision needs to be aligned with the organization's overall goals and values. Nevertheless, the employees have the freedom to make decisions without confirmation from top-management but they can choose to make it solo or to invite their colleagues in the process. Further, Teressa adds a shared purpose as also a crucial element, which involves the team aligning with common goals and values of the company, which can significantly enhance cooperation and reduce conflicts.

> *"[…]having a clear, shared purpose helps individuals see how their contributions fit*
> *into the bigger picture[…], this makes them committed to the team's efforts." - Patrick*

A clear and shared purpose enables individuals to understand how their contributions contribute to the organization's larger objectives, fostering commitment and cooperation among team members. Overall, the emphasis on freedom, coupled with shared purpose and responsibility, underscores the organization's commitment to fostering a collaborative and autonomous work environment that encourages innovation, accountability, and alignment with organizational goals.

4.3.2.3 Relationship-based culture

The findings underscore that the organization is based on a relationship-based structure rather than an authority-dominated structure, and building such relationships takes a lot of effort, such as building trust and friendship. Julia indicates that by fostering genuine relationships and caring about each other beyond mere professional interactions, a team can achieve a deeper level of connection. The respondent adds to the perspective and suggests that such bonds create a supportive and enjoyable work environment, which can significantly boost morale and loyalty. Furthermore, the respondent adds that feeling freedom and trust from the parent company has a positive impact on individual team members, indicating the significance of relational dynamics in driving organizational success.

While being asked if there are any *cultural* differences they see when it comes to their current company's structure as they operate under a bottom-up approach. Paul touched on the cultural aspect, saying that while traditional structures are easier to explain and navigate in terms of hierarchy, as a company, the respondent implies they are relationship-based in their current organization. Their emphasis is more on collaboration and consensus throughout teams, which leads to stronger alliances, as they believe that making decisions involves discussions and negotiations rather than just following orders from someone higher up. Furthermore, relationship building and maintenance may require more effort. While proceeding with the interviews, we understood that collectively the responses indicate both the advantages and minor disadvantages, for the sake of explanation to us, of moving away from traditional hierarchical forms. However, the responses do suggest that there is a need for some level of structure to maintain organization and efficiency, especially in functions that require centralization for optimal performances.

Overall, the responses reflect a nuanced understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of moving away from traditional hierarchical structures. While the relationship-based model fosters collaboration and employee empowerment, there is a recognition of the need for some level of structure to maintain organization and efficiency, especially in functions requiring centralization for optimal performance. This highlights the organization's commitment to balancing autonomy and structure to support its bottom-up approach effectively.

4.4 Chapter summary

This particular chapter explores the distribution of responsibility in Bright Solutions, which is a bottom-up networked organization. Through the empirical data that we collected from the employees of various subsidiaries of Bright Solution, the insights that we provided by the interviewees delve into the nuances of an organization with a decentralized structure, which contrasts with the practices of a traditional top-down organization. The structure of Bright Solutions encourages autonomy, flexibility, and responsiveness, fostering an adaptive business environment.

Despite the absence of a rigid chain of command, like a traditional structure, the bottom-up networked organization not only enhances quick decision-making but also fosters innovation by involving the consultants directly in strategic development. Networked structures are seen as better suited to innovative, highly skilled individuals—rockstars, according to Frank—who thrive in environments where they can directly influence outcomes. The chapter also discusses how the distribution of responsibility within Bright Solutions exemplifies a modern approach to organizational design. While the bottom-up approach has some challenges, which include clear lines of authority, predictable operational processes, an absence of coordination, and the lack of a central command, resulting in a lack of cohesion when dealing with complex projects, its numerous benefits, which include enhanced adaptability, innovation, and employee engagement, significantly outweigh the drawbacks.

In conclusion, the bottom-up, networked approach within Bright Solutions highlights how responsibility is distributed in decentralized organizational structure, which fosters environments that are conducive to adaptation and forward-thinking.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, we compare theory and empirical data collected by examining how the theoretical concepts relate to the empirical material from the perspective of the respondents about the company's structure by focusing particularly on a comparison between a decentralized, bottom-up approach with a centralized, top-down approach in modern organizational structure.

