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**Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in supply management: the case of  
healthcare**

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## Tiivistelmä

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Yritysvastuu voidaan jaotella kolmeen osaan, taloudelliseen, ympäristölliseen ja sosiaaliseen käyttäen triple bottom line- mallia. Viimeisimpien vuosien aikana muidenkin kuin taloudellisten tunnuslukujen raportointi on lisääntynyt, johtaen vastuullisuuden ja kestävyuden popularisointiin yrityksissä median ja osakkeenomistajien luoman paineen avustamana. Yritysvastuu hankintatoimessa on ollut vähemmän tutkittu aihe ja tämä tutkimus tuo siihen näkemyksen länsimaisesta kulmasta.

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia yritysvastuuta ja siihen liittyviä konkreettisia tekoja yksityisessä terveydenhuoltoyrityksessä, ja kuinka nämä ovat kehittyneet viimeisen 5-10 vuoden aikana. Tutkimus on toteutettu haastattelujen avulla ja lisämateriaalia on kerätty yrityksen vuosiraporteista ja verkkosivuilta. Yrityksen tekemiä panostuksia verrataan aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa havaittuihin, ja lopputulos on, että hankintatoimi on erittäin tärkeä toimija vastuullisuuden osalta ja sillä on paljon mahdollisuuksia puuttua vastuullisuuden ja kestävyden ongelmiin kaikilla triple bottom line- teorian osa-alueilla.

## Abstract

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Corporate social responsibility can be divided into three parts, economical, ecological and social using the triple bottom line model. In the past years reporting more than just financial figures has been emerging, leading to popularization of sustainability and responsibility in companies aided by pressure created by the media and shareholders. Corporate social responsibility in supply management has been a less-researched topic and this study brings the perspective of a western-world country.

This study aims to investigate the corporate social responsibility and the concrete actions in a private healthcare company and how it has been developing in the past 5-10 years. The study is conducted using interviews and further material is gathered from the company's yearly reports and websites. The efforts made by the company are compared to those found in previous studies, and the conclusion is that the supply management of a healthcare company is a very detrimental operator and has a lot of possibilities to tackle responsibility issues throughout all the parts of triple bottom line.

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## 1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility is a topic founded in 1953 by Howard R. Bowen and F. Ernest Johnson that has started arising in the media in the past few decades and is becoming more and more important for stakeholders in large companies as it plays a major role in the reputation of a firm (Modak, Sinha, Raj, Panda, Merigo, Jabbour 2020, 1) . The risk for reputation loss may be higher in companies that do not produce products, but services. (Gottschalk 2011, 27) One of the main factors in the rise of corporate social responsibility is the awareness of global warming and non-governmental organizations' pressure to tackle the issue.

The purpose of this thesis is to review the corporate social responsibility in supply management in the healthcare sector. This thesis is done as a case study with a Finnish company in healthcare. The case company is one of the bigger private healthcare providers in Finland with services ranging from dental services to private hospitals and nursing. The company has service points all over Finland and sells specialized services to the public healthcare sector to help in busy times and to provide state-of-the-art equipment for use.

The main research question of this study is:

- How can corporate social responsibility be considered in supply in healthcare?

Sub questions for the study are such as:

- What are the key points of CSR in healthcare?
- Has the situation regarding CSR changed in the past 5-10 years?

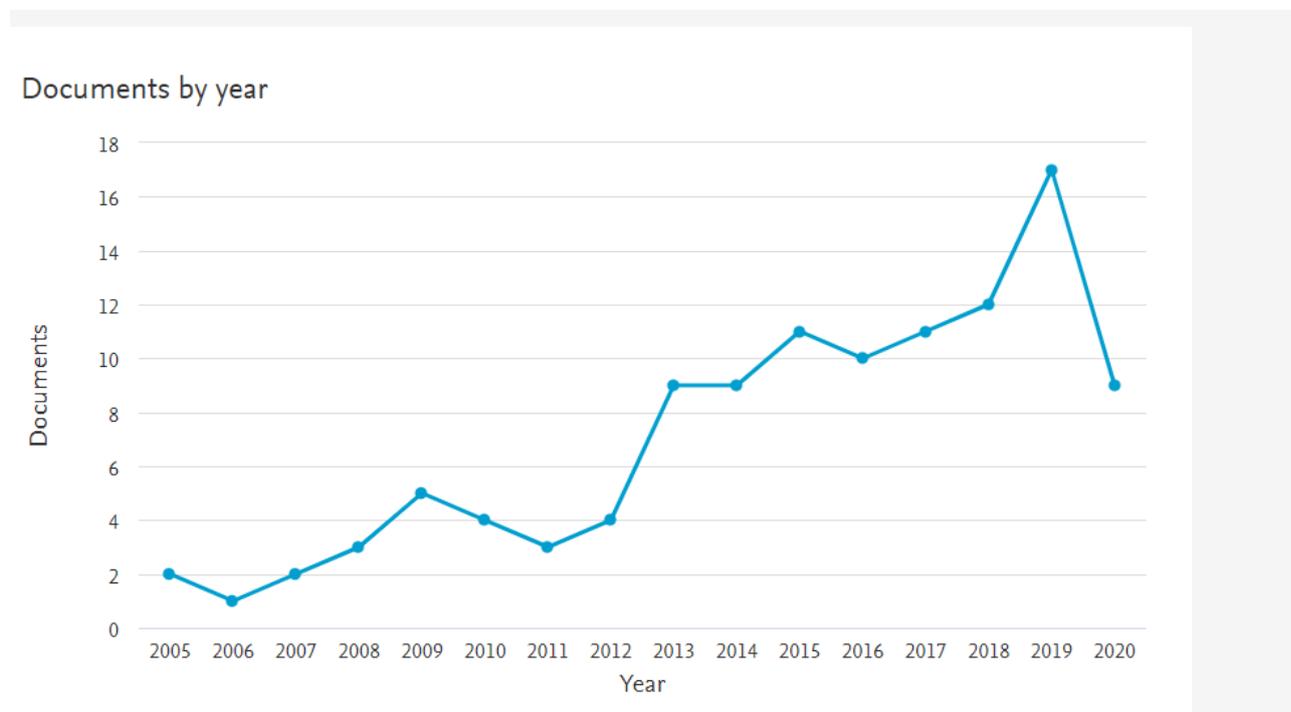
This topic is to be investigated for there has been very few studies of corporate social responsibility in general as it is an emerging topic in the corporate world. Only a few of the studies have been conducted in western-world countries and many of them concern the work healthcare in rural areas rather than more widespread private healthcare. The studies in the healthcare sector have been limited to just a few yearly, the earliest ones being in mid-2000's and the number rising rapidly ever since (Scopus 2020). The previous research have had contradicting results, but the general consensus is that corporate social responsibility is still in the phase of evolving in health care and is mainly a matter of internal decision making (Yadav, Viswanath, Patnaik 2020, 36), (Hishan, Ramakrishnan, Abu Mansor, Jaiprakash, Mohanraj 2020, 9). A lot of emphasis is put on the moral obligations of health care, both public and private to operate in a way that improves the health of people rather than seek profits (Dixit 2020, 268). Additionally, as LUT School of Business has sustainability as one of their main focuses, and corporate social responsibility is being discussed more in the media in the past years, the topic is relevant to my studies and the current world.

