

OSLOMET

Karoline Mærland

The Interconnection of Work-life Balance, Organisational Culture and Social Policies

**A Qualitative Study on the Promotion of Gender Equality among
Female Leaders in Norway**

Master's thesis in International Social Welfare and Health Policy

Oslo Metropolitan University

Faculty of Social Science

Oslo 2023

Abstract

Norway is often presented as one of the most gender equal countries in the world. Where equal opportunities and rights are fundamental elements. The following thesis aims to explore the experiences of women in leadership positions in Norway, specifically regarding gender issues and equality. With a goal to get a better understanding of the gender differences that still persist today. Using conflict theory and organisational culture, this thesis seeks to answer the research question: how does work-life balance affect the gender equality of female leaders in Norway? Considering work-life balance and organisational culture are tightly intertwined. What is organisational culture's role in promoting gender equality? In addition to: what role do social policies, such as parental leave and gender quotas, play in promoting gender equality?

Semi-structured interviews were utilised in the analysis of the findings. With women in leadership positions between 35-50 years old working in different sectors in Norway, the aim was to get valuable insight from the female managers' point of view.

The results suggest that organisational culture plays an important role in promoting gender equality, because factors such as working hours, working structures, underlying beliefs and values can both hinder or promote equality. To have a workplace culture that is supportive seems to be important in terms of providing equal opportunities for all. Other important aspects as expressed by the informants included flexible working hours, gender quotas and parental leave policies. Additionally, despite Norway being one of the most gender-equal countries, barriers such as gender norms and stereotypes still seem to persist today.

Acknowledgements

With the completion of this master's thesis, a chapter of my life is finally complete.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Blanka Støren-Vaczy for providing guidance, support and insight throughout this journey.

I would also like to thank fellow-master's student, Aurora, for encouragement and moral support during our long sessions at the university, and thank you Linnea for generously offering to assist me with the proofreading of this thesis. Additionally, I am thankful to my parents for their support throughout my entire master's degree.

Lastly, I would also give a special thanks to the informants for sharing their time, experiences and knowledge with me, without you this study wouldn't be possible.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background and Purpose.....	2
1.3 Research Question.....	2
1.4 Definitions of Key Items.....	3
1.5 Relevancy to my Education.....	4
1.6 Structure of the Thesis.....	5
2. Previous literature.....	6
2.1 Work-life Balance International and National Research.....	7
2.1.1 An International Perspective.....	7
2.1.2 A Nordic and Norwegian perspective.....	8
2.3 Research on Barriers and Role Expectations of Women in Leadership.....	10
3. Theory.....	13
3.1 Conflict Theory.....	13
3.2 Organisational Culture.....	18
4. Methods.....	21
4.1 Qualitative Methods.....	21
4.2 Choice of Method.....	22
4.3 Data Production.....	23
4.4 Data Analysis.....	24
4.5 Research Ethics.....	25
4.6 Validity, Reliability and Study Credibility.....	26
5. Presentation of Findings.....	27
5.1 How Men and Women Handle Their Work-life Balance.....	28
5.2 Equality - Perceptions and Experience of the Informants.....	31
5.3 Social Policies in Norway.....	34
5.3.1 Parental Leave.....	34
5.3.2 Gender Quota.....	35
6. Discussion.....	36
6.1 Work-life Balance and Conflict Theory.....	37
6.1.1 Risk.....	39
6.2 Organisational Culture, Barriers and Expectations.....	41
6.2.1 Professional Networks and Role Models.....	43
6.3 Social Policies - Parental Leave and Gender Quotas.....	45
7. Summary and implications.....	47
7.1 Conclusion.....	47
7.2 Concluding Comments and Recommendations for Future Research.....	49
References.....	50

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval.....	57
Appendix 2: Consent Form.....	58
Appendix 3: Interview Guide.....	62

1. Introduction

Gender equality is more than just a fundamental human right, it also promotes growth for the modern society and economy. To create a better society at large, it is important to make people feel like they can contribute at home, in their private life and at work (OECD, 2017, p. 3). One of the central principles for both social and economic development in the Nordic welfare states, has been that both men and women have participated highly in both the workforce and in society in general. Norway is a democratic society where equal rights and opportunities are both crucial and fundamental elements. In addition to it being one of the core values when presenting Norway to the world, as it is being presented as one of the most equal countries (The Research Council of Norway, 2019, p. 3). Over the years there has been a shift in the proportions of female leaders in comparison to men in Norway. In 2008, women accounted for 32% of leadership positions, whereas 68% were men. In 2019 this number was 37% for women and 63% for men. Indicating that there has been a steady rise in the representation of women in leadership positions (Gram, 2021).

However, there is still a gap there, as well as differences between industries. With female underrepresentation, girls don't have strong female role models to look up to, creating a lack of women's voices in big decisions in companies (OECD, 2017, p. 6). Furthermore, work-life balance plays a role in gender inequality as research has shown that women are more likely to take care of and have more responsibilities at home and for the family in addition to having paid work and a career (Connell, 2005, p. 370; Seierstad & Kirton, 2015, p. 390). It is evidently shown to be a product of cultural norms. There are still fewer women in leadership positions, especially in top positions across most countries, which can partly be blamed on the fact that these positions are hard to combine with family responsibilities (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015, p. 390). Hence, in social policy, work-life balance is a topic that creates a lot of debate, policy innovation and research (Connell, 2005, p. 370).

1.2 Background and Purpose

Consequently, the purpose of my master's thesis is to explore the experiences of women working in leadership positions across different sectors in Norway, in relation to gender issues. By examining their workplace experiences and their family life. The work-life balance also connects to welfare policies in Norway and how these policies can contribute to achieving more gender equality for both men and women. Hence, writing this thesis can help to gain a better insight into gender differences today, both in terms of exploring why fewer women are in managerial positions than men, in addition to looking into factors for why this is the case—getting valuable insight from the female managers' point of view through semi-structured interviews. The topic of work-life balance is particularly interesting due to the increased number of women that have entered the workforce over the years, with the rising prevalence of dual-earning couples, it has led to more research in the field. Simultaneously, we also have entered the information era, with technology being as important as it is, it has significantly changed the way people work. Affecting people's life by blurring the lines between work and family-life. Consequently, this has also led to work being intrusive in a people's personal life, affecting the work-life balance. Thus, it might be interesting for researchers to see how this affects us and our own balance in life (Colombo & Ghislieri, 2008, p. 35).

1.3 Research Question

I started after reading through articles about this topic and with these understandings in mind, I already had a preconception about the topic and used an abductive approach. I wanted to examine: *how work-life balance affects the gender equality of female leaders in Norway*. As well as:

- Considering work-life balance and organisational culture are tightly intertwined.
What is organisational culture's role in promoting gender equality?
- What role do social policies, like parental leave and gender quotas, play in promoting gender equality?

There are different levels to my questions, I will examine work-life balance, which is on a personal level. This can be connected to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and the micro-system. In this system the people themselves are present. It's the inner circle of the system, where the person interacts with their surroundings. For example, with other people meaning, friends, family colleagues etc. In this context it means it's something my informants personally experience. It is connected to relations, social roles and interactions they have. While organisational culture will be on the meso and micro level. The meso level is the interaction between the different micro-systems. Leading to influence between them, because of communication, by exchanging knowledge and interactions (Bø & Ertesvåg, 2006, p. 264).

Conflict can arise between systems as well. Policies can be said to have an impact on a societal level. The macro-system affects the whole society through for instance, different policies, values, traditions, ideologies etc. Thus, leading different countries to influence their inhabitants in different ways. Nevertheless, it will still affect people on a personal level. In this thesis, I will discuss social policies in Norway, which will influence the inhabitants, and therefore my informants in some way. However, the inhabitants might have a say in the policies by for example being able to vote (Bø & Ertesvåg, 2006, p. 264). I will gain insight into women in manager positions' experience and perceptions through interviews on these topics. For this thesis and my interviews, I've only interviewed women and decided to limit it to women from 35-50 years old as they are more established in the workforce and may have children. They are all working in managerial positions, and as mentioned, they are all in different sectors and work in Norway.

1.4 Definitions of Key Items

In my research question I use the terms "managerial position" and "work-life balance". These terms will be explained in further details below.

1.4.1 What does managerial position mean?

My research question concerns "women in managerial positions". I encountered difficulties when trying to find a relevant and proper definition of a manager position for my research

question. Unfortunately, a clear definition is unusually not mentioned in research articles. I therefore chose to include a definition from the Cambridge Dictionary and from a database for law and business owners. Managerial positions or leadership positions can be defined as a person who is responsible for managing for example a company, organisation, department or area of a company (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). While also being "(...) responsible for directing, supervising, or administering the activities of a group of two or more people with fiscal responsibility and authority over that group." (Lawinsider, n.d.).

1.4.2 What is work-life balance? Why is it important?

Having a work-life balance can be said to be an equilibrium state, where both a person's private or family life and work life are balanced and equal. As life itself is something that needs to be balanced (Lockwood, 2003, p. 2). There is an interest in work-life because of its connection to quality of life in general. Work-life balance has become an issue up for debate, especially in recent decades as the pressure has intensified as a consequence of several developments in technology, the need to be constantly available, as well as the need for quick responses to be able to satisfy and provide good customer service. All of these factors put stress and pressure on people which eventually leads to an unequal work-life balance (Guest, 2002, p. 256).

1.5 Relevancy to my Education

My chosen topic is relevant to my course as it includes a focus on the social science field and on social policy-oriented literature. Social policy concerns how societies facilitate the needs of the population, in this thesis for instance in regards to work, well-being and health. In addition to how the state and society face challenges like globalisation, economic change and social challenges. Social policy also has a role in analysing different roles, for instance, the family, society, the government and organisations. And how these help provide support and services to people in different life-stages. Types of support can be education, housing, unemployment support, pensions, social- and healthcare. Again in this thesis, one focus will be on policies concerning parental leave, child- and family support as well as gender quota in Norway. Further, it also aims to spotlight equality which social policy is also concerned with, as it tries to identify as well as reduce inequalities. Inequalities between social groups can be

divided by for example race, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and gender. Not just in a country, but between countries as well (Platt, n.d.).

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: includes an introduction of this thesis and knowledge about the topic which forms the foundation. The topic and the purpose of the thesis are also stated in this part. The research question is presented, as well as giving a definition of words that form the most important aspects of this thesis. These being “Managerial positions” and “work-life balance”. The topic will also be discussed in relation to the relevance to my field.

Chapter 2: examines previous knowledge and research that already exists on the topic. Including international, Nordic and Norwegian research on work-life balance, in addition to barriers and role expectations of women in leadership.

Chapter 3: covers the theoretical framework of the thesis. It presents theories that are relevant to the research question and topic. This chapter is divided into two parts, each presenting a different theory based on the topic, namely: conflict theory and organisational culture.

Chapter 4: presents the methodology used in this thesis. A qualitative approach was chosen, and will be briefly explained. In addition to ethical considerations specific to this thesis. This part will also include the procedure for data production, a description of the process and how the interviews were analysed. Finally, validity, reliability and credibility will be discussed within this context.

Chapter 5: introduces the findings from the interviews. These findings are sorted into themes in connection to the research question.

Chapter 6: is the discussion section of the thesis, which will present the main findings. The information gathered from the interviews will be discussed with the research question in mind.

Chapter 7: provides a summary and conclusion of the thesis. Where it will seek to answer the research question based on the main findings, and give suggestions for future research, as well as discuss limitations of the thesis. Appendices are attached after the reference list.

2. Previous literature

This part of the thesis will present background literature and discuss international and Norwegian research about work-life balance. Along with research about role expectations and barriers women in leadership positions may encounter.

In the 1960s and 70s in both Sweden and Norway, there was a growing focus on feminist issues because of the women's liberation movement. As a result of this, a more progressive equality legislation was implemented by the politicians in these countries and therefore gender equality has been a focal point in recent decades (Utoft, 2020, p. 5). The aim was to spotlight gender in policy making, as there might be hidden gender bias in the decisions that the government makes. The policies put forward by states cannot always be trusted to be neutral. By using mainstreaming as a strategic approach, it can help get more fair outcomes for governments. In addition to putting an end to gender stereotypes and making people gain trust in the government (OECD, n.d.). In order for this strategy to work and be implemented, it requires to have all the frameworks and structures in place in order to promote gender equality (OECD, 2023, p. 13). Since the mid-1980s, the Norwegian government has practised mainstreaming gender policy. The integration strategy is supposed to say something about how the policies and political decisions affect men, women, as well as girls and boys, and how it's carried out in practice (The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2012, p. 4).

