



## **Women to companies' top leadership positions**

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## Abstract

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This thesis focuses on feminine leadership in Finland. It investigates the challenges women may encounter in their career advancement to top management positions of a company. Finland is considered one of the leading countries when it comes to gender equality. Regardless, women remain underrepresented in upper management positions as the majority of these positions are filled by men. More and more women have reached middle management, generally as managers of support functions, but to get higher in the hierarchy, they face a glass ceiling. Glass ceiling represents the unseen obstacles for women's career development.

The author chose the topic as she finds the research problem relevant still today. The objective of the thesis was to answer the two main research questions that were: What is holding women back from making it to the leading positions? and How can women get equal career opportunities as men? Through the theoretical framework and the empirical data the author sought to find out what serves as an obstacle in women's career paths. The aim was also to put forward possible solutions for companies to take more actions in order to support the career prospects of women.

This thesis is a qualitative research and six women, with different years of managerial experience in male-dominated fields, were interviewed. In order to obtain as much unfiltered information and views as possible from the interviews the author agreed with the participants not to reveal the companies or identities of the women interviewed. For this reason the participants remained completely anonymous throughout the whole research process. The empirical data was collected by individual theme interviews between 29 September and 8 October 2021. The findings show that one's gender is neither seen as an advantage nor a disadvantage in male-dominated fields. However equal opportunities for promotion with male colleagues shared opinions. One's own manager was seen as an essential part of whether or not a person was supported to advance in her career.

One of the proposed solutions for the research findings is to encourage women to reach for the fields that are considered male dominated as the more women there are, the better possibilities they have to reach higher within a company. Currently the group from which the members of the upper management team were elected was too narrow for women to show up to their advantage. In order to reach a solution, it was perceived that both the women themselves and the employer should take concrete action to improve the situation. A common finding was that the direction is right, now it must be ensured that women make it from middle management to the next level.

**Keywords**

Women, leadership, female leadership, career development, gender equality

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## 1 Introduction

Together with other Nordic countries, Finland is often considered one of the leading countries when it comes to equality matters. While there have been huge improvements since the nineties, women's low representation in company management positions is clearly evident. Still today, a very few of the managerial positions are held by women. The gap between genders remains high. From a global perspective, women in Finland have better representation in management and professional positions compared to many other countries. Regardless, there is still room for improvement. In 2020, the number of female chief executive officers in Finnish listed companies was only 8 percent and in company management 27 percent were women which until today, is the highest number (Keskuskaupakamari 2021, 12–13). However, these numbers remain low. Now that the "large age groups" are retiring, it would be a convenient time for a change. Women's academic performance is known to be better than men's. Numerous research shows that women have succeeded well if not better than their male colleagues in managerial positions and they usually have better communication skills. Why is there still a lack of women in top management positions? This is one of the questions investigated during the research.

Women in the top management of companies is a topic that has been relatively discussed for the last few decades. At the end of 2019 Finland received a lot of recognition globally, when five women started to lead the country's government (Abend 2020). Leadership provokes strong feelings and opinions and therefore it is a very much discussed topic. Although the number of women in politics has risen quite dramatically, there are far less women in company management teams. This thesis has a focus on women's leadership from the perspective of companies. The number of women leaders in the public sector has begun to rise, but in the private sector, which is known to employ more men, the number of women who have surpassed the glass ceiling remains very small. Today's female leaders are more visible in service industries than, for example, leading a high-tech company.

When investigating the topic, the author came to a conclusion that in Finland during recent years women have been able to be represented in politics, however at the organizational level in the business world, women have remained underrepresented in positions of power. Too often the accusing finger is pointed at the woman herself, stating that her skills are inadequate or that she is unsuitable for the job, when research shows that women have performed well, and almost even better than men in management positions. In order to find a solution, a company's top management must first understand that there is a problem and secondly take concrete actions to improve it and give more and more women an opportunity for advancement. The topic has been researched globally and some countries have introduced quotas for women in organizations. However, studies show that quotas

have not resolved the problem as for example, in some of the Northern countries, the proportion of women in business management has not increased as a result. In Finland, the quota has not been introduced.

The author chose the topic as she truly believes that everyone, regardless of gender, should have equal opportunities to advance in their careers. The subject is addressed and investigated with the basis that there are only two biological sexes: women and men. In this research, the author takes no stand on other genders or people's feelings about their own gender. The author hopes that this research will help get more and more companies to not only discuss the theme, but more importantly leave prejudices behind, and make practical changes to enable women, as well, to reach leadership positions in companies regardless of the sector. The aim of the research is to find answers and understand the reasons behind the barriers in women's career development from mid-management to top leadership positions. The research questions for the thesis are as following:

- What is holding women back from making it to the leading positions?
- How can women get equal career opportunities as men?

The first research question investigates the reasons behind the low number of women CEOs and top managers within Finnish organizations. The number and the sectors women leaders are represented in will be covered. The second research question investigates the equal opportunities of women and men in working life. The obstacles and prejudices that women may face when reaching for these higher positions within a company, will be defined. At the end of the thesis, suggestions for improvement will be introduced. The objective of this thesis is to discover the reasons preventing women from advancing, but at the same time to encourage all the women to be brave, have confidence in their competences and to aim high in their careers as the more pioneers there are, the more women will dare to strive higher.