For the purpose of the study, we collaborated with Bright Solutions, a company that follows a networked bottom-up approach. By combining both theoretical frameworks and empirical data, our aim is to investigate how such structures impact the distribution of responsibility. We begin by exploring the theory of bottom-up and network-based organizations and how they are designed to increase the independence of individuals in decision-making, encourage an innovative and friendly working environment, and make Bright Solutions more responsive to continuous market changes. In contrast to traditional structures, which have rigid authority and clear roles for employees, this tends to limit creativity.

Through the empirical data we collected, we provided the experiences and perceptions of our interviewees to understand how the benefits described in theory are realized in practice and what challenges arise when implementing such organizational structures. Moreover, we explore how practices like having the right mind-set, trust playing a role, freedom, and the relationship-based structure of a network-based organization affect how responsibility is distributed in such an organization. By integrating both theoretical frameworks and empirical insights, this chapter seeks to offer a discussion on organizational design.

5.1 Structure

5.1.1 Comparison of organizational structure

From our findings, it is evident that Bright Solutions has a clear preference for a bottom-up approach within the organization by highlighting benefits such as increased autonomy and flexibility among its team members. The empirical data collected from the interviews further enlightens us as interviewers, suggesting that the structure of the organization empowers individuals at all levels to actively participate in decision-making processes, fostering an innovation-friendly environment. As also noted by our respondents, such as Teressa and Kevin, we can say that this empowerment is not just theoretical but definitely practiced. This mirrors the benefits of bottom structure, as discussed earlier in the chapter-theoretical framework, where Park, Kim, and Krishna (2014) outlined that empowerment is linked to enhanced organizational responsiveness and innovation.

Due to a decentralized authority, team members in networked organizations get to experience autonomy in Bright Solutions, as highlighted by Frank, which further supports the notion that a flat hierarchy facilitates quicker decision-making and reduces delay (Podolny & Paige, 1998)., due to the multiple layers of hierarchy in a traditional structure. The structure that Bright Solutions has allows them to adapt more swiftly to market changes and client needs, embodying the theoretical advantages of networked organizations that prioritize agility and resilience (Powell, 1990).

Also, organizations adopting this form of structure have innovative and entrepreneurial traits often seen in smaller companies while still enjoying the advantages of a large company, like having resources and stability, which enable them to react promptly to changes and opportunities in the market, according to interviewees Kevin and Paul. This preference of the interviewees aligns with the theoretical perspectives that were discussed by Kim, Sting, and Loch (2014) in our theoretical framework chapter of the thesis, who suggest that bottom-up structures empower employees at all levels to contribute ideas, insights, and feedback that shape the organization's direction and strategies.

The literature emphasizes some advantages of bottom-up structures, where decision-making is decentralized and employees are motivated to contribute actively to organizational goals (Park, Kim, & Krishna, 2014). This contrasts with the traditional top-down approach, where decision-making authority is concentrated at the upper levels of hierarchy, which invades creativity and slows down responsiveness to market changes (Mintzberg, 1979; Kotter, 2014).

Despite these advantages of bottom-up structure, our findings also illuminate some challenges that are associated with the bottom-up approach. One challenge, as mentioned earlier, is that the employees think they struggle with coordination and cohesion. As Felix points out, the lack of a centralized key account management role can lead to perceptions of disorganization, especially when dealing with complex client requirements that require them to provide multiple services at once to a large client. This challenge resonates with the theoretical drawbacks mentioned in our literature review, where the absence of a traditional hierarchical structure can sometimes impede the organization's ability to act cohesively (Mintzberg, 1979). Another challenge that our findings shed light on is the one pointed out by Patrick and Frank about the challenge of managing central functions like HR, legal, and IT, which reflect a critical tension within decentralized structures.

While decentralized structures enhance flexibility, they can also lead to inefficiencies, particularly when subsidiary CEOs are overloaded with responsibilities typically handled by specialized departments in more traditional settings (Cunha, Clegg, Gaim, & Giustiniano, 2022).

Additionally, the varied perspectives of the interviewees on the missing elements of traditional top-down structures, such as clear lines of authority and predictability, underscore another organizational challenge, which is finding the right balance between flexibility and structure. Julia's comments about missing the clarity of roles and responsibilities that a hierarchical structure provides. To put it in simpler terms, a bottom-up structure allows an organization to cope quickly with changes, but it can sometimes make it unclear who is responsible for what. This trade-off is crucial for organizations to manage, as they aim to be both responsive to dynamic conditions and operationally efficient. This sentiment, in some way, aligns with studies that have shown that traditional structures provide clarity in roles and accountability for top management, but at the cost of potential rigidity and slow response times (Palmer & Dunford, 2002; Kotter, 2014).