2.1 Work-life Balance International and National Research

2.1.1 An International Perspective

A study by Chang et al. (2010) that reviewed empirical papers published about work-life balance from 1987 to 2006 in different disciplines, found that there has been a steady increase in research on this topic from 2003. At the same time, knowledge about work-life balance has also gradually stretched across countries outside North America, where a lot of research uses a qualitative approach and mainly spotlight women by getting their perspectives on the topic (Chang et al., 2010, p. 2399). Even though research has been done in many different countries, analysis of the published literature has shown that the biggest portion of the research has been done in Western countries. Even within Western countries there are a lot of differences in practices. There is less research about Asian countries. Where research shows that they see work-life balance as more of a problem for women. On the other hand, in the research done in Western countries it includes balance for both genders, as people have both family and work responsibilities (Chandra, 2012, p. 1055).

Research done by Lewis et al. (2007) about work-life balance in a number of countries shows that there is still a separation of the “work” and “life” sphere, and that the maintenance of this separation in workplaces worsens the gender roles, by reinforcing them. The social policies in a country might want fathers to take paternity leave, however in reality the workplace doesn't have what is needed structurally in place to make this happen (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 365). It seems like Norwegian fathers do want an even split of the parental leave, even more so than mothers, as seen in a study done by Evensen et al. (2023). It has been shown that the father's experience with paternity leave leads them to prioritise differently after the leave, by spending less time in their work sphere, instead spending it on family life (Østbakken et al., 2018, p. 21). Another aspect that seems important for people worldwide is that they themselves have a personal choice and take responsibility for how they balance their day. This means that they themselves get to choose how to make use of work flexibility policies, and how much time they allocate for work. As there has become an increasing focus on education, some types of jobs have become more attractive. Especially “knowledge work” where there is a lot of status and identity connected to it. Thus, some

people feel like they have to put a lot of effort and long hours into their work, and are happy to do it. Hence, in the end, it is hard to balance their life and they end up blaming themselves for not managing. As previously mentioned, the lines between work and life today are becoming progressively more blurred. Because of the impact of technology which doesn't necessarily help keep the balance between work and life (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 366).

There seems to be a big difference between Asian countries versus Nordic countries. Whereas in Asian countries, working long hours is regarded as positive and displays a person's dedication to the job. The Nordic countries on the other hand, have much shorter work hours, which would be considered a weakness in Asian countries. Women in Asian countries often have to sacrifice their job when having children, or due to their husband's careers. Even though they have maternity leave, it's much shorter, averaging 14 weeks in South Asia, and paternity leave being a rare concept. Compared to up to a year with pay in Nordic countries (Chandra, 2012, p. 1045-1046).

2.1.2 A Nordic and Norwegian perspective

Furthermore, there has been research done on work-life balance from a Nordic perspective, where Antai et al. (2015) showed that not being able to balance your work-life leads to more sickness absence. This was also consistent with other research done on the subject that there is a correlation between sickness absence and work-life balance. The study showed that women were more likely to report sickness absence than men. The reason that women have more absences often gets blamed on the "double burden hypothesis", meaning that they have a heavier burden as they have more domestic responsibilities and spend more time taking care of the children in addition to paid work. However, there isn't much proof of this being the reason. There are divided views on this topic. Some argue that having children while being employed can lead to better health. The traditional roles of men and women have changed, and the gap has narrowed for working women, especially in countries where there has been a focus on gender equality (Antai et al., 2015, p. 218-219).

There has been research done from a Norwegian perspective too, from the viewpoint of women in highly committed careers, such as non-executive directors and politicians. They found that the women in this study did not particularly say they had a problem with being

able to balance work and family. However, they did sometimes experience work-life balance strain. They did manage to combine work and family most of the time, but some said they had to make sacrifices in other areas of life. For instance they had to reduce the time spent on hobbies or socialising with friends (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015, p. 400).

It also showed that even with all the progressive policies in place to help the work-life balance, it was more complex than that. Even though these women had a strong connection to their work, they were placed into a gender order, both in their private lives and at their workplaces. Where they ended up buying services to make their domestic life work out, instead of talking to their partners about the division of housework, they instead settled on using cleaners and nannies to make it work. Indicating that there is still an underlying gendered expectation of women even in countries that are seen as 'gender equal' (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015, p. 401).

Other research from other countries shows this too. There is evidence that work-life balance is affecting gender equality. Women overall have a greater load of housework, as well as taking care of the children to a larger extent than men. Even though women do have choices that help them balance their work and life through different policies put in place, some don't take these options (Connell, 2005, p. 369-370; Ferrant et al., 2014; Kitterød & Lappegård, 2012, p. 681-682; Seierstad & Kirton, 2015, p. 401).

It seems like even if women spend more time on housework and children, it doesn't necessarily mean they have a 'double burden', they usually have fewer hours of paid work than men, working more part-time (Kitterød & Lappegård, 2012, p. 682). Even with the supporting policies that the state offers it seems like the policies might be more of an ideal than what is actually happening at the workplace, because the workplace culture may be less supportive. The research found that the national welfare regime helped women to be able to balance their lives, on the other hand, it was the traditional gender ideology both in society and at work that weakened the work-life balance. As in Norway, they were still seen as the main carers for the family (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015, p. 401). In this article, it is clear that there is still room for improvement, even in such a progressive country as Norway.

Meaning it is still a concern for women in Norway as it is for women in other countries (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015, p. 401-402).

2.3 Research on Barriers and Role Expectations of Women in Leadership

According to recent research, gender stereotypes are still the biggest barrier for women not reaching the top. An article by van't Foort-Diepeveen et al. (2021) about why women are underrepresented in top positions mentions that: "One of them is the double bind that results from gender stereotypes. Because of these descriptive stereotypes, women are not regarded as competent, but when they have proven to be competent, they are often disliked." (van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474).

There are biases as well as gender stereotypes that can be unconsciously or consciously upheld by people that stop women from reaching the top (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017, p. 314). This can also be seen in research done by Thrasher et al. (2022). There is a difference in roles when it comes to male and female managers. With a high expectation connected to female managers, as they have to overcome social and gender norms and barriers associated with the role of being a manager. Including that they have to show their competency much more, solely because they are female. On the other hand, male managers might more often experience a better work-life balance, as the gender stereotype fits their expectations as managers. For instance, there is a gender stereotype that men already have inherent managerial traits (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017, p. 314; Thrasher et al., 2022, p. 689-691). This leads to them not having to show their competency to the same degree women have to, in addition to them not being judged to the same degree when choosing work over family life. This doesn't necessarily mean men have it less challenging as managers (Thrasher et al., 2022, p. 689-691).

Another one of the barriers is connected to the existing stereotypes. The women do not have access to networks to the same degree as men, and the networks are hard to 'break' into as they are mainly male-dominated and have usually been established for a long time

(Schwanke, 2013, p. 18; van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). There seems to be a difference in the professional networks that men and women build. Whereas women tend to have more social networks, that consist of fewer people, but with stronger connections. Men often have large numbers of people or acquaintances but with weaker ties between them. Thus, the networks of men are more characterised as networks that promote self-interest, while the networks of women are more socially focused (Greguletz et al., 2019, p. 1239). At the same time, women lack self-promotion, which also has a mutual effect. Thus, when they don't promote themselves they can get accused of not having leadership expertise. On the other hand, if they do promote themselves they might be judged negatively because of these stereotypes mentioned. Another element that is intertwined with this is the barriers of the organisational culture as well as the work-life conflict or balance (van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). Additionally, women often get evaluated by other aspects beyond ability alone, for example by appearance or whether they are being too strict and tough, thus not seen as feminine enough. On the other hand, if they are too feminine they will also be judged for not being strict enough and too soft (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017, p. 314).

At the same time, it can be difficult for women to conform to these norms when they have a family. It can lead to them being perceived as less committed than men, resulting in exclusion and not getting the opportunity to attain leadership positions. This may also be a reason for why women then don't apply for job opportunities or promotions and instead end up drawing back and resigning from work (van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). Furthermore it can be connected to risk and risk-taking behaviour of women. When women were put in situations where they had to choose between taking a risk or not, more women than men decided not to do it. Especially when the consequences would not only affect themselves, but others as well (Ertac & Gurdal, 2012, p. 29). However, risk-taking might be connected to culture and can be seen as gendered. In a way that women are taught to be modest by not bragging about their achievements in comparison to men. For this reason, risks taken by women can often be hidden (Maxfield et al., 2010, p. 593-594). The level of self-confidence of men and women seems to have a connection with their influence in an organisation. Showing that men with high-self confidence also had more influence on the

organisation. On the other hand, women's influence was determined by their prosocial orientation, and not only by their self-confidence (Guillén et al., 2018, p. 846).

Consequently, stereotypes about women, organisational structures and work-life balance or conflict end up determining and influencing women and their careers, including their ability to reach leadership positions. A lot of women lack role models and mentors to look up to. Research has shown that it seems like women benefit and learn more from having another woman as a role model, as opposed to male role models (Lockwood, 2006, p. 43-44; van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). For this to become a reality more women have to enter top positions. The barriers can be divided into three parts. The first barrier is related to personal reasons of the individual, that women refrain from getting promotions at work either because of their own choice or because of obstacles. Secondly, there may be organisational barriers, such as women not being chosen for a top position. Thirdly, gender stereotypes also impact the opportunities for women in leadership positions, while at the same time affect their desire to fill such positions. All of these individually or in a combination lead to women being underrepresented in these types of job positions (van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). It is hard to escape these barriers for women as they reinforce each other and create a vicious circle that can be hard to escape. As it is multi-layered it is therefore hard to overcome and escape by both companies or women as individuals. In the end, the gender stereotype barrier seems like the barrier that is most persistent and has a role in most of the other barriers as well (van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 476).

The glass ceiling effect can be mentioned as one of the barriers. This effect has several conditions for inequality to be considered a "glass ceiling" (Cotter et al., 2001, s. 656). It's not just about discrimination on one level, as it wouldn't be needed to create a new concept to describe this. Secondly, it describes the fact that if people move higher on the corporate ladder they experience increased discrimination, instead of just discrimination within hierarchies. This means higher levels of discrimination with higher levels of outcomes. As this effect says, they will experience more discrimination as they move up the corporate ladder, it is especially relevant to women in leadership positions. Thirdly, there are inequalities in the chances of advancing to higher levels (Cotter et al., 2001, p. 658-659).

Lastly, the glass ceiling effect also refers to disadvantages that increase over the career span as some research has shown (Cotter et al., 2001, p. 660-661).

3. Theory

This part of the thesis discusses two central theories connected to my research question: conflict theory and organisational culture.

3.1 Conflict Theory

The conflict theory is based on Karl Marx and Max Weber's works. It aims to look at inequalities of power, class and wealth in a society. Which again tries to examine how these differences and inequalities cause conflicts between social groups (Teater, 2015). While focusing on that it is embedded into human behaviour to struggle for domination. Historically there have always been social class systems and the dominant group has always benefited from this, while the other groups got exploited. These conflicts between classes would lead to historical change according to Marx (Campbell, 2021, p. 357). Through this, the modern conflict theory emerged, as an attempt to remove the ideology of Marxism (Collins, 1990, p. 68).

Research has shown that there is role pressure between home and work that affects each other negatively. The first to introduce this type of conflict theory was Greenhaus and Beutell (1985). Initially, in the late 1980s, this work-life balance was seen as something that was essentially a business issue for the human resource teams. However, it was eventually recognised as important by the organisations, both for the employee as well as for the organisation itself, consequently ending up putting more resources into achieving work-life balance for the employees (Khateeb, 2021, p. 28-30).