The topic of the research is very vast, therefore some limitations had to be made to get a better and deeper insight. As leadership covers all from self-management to political leadership as well as corporate management and so on, when considering the theme of the thesis, delimitation has had to be made. This research does not include political leaders or country leaders but has its focus on organizational leadership. Neither does it take a position on the company's board of directors, but it focuses on the CEO and other management levels. More specifically, the focus is on feminine leadership in Finland from a women's but also a company's perspective. Data is collected from women operating in male-dominated industries (e.g., construction, transportation, manufacturing). To get more personal and transparent data out of the interviews, the organizations, as well as the participants, will stay anonymous throughout the whole thesis.

This thesis is divided into five main chapters that are introduction, two chapters on theoretical framework, method, and discussion. The topic, objectives and limitations of the research have been introduced in the first chapter. The theoretical framework will be explained in the second and third chapter. Chapter two will focus on women's roles in working life now and before, as well as how the labour market is segregated. Chapter three includes defining the meaning of leadership, women as leaders, and the obstacles women may encounter in their careers as leaders. Once the theory has been explained, the research method will be introduced. Qualitative research, interviewing, data collection and as well as the interview results will be presented in chapter four. Chapter five includes the conclusion of the research and analysing the empirical data with the help of the theoretical framework, suggestions and ideas for further research and evaluation of the thesis process as well as author's own learning during it. The references used in this research as well as appendices can be found at the end of the thesis.

## 2 The role of women in working life

As this thesis examines women's leadership in Finland, this chapter starts with a small overview of history on women's position in the country's labour market. Finland is seen as one of the leading countries when it comes to gender equality questions. It was, for instance, the first country in the world to give women complete political rights in 1906 (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health s.a.). Equal rights between women and men have developed immensely from decades back, but still today there are some gaps, for example in work life, when it comes to women's career development. To understand these gaps, this chapter starts by going back in history to the late nineteenth century when women entered the labour market.

### 2.1 History of women's work

Women in Finland have worked mostly in agriculture, where taking care of the livestock along with housekeeping were considered their responsibilities. Admittedly, women had a huge number of tasks to take care of. They were in charge of animal husbandry, took care of the children, cooked, baked, cleaned the house, made bread, did laundry, carried water, preserved, gave birth, cut the grain, raked the hay, assisted men in their chores whenever they needed a helping hand, and took care of the house's heating, among others. Women had no time for anything else, there was enough work from early morning to late night. At the time, women had no rights, and were not valued. It was the father who decided on the girl's affairs until the very moment she got married and the decision-making power passed on to the husband. The husband acted as her representor by law until 1930 when the marriage act was revised. (Ranta 2012, 5–6.)

In many families, the daughters started assisting their mothers in the housekeeping at an early age. If the family did not have their own daughters, they would have daughter-in-laws or a maidservant to help with all the work. The maids were young and unmarried and very cheap labour for the family. The young girls adopted the tasks by following and helping the mother or other women in the house. (Ranta 2012, 17–19.) In the late nineteenth century, the most important roles of a woman were to be a mother and wife. Women who did not fulfil this criterion had a weak position in the society. They rather worked, in positions of education or health care. These domains were considered feminine and therefore low paid. It was said to be a mission for the unmarried to sacrifice for the benefit of society, as the rest of the women sacrificed for their own families. (Pesonen 2020.)

In 1907, women were for the first time allowed to run in a state election. In this election, nineteen women members of parliament were elected from different professional groups. Women got the freedom to pursue a trade or profession in 1918. In the 1920s and 1930s, the industrial sector experienced rapid growth, and more employees were needed. In the 1920s, around 30 percent of the employees in factories were female. For the first time, women got to work outside of their own or others' households. (Ranta 2012, 28, 39, 47–48.)

With the creation of the Nordic welfare state between the 1960s and 1970s, women with families also got the opportunity to enter the labour market when day care and other necessary social services were invented. About half of the trade workforce were women, especially in fabric, clothing, and grocery stores. Women also started to work in the offices in stores and banks. At the time, around half of Finnish women were employed; one third in agriculture and forestry, another third in transportation and service industry, one fourth in industry and the rest in trade. The polarization between the jobs of women and men was drawn. Women were not seen in managerial positions and the positions they occupied were low paid. As a result, most women were hired in the public sector, whereas men occupied more the private sector. (Pesonen 2020; Ranta 2012, 69, 73.)

The wages of women still cause debate to this day as for every 84 cents a Finnish woman earns, a man, in turn, earns one euro. During the time of former Prime Minister Paasikivi, women's pay was justified for various reasons as to why it should not be as high as men's. Employees demanded the same pay for women while employers disagreed. In the paper industry, a woman earned 60 percent of a man's salary, when in the metal industry, the highest pay for a woman was 50 percent of what a man would earn. It was thought that a family woman was supported by a man and only single women went to work, so their pay did not have to be at the same level as men. According to a pay provision, the jobs of women and men were not of the same value and pay was determined by gender. (Eskonen 2020.)

In the 1960s, when Finland approved an international equal pay agreement, wage regulation was dismantled. As a result, everyone regardless of gender should be paid the same wage for work of equal value. The Equality Act stipulates that the employer should monitor the pay gap between women and men, but this has still been perceived to be weak. If employers were told to put the salaries of their employees for public information, it would make discriminatory practices visible. (Eskonen 2020.)



## 2.2 Women's work today

Statistics show that male and female employment rates have been close to one another for a long time. In 2020, 71 percent of women were employed, whereas men's employment rate was 73 percent. Women's employment rates were 4 percent better than the average of EU27 countries. (THL 2021a.) In Finland, the labour market is radically divided by gender. In general, women work in different sectors, companies, and professions compared to men. Women are most likely to start off their careers in the public sector in workplaces where the majority are women, while men tend to apply more in the private sector to companies that usually have more male employees. In recent years, some change can be seen as women have started to seek jobs in the sectors that are traditionally considered male-dominated such as doctors and lawyers. (THL 2021b.)