5.1.2 Adaptation of Network Forms of Organization

The findings indicate that the adoption of network forms of organization is driven by a desire for adaptability and an innovation-friendly culture in the company. The primary motivation for Bright Solutions to adopt a network structure is the need for greater adaptability and faster responsiveness, as highlighted in the previous chapter. A network organization is characterized by a structural emphasis on interconnected nodes (Powell, 1990) that enhance collaboration across different units of the organization. This structure facilitates a seamless flow of information (Podolny & Paige, 1998), which is crucial for continuous learning and quick adaptation to new challenges or opportunities. The literature by Powell (1990) and Podolny & Paige (1998) outlined the organizational structure, emphasizing collaboration and interconnectivity among units, facilitating rapid adaptation, and enhancing learning through a more integrated flow of information.

The network structure supports a broader range of search routines compared to hierarchical structures and conveys more comprehensive and intricate information than the traditional structure. Podolny & Paige (1998) highlight that network forms of organization, instead of merely

facilitating the transfer of information between nodes, may lead to the generation of new knowledge. This is achieved through persistent exchange relationships within the network, which can lead to the creation of novel information syntheses that differ qualitatively from the information previously contained within individual nodes.

Another crucial motivation for Bright Solutions to adopt a network structure is the desire to create an organizational environment that nurtures and leverages individual talents, as noted by Frank. Traditional structures often treat individuals as cogs within a larger machine, which can obscure and underutilize the skills of 'rockstar' employees who drive the company's business. By adopting a network structure, Bright Solutions aims to empower these specialists or highly skilled individuals by enabling them to make decisions and contribute directly to the organization's strategy. This approach not only empowers the consultants but also aligns with the theoretical advantages of a bottom-up structure where decision-making is decentralized and more responsive to market dynamics. (Park, Kim, & Krishna, 2014).

Furthermore, Paul's insights reveal a strategic intent to combine the agility of small companies with the resources and stability of larger corporations. This hybrid approach allows Bright Solutions to remain innovative by facilitating the different parts (or nodes) to operate autonomously yet remain interconnected, sharing ideas and resources efficiently. These networked ties create a community where trust and reciprocity are expected, as noted by Granovetter (1995), which promotes open idea sharing and creative outputs. Such environments foster an innovation-friendly environment because there is a strong sense of trust and obligation among group members. However, the success of network organizations depends significantly on the strength of relationships and communication within the network, and they may face challenges in maintaining coherence and direction without a central authority

5.2 Responsibility

The study explores the nuanced dynamics of responsibility within a bottom-up, network-based organizational structure, juxtaposing it against traditional hierarchical models. The findings underscore the complexity and multifaceted nature of responsibility, highlighting the interplay between autonomy, accountability, and support.

A key finding across all organizational structures is the interplay between responsibility and accountability. In hierarchical systems, accountability is often narrowly defined (Roberts, 1991), potentially undermining a broader sense of responsibility. In contrast, bottom-up and network organizations encourage a more holistic approach to responsibility, integrating moral and instrumental considerations into daily activities (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003). This broader view of responsibility can lead to greater employee engagement and innovation, as individuals feel more connected to the outcomes of their actions and the overall success of the organization. As presented above the theoretical framework offers a distinction between responsibility and accountability. This distinction is reflected in the empirical findings, where respondents described a structure that empowers individuals by delegating significant responsibilities, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. Frank's statement encapsulates this duality when discussing that the group CEO has a responsibility for all the companies at the same time as the group CEOs has responsibility for their respective subsidiaries as long as they generate a positive result. The sentence as long as they have a positive result not only promotes a result-driven culture where the importance of internal motivation and moral responsibility is emphasized, but it also promotes accountability of a hierarchical structure since the employees need to fulfill the expectations of the group CEO. Roberts (1991) highlighted that instrumental accountability can lead to a floating responsibility where no one takes responsibility for the broader consequences but as the findings show it is the CEOs of the subsidiaries that has the primary responsibility and the group CEO has the ultimate responsibility. This distribution of responsibility is erasing the possibility of the broader consequences when mixing both accountability; instrumental and external controls, with responsibility; morality and internal controls. Grant (1996) argued that hierarchical accountability fosters an independent workplace with no interaction by following rules, plans and roles. However, the findings present that this is not the case within Bright Solutions, the mix of distributed accountability and responsibility offers a modern and nuanced perspective on how responsibility can be distributed.