The conflict theory indicates that to what degree one participates in the home role will result in it being more difficult to participate in the work sphere. Thus, creating a home-work conflict. On the other hand, to what extent one participates in the work sphere can also hinder the person participating in the family role. Putting pressure on people in relation to

time, strain, as well as there are behavioural expectations connected to it (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018, p. 2; Huang et al., 2004, p. 81-82). This conflict is also shown to be correlated with the amount of time spent commuting and working, along with how much overtime a person is working. It may also lead to a work-life conflict when the working hours are inflexible. Additionally, conflicts also happen when people are spending large amounts of time on family activities. Empirical research shows that many factors come into play. For example, work schedule, children, if they are married/unmarried and the type of work of the spouse (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 78-80).

Research has shown that the part that has the most negative impact on the work-life balance is work pressure, meaning the intensity, how often and how long hours are spent working. Since the early 1990s there has been a significant rise of work pressure in European countries, therefore it has also seemingly contributed to even more strain on managing the work-life balance. According to research done by Gallie & Russell (2009) as skill rises and societies advance and what is known as “knowledge-based” economies grow, it emphasises the work-family conflict. “Knowledge-based economy” originates from the awareness that technology and knowledge play a big role in economic growth, and that the OECD countries rely even more on the distribution and production of knowledge now, than they ever did before. Because knowledge and technology are, and always have been, one of the most important factors for economic development (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1996, p. 9).

It is shown that family characteristics only have a weak influence on work-family conflicts compared to work characteristics. To explain further, family characteristics being analysed in this study were divided into five parts. How old the children are, how much the partner is contributing to housework, the partner’s employment status, how much of the income the responder provides to the household and how much housework the household members do per week (Gallie & Russell, 2009, p. 454). Having more housework and caring demands will heighten work-family conflict, but more of this conflict is explained by job characteristics (Gallie & Russell, 2009, p. 460).

The workplace can have various effects on individuals at their work. It can lead to individuals being absent from their job, turnover or loss of productivity at their workplace, affecting their health and how satisfied they are with their job, while at the same time increasing the conflict level within a family and decreasing overall family satisfaction (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018, p. 2; Sirgy & Lee, 2018, p. 235). The outcomes can be divided into three different categories. Firstly, work-related outcomes, for example, how satisfied someone is with their job, absenteeism, job performance, commitment etc. Secondly, there are non-work related outcomes, for instance, general life and family satisfaction, satisfaction in marriage, satisfaction in leisure time etc. Thirdly, there are stress-related outcomes. This can for example be depression, burnout and psychological strain (Sirgy & Lee, 2018, p. 235).

To be able to understand the work-home junction, it is necessary to examine the gender roles that are part of our society. These gender roles can be said to be beliefs and attitudes shared by a number of people, based on which sex the person socially identifies with. Sex is often the basis of how labour is divided in a society (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018, p. 2). Women often occupy roles that require interpersonal traits, for example, sensitivity, gentleness and compassion, often seen as feminine traits (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010, p. 515). In Western societies, the home sphere and the household chores are often seen as something that women are in charge of. This assumption can lead to a higher level of home-to-work conflict for women than for men. However, according to Cerrato and Cifre (2018), this is not something that has been checked or properly researched (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018, p. 2). Most of the time the family-work conflict is lower than the work-family conflict. Family-work conflicts signify that problems connected to family life ultimately spill over, affecting the work sphere. On the other hand, work-family conflicts happen when there are problems at work spilling over into family life (Colombo & Ghislieri, 2008, p. 42-43). It seems that when people value family over work, or work over family they have different reactions to demand levels. Research has shown that if work is central in a person's life, more so than family, it is the family domain that interferes with the work domain. And the other way around if family is central in a person's life. This means it looks like the blame for the conflict is the one domain that the person values less (Boyar et al., 2008, p. 222).

Work-life conflicts can take on different forms. Based on previous literature these conflicts can be divided into three forms. The first one is *time-based conflicts*, then *strain-based conflicts* and finally *behaviour-based conflicts*. All these emphasise that any role whether it's time, strain or behaviour-based puts pressure on another role, thus we get role pressure incompatibility. *Time-based conflict* can be divided into two. One role's time pressure makes it hard to fulfil the requirements of another role, resulting in an inability to meet these expectations. For example, if someone is a manager as well as a mom, and their job is very demanding, they might not have as much time as they would like with their children. Another possible situation that may occur is that a person gets absorbed into one role, thus spending considerable time in this role even though they are trying to meet the demands of another role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 78). This can be especially relevant with women in managerial positions.

The second type of conflict is *strain conflict*. Meaning that the work-life balance will be put under strain in a work environment. For example, there are a lot of demands at the workplace, which employees cannot meet. Consequently, this leads to fatigue, irritability, anxiety, stress etc. which is supported by empirical evidence. This strain happens when two roles are incompatible, inevitably leading to one of the roles being affected by the other and not being able to meet the demands. When looking at the work side of this, other reasons for strain might be work role conflicts or ambiguity. To counteract these stressors, there is evidence that a supportive spouse helps with work-life conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 80).

The third type of work-life conflict is *behavioural-based conflict*. Meaning that people need to be able to fit their behaviour to the role and to what is expected in this role. This is also closely connected to Schein's understanding of organisational culture, which will be explained further below. An example of this can be that a female manager might need to be emotionally stable, independent and objective, whereas in a role as a mother, the role and the expected behaviour are different, as this behaviour now might be: warm, vulnerable and emotional. Therefore, not being able to adjust to this, a person might experience a behavioural-based conflict as they need to be able to step into different roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 81-82).

However, the conflict theory has also been criticised due to, among other things, that it can be used to punish women. For this reason, it can be seen that women who are involved in multiple roles are less committed, reliable and productive. There have also been problems dividing and making distinctions between work-family conflict and family-work conflicts (Colombo & Ghislieri, 2008, p. 42). However, one can argue that this can be applicable to men as well.

How to reduce this conflict?

There are several ways to try to reduce this balance conflict. At the organisational level, there are family-friendly programmes, which will help people balance their demands in the work and family sphere. This means that they can reduce the employees' roles by giving them more flexibility, work at home, give the employees less workload and give the employees resources and support both from the leaders and the coworkers to be able to complete assignments. Additionally, if the job is both challenging and exciting for the employee they will find the job more valuable, thus, it can lead to the employees to gain motivation and work harder. Therefore they might be more willing to take on extra work, without feeling like the demand is high (Boyar et al., 2008, p. 229; Chang et al., 2017).

On the social policy level, family-friendly policies, such as parental leave, childcare and the possibility for the children to be in kindergarten might have an effect on reducing work-life conflict (Chang et al., 2017). When comparing Norway to the UK in relation to work-life conflict it appears like Norwegian female employees experience a lower level of conflict because of lower working intensity. Lower working intensity indicates a lower number of hours worked (Gallie & Russell, 2009, p. 458).

A way of trying to reduce the strain on a social level might be if there is an imbalance of caring work and housework, as women have become more involved in paid work, men who participate equally in taking care of the children and housework help in reducing the work-family conflict (Gallie, & Russell, 2009, p. 450). There has been Canadian research that looked at coping strategies for how families deal with work-life conflict and how they solve it. They found five different ways: the first one was that they had to rearrange and

restructure the family roles, by for example, letting the children do some of the chores in the household and help each other out. Second, prioritise the family by planning their schedule around, making modifications for it to fit. Third, sacrifice their own needs, for example, doing fewer activities in their spare time and sleeping less. Fourth, getting help from others like friends and family. Fifth, hire help, for instance, people to help look after the children (Higgins et al., 2006, p. 224).

3.2 Organisational Culture

Culture is something that is constantly around us and is a dynamic process, meaning it changes all the time, as it is created and sustained by behaviour and interactions with others. It is connected to and shaped by leadership through behaviour, rules, norms and routines. It leads as well as constricts the behaviour of others (Schein, 2004, p. 1).

Organisational culture started to become a major field of interest in the 1980s and 1990s. Even now it is still relevant, however there has been a shift in interest from organisational culture to the concepts of organisational identity and organisational discourse (Alvesson, 2011, p. 11).

There are numerous ways organisational culture can be defined. It can be seen as norms that are created in a work environment or as important values in an organisation. Edgar Schein is widely known for his work on organisational culture and leadership. He defined organisational culture as a place where all members of an organisation have the same perceptions and assumptions that are unconsciously sustained and taken for granted. Through this the organisation shapes their own self image, as well as their perception of their surroundings (Schein, 1987, p. 5). It's an important aspect of being a leader, to be able to create, manage as well as destroy bad parts of the culture (Schein, 1987, p. 1-2). When the leaders for instance create new groups they have their own perceptions, values and goals that they bring into the group. Which eventually is seen as something that is a widely accepted way of looking at something. When new members then join the group these accepted ways of doing things are then transferred onto them as well. This culture can be consciously or unconsciously carried on by the leader (Schein, 1987, p. 42).

Schein is known for his model of organisational culture. The model is depicted in three levels: artefacts, values and underlying beliefs. The first level, artefacts are the visible parts of culture. The physical and social environment is visible but can be hard to understand as a newcomer. Observing someone's behaviour and asking why people behave in this way. However, as the culture is so integrated, the people themselves might not even see or be aware of it. The second level is values. The personal values of the employees will make up the organisational culture, meaning the individuals are important in how the culture is formed. The third level is the underlying beliefs, which are the things that are taken for granted. This means when we have a hypothesis for something that we think is right, this hypothesis eventually is seen as reality, even though the assumption is vague (Schein, 1987, p. 12-15).

Different groups in an organisation will always have their own view of the world, thus they have their own subculture. It's not only organisations that form how people see the world. There are other ways to affect people, through values, ideas and symbols among other things. This affects larger groups of people in whole societies, occupations, regions, industries etc. Additionally they will be impacted by economical, cultural and technological changes, hence it will impact on a societal level or macro level, but it will also have an effect within organisations. This is important in the understanding of what happens in an organisational context as well, or on a micro level (Alvesson, 2011, p. 15). Culture is often seen in two ways, as something that needs to change in order to fix the main problem, or that culture has to be taken seriously in order to make it possible to fix something. With culture being such an important aspect, it seems hard to make any organisational changes without it. One way of organisational change can be to directly confront the underlying issue or behavioural pattern and through this be able to identify the consequences, as well as which values and assumptions have created it. This is why culture is an important aspect of an organisation (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015, p. 3-4).

When examining organisations, they have a specific purpose and a goal they want to achieve. They are not formed accidentally. In order to achieve organisational change, one important aspect is time. Change doesn't happen instantly, it is something that occurs over

time, usually viewed from a longitudinal perspective. Where a group of people come together to accomplish something they couldn't do on their own (Schein, 2004, p. 226). To be able to understand change in this perspective people have used both theoretical perspectives like environmental driving factors and agents of change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015, p. 4-5). According to Acker (1990) and Lorber (1994) as cited by Utoft (2020) organisational culture is widely seen as the cause of inequalities between men and women (Utoft, 2020, p. 1). In an organisation, gender segregation partially happens because of organisational practices. Status and income inequalities between the genders are also created partly because of this. Organisations are one area where these cultural images are reproduced and invented. Organisational practices are also partly responsible for status inequalities, in addition to income differences between women and men. Among other things, it is also a place where gender is constructed and reconstructed based on the organisational culture. Culture is therefore crucial in the understanding of gender and equality in an organisation, as well as the understanding of masculinity and femininity (Acker, 1990, p. 140).

It is shown that organisational culture and work-life balance are tightly intertwined. The established working structures are male-focused and patriarchal. Which facilitates long working hours, full-time work and career paths that are unbroken. This can be difficult for a woman with a family to be able to meet these expectations and norms, and might be seen as less committed than a man and thus again be excluded from job positions. For example leadership positions. As well as women then may refrain from applying in the first place (van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). Inflexible working hours might be a problem for people in this situation.

Research has shown that having organisational policies that are supportive affect employers behaviour in a positive way. Leaders are especially important as they are the connection between the organisation and the employees (Rofcanin et al., 2017, p. 209). By having leadership that is both competent and stable, it will create a strong organisational culture. This type of organisational culture can be labelled as transformational culture, as the employees feel a sense of purpose and connection to their colleagues. In transformational cultures the leaders are seen as role models for the other employees. Consequently, it

encourages the employees to commit to the vision and purpose of the organisation. Additionally, if the leaders wish to change the organisational culture, they rearrange the culture with their new vision for the organisation (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p. 112-116). The research by Rofcanin et al. (2017) suggested that performance and engagement of the employees may increase with the implementation of family friendly policies and practices. Meaning that managers should also encourage family friendly policies, consequently creating a culture at the workplace that is family friendly. Again, this is connected to the work-family balance, as it might help alleviate the burden between the work and family spheres (Rofcanin et al., 2017, p. 214-215).