As can be seen from figure 1, women are mainly employed in the health and service sector, education, and food service. In addition, sectors such as arts, entertainment and recreation are most likely to have more female employees. Today, a very small proportion of women are employed, for example, in construction, agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, and different industries, which are seemingly still considered more masculine fields. The data in the below figure has been collected from employees aged between fifteen and seventy-four working in Finland.

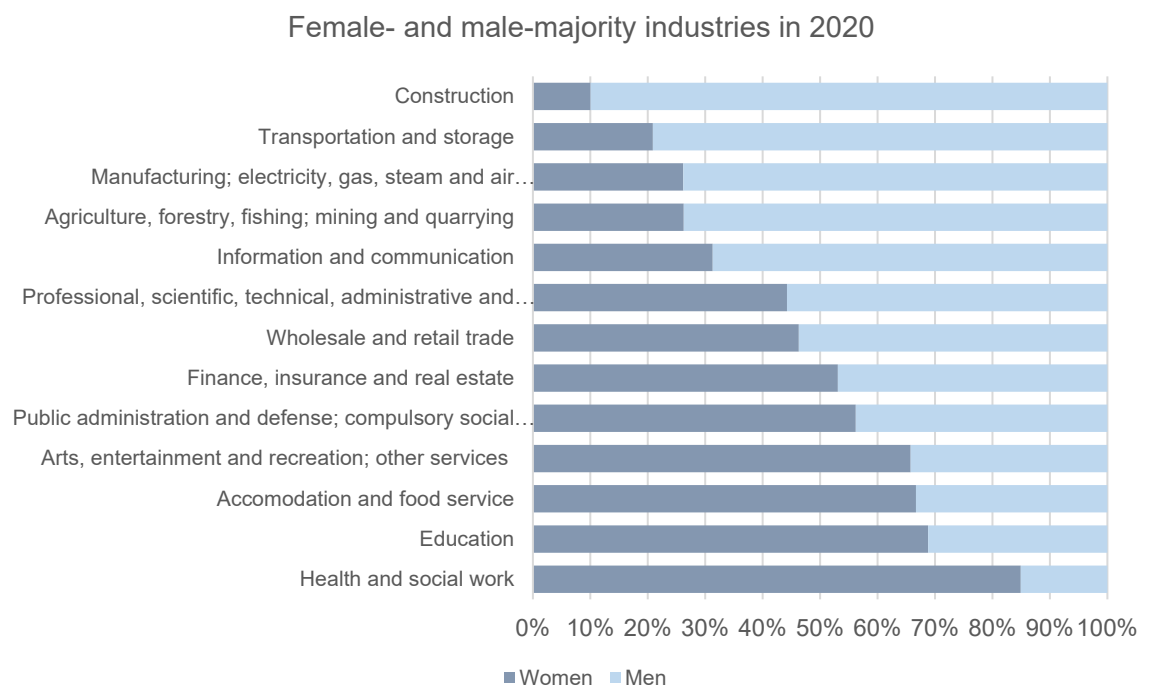


Figure 1. Industries by gender in 2020 (adapted from Statistics Finland 2021a)

According to Statistics Finland (2021a) the three most female-dominated domains in 2020 were:

- Health and social work, 85% women
- Education, 69% women
- Accommodation and food service, 67% women

On the contrary, the three most male-dominated industries were:

- Construction, 90% men
- Transportation and storage, 79% men
- Manufacturing; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning and water supply; sewerage and waste management, 74% men.

In recent years, only about 10 percent of wage-earners worked in professions considered equal occupations that had between 40 and 60 percent of both female and male employees. These professions include for instance, advertising and marketing specialists, teachers in vocational schools, real estate agents, merchants, journalists, and lawyers. (Statistics Finland 2021a).

Even today, the labour market is divided into men's and women's sectors and professions. It is surprising how the division between genders in business sectors have remained so clear to this day. The research shows that it is related to education and starts already when young people choose what to study at school and the specialization of their post-graduate studies. The data shows that the tasks female and male employees have when they start their careers differ from one another. Women are more likely to be hired for less demanding positions than the position of men at the same starting point. Nevertheless, the differences were higher twenty-five years ago. These career differences have been linked to the career choices made when deciding one's field of study. (Kauhanen & Napari 2009, 15.)

Men are more likely to be promoted in their careers than what women are. Women tend to have the same position with the same level of difficulty for a longer period, there are only a few who advance to a position that is a higher level to the one in which they started. Whereas men can have multiple levels of promotions. They move to more demanding tasks in their career more often than women do. (Kauhanen & Napari 2009, 16.) The division of occupations and education between genders does not mean that one job is better than another. As a result of segregation, certain jobs and skills needed in them are perceived as either more feminine or more masculine. It can be observed that some professions are hierarchically ranked differently than others. This appears, for example, in the pay gap; jobs valued more feminine are still, on average, lower paid than male dominated jobs. (Kinnunen & Korvajärvi 1996, 13.)

### **3 Women and leadership**

In this chapter the theoretical framework of the thesis is introduced using current and recent literature. First, the author will concentrate on defining the term leadership and explaining the most common qualities that are associated with leaders. After that, the focus is on female leadership, including the leadership style and most common qualities female leaders have demonstrated strong possession of. As leaders are known to be men more usually than women, the author finds it important to introduce some women leaders who have served as role models for other women. This chapter ends by defining some of the obstacles women face in their careers, especially when reaching for career advancement.