The discussion of hierarchical versus community-based structures further illuminates the complexity of managing responsibility. Traditional hierarchical structures, as Roberts (1991) notes, tend to individualize accountability and suppress moral values, creating a solitary and compliance-focused environment. In contrast, the bottom-up approach emphasizes community and

solidarity, fostering a supportive environment where individuals feel connected and responsible for each other's success (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003). The empirical data supports this, with respondents highlighting the collaborative nature of their organization. Julia emphasizes the importance of fostering genuine relationships and caring about each other beyond mere professional interactions, meaning that a team can achieve a deeper level of connection. This relational dynamic creates a supportive and enjoyable work environment, boosting morale and loyalty. The interconnectedness within the organization allows for the sharing of best practices and innovative solutions, enhancing overall effectiveness and efficiency.

Julia provides a critical perspective on fostering responsibility with her insights into the intrinsic motivation and entrepreneurial spirit of the CEOs. By having a personal stake in the business, CEOs are inherently motivated to fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to the organization's success. This highlights the significance of aligning individual incentives with organizational goals, ensuring that employees are motivated by more than just external controls. A key theme in this discussion is the balance between autonomy and necessary structure. While the bottom-up approach empowers employees and promotes rapid decision-making and innovation, it also presents challenges. Frank's frustration highlights the tension between providing guidance and maintaining autonomy in his area of responsibility. The struggle of being a helping hand in the community to ensure that the results are good is without taking responsibility from the employees once again highlighting the result-driven structure as well as showing the direction from top-management. But it is also presenting the importance of keeping the bottom-up and network structure which is the reason for the frustration and struggle of this structure. In addition, Teressa's observation about the difficulty for some positions due to missing central functions further underscores the need for a balanced approach. These tensions illustrate the potential downside of decentralized models that combine both bottom-up and network forms, showing that a balance of responsibility is important. Simultaneously, the balance needs to make sure that the organization is successful, but that is on the other hand fundamental for every organization, adopting either a traditional structure or a bottom-up and network structure.

5.3 Influencing factors

In order for an organization to adopt a network and bottom-up approach we have been given insights by previous literature on what these two approaches need to be successful, however the conducted interviews gave us insights on additional factors that influence their way of working in this kind of organization. The empirical findings from the interviews emphasize three main influencing factors crucial for the success of bottom-up and network organizational structures: trust, freedom, and a relationship-based culture. These factors are intertwined and collectively contribute to fostering a conducive environment for innovation, collaboration, and adaptability.

5.3.1 Empowerment of Highly Educated Individuals

The empirical findings of this study offer a rich tapestry of insights that seamlessly integrate with the theoretical perspectives on bottom-up and network organizational structures. This discussion will bridge the gap between empirical data and theoretical frameworks, underscoring the practical implications and reinforcing the conceptual foundations discussed earlier.

The study reveals that employee empowerment is pivotal in bottom-up organizational structures, as highlighted by the interviewees who emphasized the role of empowerment in fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among employees. For instance, quotes from Julia and Kevin illustrate how empowering employees to shape their roles enhances organizational culture and drives innovation. The theoretical framework posits that bottom-up structures thrive on the active participation and idea generation from all levels of the organization (Kim, Sting & Loch, 2014). Zhang and Bartol (2010) assert that such structures excel by motivating employees to share information and cultivate an innovative mindset through quality relationships. The empirical findings affirm this by showing that empowered employees are more engaged and innovative, which aligns with the theoretical emphasis on bottom-up engagement and participation.

The interviewees highlighted the significance of autonomy combined with accountability. Empowered employees, particularly in agile subsidiaries, are given significant decision-making power, which reinforces their engagement and commitment. For example, Patrick and Paul stressed the need for leadership capable of managing and driving subsidiary goals, which ties into the broader theme of autonomy. The theoretical framework supports this by arguing that

empowering leadership involves creating conditions where power and responsibility are shared, leading to greater autonomy in decision-making (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). This theoretical stance is validated by the empirical data, which show that autonomy and accountability are crucial for maintaining high levels of employee motivation and performance. The balance between these elements ensures that employees remain aligned with organizational goals while being free to innovate and take initiative.