4. Methods

The methods part of the thesis will start by providing a definition of qualitative methods. Secondly, explaining why this method was chosen for exploring the research question, along with the considerations made during the recruitment process. The process of transcript analysis is described. Finally, ending with research ethics, reliability and validity and why this part is important.

4.1 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods are suitable to use if we want to get rich descriptions of a phenomenon, along with making people aware of the events and giving a better understanding of it. It's a way to make out patterns and distinctions, thus it provides a more in-depth explanation (Sofaer, 1999, p. 1102). This is one of the reasons why I chose this research method, as it explores the topic in-depth and allows for more open answers from the informants. One of the most important aspects of the qualitative method as a researcher is to have the ability to ask open-ended questions and to be aware of how the questions are asked in such a way that the participants feel like they can elaborate their answers instead of it turning into a closed-off question only leading to "yes" and "no" answers. Qualitative methods are useful when constructing theories or when we are generating a hypothesis. In

comparison to quantitative methods which will be tested on assumptions or hypotheses based on the answers we get (Sofaer, 1999, p. 1104). Compared to quantitative methods, the qualitative research method helps people explore and express themselves freely, instead of being limited to having to answer questions on a questionnaire. This also helps to understand their values. In addition, it enables observation of their body language during interviews (Sofaer, 1999, p. 1105). As qualitative interviews are time-consuming I have interviewed fewer people than what would be normal in a survey, as the intention was to get an insight into a few people's experiences on the topic.

4.2 Choice of Method

Based on my research question I wanted to get an in-depth perspective on the topic by using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a popular method for interviews as it is very flexible. It can be used in both groups and with individual interviews. It is also possible to alter the interview structure if it's more or less rigid based on which research question is being explored and the purpose of the research. One of the important aspects of the semi-structured interview is that there is reciprocity between the participant and interviewer, as the questions can be modified after what the participant answers, creating a more dynamic and realistic interaction between them (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2955). I used this way of interviewing when speaking to the participants, therefore my interview questions differ when looking at the transcripts. I primarily used the same initial questions, but my follow up questions were adapted based on the participants' responses. I aimed to create more of a conversation instead of an interview. Trying to keep the questions open-ended, thus avoiding questions that would only elicit simple yes and no answers, and for them to express themselves in the way that they want to. This type of interview requires that the researcher have previously read and researched about the topic as the questions have to follow this knowledge (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2955). After researching the topic I formulated an interview guide which I used during the interviews to provide some structure and to ensure that the discussions were focused on the topic.

4.3 Data Production

For my interviews I wanted to include women from Norway to examine the relationship between work-life balance, organisational culture and social policies, and how these policies impact the women I interviewed. They also discussed their experience with equality and discriminatory practices. They are all from 35 to 50 years old, and they are working in various sectors. By interviewing different women in leadership positions, with diverse backgrounds I get a better insight into their work and life as leaders. Along with how they experience policies in Norway, particularly how it has affected them in relation to gender issues, for example regarding parental leave and gender quota. I ended up interviewing six different participants and the women represented a wide range of industries from IT, tourism, the insurance industry, the energy industry, one business manager as well as one from a non-profit organisation. The family composition of the participants was not a focus during the interviews.

That they are from a range of different industries was something I thought would be interesting for my thesis as it might show some differences in experiences and opinions. The disadvantage of this is that the sample is not representative as qualitative methods include such a small number of participants. Furthermore, they are also from different sectors and don't represent one sector's opinion (Hammarberg et al., 2016, p. 498). I primarily recruited participants by contacting a labour union, and through this organisation finding women who met my criteria and who were interested in participating in interviews. Additionally, I also recruited using snowball sampling, which involved getting new participants through someone that already joined the interview. Where they referred me to someone else that could potentially be interesting for me to interview. This is a repetitive process where one person refers to another person, and then this person refers to someone else and so on, until we get as many informants as we need, thus the name "snowball sampling". It is one of the most used methods for sampling in social science when doing qualitative research (Noy, 2008, p. 330). Since it can be challenging to find specific groups of people, I believed it could be a good way of recruiting participants, as they might have extensive networks and might know someone else in leadership positions.

4.4 Data Analysis

In this master thesis I have used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method which helps organise, identify patterns and get an insight into our data. Since this method looks across all the datasets, it helps find meanings, together with shared or collective meaning between the datasets. With this we help identify what is common when talking about a topic, this doesn't mean that what is necessarily common is important or meaningful in terms of our topic. The researcher must identify what the most important parts to include from the data sets are, in relation to the research question and topic. Through the analysis of the data sets, we will be able to identify a number of patterns and determine the relevance to the specific research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57).

The reason for choosing thematic analysis as a method is that it is flexible as well as accessible. Accessible in a way that it doesn't call for as much technical and theoretical knowledge as other analytical methods. Qualitative research can seem complex and vague, and this method helps provide a system for coding and analysing the data. It can be linked to concepts and theoretical issues (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57-58; Nowell et al., 2017).

Research in the social science field is usually divided into different research designs, for example inductive, deductive or abductive methods. The deductive research design tries to objectively test a phenomenon and is both driven by theory and is connected to positivist methods. On the other hand, inductive research uses more interpretive methods and through this gains more theoretical knowledge on the subject. Lastly, we have abductive research design which is somewhere in-between deductive and inductive methods. This means it doesn't use the hypothesis nor the data found as a main focal point for the research, but it's somewhere in-between where it both uses the theoretical understanding as well as the empirical data. Thus, the researcher already has a theoretical understanding of the subject and doesn't start the research with a blank slate (Richardson & Kramer, 2006, p. 500-501; Thompson, 2022, p. 1411). Since I already had read articles about the subject I somewhat knew what I was looking for. This made it easier and helped me avoid abstract ideas that in the end would not fit my research question. Additionally, if the data doesn't align with the already existing theoretical data I'm not obligated to make it fit, as the

abductive method's aim is not to discover one objective truth. Rather to find explanations and good solutions for a phenomenon (Thompson, 2022, p. 1411).

My main themes and focus for the analysis are experiences with national policies, and household arrangements as well as the informant's experiences at their workplaces. For example, looking into themes of attitude towards parental leave, their own experience with work-life balance and treatment at the workplace based on gender. The interviews were held in Norwegian, written down in Norwegian and analysed, before translating the selected quotes into English for this thesis.

4.5 Research Ethics

Before starting with the interviews I sent all the information about the project, including the interview guide to the SIKT - Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, formerly known as NSD to get it approved. All of the participants were handed an information form about the project, and about what the project wanted to explore. They gave verbal consent to participating. In addition, they were informed about how the information would be used, that the interviews would be recorded and that the transcripts would be deleted after the project was finished. As well as having the choice to withdraw from participating at any time if they wish to do so, because they should be able to have individual autonomy. The principle of autonomy means that they should all be respected in their own decision-making skills, where no harm should be done to the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021, p. 104). Since I held semi-structured interviews I recorded them to be able to transcribe them later. I did this using the "Nettskjema - diktafon" app, which securely saves all recordings online. The recording is password protected to prevent unauthorised access. The recordings and the transcriptions so that they cannot not be identified.

If I use direct quotes in this thesis I will only write "informant 1", "informant 2" and so on. Instead of names to maintain the participants' anonymity. There are different ethical concerns when it comes to the qualitative research method. In comparison to the quantitative methods, the participants are able to express their opinions freely and are not bound by a form where there is relatively little room for them to explain themselves. In

quantitative methods the results will be calculated together with other scores to find an average. Therefore, the qualitative methods information leads back to the participants in another, more personal way than in quantitative methods (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021, p. 106).

Another important aspect of ethics is the role of the researcher as they are the essence of a good piece of research and the quality of the ethical decisions that are being made. The researcher is morally responsible when doing research, this is not just connected to their choices or ethical knowledge but is also linked to their sensitivity, empathy as well as engagement in questions of morality. It is especially important when doing interviews as the researcher themselves is the tool for acquiring knowledge. There are also ethical requirements for the researcher which go into the strict demands to the quality of the research. This means that the findings need to be as representative and accurate as possible for the field of research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021, p. 108).

4.6 Validity, Reliability and Study Credibility

When doing qualitative research it is important to consider elements such as reliability and validity. Validity is important because it ensures that the research is both accurate and truthful. It should represent something that actually occurs, and be measured in a reliable manner. It can be divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which the research actually represents and reflects reality. This means, does the data actually show what the participants have said and done, without being influenced by extraneous variables. External validity on the other hand examines whether these reflections and representations are relevant across different groups. Furthermore, reliability is associated with the stability and consistency of the data. This not only applies to the participants, but also to the researcher. The researcher must be able to collect and utilise the information in a good way. There can be errors occurring in a number of stages of the process, including in the way the data is collected, the analysis that may lead to errors or the interview situation itself (Brink, 1993, p. 35).

There are two potential factors that may have impacted the thesis. Firstly, the translation of the interviews from Norwegian into English, considering the quotes from the women that were interviewed were used in the thesis. However, it may have allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and they might be more open and better at articulating their thoughts as it is their own native language.

Secondly, conducting all the interviews online may have been affecting the participants in various ways. It might feel more or less comfortable to the participants doing it online. Additionally, there were moments with poor internet connection, which also might have affected the participants and the quality of the recording.

Thirdly, my background knowledge and personal thoughts and values will affect me as a researcher even if it is unconsciously. A researcher can be affected in various ways. For instance, if the researcher has a connection to any of the groups, this might be from “underneath” or “above”, as there might be influence from someone like sponsors or participants. This might lead to the researcher putting more emphasis on certain aspects, and less on something else, consequently leading to non-neutral results. Due to the close interactions the interviewer has with the participants, this may also lead the researcher to be affected and begin to identify themselves with the people they interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021, p. 108). When writing this thesis it is important to take this into consideration. Furthermore, as a woman writing about gender questions, there may have been unconscious influences on the thesis. Qualitative research is seen as not representative as it deals with a small number of participants, and because of its subjective nature. Which contrasts quantitative research and its objectivity (Hammarberg et al., 2016, p. 498).

5. Presentation of Findings

In this part of the thesis I will present my findings from the interviews I’ve found through analysis of the collected interview data. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into what women in leadership positions thought about their own work-life balance, their thoughts on equality, female leadership and the existing system and policies in Norway,

aimed at ensuring equality. I found that the participants often shared similar viewpoints or agreed with what the others said. Consequently, the participants' answers were compared to highlight similarities and differences in their responses. The results of the analysis ended up with three main themes. The themes found will contribute to a deeper understanding of the research question.

The first theme addresses: how men and women handle their work-life balance, while the second focuses on: equality - perceptions and experience of the women interviewed, and the third theme concentrates on social policies in Norway.