## 2. Corporate social responsibility

“Corporate social responsibility is the economical, ecological and social affects a company has on the society and stakeholders. The main purpose is to profit from the business opportunities by answering the demand of the society and stakeholders while minimizing the damage to the business (Juutinen 2010, 21).” This is one explanation for the term corporate social responsibility and it cannot be explained in a few words that every professional would agree on, that is why it is important to emphasize the idea behind the words (Brejning 2012, 6). Working according to these principles is proven to be more efficient than disregarding the arising awareness of problems in companies as the value of a reputation is one of the biggest intangible assets (Hemphill 2006, 637). The base of corporate social responsibility is founded on universal rights and national laws, which for example prohibit the use of child labor, guarantee

employees specific rights and enforce following the universal declaration of human rights (Juutinen 2010, 23). Although corporate social responsibility is interpreted as additional rules to legislation, following the legislation is a mandatory step to being responsible.

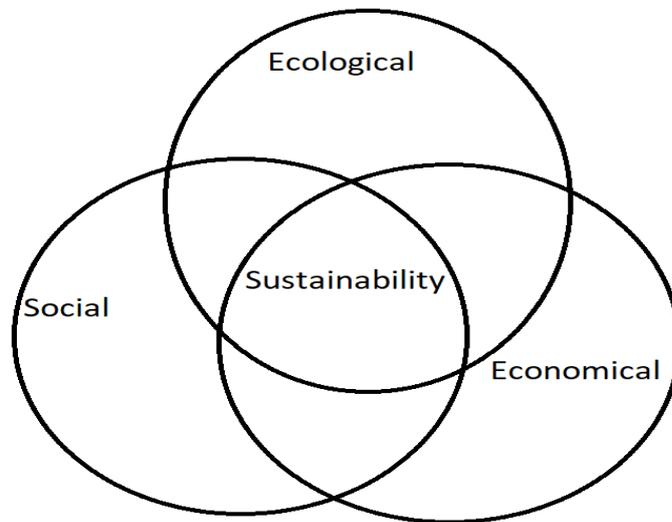
Graph 1 Number of scientific papers on the topic (Scopus 2020)



The graph presents the number of studies conducted on the topic that are available in Scopus. Firstly I searched for corporate social responsibility only, but then due to excessive number of results it was narrowed down to corporate social responsibility and healthcare, which this graph presents. It shows that the studies have not been conducted for very long and the number has been rising ever since the first studies until the writing of this thesis.

## 2.1 Triple bottom line

Triple bottom line (adapted from Carter, Rogers 2008, 365)



This picture represents John Elkington's view of the triple bottom line theory, where 3 different aspects form sustainability as a combination.

The triple bottom line concept presents sustainability as a combination of environmental, social, and economic performance which John Elkington allegedly invented in 1994 (Elkington, 2018). The main idea of the triple bottom line concept is to equally weigh the three dimensions and emphasize the fact that focusing on those three will give a company a competitive advantage and also result in the company acting in a sustainable way (Hussain, Rigoni, Orij, 2016, 411). Triple bottom line has since been adopted by many companies to evaluate their performance outside numerical values of profits, return on investment or turnover and it also strides in governments on various levels (Slaper, Hall 2011, 6).

## 2.2 Economic factors

The economic factor in triple bottom line can have values that are used in all companies to measure the business' state, for example: turnover, profitability, profits, taxes, wages (Slaper, Hall 2011, 5). Economic factor is the easiest to measure, as the values for this third are already accounted by the companies before implementing triple bottom line. Tracking of the numerical values in form of financial statements also give the companies an easy way of tracking if their work for sustainability is profitable. Although additionally companies need to think of the indirect consequences of their investments: which companies are they funding and can they trace the money flow to prevent tax evasion and money laundering in their supply line.

## 2.3 Environmental factors

The environmental factor is harder to assess, as it can be done in many various ways. Some try to transform environmental factors into money and some use numerical values and for example calculate the carbon footprint of a product, where the emissions created from producing the product are tracked from the raw materials to recycling the product. (Deegan 2000, 12-13), (Bebbington, Gray 2001, 561-563) Recently it has come popular to present environmental factors with the carbon footprint model, most noticeably in food products and comparing the environmental imprint of cars. What could be considered when thinking of the environmental factors, is how much raw materials and other resources are used for production, the transportation of materials and the electricity and water usage in the company, as well as how electricity is produced.

## 2.4 Social factors

The social factor mostly focuses on the well-being of the employees in any given company, although the consequences reach the families of those working and through them affect the whole society. Different factors in the social block can be measured by numbers, which might include for example: commute time, salary, health benefits and the time taken to train an employee. Many of the variables that cannot be numerated sensibly are related to health and happiness of people, which are hard to measure. (Slaper, Hall 2011, 5), (Deegan 2000, 13-14) Managing social responsibility can be done through auditing and surveys to employees and partner companies or suppliers, although the response rate for such surveys might fall very low.