#### **3.1 Defining leadership**

Leaders and leadership is a topic that evokes a lot of opinions and discussion, therefore also the term “leadership” has got a vast number of definitions over the years. According to Robbins and Judge, leadership is the ability to have an influence on a group toward the achievement of a vision or set of goals. Strong leadership and management are needed for an organization’s effectiveness. This includes creating visions for the future, inspiring the members of an organization to achieve the visions that have been set, carrying out plans, creating efficient organizational structures as well as supervising day-to-day operations. (Robbins & Judge 2015, 364–365.) As Kamensky says, corporate goals are not achieved by focusing only on people management, it is essential that technology as well as economic management work also. Technology, economy, and people being the three main elements in an organization’s functioning. Management is ensuring the achievement of results in a company. (Kamensky 2015, chapter 1.4.)

Over the decades, the perspective of leadership has varied. Early leadership theory focused on three dimensions of leadership. The first one included the personality, traits, and attributes of leaders. Whereas the second concerned the actions of leaders and the different roles they adopted, in other words, what leaders did and how they behaved. The third one is linked to the thought that leadership has different styles, and it varies in different situations. After that leadership has been connected to power and influence followed by focus on the way of leading and the actions and behaviour leaders have adapted. (Crainer & Dearlove 2013, chapter 1.) There certainly has been many ways leadership has been viewed during the decades and still the definition of leadership varies depending on who provides the answer.

Leadership is successful when a group of people with its support achieves a common goal, is able to develop themselves, as well as maintain motivation and well-being at work.

Leadership roles can be, for example, managers of an organization's senior management, business unit and department heads, project managers, team leaders, supervisors, or department managers. Leadership does not necessarily limit for the ones that have it in their job description on their contract of employment. Occasionally, every employee will find themselves in a situation that requires a "leader's role" to be taken, meaning that others need to be influenced in order to reach a common goal. Everyone is leading themselves by setting goals, choosing ways of working, operating, and qualifying their own performance and outcome. (Viitala & Jylhä 2019, chapter 1.)

Chamorro-Premuzic introduces in his book three generalizations that should help the selection of better leaders for an organization – intellectual, social, and psychological capital. The first argument is that a good leader needs to have intellectual capital: expertise, and experience on the domain, as well as good judgment. These components have shown to increase one's credibility and reliability in the workplace and also employee engagement. In the center is the social capital meaning the network and connections leaders have. Studies show that individuals with wide and strong connections both inside and outside the company are more likely to perform better in a managerial position than a person who is only in contact with a small number of people. Still today, the trust on word of mouth is substantive for instance when selecting a suitable candidate for an open position. A person without a referee competing with a highly recommended person will often be left behind in the selection. (Chamorro-Premuzic 2019, 105–111.)

To understand psychological capital and how individuals will make use of their capabilities in leading, three levels of character must first be covered. The bright side includes individuals' ability to learn and the key personality traits such as ambition, curiosity, and emotional stability. Having some bright side traits can have a significant effect on making leaders, for example, Jeff Bezos's curiosity led Amazon to the top of most innovative companies worldwide and made him history's richest man. Narcissism and psychopathy are often linked with leadership, these belong to the dark side traits. Dark side traits bring out the less desired aspects of a leader's personality. These traits can be categorized in three groups – distancing traits, seductive qualities, and ingratiating traits. Distancing traits such as moody or sceptical, push leaders away from their followers. On the contrary, seductive qualities attract people. Typically, leaders who are charismatic, have followers and influence, demonstrate and possess these seductive traits. Ingratiating traits refer to behaviours that help make others like the person. They are considered positive in followers rather than in leaders. The inside of a leader's personality is about the core values in fitting in and creating organizational culture. A person having the right intellectual values has more potential to perform well as a leader. (Chamorro-Premuzic 2019, 111–115.)

Research has shown that there is a prototype or ideal type of leader organizations are used to hire, and it is a man. The word leader is easily linked to a male that generally speaking fits the criteria: white, middle class, heterosexual, masculine male. The old way of seeing leadership, which still applies a lot today, is associated with dominant, confident, competitive, aggressive, exclusionary behavior. In addition, one factor that is crucial when thinking about gender equality, leaders are expected to make work their number one propriety, which makes it difficult for women to advance to leaders. (Nickisch 3.3.2020, 5–20 min.)

Today leadership can be divided into numerous different styles. A leader is most likely to use a variety of different styles when leading others; rather than just one. Since the 1970s one of the most adapted leadership styles has been transformational leadership, which is based on two parties engaging, understanding each other's motivations, and having a relationship that benefits both parties (Crainer & Dearlove 2013, chapter 1). An essential part of being a leader is understanding what type of leader you are. Understanding different leadership styles as well as the way one leads permits one to have better knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses. According to Schultz eight common and effective leadership styles include democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, transactional, charismatic, transformational, servant and bureaucratic leadership. Learning different leadership styles helps a leader learn how to communicate in different situations. (Schultz 2021.)

Democratic or participative leadership is about engaging and listening to every team member's opinion when deciding. Autocratic or authoritarian leadership style works best when a decision needs to be made quickly, as the leader is the one deciding here. In the laissez-faire style, individuals get more responsibility and less supervision when the manager delegates decision-making. A transactional leadership consists of incentives or penalties depending on the performance. Charismatic leading is performed by personality and by inspiring others for results. In transformational leadership, organizational growth is essentially in the chore of development of the business or the company. Serving leaders put the needs of their team members first as they believe the satisfaction of the personnel will grant them great results. In bureaucratic leadership style the rules and policies that the company has been set are followed very closely, something perceived to work well in highly regulated departments. To be an effective leader, a person should possess qualities such as creativity, vision, empathy, and motivation that according to Schultz are so-called "leadership qualities". (Schultz 2021.)