5.1 How Men and Women Handle Their Work-life Balance

As this thesis aims to look at the work-life balance, the participants were asked about their own work-life balance. Where all of the informants either expressed that they found it difficult to balance their life now, and/or especially hard when they had small children. This might be a common challenge for people with small children, however as the women are in leadership positions it becomes even more demanding because of the responsibilities connected to it. Some of the women mentioned how they found it more challenging in the past, but as they had gotten older they had also gotten better at delegating their time differently. One informant said:

I feel like I've gotten better with age, you know? And so in order for me to feel better at work and at home, I kind of have to lower the expectations a little for everything I have to be involved in. - Informant 4

Many of them expressed that they had to prioritise in order to get their day to function, with all the responsibilities they had. As they mentioned, there are certain expectations they have to meet that come with being a leader. Consequently, leisure time and being social with friends often had to be down-prioritised. One of the informants said:

Rather, I think it's about consciously deciding what you want, and then you have to prioritise something away. I think that applies anyway. And for my part, the fact that I'm not so social or often with friends. Doing a lot of other things besides work... I don't have time for that. - Informant 5

Another one of the informants mentioned that she had an especially hard time balancing her work and life:

I think it's completely impossible to be honest. Balance. No! I can't do that (...) And the days, the working days, I don't quite know when it actually ends, that's how it is to be a leader and then you have the responsibility... Hopefully to have that sense of responsibility that things should and must be followed up. - Informant 1

Two of the informants mentioned the importance of flexible working arrangements. In addition they also noted that such arrangements could be a way for more women to have the possibility to step into leadership roles. "After all, you are dependent on a place of work where you have flexible working hours. I am unable to sit in the office full-time". - Informant 3

Another informant stated:

Then again, it's all about arrangements. (...) If you have a manager who really wants to bring forth young female leaders, then you can achieve that by facilitating flexibility. By this I mean that you don't have to come in very early in the morning, and don't sit for long hours in the evenings. A bit of practical arrangement. - Informant 2

The informants had different perceptions regarding women's opinions about how men handle the work-life balance. Four of my informants expressed that they thought that men had a different or a better way of handling the work-life balance in comparison to women. While two of my informants said that they didn't think it was gender-based, but based on personal characteristics. One of the informants said:

Yes! I think we are wired differently. Which means that men are naturally better at just saying: yes, but now I need a beer or now I need a break, or now I need... And then they just do it! - Informant 2

Another that disagreed said:

I imagine that it has a lot to say what kind of balance you have at home in relation to what kind of profession you have, or even upbringing. (...) Who is seen as most important. Right? Who has the most important job. - Informant 3

When asked about what they thought the reason for female underrepresentation in leadership positions was. Four of the participants said that they thought family life and children were one of the contributing factors for women not ending up in leadership positions. By this, they didn't necessarily mean that the workplace was not arranged in such a way that it was possible, but because the women themselves chose not to pursue job positions where they knew they would have extra responsibility.

What I think it is is that.. I think it's probably a bit true that you end up in a family situation (...) where you have a totality that you have to deliver on... and that you might be reluctant to take on responsibility where you don't think you can manage the totality. I think it's probably that, don't take the risk because it won't work. That you spend too much energy and evaluate it, and then evaluate it as someone else is better off than you. Dare to take on that responsibility. Yes, I think there is something there, something with the risk appetite. To dare to fail to a greater extent. -

Informant 3

Another one of the participants had a similar view:

This with having children and being present for the children and creating a home and such, I think it checks off a number of important values or needs in women in a slightly different way than in men. And I realise that I sound a bit old-fashioned, but I think it's a bit like that, at least that's my opinion. And that, as with a leadership responsibility, it often brings with it obligations, and then you are stuck in the 'squeeze' where you have to choose. And then it doesn't mean that all women are

like that, some think it's perfectly fine to do things in other ways, but I think there are more of those who experience it that way and who think it also makes sense to prioritise home and family life. - Informant 2

While it was also pointed out by some of the participants that women might not have the same level of “risk appetite” as men, and that men may be more willing to take risk and therefore more willing to fail to a greater extent. It was mentioned that women might spend longer trying to decide if they should take the responsibility and they might evaluate that another person is better suited than them. Another participant pointed out that:

I think a lot depends on culture and this “glass ceiling”. It's a bit difficult in relation to career, so you have to be very determined and be very independent as a woman. While for men I think it is that they are good at using networks and each other and creating a direction through the network. - Informant 6

The same participant pointed out what she has started doing in her career and shared her thoughts on the key elements of women’s careers.

I have started to create more room to work both with strategic abilities, and with a more active network to create opportunities. You can call it self-promotion. You kind of have to create a team that is encouraging you (heiagjeng) to get the opportunities, it doesn't just help to be good. We (women) have to be very determined and... call it a bit selfish, in terms of setting goals and clearing things out of the way to achieve them. A career rarely comes by itself, and understanding what it takes to work on it. I think it's important that women get insight into and encouragement for that. - Informant 6

5.2 Equality - Perceptions and Experience of the Informants

The second element to consider was equality, and the informants' general attitude towards it. My main finding was that several of the informants mentioned that they wished it was possible to be able to move past gender. Instead, see people as individuals with different

characteristics instead. As well as that the main goal should be diversity and equal opportunities in a work environment. One informant commented:

In working life, it is even more important that there are equal opportunities. But I am more concerned with equal opportunities than that everything should be the same for men and women. I want to be able to choose to become a senior manager, but I also want to be able to choose *not* to become one. So I'm perhaps more concerned with working with that room of possibilities than that it somehow necessarily has to be fifty-fifty. But that everything should be in place structurally - Informant 2

Several informants focused on the importance of choice for women in their careers. They expressed that women should be able to choose to work as much as they want and return to work after maternity leave. At the same time, women should be able to be home with their children if they want to. Again, the importance of the freedom of choice. With an emphasis on equal opportunities instead of that it should be completely the same for men and women.

Another of the informants mentioned that:

I think it's diversity in general and not gender. I think there is far too much focus on the fact that we must now strike a balance here (...) My wish is that we could get past that. But as it is now, we still have to keep it on the agenda and work for it. Because there is still a lot to work on. - Informant 6

Acknowledging that there is still room for improvement. According to this informant it is still an organisational culture that has to be changed, but it may take some time. However, there are differences between sectors and therefore the time frame for this change might vary. Some acknowledged that there still is a way to go when it comes to full equality between men and women. I asked if some of them had experienced being treated differently based on their gender. Especially as a young woman in a leadership position, one of them shared their experience:

Yes, I am a young manager and a young female manager. And I have been... I have experienced gender discrimination together with age discrimination, like: "my little girl" or "but what do you know about that, little girl?" I've heard that, and I can still experience it. - Informant 1

Another one of the informants stated that she felt she had to prove herself more because of her gender.

Oh yes, a lot of times! No, it's typically domination techniques (hersketeknikker) like that that are being used. Especially... You kind of have to prove that you're professionally strong when you're a woman. Even if I'm a lot more competent and experienced than a man, there is such a prejudice that I might not have as many interesting things to contribute with. Then it's really important to join in and take up space and be very strong professionally, and I think that's also the reason why I've become good at it. - Informant 6

On the other hand, some of the informants said that they had never experienced being treated differently based on their gender. In fact, some said that in some cases they felt like they had more rights, and had gotten more opportunities and responsibilities just because they were women. Nonetheless, some thought that gender-based disparities still existed in other sectors.

No... Perhaps rather the opposite, that it has been very positive that I am a woman. And in such an industry, being relatively young as well. It has been good, and I got my first managerial job when I was on maternity leave. I believe that it still exists when people make plans for the future and know that someone is going on leave. Then we have probably not reached the point where everyone has managed to think that this is long-term, but there are probably men of a certain age who are preferred over women, but I have not experienced it myself. - Informant 5

5.3 Social Policies in Norway

The research also covered the following questions: how they perceived the impact of the equality policies in Norway in relation to their career and life, and whether they were happy with the policies. Both parental leave and gender quotas were discussed.

5.3.1 Parental Leave

When asking questions about parental leave policies, all of them said they were happy and felt privileged. They mentioned how they thought that Norway had a very good parental leave policy. "In terms of maternity leave, we are very lucky if you compare us to other countries. We have come a long way. When we look at equal pay, I think we still have a way to go." - Informant 1

Furthermore, they spoke about the fact that it is possible to accommodate and make their own agreement with the employer. For this reason it makes it possible for women with small children to work in management positions: "But, in other words, you can make agreements with your employer, which is perhaps the biggest difference, that in Norway you have the opportunity to make your own agreement." - Informant 4

Another agreed that the arrangements around the leave are good. Yet, there might be other challenges: "After all, parental leave is well facilitated. And then there are probably some of the challenges that many women face, which are about attitudes. More than that the system is somehow not properly arranged." - Informant 2

On the other hand, two of the informants said that they think that the maternity and paternity leave is about to become too even. They feel that the state is exerting too much control over the division between the mother and father. It should be up to the parents themselves to decide how to split the parental leave.

I don't know if I really agree with the latest changes that were made in relation to the distribution of the father and mother. I think that fathers should have leave rights, but I think that there is a role as a mother that it is important that we don't... I think

it might be getting a little too even. That there are some disadvantages when breastfeeding, amongst other things. I think perhaps the proportion of the father's quota has perhaps become a bit too large. - Informant 6

Another one of the informants talked about the culture change she had seen when it came to paternity leave. When asked about if she thought paternity leave had changed anything about the distribution of the care work she said:

I think that is so individual. Because it depends on the person and it depends on the generation, it has changed since my father's presence at home, it is not the same as the fathers today (...) It has probably something to do with culture, a change in our culture. - Informant 1

From this, it can be seen that the informants put a lot of emphasis on removing that division between men and women. They believe in not thinking about gender, but as people with different personal characteristics. One of the informants pointed out that to her it didn't necessarily have to be fifty-fifty of women and men at a workplace. They also chose to emphasise the importance that they should be able to pursue their desired careers, without the pressure that everyone should want to become a manager. Adding that if women want to go into more traditional roles they should be able to choose so themselves.

5.3.2 Gender Quota

When discussing policies, several of the informants also brought up the concept of gender quotas. They had some conflicting views about it. When asked if they believed a more targeted gender policy could contribute to more women choosing management positions one of the informants said:

Yes, I think so. I also think for my part it has been about, also personally in a way... Ending the mindset from thinking that we should not have any kind of quota, and we should not force this and you do not need women's networks and mentors and schemes. But all the figures show that we do. - Informant 5

On the other hand, another participant had a conflicting view. While she thought gender quotas were good in principle, she didn't agree on the idea of solely being hired because of gender. She said that:

The quota policy is good, the idea behind it is very good. I would not have wanted to be employed on the basis of gender quotas. I want to be hired because I was the best, it would have done something to me and my self-esteem if I had gotten a role because I was a woman. - Informant 1

Another informant almost mentioned the same: "I think quotas are terribly difficult, because on one hand I would never, ever be quoted in, like, you don't want to be quoted somewhere. You want to get a job because you are good at it." - Informant 3

6. Discussion

The main goal of this thesis is to examine what role work-life balance, organisational culture and social policies have in promoting gender equality of female leaders in Norway. This part of the thesis will go into more detail about the findings, and discuss the implications and significance of them in relation to the research question. The most important findings are as follows: firstly, organisational culture seems to have a significant role in the promotion of equality. Secondly, there are linkages between networking, risk and role models.

Additionally, the findings emphasises the importance of mainstreaming policies, especially flexible working hours for these women, and to be able to have an adaptable parental leave. Furthermore, there seems to be challenges tackling gender norms and gender stereotypes. Finally, there are conflicting views and dilemmas concerning gender quotas.

6.1 Work-life Balance and Conflict Theory

Turning now to the findings about the informants' work-life balance and how they experience it as leaders. They discussed how they thought it was somewhat challenging to balance their day, where some struggled more than others. Some mentioned they had gotten better at structuring their day as they had gotten older. By contrast, it seems like the Norwegian study by Seierstad & Kirton (2015) about women in highly committed careers didn't find that the women in their study had much of a problem managing their work-life balance. However, they still pointed out that the women ended up buying services as a tool to make their day-to-day work out. From the findings, the informants said that they had to prioritise and make sacrifices in their daily lives. One of the informants said she struggled a lot with her work-life balance. As stated earlier she said that she thought it was impossible to be able to balance her work and life, as she didn't have a clear end to her workday. None of my informants expressed that they used other services like nannies or cleaners to balance their work-life, as the result of the Norwegian study showed. However, it cannot be excluded entirely since the informants were not directly asked about it and therefore didn't mention whether they used such services. The informants probably experience more incongruence between their work and home than other women that are not in leadership positions, because of the extra responsibilities connected to the role.