## 2.5 Restrictions of the concept

Implementing the triple bottom line concept of corporate social responsibility to a company is not a short-term process and will only start producing added value if taken seriously and further developed regularly (Juutinen 2010, 39). Furthermore, only misleading the public with press releases that tell about responsible actions that have never been conducted, cannot financially benefit the company. Those allegations do not generate any value, as the economic benefit comes from sustainable actions that change the processes in the company and therefore make gaining an advantage possible.

## 3. Supply management and Corporate Social Responsibility

Supply chains are a complex instance, which are often hard to track from the raw materials to the product being finished. That is why there is already a lot of scrutiny and control in supply and it has a large impact on the company's financial status.

Sustainable supply therefore has strong incentives as it also affects the reputation of the firm due to recent rise in popularity of sustainability and many companies have started paying more attention to their supply. To further control the supply chain, signing and following a supplier code of conduct is often one of the requirements for a subcontractor to be accepted to cooperate with a company either producing or buying goods. Subcontractors are evaluated based on a range of factors which vary from company to another, but might include statistics such as: supply reliability, overall cost, various certificates, quality of products and responsibility. A part of sustainable sourcing is also supplier development, when suppliers are helped to achieve new certificates and new innovations which would benefit both the supplier and the buying company through improved efficiency and saving resources. Pushing for improvement and looking for alternative options is a standard procedure.

### 3.1 CSR in supply chain

Corporate social responsibility in supply management has come up during the last two decades, with more than 90% of the articles in the Scopus database being released since 2009 (Modak et. al. 2020, 1). The studies recently have found that even though corporate social responsibility is closely related to sustainable and responsible supply management, suppliers have already suffered from price pressures, increased demands on social compliance and shortened lead times (Lund-Thomsen 2020, 1700). This could be enhanced by further refining triple bottom line or other forms of corporate social responsibility in the supply chain. The major improvements that could be achieved with better understanding of corporate social responsibility in supply chains could be lowered costs due to better warehousing and packaging, lowered labor costs from better motivation and less absenteeism from better working conditions, additionally saving materials by recycling and enhancing company reputation with above measures (Craig, Carter, Liane 2011, 49).

## 4. Methodology

This part discusses the methodology of the study and the limitations that concern it. As it is a case work, the limitations are an important topic and must be addressed accordingly.

### 4.1 Limitations of the study

The study only focuses on one company as the case company, so it is not a great overview of the whole healthcare sector even though the case company is a big company in a country the size of Finland. Secondly, the study only focuses on the private healthcare sector, where they do not have as strict rules to follow on supply and choosing suppliers (Hankinnat 2019). The size of the company is also a limiting factor: with over 20 000 employees and services all over the country not all relevant people can be interviewed for this study to uncover how corporate social responsibility is considered in different places and parts of the organization. For that reason, only the key people are interviewed and particularly the supply management side is chosen for further review.

### 4.2 Data collection and research methods

Data for the thesis is collected using interviews of two managers from the case company. Three interviews in total are conducted, two of which are with supply manager and one with corporate social responsibility manager. The average duration of the interviews is 20 minutes. A set of questions that are included in the appendix, are asked, focusing on the company and its attitude and actions towards corporate social responsibility and sustainability. Additionally, the company's supplier code of conduct is used as a basis for the study.

Because the data is collected using interviews, there is a margin of error for the answers when speaking and writing down the answers at the same time. All the interviews are conducted in Finnish which is the native language of both the interviewees and will be translated to English where needed, therefore parts of the information might be lost or change meaning. These errors are minimized by contacting the interviewees twice and assuring that the information gathered is correct.

This study is conducted with using qualitative research methods, more precisely as a case study. A case study with qualitative research methods well suits a research of this type, as the questions do not require numerical values and the question types are typical for a case study and the topic is considering contemporary events (Yin 2018).

## 5. Corporate Social Responsibility in the case company

The company is one of the largest employers in Finland and therefore has a major role in the society and must monitor every decision closely. Their core values are responsibility and caring. The corporate social responsibility in the company is based on various certificates, such as ISO 9001 quality standard awarded in 2005 and ISO 14001 environmental management certificate. The company's services were described in the final auditing report for the certificate as follows: "Quality work and the principle of continuous improvement are in a key position in the company. The development work has been systematic, and the personnel is committed to the work. The work atmosphere is positive, and the employees clearly take pride in their job and being part of the company". At the start of 2020 the company also hired a manager for corporate social responsibility. They work in collaboration with all the other managers of various fields in the company to further develop overall sustainability. The most important aspects of corporate social responsibility in the company are the quality of treatment and ethics, prescribing drugs responsibly, privacy and tracing and minimizing quality deviations in services and used products. As the industry is very property-heavy, a lot of emphasis is put on energy and water consumption as well as saving natural resources and minimizing the use of single-use items although in healthcare many items are single-use due to hygiene reasons.

#### 4.1 Personnel management

The company focuses on training supervisors and managers as well as using state-of-the-art systems for personnel management and reporting work, such as OmaTyö, where you can report your working hours, whether you were on a sick leave or not, contact your supervisor and add additional notes to a specific shift if needed. The application also allows personnel to look for additional shifts and mark times when they want to work and add personal goals for working hours per month. All the work shifts that are substituted due to an employee being unable to attend the shift are publicly shown in the app and anyone in the same province can pick it up. The case company also seeks to take part in social debates with other organizations, government, and stakeholders. (Interviewee1 2020)

#### 4.2 Environmental aspects

The company complies with environmental policies and legislation and demands their employees to act environmentally responsibly when working. For example, the company tries to find employees close to the need of treatment so less pollution will be generated from commuting and some services of the company have a smoking prohibition. Waste management has a huge role in the company as a lot of medicine and medical equipment is used and many of those cannot be recycled. All the leftover medicine and medical equipment that require it, will be disposed responsibly. The company is a part of the drug-free Baltic sea -campaign to encourage people to take their expired or otherwise unused drugs to a pharmacy to be disposed properly, rather than throwing them away to preserve the already highly polluted Baltic sea.

***“We are a part of the drug free Baltic sea -campaign to take care of the already highly polluted sea.”***

Every year over 500 000 kilos of waste is generated from medicine and according to studies, between 20 and 40 percent of Finns throw their old medicine to the trash or flush it down the drain. Water treatment plants are not designed to filter out medicine that has dissolved into the water and will therefore be eventually released to the sea that is very vulnerable due to being so small and shallow (Lääkkeetönitämeri 2019). The company is the only private healthcare company to take part in the campaign and due to its size it makes a big difference because medicine usage is a big part of the company's business. This is all additive to the teaching provided in elementary schools, where proper recycling and disposal of hazardous materials or non-disposable waste, such as medicine and car batteries and electronics is taught.