The saying leaders are born not made does not make sense. Anyone can be a leader as anyone can develop themselves and learn, and with the right mentoring, good leaders are made. There is neither only one nor a so-called right way to lead. Most can use some

leadership skills at the right time, and everyone should have the possibility for skills development. Leadership skills are said to be just normal people management skills, as after all, leaders are also normal people like everyone else. Those in positions of power have completely resisted creating greater equality and fairness at work or at least they have done little to promote it. People in top management show with their lack of actions that they are not aware of their prejudices and blind spots, or if they do there is a lack of will to do enough in order to see change. The battles on equal opportunities are not over but more actions are needed. (Stern & Cooper 2018, 57.)

According to equality consultant Malin Gustavsson, the leadership image in Finland is considered too narrow and should be challenged. Diversity is a prerequisite for a competitive and innovative company. At present, diversity has unfortunately been forgotten in many companies when compared to other European countries. Finland is stuck with the idea that a manager should be an engineer. As a solution, Gustavsson suggests that companies should make it clear that to become an inspiring leader there is not only one established route. If more women are to lead a company, change must be shifted to updating standards and not to changing how women act or lead. According to Gustavsson, a commanding leader is still valued in Finland, and inspiring leaders are less popular. However, both qualities are needed but in different situations. (Leiviskä 2018.)

### **3.2 Women as leaders**

Women in Finland have aimed for higher leadership positions for a long time now. Today more and more women reach the top positions, however still not as many as should. At the beginning of this century, it would have been odd to see a woman leading a billion-turnover organization. According to a statistic from 2019, the number of female leaders in Finland reached its highest level in that year. Women made up to 37 percent of all leaders in companies, administration, and societies in Finland. The number was 3 percent higher than the average of the OECD-countries. If the percentage is between forty and sixty, a country can be classified as gender equal in the advancement for leaders. Finland is catching up after its neighbour Sweden, which has already reached this target in 2019 and is seen as the model country for equality. There are still old structures that should be updated to reflect a gender-equal labour market in Finland. Unlike some of the other Nordic countries, Finland has not put a quota or proportion of women that must be in the management of a company. The importance should be to concentrate on women's career advancement, which guarantees experience in leading a business and thereafter moving up to the top leadership positions. (Kullas 2021.)

### 3.2.1 Leadership position

The history of feminine leadership in Finland goes hand in hand with entrepreneurship. Centuries back, if a woman was to become an entrepreneur or a leader it was by inheriting a family business from her parents or husband. When entering marriage, many women started working alongside their husband, but the business was in the man's name. Only if the woman was widowed did she inherit the company of her husband. This way, the first Finnish female leaders began to appear first in the trade sector, then later also in industrial companies amongst others. The early managerial experiences of women in the country date back to the time when women were mainly employed in the trade industry.

Changes towards a more equal working life between men and women seem to be slow, particularly in top management of companies. The percentage of highly educated women is increasing, but it does not correlate to the number of female leaders. Women are less likely than men to position as leaders in most of the sectors. Figure 2 demonstrates that equal positioning of women and men in the management of Finnish listed companies does not come true. In 2020 only 8 percent of listed companies managing directors were women. As can be observed from the figure women are most likely to position in the management of support functions (e.g., human resources, legal affairs, sales, marketing, communications, financial or IT administration). Last year, women accounted for 43 percent of the support functions management team. However, only 15 percent were part of the business function management. (THL 2020; Statistics Finland 2021b.)

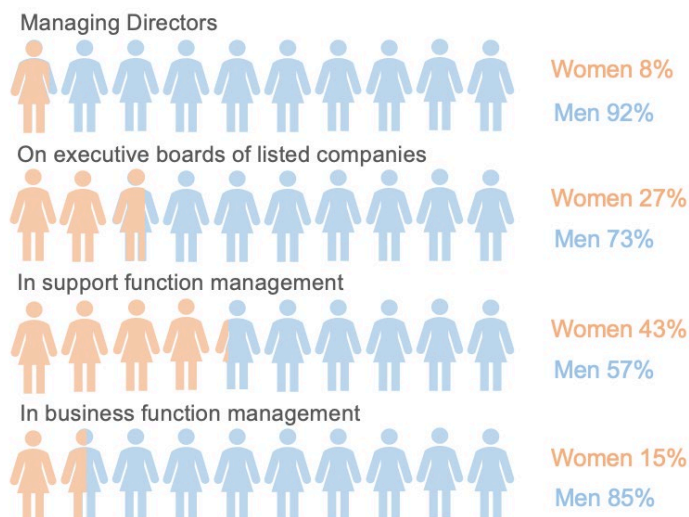


Figure 2. Listed companies' management in 2020 (adapted from THL 2020)

The figure supports the literature on the fact that women who have reached a company's management are usually part of the support functions. Sometimes it can even be seen that the functions that are fundamental to a successful business are referred to as less

valued only because more women are employed in these areas. However, to reach the top management level, experience in operational management is also required. Kullas and Myllyoja (2014, chapter 3) state that as job competition grows, it is increasingly challenging for a woman to show that she can perform as well as a man. When hiring a leader, women are still seen as a risk in a leadership position while men are seen as more of a safe choice. For a male leader it is easier to move from one leadership position to another, as generally they have broader leadership networks, whereas for a woman who has once failed, no one will show support. The middle management is considered as an opportunity for women to get experience for more demanding tasks. (Kullas & Myllyoja 2014, chapter 2–5.)