Access to resources, information, and support emerged as critical factors for effective empowerment. Interviewees noted that employees need these tools to perform their roles effectively and contribute meaningfully to the organization. Kevin and Teressa emphasized the importance of being close to customer demands and the internal sharing of ideas across subsidiaries. The theoretical framework underscores the importance of communication symmetry and resource access in empowering employees (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014). Effective communication ensures that employees understand their value within the organization, fostering mutual understanding and engagement. The empirical findings corroborate this by demonstrating that access to necessary tools and support enables employees to succeed, highlighting the practical steps organizations must take to empower their workforce.

Opportunities for skill development and continuous learning were highlighted as vital for fostering empowerment. Respondents like Teressa and Paul noted that ongoing learning helps employees feel more competent and confident, thereby enhancing their empowerment. The theoretical framework suggests that empowering employees involves not only granting autonomy but also providing opportunities for continuous learning and development (Wei, Yi & Yuan, 2011). The empirical evidence supports this by showing that continuous learning and skill development are linked to higher levels of competence and empowerment among employees. This reinforces the theoretical assertion that investment in employee development is crucial for sustaining empowerment.

5.3.2 Trust, freedom and Relationship-based structure

5.3.2.1 Trust

Trust is a fundamental element of effective teamwork, collaboration, and organizational success. Enabling employees to feel secure in their roles and confident in taking initiative without fear of undue repercussions. It involves having confidence in the integrity, reliability, and competence of others, and believing that they will act in the best interests of the team and the organization. The theoretical framework supports this, suggesting that trust forms the moral foundation of network organizations, facilitating open communication and collaboration (Granovetter, 1995).

Theoretical frameworks emphasize trust as a catalyst for empowering employees within bottom-up structures (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014). In these structures, where decision-making authority is decentralized, trust becomes essential for enabling employees to take ownership of their responsibilities and contribute to organizational success. Empirical findings validate the importance of trust in organizational dynamics. Interviewees consistently highlighted trust as a critical factor for team dynamics. They noted that when trust is present, employees are more likely to take risks, share ideas, and engage in problem-solving. For example, Paul mentioned that trust, shared purpose, and the freedom to experiment and take ownership are critical in maintaining cohesion and commitment among team members. Underscoring the significance of trust in fostering open communication, collaboration, and autonomy.

Moreover, trust reduces the need for micromanagement and extensive oversight, allowing leaders to focus on strategic goals while employees handle day-to-day operations autonomously. Similarly, trust forms the foundation of ongoing exchange relationships within network organizations (Powell, 1990). These relationships are characterized by a norm of reciprocity, where participants trust each other to fulfill their obligations and act in the best interests of the collective. Trust enables the rapid dissemination of information, facilitates collaboration, and promotes the generation of new knowledge within the network. Empowerment also relies heavily on trust. When employees feel trusted by their leaders, they are more likely to engage proactively, share information, and take initiative (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014).

The theoretical framework and empirical findings align closely, demonstrating the practical implications of trust within organizational structures. Respondents' answers provide concrete examples of how trust operates in practice within the organization, validating the theoretical assertions. Trust is not merely a theoretical concept but a practical strategy employed by the organization to foster a supportive and empowering work environment.

5.3.2.2 Freedom

Freedom, closely related to empowerment, is the ability of employees to make decisions and take actions within their roles without excessive constraints. This concept is crucial in bottom-up structures where innovation and responsiveness are paramount. Freedom emerges as a crucial aspect influencing organizational dynamics, particularly in the context of bottom-up and network organizational structures. Drawing insights from both theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, we can explore how freedom contributes to employee empowerment, innovation, and organizational adaptability.

Theoretical frameworks highlight freedom as a catalyst for empowering employees within bottom-up structures. In these decentralized environments, granting employees the freedom to make decisions and take ownership of their responsibilities is essential for fostering innovation and adaptability (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014). Empowerment, a central tenet of bottom-up approaches, hinges on providing individuals with the autonomy to explore new ideas, experiment with different approaches, and contribute to organizational goals. Empirical findings acknowledge the theoretical importance of freedom in organizational structures. Respondents consistently emphasize the critical role of freedom in fostering innovation, collaboration, and employee satisfaction within the organization. For example, Felix underscores the importance of providing team members with the autonomy to experiment and assume responsibility for projects, as this encourages innovation and personal investment in the work. Similarly, freedom plays a significant role in network organizations, where collaboration and connectivity are emphasized. Powell (1990) asserts that the flexibility afforded by network structures allows for rapid adaptation to changing environments, with freedom enabling individuals to respond effectively to emerging challenges. Moreover, respondents highlight freedom as a key ingredient for successful team dynamics. Kevin mentions that trust and freedom are primary factors contributing to a team's success, emphasizing the

importance of autonomy in driving employee engagement and motivation. Within network forms of organization, individuals have the freedom to engage in diverse exchange relationships, share information, and collaborate across organizational boundaries, contributing to collective learning and innovation.