Let us now consider the conflict theory. It states how the tension between the home and work changes based on how much a person participates in either the home or work role, thus creating a conflict between the two (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018, p. 2; Huang et al., 2004, p. 81-82). This can be used to interpret my data based on what my participants said. Several of them mentioned flexible working arrangements and how it helped them with their balance. Stating that it would be impossible without it. Thus, that the workplace is arranged in such a way that it's possible to have flexible hours seems like an essential aspect in reducing work-life conflict. Meaning for many, an inflexible job position could lead to them to decide against pursuing a job promotion, for instance. It can all be connected to the workplace structures, the organisational culture and equality in the end. This indicates that if the workplace structure is arranged in such a way that it's possible to have flexible hours this means that women with children might be more inclined to choose to take on promotions in

order to climb the corporate ladder to the same extent as men. This is discussed earlier in the study by van't Foort-Diepeveen et al. (2021) that women might end up refraining from applying because they feel like they cannot meet the expectations. However, not to say that this only affects women.

Moving on to examine the international research and the findings from the Canadian study by Higgins et al. (2006). They found different coping strategies of families and how they solved them. This can be linked to my findings as there are some similarities between what the participants said and the study. One example from what the informants mentioned is that they did have trouble with ending their workday, thus this might again lead to them sacrificing their sleep to make their work-life balance work out. Creating a work-life conflict as one sphere takes up more time than the other, which might over time lead to an imbalance and therefore conflict. Another example from my findings was that some also had to make sacrifices when it came to their spare time. Not spending a lot of time with friends and/or not being involved in a lot of things outside of their job. This doesn't necessarily mean that spending a lot of time at work and having less time for other activities is bad. If a person thoroughly enjoys their work it can be a balance that works for them. The participants expressed how their job was very important to them and a big part of their lives, and some of the informants expressed that they wanted to work a lot. Therefore, it seems from my findings that the work sphere takes up more space in their life than the home and family life for several of the informants. In contrasting views, however, research by Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) showed that with more work more conflict also arose.

Nonetheless, there are other ways to resolve this conflict, considering that not having a balanced home life can lead to conflict as well. The informants didn't mention anything about housework, though women on average spend two to ten times more time on household responsibilities than men all around the world (Ferrant et al., 2014). Which may lead to conflicts between work and home. Thus, dividing the burden may help reduce some of that conflict. This is also seen in research by Gallie & Russell (2009), where men equally helped with the children and household chores, leading to less work-family conflict. Considering they're leaders they may have to prioritise differently as there are a lot of

responsibilities and pressure put on them to meet certain expectations as mentioned by the informants themselves. Meaning they might have different priorities than non-leaders.

6.1.1 Risk

Risk is another aspect raised by the informants. They discussed risk and the 'risk appetite' of men and women. Taking risk being one important aspect of the responsibilities of a leader. The informants mentioned that there might be reluctance for some women to take on bigger responsibilities, because of family and the duties that come with it. Especially, considering it will be more demanding and might take up more time of the day. Thus, this might lead to a work-life imbalance. Consequently, women might not take the risk. The same informant said that women might see themselves as being not as good as someone else who is also a candidate for the position. In the end, they decide to not take it, because they think that it won't work. Based on this statement it raises the question about women's attitudes and how they see themselves.

This is supported by research that indicates that women do lack self-promotion in comparison to men, as it is gendered that women are taught not to brag about themselves. On the other hand, the reluctance to self-promote might lead women to hide their accomplishments from others. Even though it seems like women generally welcome risks as found in the study by Maxfield et al. (2010), it can create the impression that women don't want to draw attention to their achievements. For example, when achieving something, the risk-taking often gets downplayed and women use "we" as a way of talking about it instead of taking credit themselves. Secondly, women do not necessarily seek the risk of getting a promotion (Maxfield et al., 2010, p. 594).

Could this be one of the reasons why fewer women become leaders? That they do not dare to take the risk to try to get a promotion? Let us now consider another part that can be connected to this, namely competency. One of the informants spoke about how she felt she had to have to prove herself more because she is a woman. Even if they are as competent or even more so than a man. Something that is also supported by the study by van't Foort-Diepeveen et al. (2021, p. 474) is that women have to show that they are competent

to a greater extent than men. Additionally, other studies are showing that there are higher expectations of female managers in comparison to men (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017, p. 314; Thrasher et al., 2022, p. 689-691). Because women need to prove themselves more than men in the same situations it may lead to women being discouraged from taking on bigger roles and more responsibility.

Consequently, this might lead to women doubting themselves and their capability to fulfil such a role. Do men then have more self-confidence to go into different roles in comparison to women? As one of the informants mentioned she thought men were better at adapting into different roles than women. However, the answers from the informants varied a lot, from not believing there to be any difference when it came to male characteristics to there being a lot of difference. The ones believing there is a difference, they particularly highlighted that men seemed like they could distance themselves more from their work when they are home. Nevertheless, low self-confidence has often been used to explain why women often don't get promotions. However, research has shown that there are no gender-related differences in self-confidence levels (Guillén et al., 2018, p. 839-840). On the other hand, the appearance of high self-confidence as seen by other employees does have an effect, though it seems it was more complex for women to gain influence in an organisation than men (Guillén et al., 2018, p. 839-840).

Another significant aspect of women and risk was discussed by Ertac & Gurdal (2012). Shows that when faced with risky situations that could affect not only themselves but also others, women more often than men would avoid taking the risk. Even though this would affect their payoff. The reluctance to make decisions that could affect others could be an explanation for why more men than women end up in leadership positions. As leadership positions require having to make difficult or uncertain decisions. This could imply that women do not want to be the reason for other people to experience loss, or rather an explanation that women do not wish to lose the control they have. It is also shown that men in leadership positions take more risks than men who are not leaders. However, the same result cannot be seen with women in leadership versus non-leadership positions (Ertac & Gurdal, 2012, p. 29).

6.2 Organisational Culture, Barriers and Expectations

Interpreting the findings with organisational culture in mind, some of the informants mentioned that they are dependent on the working hours to make the work-life balance work out. If these working hours are inflexible it would therefore become a problem for them. As shown the established working structure is based on a male-focused working arrangement. Not taking into account that women might have children while being employed at a company. Accordingly, this work structure with long hours and unbroken career paths would not work for people in this situation. If women then can't meet these expectations they may not be the first choice for job positions that take this into account (van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). However, the informants that mentioned flexible working hours said they had the possibility to create their own workday.

It can be seen on different levels using Schein's model (Schein, 1987, p. 12-15). To newcomers in an organisation it is possible to visibly see the culture. On the basis of what the informants said, the working hours and the working structure would be the artefacts. It is possible to observe that some employees come in later to the office and some leave earlier. On the second level, the values, the employees or in this context the leaders might have a shared opinion about flexible working arrangements as they also value their family-life. Because of this value, it will be a reason for why they behave in a certain way. In this context, they choose to start later or end their shift earlier. Thus, leading to this being a standard for how things are in an organisation. It is also possible to see this in the light of the male focused working arrangements, as their values will be rooted in traditional gender roles and expectations. On the inner level, the underlying beliefs, flexible working arrangements are eventually seen as something that is taken for granted and something that everyone chooses themselves. Therefore, it becomes customary for the employees. Again, it's also possible to see this in light of the male focused structure. Where it will be taken for granted that all employees will be able to adhere to this working structure, without having in mind individual circumstances or needs.

Two of the informants said that they noticed a change in the culture around parental leave, with fathers that took a longer leave. Norms and values take time to be established, and the organisational culture may need a long time to change. It may suggest a shift in the

organisational culture on what is considered “normal” and “acceptable”. With this in mind, according to Schein’s model, it seems like the third level, the underlying beliefs are changing at their workplace (Schein, 1987, p. 12-15). Eventually that fathers take a longer paternity leave is taken for granted. It’s not necessarily the organisational culture in itself that leads to this change. It’s affected by the political system in addition to policies put in place. As policies help manage organisations, by saying that the fathers should take paternity leave it will also lead to a change in culture. Culture is hard to change, especially the underlying beliefs in an organisational culture (Alvesson, 2011, p. 15).

It seems that the women had jobs where the organisational culture was supportive and they were able to facilitate their workday because things were structurally in place. As a result of the policies in Norway having a focus on equality because of the gender mainstreaming strategy (OHCHR, 2012, p. 4). This doesn’t mean that it is only about women’s rights, but leading to gender equality both ways. This includes men’s rights to for example paternity leave as well. One of the informants mentioned that she thought that it’s not necessarily that way in all fields of work. Not because of the policies put in place, but again because of the organisational culture and the workplace structures.

Barriers and expectations mix into organisational culture, as mentioned, because that organisational culture is often the reason for the inequalities between men and women (Utoft, 2020, p. 1). One of the barriers discussed by one of the informants was the glass ceiling effect and organisational culture as a barrier to women reaching the top. This participant is referring to the glass ceiling effect which refers to the ‘invisible’ barriers that women and minorities face which stops them from advancing and reaching higher on the corporate ladder. Even though they have the same qualification, regardless of their achievements (Cotter et al., 2001, p. 656). According to this effect, they would then face increased discrimination. Though two of the informants mentioned experiencing this, the rest said they hadn’t experienced it. Rather, on the contrary, two felt they had received more benefits and were being pushed and encouraged to climb higher on the corporate ladder. This says something about the differences in the workplace between the informants.

6.2.1 Professional Networks and Role Models

Professional networks and role models can be connected to the leadership role in addition to organisational culture. One of the barriers for women in reaching leadership positions is that they do not have the same access to professional networks as men, and that already established networks are hard to break into (Schwanke, 2013, p. 18; van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). Thus, if they had more access to professional networks it could lead to more women striving for leadership positions. Professional networks is something that three of the informants commented on. One of the informants acknowledged that she had to stop thinking that women didn't need women's networks and mentors, Because figures showed her it was. Another one of the informants mentioned that men are good at using professional networks, and through that creating direction. A third informant said she had started using professional networks more actively to create possibilities for herself. In conclusion, it seems based on what the informants said that women can benefit from using their networks more actively to reach their career goals. In terms of organisational culture, professional networks can play a role in shaping the organisational culture. By learning from others, sharing experiences and collaborating it might help leaders to bring this into their own practice and then eventually change their own organisational culture because of it.

In addition, having female mentors might be a better asset to women than having male mentors (Lockwood, 2006, p. 43-44; van't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021, p. 474). By having other women to look up to this might lead to women striving to reach higher and achieving more at their workplace. Can this potentially be a way to achieve more gender equality in the workplace? This is something prior studies have shown the importance of. As mentioned before the study by Lockwood (2006) having female role models can be important in battling gender stereotypes and barriers can be overcome for women because of it. Secondly, how similar these role models seem to be to the women also affects how efficient they are. On the other hand, this trend cannot be seen with males. They did not affect male participants and their identifications with them based on gender. Leading to the suggestion that men don't need male role models to inspire them to success, because they do not face the same barriers connected to gender as women do in their careers. In relation to female leaders they can inspire the other employees by being role models. Including if they can see that the

management team works well, this can give inspiration to the other employees. On the other hand, it can also inspire if the management team doesn't do well, to do things differently and then leading to change in the organisational culture. Having female role models may provide a more inclusive and a workplace highlighting equality, as they might challenge the existing gender stereotypes in an organisation.

In regards to networks, why is it then that men seemingly are better at building and using networks? From the findings, one of the informants pointed out that she had started promoting herself more and had to be determined and a bit selfish to achieve her goals. Self-advocacy is closely connected to why people manage to create and be included in networks. As mentioned before, this can be a problem as it goes against gendered roles. These roles have underlying implications that women should not self-promote and speak up for themselves and are therefore excluded from these networks (Greguletz et al., 2019, p. 1236). The tendency to undervalue and underestimate themselves makes it harder for women to succeed in a number of ways (Greguletz et al., 2019, p. 1256). It seems women have different motivations for using networks. In addition to this, it seems women not only use their network, but they also rely on family and friends to get advice in their professional lives and decisions involving risk. And so, this may be related to the work-life conflict. Research has shown that women who do take risky opportunities more often use their professional networks, instead of using their family and friends for advice (Maxfield et al., 2010, p. 593-594).

Several of my informants mentioned getting into a family situation and having children as a reason for women not daring to aim for a leadership position. Some thought this was the reason for there being fewer women in leadership positions. Something that is also discussed in the study by Greguletz et al. (2019). This revealed that when the women sensed that there might arise a work-family conflict because of their careers, they instead chose to back away from their careers as well as their professional networks. On the other hand, if the woman wanted to take on a more advanced career she had to clearly communicate this if she had children. Otherwise, people would see her as a mother and therefore assume she didn't want more responsibilities (Greguletz et al., 2019, p. 1247). It indicates that having a supportive work environment, female mentors and networks can encourage more women,

and give inspiration and support for more women to reach for higher positions. In instances where female leaders have good and effective management, it can help inspire others and again lead to a workplace that is more inclusive and equality oriented.