In comparison to the public sector, the private is known to be even more behind when it comes to gender balance. According to Jabe in 1964 the proportion of women in the private sector top management was around one percent. Twenty years later the number rose to 4 percent and in the twenty years from there, less than one percent more women had been employed to top leadership positions within the companies. (Jabe 2007, 25.) It is more difficult to find up-to-date data from the private sector on the placement of women in management positions. The figure 3 below compares the number of women in 2000 and 2009 in different employer sectors.

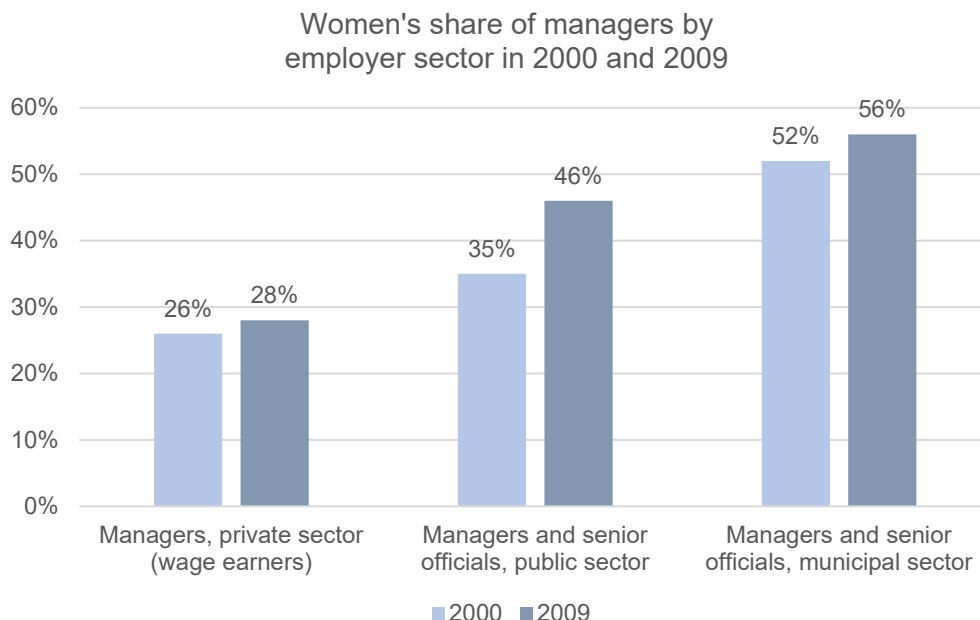


Figure 3. Women as managers by employer sector (adapted from Tilastokeskus 2011)

Comparing the years 2000 and 2009 the number of women as managers has increased the most in the public sector. In 2009, women accounted for a third of managers and sen-



ior officials and half of specialists. As the figure 3 shows, the proportion of women in management positions has been growing slowly since 2000. When comparing the numbers by employer sector, the differences are significant. The largest growth has taken place in the public sector, with 46 percent women as managers in 2009. The slowest change has been in the private sector, which is still known to be conquered by men. In the private sector, the number of women leaders increased only from 26 percent to 28 percent. In 2009, the majority of salaried managers, 78 percent, worked in the private sector. In the municipal sector, the percentage of female managers has also increased but not as considerably as in the public sector. (Tilastokeskus 2011.)

Women tend to position as leaders mostly in different care and education sectors. In 2018, women held the most management positions in child and elderly care as well as social services. Other sectors with more female than male managers were human resources, health care services, hotel, and restaurant sector as well as education. In other sectors, such as information and communication technologies, industrial production, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and retail and wholesale, there are more men than women as leaders. (Statistics Finland 2021b.) Talouselämä lists Finland's 500 largest companies annually based on their turnover. In 2021 the number of female chief executive officers in that list was forty-five which was smaller than the year before. In 2020 the list included forty-nine companies having a female CEO. Although female leaders of companies account for only about 10 percent of last year's total, small progress can be seen since 2018, as that year only thirty-seven women were in the position of a company's CEO. (Pekkonen 2021.)

In Finland women CEOs are usually aged around their fifties. It is rare to see millennials running big companies and this has been justified by the work experience required before being able to enter the top management of a company. On the Kauppalehti ranking on 100 most influential female leaders in 2021, only one was under thirty-five years of age. The age range among the 100 most influential women was between thirty and sixty-nine. Forty-one of them belonged to the age group from fifty to fifty-four. Taking into account from the ranking only the ones who work in a company management not in a board, sixteen have studied MBA degree in management, eight have defended their doctoral dissertations and four of them have completed not only one but two master's degrees. These women are highly educated, mostly economists or Master of Science in technology and 35 percent operate in technology companies. According to the article it is the experience that leads women to the top. (Aaltonen 2021a, 29.)

Sandberg states in her book that the world is still ruled by man. Her argument is based on the fact that if complete equality had been achieved then half of the companies and states

today would be run by women and half of households by men. Overall performance would be improved if all talent and resources were better utilized. Sandberg believes that if equality were achieved the world would be a better place. (Sandberg 2013, 21.) Women have demonstrated having qualities and skills that future leaders are expected to have, competent leaders of the people. For each position an individual with the most adequate qualities and competencies should be chosen, be it a woman or a man. In many cases it is still the most suitable man that is selected among all the candidates.