Theoretical frameworks and empirical findings converge to underscore the significance of freedom in organizational structures. The freedom to make decisions, experiment with new ideas, and collaborate across organizational boundaries is essential for empowering employees and fostering innovation. The integration of theoretical insights with empirical evidence highlights the practical implications of freedom within the organization, validating its role in driving employee engagement and organizational effectiveness.

5.3.2.3 Relationship-based culture

A relationship-based culture prioritizes interpersonal connections, collaboration, and a sense of community within the organization. This culture is vital in network organizations where decentralized structures rely on strong, trust-based relationships.

The empirical data collected also highlighted some cultural differences in organizational structure preferences. The literature highlights the rigid nature of traditional top-down structures, where decision-making is centralized, that is, concentrated at the upper levels of the hierarchy, hinders innovation due to its slow responsiveness to market changes that take place (Cunha et al., 2022; Mintzberg, 1979). As we previously mentioned that Respondents of Bright Solutions stated that even though a traditional structure provides clear lines of authority and predictability, it might hinder an organization's ability to adapt quickly to market changes which aligns with Mintzberg (1979) and Cunha et al. (2022) due to their rigidity and slow response times (Palmer & Dunford, 2002; Kotter, 2014). Theoretical frameworks emphasize the importance of cultivating a relationship-based culture within organizations. In bottom-up structures, where decision-making authority is decentralized, relationships form the foundation for collaboration and teamwork (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014). Building genuine relationships fosters trust, open communication, and a sense of belonging among employees, creating a supportive and inclusive work environment. Empirical findings corroborate the theoretical importance of relationship-based culture in

organizational settings. Respondents consistently highlight the significance of trust, friendship, and genuine connections in fostering a cohesive and committed team environment. For example, Julia emphasizes the importance of fostering genuine relationships and caring about colleagues beyond professional interactions, as this creates a supportive and enjoyable work environment. Similarly, within network organizations, relationships play a central role in facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing among interconnected nodes (Podolny & Paige, 1998). A relationship-based culture encourages individuals to form meaningful connections, collaborate across organizational boundaries, and leverage collective expertise to achieve common goals. Strong interpersonal relationships within networks enhance trust, foster cooperation, and promote the exchange of valuable information and insights. Moreover, respondents recognize the impact of relationship-based culture on individual morale and organizational success. Paul suggests that building relationships based on trust and shared purpose enhances team cohesion and commitment, ultimately driving performance and productivity.

Theoretical frameworks and empirical findings converge to underscore the critical role of relationship-based culture in organizational success. Building genuine relationships and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration are essential for empowering employees, enhancing teamwork, and driving innovation. The integration of theoretical insights with empirical evidence highlights the practical implications of relationship-based culture within organizations, validating its importance in shaping organizational dynamics and performance.

5.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, we facilitate the discussion of Bright Solutions through the dual lenses of theoretical discourse and empirical investigation that provide significant insights into decentralized, bottom-up, and network-based organizational structures. In this chapter, we demonstrate that while bottom-up networked organizations have benefits in terms of flexibility, employee empowerment, and responsiveness, they also have some unique challenges that require careful management.

We discussed that the bottom-up approach significantly empowers employees at all levels, allowing them to contribute to decision-making processes and fostering a sense of ownership and

responsibility, which is closely linked to innovation as employees are more directly engaged in shaping the company's strategic direction. Moreover, we said that trust and freedom emerge as crucial factors that influence the effectiveness of decentralized structures, as they foster an environment for open communication and collaboration, while freedom enhances individual motivation and creativity, which are important for adapting to market changes.

Furthermore, we connected it to the fact that trust and freedom help to build a strong relationship-based culture that supports the network-based model by enhancing interpersonal connections and collaboration. This cultural aspect is essential for maintaining cohesion and alignment within decentralized setups. In the discussion on responsibility within Bright Solutions, we delved into how responsibility is distributed in a bottom-up, network-based organizational structure, comparing it to a traditional hierarchical structure. We talked about our observation that at Bright Solutions, responsibility is not just about fulfilling tasks but involves a broader sense of accountability. Also, as decentralization empowers individuals, this promotes a sense of ownership and accountability, where individuals are connected to the outcomes of their actions. To conclude, the discussion about responsibility at Bright Solutions highlights focus on being flexible and empowering their employees.