6.3 Social Policies - Parental Leave and Gender Quotas

The findings show that the informants are mostly happy with the policies in Norway and their effects. The social policies in Norway are not only interconnected with equality, but economic policies, family policies and labour policies as well. The policies in Norway make it possible for people to balance their work and life. The possibility of sharing the leave between the mother and father is one of the reasons for this balance (OHCHR, 2012, p. 1-2).

Examining other studies internationally and comparing with the findings in this thesis it seems like one of the most important parts concerning work-life balance is the possibility of being able to choose for themselves. As seen earlier, Lewis et al., (2007, p. 366) found that it is especially important for people to choose how they want to balance their day and to what degree they want to use the policies put in place to help them. To be able to have a personal choice in the matter. In how much they want to work, if they want to work and to have the opportunity to become a senior manager or CEO if they want to, regardless of gender. The freedom of choice is also reflected when they mention parental leave, where two of the informants say that the state may have too big of a say in the matter of the division of the mother and father's leave. Again, that it should be up to parents individually of the state to choose how to split the parental leave. However, the informants seem to be in agreement that they are generally happy with the parental leave in Norway. In conclusion, having equal opportunities and freedom of choice was the most important part to the informants, as supported by findings from the international study as well (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 366).

However, some of the informants expressed that they thought the parental leave had become too equal. That they disagreed with the current parental leave split between the mother and father. Highlighting that there are some important aspects in having the mother stay at home longer for example while breastfeeding. Several international and Norwegian

studies have shown a connection between longer paternity leave and increased equality. Thus, indicating that these fathers more often share the caring- and household chores (Østbakken et al., 2018, p. 21). As well as experiencing more equality at their workplace after the leave (Østbakken et al., 2018, p. 13). Turning to mainstreaming gender policy, it is concerned with a process to ensure equality in the policies that are implemented. Especially equal possibilities of both genders. Discussing this in relation to what the informants said it would then be a discrepancy between those views, as it seems the women in this instance don't necessarily want a fifty-fifty split in regards to parental leave. However, it appears that paternity leave has a positive impact, even if some of the informants don't fully support the split. A study by Evensen et al. (2023) showed the tendency that fathers often want a longer leave than what is typically allocated for the father, in comparison to the preference of the mothers. Which is reflected in the findings in this thesis. Having the opportunity to divide this would mean that the state with these policies promote a lifestyle where there would be an equal division between the mother and father. Thus, also dividing the childcare responsibilities and again, the women would therefore have the opportunity to choose job opportunities that are more demanding.

Moving now on to gender quota. Gender quota is a topic that brought forth differing views among the informants. The findings show that some of the informants expressed that they supported gender quotas because it might encourage women to pursue management positions. The informants acknowledged that the evidence suggested gender policies had a positive impact. On the other hand, two of the other informants had conflicting views based on the concern that they would only be hired because they were women, not because they were good. Thus their own competence and qualifications would be undermined. Subsequently affecting their self-esteem. These different views reflect the complexity of the gender quota discussion. It raises the question of how to balance the selection process and promote gender equality in such a way that it is fair. It's important to see the two conflicting sides when discussing gender quotas. On one side it can affect individuals' self-perception, on the other side they are important for putting focus on the gendered differences and assisting in reaching equal representation in certain fields. Overall, the findings spotlight the ongoing debate surrounding gender quotas, with perspectives ranging from support to reservations about their implementation. In conclusion, according to the findings, it is not

only the systematic barriers that need to be addressed, but also the persisting stereotypes and attitudes that may still exist in the workplace that need to change. Thus, it can be seen that the role of social policies can be to shape norms and practices in a society, creating a more inclusive and equal society for all. It is possible to use gender mainstreaming to evaluate these conflicting views of gender quota and get a more nuanced understanding of the challenges. By both looking at the impact of how this is perceived by individuals that is quoted in, and examining how it can achieve equal representation.

In terms of policies, addressing flexible working hours. They are connected to Norwegian law by the Working Environment Act, which says “An employee shall be entitled to flexible working hours if this may be arranged without major inconvenience to the undertaking” (Working Environment Act, 2005, §10-2). It seems to be easier to change the underlying belief system in an organisation if it must comply with political guidelines and thus it helps to push and influence organisations all over the country. Changing the original underlying male work structure to fit more people. For the benefit of men as well as women, especially being beneficial for those with small children. Eventually leading to deeper change in an organisation, consequently rearranging existing values and beliefs.

7. Summary and implications

7.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis sought to examine the role of work-life balance, organisational culture and social policies in promoting gender equality of female leaders in Norway. There were several important factors highlighted by the findings.

Firstly, organisational culture seems to play a crucial role in the promotion of gender equality. In the way that there are several factors that come into play, including working structures, working hours, values and underlying beliefs can either hinder or promote equality. It also shows how these traditional male working-structures and gender roles can become barriers for women that have leadership aspirations and/or want to progress their

own career. While at the same time this type of structure might lead to work-life imbalance. The findings reveal the significance of networking, role models and risk-taking in achieving equality at the workplace. As well as the importance for organisations to promote a supportive workplace culture that values diversity and provides equal opportunities for career advancement. It can be hard to change underlying beliefs in an organisation and organisational culture in itself does not necessarily start the equality process. It can be larger impacts that are leading to this change, like political systems or policies. The attitudes, values and behaviours of an organisational culture does have an important role as it challenges gender equalities or reinforces them.

Secondly, the findings revealed the importance of parental leave policies, flexible working hours and gender quotas to the informants and for the promotion of gender equality. In regards to work-life balance, flexible working hours helped the informants to balance their work and personal lives in a way that allowed them to have the responsibilities of a leader, without sacrificing their family life to the same extent as if they didn't have a flexible work day. One important aspect that was highlighted by the informants was the ability to choose how they wanted to split the parental leave. Accentuating the importance of freedom of choice and autonomy. In regards to gender quotas, it was seen as somewhat necessary by the informants, but also something challenging to implement in reality. It stood out as a challenging subject, as it was seen as needed but the informants themselves didn't want to be subjected to quotas.

Furthermore, another crucial element was stereotypes and gender norms that seemed to still be present. Although not all of the informants had experienced gender biases it is important to still address these norms as harmful, and challenge them to be able to promote gender equality. Ultimately the findings show that all of these aspects, both work-life balance, social policies and organisational culture are interconnected and essential for promoting gender equality of female leaders in Norway. Thus, by having flexible policies, being able to create a work environment that is both supportive and inclusive, as well as challenging the existing gendered norms, it can be possible for women to have equal opportunities and to succeed as leaders.

7.2 Concluding Comments and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings mainly add to the existing research in the field, by mostly supporting previous research, and can be used to gain a better insight into female leaders' work-life balance in Norway. Additionally it can help give an understanding of why women in managerial positions are less represented than men, and what kind of barriers women in both in leadership and non-leadership positions may face.

A limitation of this thesis is that it could have given even more insight into the topic in addition to maybe providing different angles if there had been more participants. At the same time, these aren't the opinions of only one sector and thus cannot provide a conclusion from one work area. However, the responses will be diverse and help gain understanding from several perspectives in a Norwegian context. The women interviewed also have a lot of experience and knowledge in their field and spoke freely about their experience. The findings don't necessarily only apply to women in leadership positions but could apply to women in all types of work.

In terms of future research, it could address in a qualitative study how work-life balance affects men in leadership positions as well, in a Norwegian context. If they have a different insight or attitude towards it, and to see if their answer would differ from the women's perspectives. Due to the limitations on how much it was possible to include in this thesis, I thought I could go more in-depth if I only included women. It would be possible to do this study using a different approach as well, for example using a quantitative method. Additionally, at the start of the thesis, I mentioned how there has been a steady increase in work pressure since the 1990s, thus it would be interesting to see how this affects the work-life balance of male and female leaders and how it has changed because of technology.

References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations. *Gender and Society*, 4(2), 139–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002>
- Alvesson, M., & Sveningsson, S. (2015). *Changing organizational culture: Cultural change work in progress*. Routledge.
- Alvesson, M. (2011). Organizational culture: Meaning, Discourse, and Identity. In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. P. M. Wilderom & M. F. Peterson (Eds.), *The handbook of organizational culture and climate*, 11-28. London: Sage.
- Antai, D., Oke, A., Braithwaite, P., & Anthony, D. S. (2015). A 'balanced' life: work-life balance and sickness absence in four Nordic countries. *The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 6(4), 205–222. <https://doi.org/10.15171/ijoem.2015.667>
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1993). Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 17(1), 112–121. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40862298>
- Boyar, S. L., Maertz Jr, C. P., Mosley Jr, D. C., & Carr, J. C. (2008). The impact of work/family demand on work-family conflict. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(3), 215-235. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810861356>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis*. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>
- Brink, H. I. (1993). Validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Curationis*, 16(2), 35-38. <https://doi.org/10.4102/curationis.v16i2.1396>
- Bø, I., & Ertesvåg, S. K. (2006). Gjensyn med Urie Bronfenbrenner etter hans «arbeidsdag» på 60 år. *Nordic studies in education*, 26(3), 258-274. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-5949-2006-03-05>
- Campbell B. (2021). Social Justice and Sociological Theory. *Society*, 58(5), 355–364. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-021-00625-4>

- Cerrato, J., & Cifre, E. (2018). Gender inequality in household chores and work-family conflict. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 1330. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01330>
- Chandra, V. (2012). Work-life balance: eastern and western perspectives, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(5), 1040-1056, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.651339>
- Chang, A., McDonald, P. & Burton, P. (2010). Methodological choices in work-life balance research 1987 to 2006: a critical review, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21:13, 2381-2413, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2010.516592>
- Chang, X., Zhou, Y., Wang, C. & Heredero, C. P. (2017). How do work-family balance practices affect work-family conflict? The differential roles of work stress. *Front. Bus. Res. China* 11(8) . <https://doi.org/10.1186/s11782-017-0008-4>
- Chisholm-Burns, M. A., Spivey, C. A., Hagemann, T. & Josephson, M. A. (2017). Women in leadership and the bewildering glass ceiling, *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, 74(5), 312–324. <https://doi.org/10.2146/ajhp160930>
- Collins, R. (1990). 3. Conflict Theory and the Advance of Macro-Historical Sociology. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *Frontiers of Social Theory. the New Syntheses* (pp. 68-87). New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/ritz91254-004>
- Colombo, L., & Ghisleri, C. (2008). The work-to-family conflict: Theories and measures. *TPM-Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, 15(1), 35–55. <https://www.tpmmap.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/15.1.3.pdf>
- Connell, R.W. (2005). A Really Good Husband: Work/Life Balance, Gender Equity and Social Change. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 40: 369-383. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2005.tb00978.x>
- Cotter, D. A., Hermsen, J. M., Ovadia, S. & Vanneman, R. (2001) The Glass Ceiling Effect, *Social Forces*, 80(2), 655–681. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2001.0091>
- Ertac, S., & Gurdal, M. Y. (2012). Deciding to decide: Gender, leadership and risk-taking in groups. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 83(1), 24-30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2011.06.009>
- Evensen, M., Kitterød, R. H., & Teigen, M. (2023). Mild tvang, bred oppslutning: En analyse av holdning til deling av foreldrepermisjonen blant fedre og mødre. *Søkelys på arbeidslivet*, 40(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.18261/spa.40.2.4>