### **3.2.2 Leadership style and qualities**

Frequently, women find it challenging to adapt a certain leadership style as they are constantly criticized for their qualities and actions. Women are generally pictured being helpful, gentle, friendly, sympathetic, kind, and sensitive. Yet these qualities are not associated directly with leadership. As mentioned earlier when defining qualities of effective leadership, it is linked to ambitious, dominant, self-confident, and powerful, competent, and rather individualistic. Characters, that generally men, are most likely to possess. It is very likely that these qualities, that are so strongly connected with the image of leadership, originate in a long history of male leaders of countries and nations. (Eagly & Carli 2007.)

Professor Alice Eagly of Northwestern University made an observation in her studies on leadership and gender together with her colleagues that women leaders are more respected by their followers, fairer and better mentors for their employees. They are able to communicate their visions more effectively and have a more flexible and creative approach in problem solving. All in all, women conducted better changes within their teams and organizations thanks to their more effective leadership strategies. (Chamorro-Premuzic 2019, 9.) Women have demonstrated to be better mentors, be more honest and ethical than men. Still, only few of them find that they have equal chances for promotion when the decision is made between a woman and a man. Even when the research shows women have qualified better in traits relevant for leadership, they are still not given these opportunities. The standards are set higher for women, and they are required to prove themselves. (Rhode 2017, 57–58.)

A woman feels and thinks simultaneously and uses both intelligence and sensitivity. For women, emotions are important, and relationships are built through them, while men tend to think more that emotions and work issues do not belong together. It is said to be easier for a female leader to create an inspiring work community. However, it is generally more difficult for a woman to refuse something as girls are, from an early age, taught to please others. In working life, kindness and sacrifice for others can cause difficulties for many

women. Gender differences can already be noticed in young girls and boys. Girls talk and listen to each other and when they succeed, they give credit to other people and factors who influenced the result. On the contrary, boys are likely to take all the credit for themselves and early in their games they choose one as the leader of a group. The difference between women and men is visible also in the applying process as women tend not to apply for a job if they do not meet every characteristic or requirement included in the job application, while men do not highlight their lack of competence but believe in their own abilities and dare to make it heard. (Jabe 2007, 24, 43–44, 193.)

### **3.2.3 Successful women leaders**

For girls to grow into leaders, it is important to pay attention from the early stages of their life, and how they are raised and educated. Things that most parents do not even notice or think about can affect what jobs girls will find themselves in as adults. Research shows that little boys get more praise on their actions and efforts whereas little girls get compliments on their person. The core values on which toddlers are raised impacts their future. It is important not to talk about women's and men's jobs but to let the children know that they can do whatever work they want to do. For this reason, it is essential that young girls already at an early age can see and have female leaders as role models in different fields. To encourage more women to advance in their careers up to the highest leadership positions, it is important that those women leaders who have highly progressed in the field of leadership are brought to light. This way, other women who also wish to advance in their careers can be inspired by their predecessors and learn from each other that it is possible.

Finnish magazine *Talouselämä* conducts research every year to list the 100 most influential women in the Finnish business world. When creating the list, the following points in particular have been taken into account: working as a CEO, being part of the board of a large, listed company, the business responsibility, and a position in a management team of a large international company. Along with the positions, other criterias are the size of the business, internationality, complexity, number of personnel to be managed and a person's career development, as well as social impact and visibility. (Aaltonen 2021b, 23.) As this thesis does not focus on the chairpersons of a board but rather on the CEOs and other senior management of the companies, the author decided to mention only a couple of the CEOs from the listing.

The rank of 2021 had eighteen new names on the list. All in all, seventeen are CEOs, forty-six are part of the senior management and the rest positions as chairperson or mem-

ber of board. Third place goes to Annica Bresky who is the CEO of Stora Enso, a company providing renewable packaging, biomaterials, wooden constructions, and paper solutions globally. Bresky is not the only woman from Stora Enso in the ranking as the eight place holds Kati ter Horst and Annette Stude in twelfth place. The first one works as operations manager and the second as company responsibility manager, both part of the company's senior management. (Aaltonen 2021b, 24.)

Swedish Annica Bresky had worked for Stora Enso for more than ten years when she took over as CEO back in 2019. Bresky has been described as straightforward, she wants to lead others by her own example and to develop together with the team. She describes herself as a brave person who wants to enhance a culture where people from all backgrounds are accepted and given the opportunity to show their abilities. For her, equality is a core value, and her leadership style is value-based leadership. Annica Bresky is not only Stora Enso's first female CEO but also the first one in a large forestry company in Finland. According to her the company has come far from what it was twenty years ago. Today, both genders are represented at different levels of the organization. (Lähteenmäki 2020.)

A campaign of Keksi, a creative partner in visual communication and marketing, from 2017 highlights Finland's successful, determined, and courageous female leaders. The campaign presents 365 successful and strong women, and it aims to get more conversations on equality in working life. The other purpose of the campaign is to encourage girls to reach for positions of responsibility and give them role models to help on the way. The campaign consisted of influencers from the politics, business world and organizations. These women were business leaders in areas such as advertising, marketing, and communications, as well as clothing, education, events, and culture. (Keskuskauppakamari s.a.; Keksi Agency 2017.)

### **3.3 Challenges of female leadership**

When thinking about leadership or leaders, our brain directly links it to men, as most leaders in history and still today leading organizations are those of the masculine gender. In most industrialized countries women are way more well-educated and qualified in their studies than males. So why does the number of women leading organizations or in top management positions remain very low? Why are women not even 50 percent represented in the companies' management? Even though there has been a lot of improvement over the decades, leadership can still be viewed as so masculine that when asked it might be difficult to mention even a handful of women leaders. (Chamorro-Premuzic 2019, 1–2.)