To generate as little non-recyclable waste as possible, the prescribing of drugs is monitored all the time and if some medicine is prescribed in excessive amounts or some doctors are prescribing too much medicine, the issue will be addressed, and the negative effects of such actions are sought to be minimized.

### 4.3 Social aspects

Social aspects of the company's corporate social responsibility are widespread and affect the whole population. On top of traditional occupation health care, the company has launched a working life support service, which offers help for social and emotional well-being to increase working ability and to reduce absenteeism as well as traditional treatment for injuries and sicknesses.

The care services provide each individual with treatment and care they need, and the services provide them a safe and supportive environment to live in. The care services allow other family members and relatives to take less care of the disabled or sick person for the period treatment is needed, therefore being able to work normally, and this contributes largely to the society. Without these services the people who are in

need of care, but are not in need to be hospitalized, their relatives would need to take care of them which would potentially also keep them out of working life, causing two or more people staying at home. Whereas if the people in need of care are taken care of by care services suitable for them, additionally to the family member being able to work, the services directly employ personnel and indirectly affect companies that are responsible for example the food deliveries and medical equipment manufacturing. As the services are mostly private, they are still state supported to be affordable for normal working-class people. The services also provide the clients with education to aim for independent life and, if possible, also a possibility for working in companies such as Laptuote-säätiö SR, which aims for building sustainable well-being and solving social problems (Laptuote 2020). In Lappeenranta, Laptuote-säätiö runs a workshop, where people with disabilities and therefore with problems of finding a job or needing special aid while working can work. The workshop runs a laundry service with possibility of delivery, they refurbish old pieces of furniture, carve road signs, repair clothes, and provide IT services, including computer repairs and changing parts to computers (Laptuote 2020).

The company also has care services that aim for rehabilitating clients with mental health problems to independent life and finally be able to participate in the working life again. Key elements of workers' well-being in the company are possibilities for self-improvement via meetings and communication with supervisors, which are currently being increased. Staff rotation, especially in nursing homes is frequent to keep the working atmosphere and patient happiness up. This is not a strict rule though, because if the person chemistry matches, it is beneficial to keep the same people working with customers, as is the case in my position as a personal assistant. Additionally, during the Covid-19 pandemic the company has set up numerous testing points across the country on a fast schedule to help fight the virus and prevent it from spreading. This has hugely increased the testing potential, up to 26 000 tests daily in the country, slowing the virus from spreading as the wait times for test results have gone down and allowing people with negative results that are not able to work from home to enter work sooner again, which is crucial considering the financial situation (THL 2021).

#### 4.4 Economic aspects

Economic side of corporate social responsibility in Finland is closely connected to taxation, as it is possible to avoid taxes and it is publicly despised. As the company is not a listed company, but owned by various funds, such as pension funds and pension insurance companies, some of which are owned by the state, they still choose to give out transparent information of their taxation and publish financial reports yearly, as well as tax footprint reports. The company has a set tax policy, which states the main principles to be: taxes are paid in Finland as the company operates here, matters connected to taxation always have business-related grounds, taxation is transparent and information about taxation will be published regularly and taxation does not guide operations or expanding business outside of Finland. As Finland has quite high taxation, there is an incentive to move the company somewhere else, mainly Estonia or other countries in the European Union that have a lower taxation to still keep the benefit of unified internal markets. Additionally without a see-through tax policy the cash flow could be directed through other countries that have lower taxation and the assets could be kept in those countries, as many companies did when the “Panama papers” came out. That limits the usage of assets in the home country of the company and limits the indirect financial benefits. Therefore declaring that the company will be staying in Finland and keep paying taxes here creates trust, which is an important intangible asset for a company providing services. It also has a direct effect on Finland’s economy and increases the potential of indirect financial benefits.

The aim of the company in collaboration with other private healthcare companies in Finland is to have healthy competition and thus get the services more widely available to as many people as possible while maintaining the low times for getting treatment. This includes providing additional services to the public sector and keeping the level of treatment in Finland on a high level. Additionally the healthy competition between the few companies in the private sector keeps the prices on a reasonable level so that normal working people, or people with a health insurance can use their services and therefore potentially pass the line that might months long in the public healthcare. Indirectly the company helps a lot of smaller cities by having occupation healthcare clinics, which employ thousands of people across the country and bring millions of

euros in the form of investments to non-growth areas which would otherwise lack in tax funds and suffer from emigration.

#### 4.5 Development of CSR in the company

Corporate social responsibility in the company has developed mostly in the last 5-10 years, when the importance of the topic has risen substantially. The core ideas for responsibility have been priorities for the company already for a long time, such as concentrating on the quality of work and personnel development and environmental issues. The company has recently been investing more money on the care services to improve their quality of service and to provide a safer place for people that are unable to live on their own. Since the start of the year when the corporate social responsibility manager was employed and the matters were unified within the company under one person, these things have been taken further as well as taking into account all parts of the business when considering sustainability and responsibility. The company also has an ongoing responsibility and sustainability project, which is done in collaboration with the whole organizational lead and they are planning to release a responsibility report later this year or at the start of 2021. (Interviewee1 2020) As corporate social responsibility now has its own manager, the future potential of development is vastly higher than before because the communication about responsibility is all going to one person who can then control the conversation, but all of the parts of the organization can still influence in which way things are developed in the company.

## 6. Triple bottom line and the company

Corporate social responsibility is not heavily directly considered in the supply chain in the company. Although as the company has a lot of sustainability standards, it also demands sustainable work from its subcontractors and suppliers. For this, the company has a supplier code of conduct as per the norm in any industry now. The

base of the code of conduct, additionally to the laws binding the companies, is the core values of the company, which are stated as: trust, safety and caring.