- Ferrant, G., Pesando, L. M., & Nowacka, K. (2014). Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes. *Boulogne Billancourt: OECD Development Center*.
https://www.fearlessgirl.us/wp-content/uploads/Unpaid_care_work.pdf
- Gallie, D., & Russell, H. (2009). Work-family conflict and working conditions in Western Europe. *Social indicators research*, 93, 445-467.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-008-9435-0>
- Gram, K. H. (2021, March 4). *Stadig flere kvinner blant ledere*. SSB.
<https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/stadig-flere-kvinner-blant-ledere>
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of Conflict between Work and Family Roles. *The Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76–88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258214>
- Greguletz, E., Diehl, M.-R., & Kreutzer, K. (2019). Why women build less effective networks than men: The role of structural exclusion and personal hesitation. *Human Relations*, 72(7), 1234-1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718804303>
- Guest, D. E. (2002). Perspectives on the study of work-life balance. *Social Science Information*, 41(2), 255-279. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018402041002005>
- Guillén, L., Mayo, M., & Karelaia, N. (2018). Appearing self-confident and getting credit for it: Why it may be easier for men than women to gain influence at work. *Human Resource Management*, 57(4), 839-854. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21857>
- Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: when to use them and how to judge them. *Human reproduction*, 31(3), 498-501.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dev334>
- Higgins, C. A., Duxbury, L. E., & Lyons, S. (2006). *Reducing work-life conflict: What works? What doesn't?* Health Canada.
https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/ewh-semt/alt_formats/hecs-sesc/pdf/pubs/occup-travail/balancing-equilibre/full_report-rapport_complet-eng.pdf
- Huang, Y. H., Hammer, L. B., Neal, M. B., & Perrin, N. A. (2004). The relationship between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 25, 79-100.
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.oslomet.no/10.1023/B:JEEI.0000016724.76936.a1>

- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A.-M., Johnson, M. & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 72(12), 2954– 2965. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>
- Khateeb, F. R. (2021). Work life balance-A review of theories, definitions and policies. *Cross-Cultural Management Journal*, 23(1), 27-55. https://seaopenresearch.eu/Journals/articles/CMJ2021_11_3.pdf
- Kitterød, R. H., & Lappegård, T. (2012). A Typology of Work-Family Arrangements Among Dual-Earner Couples in Norway. *Family Relations*, 61(4), 671-685. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2012.00725.x>
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2021). *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju* (3rd ed.). Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Lawinsider (n.d.). *Management position definition*. <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/management-position>
- Lewis, S., Gambles, R. & Rapoport, R. (2007). The constraints of a ‘work–life balance’ approach: an international perspective, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(3), 360-373, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190601165577>
- Lockwood, N. R. (2003). Work/life balance. *Challenges and Solutions, SHRM Research, USA*, 2(10).
- Lockwood, P. (2006). “Someone Like Me can be Successful”: Do College Students Need Same-Gender Role Models? *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30(1), 36-46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2006.00260.x>
- Manager (n.d.). In *Cambridge Dictionary*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/manager>
- Maxfield, S., Shapiro, M., Gupta, V. and Hass, S. (2010), Gender and risk: women, risk taking and risk aversion, *Gender in Management*, 25(7), 586-604. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.oslomet.no/10.1108/17542411011081383>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327-344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401305>

- OECD (2017). *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264281318-en>.
- OECD (2023), *Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3ddef555-en>
- OECD (n.d.). Gender mainstreaming in policymaking.
<https://www.oecd.org/stories/gender/gender-mainstreaming-in-policymaking>
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2012). *Information highlighting practices and significant legislative and policy reforms adopted for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality*.
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WG/PublicPoli ticalLife/Norway.pdf>
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (1996). *The Knowledge-based Economy in 1996, Science, Technology and Industry Outlook*. Paris: OECD.
<https://one.oecd.org/document/OCDE/GD%2896%29102/En/pdf>
- Platt, L. (n.d.). *What is social policy? International, interdisciplinary and applied*. The London School of Economics and Political Science.
<https://www.lse.ac.uk/social-policy/about-us/What-is-social-policy>
- Powell, G. N., & Greenhaus, J. H. (2010). Sex, gender, and the work-to-family interface: Exploring negative and positive interdependencies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(3), 513-534. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.51468647>
- Richardson, R., & Kramer, E. H. (2006). Abduction as the type of inference that characterizes the development of a grounded theory. *Qualitative research*, 6(4), 497-513.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794106068019>
- Rofcanin, Y., Las Heras, M., & Bakker, A. B. (2017). Family supportive supervisor behaviors and organizational culture: Effects on work engagement and performance. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(2), 207–217.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000036>
- Schein, E. H. (1987). *Organisasjonskultur og ledelse - er kulturendring mulig?* Mercuri media forlag.
- Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd. ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Schwanke, D.-A. (2013). Barriers for women to positions of power: How societal and corporate structures, perceptions of leadership and discrimination restrict women's

- advancement to authority. *Earth Common Journal*, 3(2).
<https://doi.org/10.31542/j.ecj.125>
- Seierstad, C., & Kirton, G. (2015). Having It All? Women in High Commitment Careers and Work–Life Balance in Norway. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 22, 390–404.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12099>
- Sirgy, M. J., & Lee, D. J. (2018). Work-life balance: An integrative review. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 13, 229-254. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-017-9509-8>
- Sofaer, S. (1999). Qualitative methods: what are they and why use them? *Health services research*, 34(5 Pt 2), 1101–1118.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1089055/?page=1>
- Teater, B. (2015). Social Work Theory. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.), 813-820, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.28092-6>.
- Teigen, M. (2010). Kjønnkvotering i næringslivets styrer. K. Niskanen & A. Nyberg (Red.), *Kön och makt i Norden. Del II Sammanfattande diskussion och analys* (p. 93-111). Nordiska ministerrådet. <https://doi.org/10.6027/TN2010-525>
- The Research Council of Norway (2019). *Policy for gender balance and gender perspectives in research and innovation*.
https://www.forskningsradet.no/contentassets/19527ed7d0b149d6b9b310f8bb354ce9/nfr_gender_policy_orig-1.pdf
- Thompson, J. (2022). A Guide to Abductive Thematic Analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(5), 1410-1421. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5340>
- Thrasher, G.R., Wynne, K., Baltes, B. and Bramble, R. (2022). "The intersectional effect of age and gender on the work–life balance of managers", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 37(7), 683-696. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-03-2021-0169>
- Utoft, E. H. (2020). Exploring linkages between organisational culture and gender equality work—an ethnography of a multinational engineering company. *Evaluation and program planning*, 79, 101791. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2020.101791>
- van't Foort-Diepeveen, R.A., Argyrou, A. and Lambooy, T. (2021), "Holistic and integrative review into the barriers to women's advancement to the corporate top in Europe", *Gender in Management*, 36(4), 464-481. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-02-2020-0058>

Working Environment Act. (2005). *Act relating to the working environment, working hours and employment protection, etc.*(LOV-2005-06-17-62). Lovdata.

https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-62/KAPITTEL_11#KAPITTEL_11

Østbakken, K. M., Halrynjo, S., & Kitterød, R. H. (2018). Foreldrepermisjon og likestilling: Foreldrepengeordningens betydning for likestilling i arbeidslivet og hjemme.

Rapport–Institutt for samfunnsforskning.

<https://samfunnsforskning.brage.unit.no/samfunnsforskning-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2572935/Foreldrepermisjon%2Bog%2Blikestilling.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer

999710

Vurderingstype

Standard

Dato

14.11.2023

Tittel

Female leaders, work-life balance and gender equality

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet / Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap / Institutt for sosialfag

Prosjektansvarlig

Blanka Støren-Vaczy

Student

Karoline Mærland

Prosjektperiode

01.09.2022 - 31.12.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 31.12.2023.

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

”Female leaders, work-life balance and gender equality”?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke kvinner i lederstillinger sin erfaring med å balansere jobb og fritid, samt å se på likestilling mellom menn og kvinner i arbeidslivet. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med masteroppgaven er å få et innblikk i hvorfor kvinner i lederstillinger ofte er mindre representert enn menn. I tillegg til å undersøke kvinner i lederstillinger sin erfaring med hvordan de balanserer jobb og fritid, og hvordan dette påvirker likestilling blant menn og kvinner. Problemstillingen jeg vil belyse er: "Why are women in managerial positions less represented than men, and how does work-life balance affect gender equality?".

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

OsloMet er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta grunnet din stilling og erfaring fra arbeidslivet har relevans for forskningsspørsmålet og problemstillingen jeg ønsker å undersøke.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Dersom du velger å delta i prosjektet vil dette innebære at du deltar i et intervju. Det vil ta maks 1 time. Intervjuet inneholder spørsmål om ledelse, balanse mellom jobb og fritid, og om kjønn og likestilling. Svarene dine vil bli registrert elektronisk.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke

Samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Kun veileder og student vil ha tilgang til personopplysningene.
- Navnet og kontaktinformasjonen din vil bli erstattet med en kode. Listen over navn, kontaktdetaljer og respektive koder vil bli lagret separat fra resten av de innsamlede dataene. Lydopptaket vil være kryptert og derfor sikret mot at andre personer får tilgang til det.
- Du vil ikke kunne bli gjenkjent i oppgaven, verken ved navn eller andre opplysninger.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 16.05.2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med dine personopplysninger anonymiseres.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra OsloMet har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- OsloMet ved Blanka Støren-Vaczy, email: blanst@oslomet.no eller tlf. +47 67 23 84 63.
- Vårt personvernombud: Ingrid S. Jacobsen på email: personvernombud@oslomet.no.

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- Personverntjenester på epost (personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Blanka Støren-Vaczy
Veileder

Karoline Mærland
Student

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet [*sett inn tittel*], og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

• Å delta på et intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Forskningsspørsmål:

- Why are women in managerial positions less represented than men, and how does work-life balance affect gender equality?

Introduksjon:

1. Om oppgaven – informer om lydopptak, skrive på engelsk, men snakker på norsk
2. Alder?
3. Hvilken bransje er du i, og hvordan endte du opp i denne bransjen/som leder?
 - a. Hvor lenge har du jobbet der?
 - b. Hvor lenge har du vært leder?
4. Hvilken utdanningsbakgrunn har du?
5. Familiesituasjon? Sivilstatus?

Familie/fritid og kjønn

1. Hvor godt synes du at det norske samfunnet legger til rette for rettigheter for kvinner i arbeid, i forhold til for eksempel fødselspermisjon? Likelønn?
 - a. Hvordan vil dette ha en påvirkning på kvinner i jobb tenker du?
 - b. Tror du at pappaperm/fedrekvoten gjør at menn tar seg av mer av omsorgsarbeidet i hjemmet?
2. Hvordan synes du det er å klare å balansere jobb og fritid?
 - a. Tror du at menn (i lederstillinger) balanserer jobb-fritid annerledes enn kvinner?
3. Opplever du at det er ting/forventninger i din fritid/hjemmesituasjon som påvirker arbeidet du gjør? Hvordan du gjør det i ditt arbeid?
 - a. Både bra og dårlige?

Karriere - leder

4. I din mening - Hvorfor tror du det er slik at det er færre kvinnelige ledere i forhold til mannlige? (37% kvinner vs. 63% mannlige)
5. Hvordan tror du det er tilrettelagt for kvinner som ønsker å nå lederposisjoner?
 - a. Tror du det er noen forskjeller for menn og kvinner?
6. Politikerne vil ha flere kvinner i lederstillinger, hvordan tror du det fungerer i praksis? Hvor godt synes du at det er lagt til rette for at kvinner skal bli ledere?
7. Tror du/har du merket at kjønnsfordelingen i lederstillinger har endret seg?
 - a. Hvordan tenker du/eller ikke det har endret seg ifra 10 år siden?
8. Tror du det er noen forventninger til hvordan en leder skal være basert på kjønn?
 - a. Hvilke holdninger opplever du at folk har til kvinnelige ledere?
 - b. Hvorfor tenker du at det er slik?

Likestilling

9. Hva er din erfaring med likestilling og/eller diskriminering i forhold til kjønn på arbeidsplassen?
10. Hvilke tanker har du om lønnsforskjeller mellom menn og kvinner?
 - a. Spesielt i lederstillinger?
 - b. Opplever du at det er noen forskjell?
11. Tenker du at det er mulig i fremtiden å ha like mange menn og kvinner i lederstillinger?
12. Hva tenker du angående disse spørsmålene om likestilling, er det noe som er interessant/viktig for deg?
 - a. Hvorfor? / Hvorfor ikke?

Avslutning:

10. Er det noe jeg har glemt? Er det noe mer du ønsker å ta opp?
11. Mulighet for videre kontakt
12. Takk for deltagelsen