6 Conclusion

In this qualitative case study, we sought to delve into the process of responsibility within a bottom-up and network organization. Having addressed the research question in the preceding section through empirical evidence, we now present a summary of their findings for the reader, emphasizing their significance and contribution to existing theory. Additionally, we will delineate the practical implications of their study and offer suggestions for future research endeavors. The study on Bright Solutions' organizational structure highlights both theoretical and practical contributions that elucidate the dynamics of bottom-up and network forms of organization. The

findings reveal significant insights into how these structures empower employees, enhance innovation, and facilitate adaptability, while also illuminating the challenges associated with decentralized authority.

In this qualitative case study, we sought to delve into the process of responsibility within a bottom-up and network organization. Having addressed the research question in the preceding section through empirical evidence, we now present a summary of their findings for the reader, emphasizing their significance and contribution to existing theory. Additionally, we will delineate the practical implications of their study and offer suggestions for future research endeavors.

The study on Bright Solutions' organizational structure highlights both theoretical and practical contributions that elucidate the dynamics of bottom-up and network forms of organization. The findings reveal significant insights into how these structures empower employees, enhance innovation, and facilitate adaptability, while also illuminating the challenges associated with decentralized authority. The study highlights the critical role of responsibility in shaping organizational effectiveness, innovation, and employee engagement. Revealing a nuanced understanding of responsibility within a bottom-up, network-based organization. In essence, while the bottom-up approach offers significant advantages in terms of autonomy, innovation, and employee engagement (Wei, Yi & Yuan, 2011), it also necessitates a nuanced balance of structure and support to address potential challenges and ensure overall effectiveness. The organization's commitment to balancing these elements reflects its adaptability and focus on leveraging the collective strengths of its members. The relational, community-focused model fosters collaboration and employee empowerment but requires careful balance to ensure sufficient support and coordination (Powell, 1990). The dual layers of responsibility—delegated to subsidiary CEOs with overarching accountability resting with the group CEO—promote a results-driven culture while maintaining a cohesive organizational ecosystem. The study underscores the importance of fostering genuine relationships, intrinsic motivation, and a supportive environment to drive organizational success.

While the organization's main structure is built on bottom-up and network forms, we also found some aspects in the structure that emphasize a hierarchical structure. Even though the employees have the responsibility of their own subsidiaries, it is in the end the group CEO who carries the

responsibility for the entire organization and he is also the one that demands a positive result from each subsidiary. This is emphasizing what Mintzberg (1979) and Zheng, Yang & McLean (2010) describes as delegating authority from a top-down perspective. By handing out work tasks that are not connected to the daily work assignment the group CEO can also be seen as delegating tasks from the top-down which is aligned with the organization's hierarchy (Clawson & Pitts, 2008). When analyzing our findings we also found some limitations of the structure which the respondents explained as frustrations. The respondents highlighted that even though they are very satisfied with the structure that is applied today, they still miss some functions that can be found in the traditional structure. For example the key account manager that could help the organization to be seen as less scattered in the client's opinion. As well as the lack of functions such as HR, legal team and sustainability team. Moreover, these points question where the boundary goes for the company to be seen as adopting a traditional or a bottom-up and network structure. In this study the structure is showing bottom-up and network rather than hierarchical. The findings have shown that in order to maintain this structure the distribution of responsibility is connected to equal systems (Park, Kim & Krishna, 2014) giving responsibility to all the individuals in the company.

Another conclusion of the study is that employee empowerment was a fundamental aspect of the adoption of a bottom-up and network structure. We found three factors that contributed to the distribution of responsibility as well as maintaining a successful structure; trust, freedom and a culture building on relationships. Trust emerged as mentioned as a critical factor underpinning the success of a bottom-up and network organizational structure. The theoretical framework and empirical findings converge to highlight the multifaceted nature of trust and its profound impact on organizational behavior and effectiveness (Powell, 1990). By cultivating a culture of trust, Bright Solutions can empower their employees, foster collaboration, and adapt to changing environments, ultimately driving innovation and achieving strategic objectives. When the entire organization shows trust towards each other it is more likely for them to work in freedom. Theoretical frameworks and empirical findings collectively emphasize the importance of providing employees with the autonomy to innovate, collaborate, and adapt to changing environments (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Organizations that prioritize freedom as a core value can empower their employees, foster a culture of innovation, and enhance their ability to thrive in today's dynamic business landscape. A relationship-based culture is building on the trust and

freedom that underlines organizational culture. By prioritizing genuine connections, trust, and collaboration, organizations can create a supportive and inclusive work environment where employees feel valued, motivated, and engaged.