The supplier code of conduct in the company is mainly based on laws in the country of the supplier, international laws, and labor regulations agreed to by the country in question. Additionally to those laws and regulations the supplier code of conduct requires the companies to follow extra rules set by the company, which are mainly the company's rules with additional points to ensure the sustainability and responsibility in the supply chain. The code of conduct is sliced into four parts: economical, ecological, and social aspects of responsibility and product safety.

### 6.1 Economical aspects

The economical aspect of the code of conduct emphasizes that risk-taking is not advised and the company must be informed if there are any risks that might be detrimental to the business. This way the company can be assured that the supply of any product is not going to be affected easily, and no extra safety measure and backup plans need to be implemented, which would cause additional costs. The supplier also must be solvent enough to keep up the production even if there is an accident and they are liable to compensate the company for that. Solvency and liability are for the sole purpose of keeping up the manufacturing with minimal losses and delays, which would possibly stop some services in the company's end with potentially lethal consequences to patients. For that reason the company also requires every supplier to have insurances that are in accordance with their business and the possible risks. Considering governance, suppliers must be able to work safely with confidential information they might be handed and the competition between possible suppliers and other companies in that area must be fair and legal. Working safely with confidential information is essential, since some of it might contain business secrets that are crucial for the company, therefore trust is highly valued. Fair and legal competition create confidence in the company as the buyer in the area and enables the companies to

keep the prices on a reasonable level, which makes it possible to pay salaries according to the local legislation.

## 6.2 Social aspects

The social aspect focuses on labor rights and UN & ILO Global Compact -agreement must be followed in the companies considering forced labor, work discipline, child labor, anti-racism-acts and freedom of collaboration and unification. The UN universal declaration of human rights must also be followed for equal treatment of the workers regarding working rights, working conditions, employee training and possibilities of advancing in one's career. This is to prevent so called sweatshops from forming and entering the competition where basic human rights are not obeyed. All employees need to have a written work contract that is understandable and legally binding. The wages are required to be paid according to the local legislation of minimum wages or the contracts in the industry if there are now laws regarding minimum wage. This suggests that the wages cannot be lower than the minimum wage and they must be paid regularly. Having written, legally binding contracts and having to pay salary according to the legislation, as well as following the labor rules makes the use of child labor and illegal workforce a lot harder and the incentive for it is decreased as getting caught for such acts can easily mean the termination of the supply contract. The usage of interns, trainees, and irregular workforce for bypassing the rule about minimum wage is prohibited and those workers must be treated equally to those who have a contract which is valid until further notice. Use of interns and irregular workforce is tempting as usually the salary of those people is a lot lower than normally and if the job is easy factory work, the training time for an employee is not long so having workers with lower salary work for a few months after being replaced by new people has a big financial incentive without proper sanctions on getting caught.

It is on the responsibility of the subcontractor to provide their workers with efficient protective gear and working outfits suitable for the work and to ensure that the working environment is clean and safe enough for working. The work safety regulations of the company must be obeyed, including having an identity card available always when

working in the premises of the company. Making the workplace safe for the workers is everyone's advantage as that will lower absenteeism, therefore creating less labor costs for the employer. The potential of serious injuries is also lowered drastically with the usage of proper safety equipment, and that lowers the chance of the employer having to pay compensation to the employee or their family. Having an identification card available at all times ensures that only the right personnel are allowed in given locations, reducing the risk of injury with undertrained people entering dangerous places and ultimately industrial espionage in laboratories. All the suppliers must have a program for reducing the risks of alcohol and drugs and need to make sure employees are not under the effect of any mind-altering substances when working. The main idea of the program is to help the worker rather than punish them for having a problem. Whereas it would be easier to lay off the employee that had worked under the influence of mind-altering substances it is beneficial for both the employee, the company, and the society to try to keep them at work to reduce the costs to the state and to create tax revenue and reduce the effects, such as increased tendency towards criminal activity unemployment has.

### 6.3 Environmental aspects and product safety

In the environmental side of the code of conduct, suppliers are required to minimize the effects on environment in advance caused by producing their goods responsibly. This prevents the companies from using the cheapest possible raw materials for manufacturing the products. The use of materials that are potentially hazardous in some part of their life cycle is highly ill-advised and the use of rare natural elements should be kept to the minimum. In case of possible leakages or other accidents the company must have an emergency plan to prevent further damage. In factories that use materials that are harmful to the environment, extra cautions need to be taken to be sure of the safety of the manufacturing process and to prevent any possibilities of leakage from the factory to preserve the surrounding nature. Environmental friendliness must also be developed in the company continually to not only stay on the level required but to at least: minimize the usage of limited natural resources, energy and water, emissions to the atmosphere and water systems, emissions of noise, dust and

smell, potential soil contamination, waste management and sorting waste, considering the packaging, shape of the products, transportation, and recycling. Where it might be easy for a small company to reach a certain level of environmental friendliness, the help of a large buyer can make it easier to strive for constant improvement on the environmental friendliness of the products and the process of making them. Additionally, trainings must be conducted if necessary for adapting to new regulations and laws considering environmental safety and reducing emissions.

The products must be designed, produced and tested with due diligence so the safety of the products towards humans and the environment can be certified. Putting effort into making the products as safe as possible is really important in healthcare as they are used to treat humans and someone's life could be dependent on if the product is working as intended and is safe enough for use. Suppliers must keep track of raw material info of the products and they need to have a CE-label to be used in the company. Having a CE-label certifies the product is safe enough to be sold on the European Union's inner market, meaning that it has been verified and tested to be safe in at least one of the member countries, adding extra step of safety additionally to the company's and supplier's own product safety standards. The suppliers are accountable for verifying the trackability of the supply chain of the raw materials and products used. Having a very long and broad network of suppliers, it would be almost impossible to keep track of all of them without spending vast sums of money on employing special personnel and buying auditing. Keeping the suppliers accountable for verifying the trackability and building trust within the supplier chain via continuous improvement with the help of the buying organization is a more cost-efficient method for ensuring product safety.

## 7. Corporate social responsibility in the company's supply chain

Corporate social responsibility in the company relies on reliable contract suppliers and online systems for supply chain management and supply as well as human resources. The number of contract suppliers in the company at the moment is around 400 and

those contract suppliers account for most of the purchases done to the company. Additionally over a thousand occasional and other subcontractors work for the company supplying products that are not available from the contract suppliers or are otherwise needed in special occasions.

