

**Czech University of Life Sciences**

**Faculty of Economics and Management**



***Evaluation of corporate culture within selected  
company***

**Abstract of the Diploma Thesis**

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## **Summary**

The main aim of this diploma thesis is to specify the implementation process of *Learned optimism* concept into Eurest corporate culture, state the level of optimism before the implementation and 4 months after and capture the significant changes between the socio-demographic indicators and optimism.

The theoretical part of this thesis is based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources of literature concerning Corporate Culture, Positive Psychology, Learned Optimism and other relevantly related topics and serves as a base for analysis included in the practical part. The practical part builds on the data included in the theoretical part as well as on information that were gained from the company sources and from the survey. It describes the selected company Eurest; summarizes its history and other information concerning their corporate culture and specifies the process of applying optimism into the culture. It also includes information about the conducted survey, its outcomes, evaluation of results and proposes recommendations for improvements.

## **Keywords:**

Corporate culture, Culture, Eurest, spol. s r.o., Explanatory Style, Learned Optimism, Optimism, Pessimism, Positive psychology.

## **Objectives of the Thesis**

The purpose of this study is to specify the process of the application of the Learned Optimism in a workplace as well as to estimate the average level of optimism between the employees and also to concentrate on the factors such as age, gender or position within the company and define whether any of these factors can influence one's attitude to optimism or the opposite, to pessimism. The main aim of this diploma thesis is to estimate an average level of optimism/pessimism in Eurest; the catering company which is currently undergoing the implementation of *Learned optimism* into their corporate culture. Moreover, it will map the whole implementation process in details and it will further evaluate the process of the above mentioned change. Particularly, it will evaluate the situation before and after optimism was introduced into their corporate culture.

## **Methodology of the thesis**

The research is going to be conducted through questionnaires which will be based on questions from *Life orientation* test and will also include socio-demographic questions. There were two surveys taking place, the first was conducted in September 2014 and the second in February 2015. The total number of employees in September 2014 was 3,064 (2,616 in Eurest, 448 in Scolarest). 799 questionnaires were sent in both surveys, where 468 employees responded in the first survey and 409 in the second survey.

The following hypotheses were applied in order to achieve the above mentioned aims of the diploma thesis:

H1: In the first survey, most of the company's employees will belong to the *realist* category on the *Life orientation* scale.

H2: The younger employees will be more optimistic than older employees.

H3: Men will be more optimistic than women.

H4: Employees in Scolarest will be more optimistic than in Eurest.

H5: Younger people will be more easily influenced by the optimistic corporate culture than older people.

H6: Employees on higher positions will be more optimistic than employees on lower positions.

H7: After 4 months of applying the concept of Learned Optimism the employees will become more optimistic in comparison with the results from the previous survey (the average figure will move towards the optimistic pole of the scale).

The respondents of this research are employees of Eurest and Scolarest in the Czech Republic of different ages, gender, education levels, who are from the different regions of the Czech Republic and work mainly in the catering operations sector. A total number of 468 respondents participated in the first survey and 409 in the second survey.

The aim of the first survey was to state the level of optimism in the company before the application of Learned Optimism and the aim of the second survey, that was conducted 4 months after the first one, was to evaluate the change in the level of optimism over this

period, state whether the application of *Learned Optimism* was successful, identify how it is perceived by individual employees and compare optimism level among different categories of employees (age, gender, position).

## **Results**

The company's average score in the first survey falls into the *optimist* category on the *Life orientation scale*. Concerning the first survey the majority of respondents 54.7 % incline to the positive categories (*optimist, strong optimist*) of the *Life orientation scale*. Such a result is an advantage for the company, as it may be easier for them to develop their optimistic behavioural patterns. After 4 months of applying the *Learned Optimism* the optimism level increased by 14.9 %, which proves that the optimism trainings were successful and reached the company's goals. Even though the increase was not so significant, it is important to take into consideration the short period of time for application of the methods from the trainings. Supposedly, if the research had been done after longer period of time, more optimistic results could have been gained.

Concerning age and optimism level it was found out that the younger employees (18-35) are less optimistic, than the older (36+). Only 45.6 % of younger employees fall into *optimist* and *strong optimist* categories, compare to 57.3 % of older respondents fall into *optimism* and *strong optimism* category. However, the further results prove that younger respondents increased their level of optimism proportionally more (by 10 %) than older respondents, which may imply that they are less easily influenced by the corporate culture as the hypothesis stated.

The survey results also support the facts that are included in the theoretical part that the women incline to the more pessimistic behaviour than men do. However, concerning this indicator it was also discovered that even though, women scored less in the first survey, their level of optimism increased in the second survey much more than it was in the case of men. Therefore, it may imply that women have different approaches to learning processes from men and thus it should be taken into consideration in case of any further learning processes.

It was also proved that the employees in Scolarest are more optimistic than in Eurest, which may be due to the fact that Scolarest employees work in more optimistic environment which is connected to happier premises, fewer complaints from customers and other more positive surroundings.

Another indicator that was examined in the survey was the position of the employees connected to the optimism level. It was found out that higher positioned employees scored more on *Life orientation scale*; however the second survey shows that the level of optimism among higher positioned employees decreased. Unit managers are in both waves of the survey more optimistic than employees, particularly 85.7 % (30) vs. 52.2 % (226) in the first survey, 76.7 % (23) vs. 61.7 % (234) in the second survey. The reason for this situation might be due to the fact that company focused its strategy of training their employees from the top positioned people to the low positioned people. Therefore, unit managers might have been influenced by the trainings while the first survey took place. The restaurant workers have been trained on optimism since the beginning of the year 2015, thus it can explain the higher increase of the optimism level among restaurant workers in the second survey. Thus, company should not forget to include all their employees into the training strategy and perhaps introduce and establish regular training sessions not only for restaurant worker but also for management.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

To conclude, the average level of optimism for the company was stated; the company scored 14.8 points (*realist*) and in the second survey 15.4 points (*optimist*). The implementation of optimism in Eurest can be, according to the results, described as successful. The average optimism level increased, and as further results prove, the majority of the individual respondents themselves perceived the positive change at their workplace. The overall Eurest corporate culture can be now considered as positive. It might be beneficial if another survey was conducted, perhaps after 1 year, trying to prove whether the optimism level of employees increased any further and how employees perceive it. However, if the company continued the optimism strategy, it is recommended to consider the different aspects that were found in this study that influence the level of optimism and the learning of optimism. The survey data imply that men do not score the same as women; that younger employees can be more easily influenced than older people; or that higher positioned employees are more optimistic than lower positioned employees. According to these survey results, while adapting certain aspects into the Eurest corporate culture, it is important to consider differences between people and accordingly, to approach individual employees in different ways.

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