In conclusion, this study on Bright Solutions' organizational structure bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications. It underscores the importance of empowerment, flexibility, and relationship-based cultures in fostering innovation and responsiveness while also highlighting the challenges associated with decentralized authority. The insights gained from this research provide valuable contributions to both academic literature and practical organizational management, offering a comprehensive understanding of how bottom-up and network structures can be effectively implemented and managed.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

Much literature on modern organizational structures focuses on bottom-up approach and network forms separately. This study has shown that these two structures combined empower a more efficient and adaptive organization at the same time as it highlights the need of empowered employees to grasp the responsibility that is handed to them. Asserting that empowerment enhances organizational responsiveness and innovation. Further, the distinction between responsibility and accountability within different organizational structures is a key theoretical contribution. The study shows how bottom-up and network forms integrate moral and instrumental considerations into daily activities, promoting a holistic sense of responsibility. This extends the theoretical perspectives offered by Lindkvist & Llewellyn (2003) and Roberts (1991).

The study contributes to the theoretical discourse on the drawbacks of bottom-up and network structures, such as coordination challenges and the complexity of managing central functions. The exploration of these drawbacks contributes to the broader theoretical discourse on organizational design. It suggests that while bottom-up and network structures offer significant advantages in terms of innovation and responsiveness, they also require careful design and management to avoid the pitfalls of coordination challenges and operational complexities. The findings imply that hybrid models, which combine elements of centralization and decentralization, might offer a more balanced approach, leveraging the strengths of both structures while mitigating their respective weaknesses

6.2 Practical Contributions

The practical implications of empowering employees through decentralized structures are evident in Bright Solutions. By allowing autonomy and encouraging active participation, the organization boosts employee engagement and innovation. This practical approach provides a model for other organizations aiming to implement similar structures. Bright Solutions' approach of combining the agility of small companies with the resources of larger corporations provides a practical example of managing hybrid structures. This strategy allows the organization to remain innovative while leveraging its resources and stability, offering valuable lessons for other companies seeking to implement similar models.

The study shows that at Bright Solutions, the integration of moral and instrumental considerations into daily activities has led to a more holistic sense of responsibility. However, this integration also sometimes results in confusion about who is ultimately accountable for specific outcomes. Even though the study offers practical insights into balancing flexibility with necessary structure. The challenges highlighted, such as managing central functions and ensuring clarity in roles, underscore the importance of finding the right balance in the distributed responsibility.

6.3 Limitations and further research

While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its reliance on existing literature and theoretical frameworks. Future research could benefit from empirical studies that examine responsibility in practice across different organizational settings. Additionally, exploring the impact of cultural and contextual factors on responsibility distribution and employee engagement could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. We go into more detail about our research's limitations in the sub-chapter. We would like to call attention to a few limitations.

Firstly, we want to shed light on our role as interviewers during the interviews. We had only a certain amount of time dedicated to each interviewee due to their busy schedule. Secondly, our thesis focuses on how responsibility is distributed within bottom-up and networked organizational forms in one selected company. While Bright Solution allowed us for in-depth analysis, however this limits the breadth of the study. The findings of the study are specific to one particular context

and may not fully represent how responsibility is distributed in other bottom-up or networked organizations across various industries or cultural settings.

Finally, the thesis primarily uses well-established theories on bottom-up and network organizational structures, However, the reliance on existing theories may restrict the exploration of new or emerging ideas that have not been fully recognized in academic discussions yet. This limitation could hinder the study's capacity to develop innovative models or frameworks that effectively address current organizational challenges.

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Appendix A: List of interviewees

Fictional Names for the Thesis	Interview #
Patrick	Interviewee 1
Paul	Interviewee 2
Julia	Interviewee 3
Teressa	Interviewee 4
Taylor	Interviewee 5
Kevin	Interviewee 6
Felix	Interviewee 7
Frank	Interviewee 8