***“The biggest costs in supply are real estate, water, heating and electricity.”***

As the company is private, it owns a lot of properties and many are on loan. Those properties are expensive to maintain because many of them are in very central areas of big cities to make healthcare easily available. Many places being open very widely or even around the clock increases the electricity consumption from having lights on in the corridors to using medical equipment in operations throughout the day. To ensure proper tidiness and prevent bacteria and infections from spreading a lot of water has to be used on cleaning the equipment as well as the corridors and appointment rooms.

After the real estate costs, medicine, medical equipment, and working clothes for the employees. On the nursing sector of the corporation, food for the customers is a large portion of the expenditure. Especially in nursing homes, where there might be dozens of people living in the same complex, all eating 4 to 5 meals a day it adds up fast. The supply for different parts of the corporation is mainly on the responsibility of the sector and there are specialized people in the buyer role in all different units, over 500 of which there are in the corporation, such as hospitals and nursing homes. With the number of different units, having a central team that would do procurement for the whole company would be ineffective and inflexible as different areas and units have different needs and the needs change on different rates. Around 50% of the supply in all units is direct and the other 50% indirect and the responsibility for the payment process is on the main supply management team and supply manager, who communicates with the different sectors and their buyers. Indirect supply covers a lot of the costs, which is typical for a company where people need to move and equipment, as well as real estate has to be repaired. Having a team responsible for the payment process makes it simpler than having all of the units paying their own supply invoices as it also helps track the cost distribution of different areas of business and the difference in cost in different geographical areas. A single team instead of over 500

units paying invoices can also lower the number of mistakes as the units can use the time normally used for this to provide services and the specific people can use all the time needed for the process. (Interviewee2 2020)

### 7.1 Supplier contracts

The suppliers for the company are tendered out every two to three years according to the contracts that have been made. Tendering helps keep the contracts beneficial for both parties and allows for the opportunity to seek for better options, whether it be for better price-to-quality -ratio or products that are more suitable for the use in provided services. Important note is that as the company is a private company, it does not have to follow the rules of state-owned companies that have to openly tender out every purchase that is over 60 000€ in value (Hankinnat 2019). In a company as big as the case company, that would mean public bidding for all items and services acquired on the top level of the organization and for many products also on local level. Having public biddings would make procurement slower as they would also need to follow the rules regarding the bidding times. Mainly the problem would be that the option of selecting something that is not the cheapest but either has lower costs during the whole lifespan of the product or is more suitable for the use would be out as the company would be forced to select the cheapest option. If the product in question is hard to describe, it might be that something with wrong properties could be bought. (Interviewee2 2020)

### 7.2 Supply chain management

The supply chain has been well-established for years and the introduction of a supply system in 2011 made buying at local level easier than before and the control of it easy. The system includes all the products from the contract suppliers and serves the higher levels of the organization well, reducing the time used for purchases, thus creating

more time for management and improvement. On the local levels, where not all products can be bought from the established partner-suppliers mistakes occur more frequently, but they are mostly one-time errors that are learnt from. A reason for such mistakes can be for example a lot of companies trying to sell their own products via directly contacting the service point. If the buyer in the service point is new to the job, there is a possibility that a purchase from outside of the normal suppliers is made. There is potential of this sort of purchases causing additional costs and complicating the tracking of suppliers and costs affected by procurement. To prevent such issues, all buyers are given sufficient instructions on what to do in case a company tries to directly sell something to a single service point instead of making an offer to become a contract supplier or make a continuous supply agreement. (Interviewee2 2020)

Many services used are not in the system for the technical problems of needing to have a standardized name for each service and many of them are single-time or a rare occurrence and it is not worth the time to add the titles to the list. Adding all services to the system would add a lot of workload on the personnel with no real positive outcome as there is a high chance the services are not acquired again, at least as they are, and making changes in the service acquired would also mean changes done to the title in the system and therefore doing one-time services without adding them to the system is beneficial. For those services that are regular, such as cleaning in many of the company's premises, where it needs to be frequent, there is a title for it and from the system you can choose to pay for it automatically monthly. Having automated paying process for services that happen monthly greatly reduces the workload of those working in the procurement sector and uses a greater portion of the potential of the supply system that is in use. Additionally local units can present wishes of certain items or services to be added to the system and the supply management on the organizational level can add the proposed item in the system or suggest for a similar item that is already included in the list. This way the communication within the organization is crucial and when done correctly, it can benefit everyone. (Interviewee2 2020)

To avoid even small mistakes on the local levels, the purchasing staff are frequently trained to keep up with the latest knowledge on how to more efficiently and error-free do the job. There is a training related to the supply system twice a year which provides the staff with an overview of the ordering process and additionally at the start of 2021

there will be a special training of the supply process. All these trainings are meant to help the buyers do their job better and to help them understand more thoroughly what they are doing and how it contributes to the whole organization. As supply management has a large impact on the costs of a company and the potential savings are vast, compared to for example having a higher price of a product or a service, the money spent on training the staff can yield large savings in the future. (Interviewee2 2020)

The supply chain of different products and services vary vastly, some are bought straight from the manufacturer which might have its premises in Finland and some others are bought from a wholesaler that imports the goods from a country on a different continent. Most of the products used are bought from wholesalers and keeping up with the supply chain of the product is on their responsibility. Therefore auditing is rarely conducted by the company, rather by the wholesalers. Auditing done by the wholesalers is dependent on their own policies and how they want to conduct it, if at all, but the supply chain for each product is however traceable and the supplier code of conduct confirms that the products are responsibly produced, and the manufacturing creates financial gain on the area of production. Meaning that it is essential for the wholesalers or other subcontractors that are not the original producers of the goods to have auditing, or other sorts of inspecting done to be able to ensure the supplier code of conduct requirements for used products are fulfilled. In service-sector, auditing would be hard to conduct due to few people working at a time in many different places, but for example everyone working in the premises of the company are expected to work in accordance with the rules and all misconducts are looked into, when possible, and potentially penalized. Surveillance in the places of service workers both from the outside and within the company is conducted according to the local legislation. Therefore a sort of indirect auditing is mostly done to keep, although it might be limited to protect the safety of the workers. In places, for example hospitals and doctor's offices, where the cleaning is frequent, the quality of work can although be seen and if necessary, feedback given to the company responsible for the work. (Interviewee2 2020)

### 7.3 Exceptional circumstances

In the time of a global pandemic, the company has also started directly importing goods from China, mostly protective equipment which was not produced in the nearby areas fast enough. These items have been ordered in such bulk that they have also been sold to other companies in Finland, to help the entire healthcare sector's demand on protective gear.

***“We are also analyzing Corona test results from Sweden and have been importing protective gear such as masks and protective gloves in bulk so that we can also sell them to other companies and keep a reasonable stock.”***

In normal times no real storage is kept on any items as the suppliers are trusted and their reliability of delivery is on a high level and therefore spending money on facilities and storages for storing products that can be directly acquired from the suppliers on demand would not make sense. In the times when no one was able to predict the real consequences of the pandemic and how large the increase in consumption of protective gear would be, it was thought to be best for the safety of the public and the supply of protective gear to start importing them. In case of lowered reliability of supply, the supplier will be contacted and the issue will be discussed through and the potential problems will try to be tackled together to make sure the supplier can continue working with the company and no service has to be cancelled or delayed due to supply issues as it might cost lives. However, in these times some critical equipment, such as protective gear, some medicine and working clothes have always been stored to ensure sufficiency of supply. Because of having more capacity for testing that is required in Finland, because of not being the only company to do testing and the evolution in testing capacity has been rapid, the company has also started testing Covid-19 test samples from Sweden to help fight the virus and to have all of the testing potential in use.

The company is also a part of treatment security organizations' healthcare pool that are voluntary networks that track, plan, and prepare procedures to improve the security of supply. The main idea of the healthcare pool is to advance the material preparedness and securing the critical infrastructure (Huoltovarmuus 2020). The pool has an aim of creating better collaboration between the private and public healthcare and therefore ensure the availability of healthcare, given any possible situation. The main idea of the whole security of supply organization, which the healthcare pool is a part of, though is not to just ensure availability of healthcare, but rather to ensure the functionality of the society in situations of disturbance, one of which is the current pandemic. The main points that are being protected by the organization are production, services and infrastructure that are vital to the people's livelihood, national defense, and businesses (Huoltovarmuus 2020) (Interviewee2 2020)

#### 7.4 Key points of product selection

The main points in the company's supply are not purely monetary, rather inspecting the reliability of supply and that the products are suitable for the task they are made for. Different quality and responsibility certificates and standards, the financial situation of the supplier, environmental and responsibility aspects are considered when choosing a supplier. The cheapest products are not often the ones to be chosen as healthcare uses a lot of special equipment and those have many potential suppliers, so they are chosen with the intended use of the product in mind. The quality of the special equipment used, additionally is a large concern as special equipment is expensive and maximum value from the purchase wants to be attained. More commonly used materials and equipment are mostly bought from wholesalers with the intention of getting as many different products as possible from the same supplier to lower the need for re-negotiating the partnerships and the workload on managing the supply chain. Buying a lot from a single supplier also helps the logistics of delivering the products as they most likely come from a central warehouse of the wholesaler and therefore the deliveries of different products are arriving at the same time and less time and effort is spent on unpacking the shipments or deliveries, benefitting both ends as

the transporting company has to visit fewer places when carrying more products to one address. (Interviewee2 2020)

### 7.5 Pricing and local operators

When thinking of the price of the product, the overall costs are considered instead of just the price. These include, but are not limited to, shipping, repairing, installation, recycling costs, the working time lost when installing, how long the product will last and how well it fits the job it is made for, therefore lowering the time used for operating for example an x-ray machine if it is well integrated to other systems and fitting to the premises it will be assigned to. As mentioned earlier, the supply is mostly done in bulk to order products that are usable throughout the corporation, however in the nursing sector, and also in hospitals and other facilities where patients have to spend more than a day, all the food and medicine distribution services are done locally, rather than ordering everything from a company located in one city and then they would have to transport the products a long way. Thus the organizational level and the contract-suppliers can be ignored if there is a more sensible solution for supply available locally and the convenience of operation is highly considered. For example buying the medicine dose packing service, for which there are only a few companies available, and the proximity of pharmacies from any give service point are considered when buying those services and medicine. Meaning even if there was a certain pharmacy company with the contract supplier position, but it has no dispensaries or pharmacies close to the place where the order was placed, the contract supplier's position can be overridden with a more convenient way of providing a necessary service. (Interviewee2 2020)

### 7.6 The base for rules

The Finnish legislation is a base for the restrictions in supply in the company and sets limits for irresponsible supply and working. As an added measure, all things that can be made more responsible without unnecessary disadvantages are done. For example

taking care of where the working outfits are produced and what coffee employees are drinking on coffee breaks do not cause a lot of extra costs to the company but can have a large impact on the overall responsibility and affect the living quality of coffee farmers that are paid a fair amount for their crop or the people making clothes that are getting a fair salary instead of working in a sweatshop. The explicit usage of renewable energy has been thought of to support the domestic electricity production, which is relying on government's financial support due to poor possibilities of producing electricity with waterpower because of a small number of rivers, lack of sunlight making solar panels cost ineffective up until recently and wind power receiving a lot of resistance from the people because of noise and scenery drawbacks caused by wind power parks (Heikinmatti, Valta 2020). The supply system is helping units order goods in reasonable amounts so everything does not have to be ordered separately, therefore reducing the delivery costs and emissions created by them and to reduce the number of times something has to be delivered to the office while making sure it is not excessive to the point where something would need to be thrown away due to expiration or simply not being usable anymore. (Interviewee2 2020)

## 7.7 Supplier evaluation

There is an evaluation conducted on the suppliers yearly, which includes questions related to safety and responsibility and they have been further adjusted and added to suit the modern world in recent years and will be updated when seen necessary. Additionally other aspects of the suppliers are assessed continuously, mainly connected to the probability of having a failure in supply and the costs of procurement. The company was assessed by the Ecovadis-assessment in 2019 and it received a score that was significantly higher than the industry average. That shows that the work for improvement and corporate social responsibility is not just talk but also actions that can be identified by external companies. (Interviewee2 2020)

## 8. Conclusions

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter and it is a revision of the paper which summarizes the key elements of corporate social responsibility in healthcare's supply. The findings are compared to those of previous studies conducted and further questions about the topic are presented, creating ideas of what to study next regarding the topic.

This study introduced vital parts of corporate social responsibility and sustainability in healthcare's supply. Those findings were labeled under the triple bottom line concept and considered in the case company, a private healthcare company. The most important aspects of economical, ecological, and financial side of things were acknowledged and presented. These include for example indirect consequences of investments, ecological footprint of products used and the affect a job has on a person's life. As the previous studies alleged, a company in the healthcare sector has a lot of responsibility, the moral guidelines and responsibility they are assumed to be following, and the corporate social responsibility they should be striving for to improve their performance as a company. The main focus in the study was on things that are being done or are in the process of being taken into use in the company, leaving room for further investigation and suggestions on improvements.

### 8.1 Answers to study questions

- How can corporate social responsibility be considered in supply in healthcare?

Corporate social responsibility can be considered in various decisions made in the company's supply. Using the triple bottom line model, we can assume that it is financially beneficial to act sustainably, as it gives the company a competitive advantage. Concretely in the company this means more emphasis on using products that are suitable and durable enough for the work they are made for, ensuring their appropriate disposal and recycling after reaching the end of use, investing responsibly to provide areas with jobs and creating buying power on the area and increasing tax

revenue. Helping other companies and countries in the time of a global pandemic has also proven to be beneficial and highly responsible. Well-organized and affordable supply is nowadays conducted using a well-functioning system for supply, which is mostly automated and improved constantly. Additionally the implementation of a specific department for corporate social responsibility that acts in cooperation with all the other departments highly raises the level of responsibility and sustainability in a company.

- Has the situation regarding corporate social responsibility changed in the last 5-10 years?

The situation has changed drastically in the better direction. The media presence has put a lot of pressure on companies from the shareholder side and there has been a true rise of responsibility and sustainability also in the healthcare sector. In the past 5-10 years there have been various sustainability programs started in the company, sustainability has been taken as a factor in their process for choosing a supplier, even though coding those measures into numerical values has still proven to be troublesome. ISO certificates and various certificates for sustainability have been implemented as a symbol that can be shown to potential trade partners and supplier codes of conduct have been modified to include a section for sustainability and responsibility. Supply chains are now known well, if not by the company making the end-product, at least the suppliers, who are demanded to be able to trace the supply chain of materials from the very start.

- What are the key points of corporate social responsibility in healthcare?

The key points in healthcare are energy usage and waste management as the sector is very property-heavy, meaning that there mostly everything that happens is happening in a property mainly owned by the company that is running it. That creates a lot of energy usage and the nature of healthcare creates a lot of waste through single-

use items, such as syringes and protective gear. The energy problem is tackled with preserving energy when possible and looking for the environmentally friendly ways of producing electricity and using as few natural resources as possible. The usage of materials and products that produce waste, especially toxic waste, such as medicine, is highly controlled and the environmental effects are being minimized through actively managing and monitoring how much of which medicine is prescribed by which doctor to avoid unnecessary waste from being generated and to lessen the potential effects it has on the public health through for example more resilient bacteria evolving as antibiotics are being used in excessive amounts. The social aspect of healthcare in the private sector is focusing on being effective while keeping the costs down to be affordable for the citizens. Private services aid the ones in need and support the person with the need for treatment to get them back to health quickly to reduce the impact it has on the society. Healthcare also adapts to the needs and focuses on the services that are on the rise or with very frequent need.

## 8.2 Reliability of the study and future studies

The reliability of the study is highly affected because it is only done by interviewing two people in one private healthcare company. At the time of the interviews it also became apparent that these topics are linked in the company, but not on the level that would be needed to achieve the best and most reliable results. Therefore the original interview questions had to be reformulated and some of them needed to be replaced. Additionally the material from interviews had to be partially translated into English and I noticed that some phrases and subjects processed in the interviews did not sound very reasonable in English, so they had to be taken off the study. The lack of financial data in the company forced me to change the topic slightly, to exclude the financial side on a more specific level from the study. The comparison between studies is not very reliable as there are few studies conducted specifically on the healthcare sector and out of those the ones in western-world countries on private sector are very rare. The data from previous studies is somewhat helpful and has the same outcomes most of the time as this study but comparing is hard due to lack of similarities (Dixit 2020, 268) (Patnaik, Viswanath, Yadav 2020, 36). Corporate social responsibility is a fairly new topic still and there still needs to be more studies to convincingly say what are the

main points of it in healthcare and how it can be considered in the most effective manner.

Further studies on the topic could be aimed towards the concrete financial gains using the triple bottom line model, it was not possible in this study due to lack of financial reporting on the topic, but it could be convincing for those already not having a responsibility program to start one. Tracing the history of sustainability and responsibility in supply would be one topic that could help recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in a company's supply, therefore providing grounds for improvement. The differences between public and private healthcare could be considered and research could be done on which one is able and more likely to operate more responsibly. In future studies, more companies should be used as the base to improve the reliability of the study.

## Appendices

### **Interview questions:**

How are goods procured?

What are the largest expenses regarding procurement?

How are the expenses distributed between different parts of the organization?

Has the supply chain changed recently?

How has the supply chain changed?

Is the supply done directly from the producer of goods or are there additional sub-contractors?

How well is the supply chain known?

Is there a direct connection to the sub-contractors?

Is corporate social responsibility somehow taken into account in supply management?

Has the importance of corporate social responsibility somehow changed in the past years?

Is there a special program for corporate social responsibility?

How has the attitude towards corporate social responsibility evolved?

What investments are made towards corporate social responsibility in the case company?

What is corporate social responsibility in the case company in practice?

What sort of problems might be related to corporate social responsibility and how are they solved?

Is there a plan to increase cooperation between different parts of the organization?

Is there any additional training for local buyers?

Could non-contract suppliers be added to the supply system in the future?

Is there a plan of calculating the concrete numbers related to the link between supply management and corporate social responsibility?

How could the supply management of the case company help the society in the time of a pandemic?

Is the responsibility of sustainable and responsible procurement mainly on every service point itself, or could it be possible to locally act in a way that would not work elsewhere (using local contractors instead of contract-suppliers)?

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