### 3.3.1 Glass ceiling

The phrase “Glass ceiling” was first used by a management consultant Marilyn Loden over forty-three years ago in the United States. Working in the telecoms industry she had experienced discrimination as a woman, through underestimations on her work input, daily comments on her appearance, and even once, despite a better performance record than one of her male counterparts, a promotion was given to her male colleague for the reasons he needed it more as he was the family breadwinner. The glass ceiling effect explains the invisible cultural barriers that women encounter in their career advancement. Many times, the glass ceiling effect is linked to women not being able to combine work and family life, women being too emotional or not having strong enough capabilities to manage others. However, during the past decades women have proved these affirmations wrong. There are an increasing number of women leaders that have performed better than their male colleagues in positions that require leading of others. (Loden 2017.)

According to the International Labour Organization the glass ceiling phenomenon refers to the occupational segregation of women being positioned mostly in the business support functions, such as human resources, finance and administration, marketing and sales or communications and public relations. These roles are considered support management functions and they tend to have less power for decision-making or supporting the company strategically. The positions women are usually found working at, have a reflection on their advancement within the company. As men are mostly employed in strategic management positions like general management, operations, corporate social responsibility, research, and development as well as profit and loss. All of them are positions considered to have more strategic input and lead to decision-making roles at higher levels. (International Labour Organization 2019.)

When identifying the barriers women face in their career advancement some researchers use labyrinth as explanative metaphor. Labyrinth represents the journey towards a goal worth reaching for. It is not simple or direct but reminds us that the goal is reachable, but it requires persistence, awareness of progress and analysis of the steps taken towards the right direction. The metaphor tells women who aspire to top leadership positions that there are existing routes, and it is not impossible, regardless the journey might include some unexpected and expected turns while aiming at it. When these obstacles of the labyrinth can be understood and defined, the reasons that are holding women back from leading also can be defined and improvements can be made. (Eagly & Carli 2007.)

Jabe (2007, 9.) states that it is up to women to break the glass ceiling and not others to do it for them. Sandberg believes that barriers for women are due to both external and internal factors. Internal factors refer to those that come from the woman herself, such as low self-esteem, compromising career goals in front of a family that may not even exist yet, or hold back. External factors, on the other hand, relate to discrimination, sexual harassment and, for example, the fact that women must prove their abilities much more than men. It is studied that promotions received by women are usually based on past achievements, while a man can receive a promotion based on his potential alone. She believes women leaders are the solution to women's career advancement. (Sandberg 2013, 22–25.)

For female leaders, generalization by few women leaders as representatives of the entire gender is critical. When a very small number of women are leaders, it is usually easy to generalize and assume that most of the women act in the same way, while the same cannot be repeated in men, for they are in large numbers in leadership positions. (Sandberg 2013, 209.) Even today men are still over-represented in the management positions. The old way of thinking that men are born as leaders supports this inequality. Great leaders are not born but they grow through dedication, perseverance, and good mentorship. Next, the obstacles and barriers keeping women from moving up to management positions will be explained.

### **3.3.2 Combining family and work**

One of the topics that has been undeniably present since the very early stages of female leadership is combining family and work. As history tells, women's first role was to be a mother and wife – family would always come first. Even when women first entered the labour market, they were still the ones taking care of the children and doing the household chores. The business world is heading towards a working culture where one must be more and more available to work than before. Employees are expected to work extra hours and take business calls and answer emails even outside of their working hours. Adding the fact that still today, women are more likely to perform most of the domestic labour and childcare work at home, it is constantly more and more difficult for women to succeed in their careers let alone to compete with their male counterparts. (International Labour Organization 2019.)

Since women have entered the labour market, having children has been seen as a difficulty for women's employment. At that moment, the research on the impact of family life responsibilities on women's work life began. The development of free parental leaves for mothers after a childbirth, as well as later a public day care system started to help solve this problem. Women in Finland have a better position in reconciling family life and work

than women in many other countries. Over the years, women's maternity leave has been very much supported, and women have been allowed to be with their children after their birth. However, for women to be able to guarantee a career as well as advancement in it, parental leave must be divided between both parents so that the break in work is not too long and therefore is not detrimental to a woman's career. Nevertheless, still today women are the ones taking most of the parental and care leave. The organizations support women in taking their leaves, when to solve the problem men's workplaces should start to support their parental leaves too. (Lammi-Taskula, Salmi & Parrukoski 2009, 14.)

Compared to other countries worldwide, Finland has rather good parental leave conditions. Opportunities for parental leave started to develop in the 1970s. During the last ten years men have been in the centre of family leave reforms. To give both parents equal opportunities to bring up their children and be equally present in their lives, it is fundamental to back up and encourage men also to take paternity leave. When these matters are in both parents' hands, and not only women are referred to as working mothers but men also as working fathers, then a step forward has been taken. Yet, the challenge is breaking the invisibility of men's parenting in the workplace, as it still raises some eyebrows. (Lammi-Taskula & al. 2009, 15; Stern & Cooper 2018, 55.) With the latest reform, the period of parental leave was extended to thirteen months. However, without any compulsion, women are the ones who will presumably continue to use most of the parental leave and stay home with the children. This has a direct impact on women's career advancement, which might suffer from long breaks in the career for the purposes of family care or parental leave after maternity leave. (Kullas 2021; ILO 2007, 197.)

Women find it very hurtful if someone points in the direction that she has failed as a mother. If a woman strives high and invests in her career immediately others think about what kind of mother she is. On the other hand, if a man is in a leadership position, he is not questioned about his relationship with his children. The same skills that a woman learns through motherhood are extremely valued in leadership roles as well. Family life improves, for example, pressure tolerance, patience, communication and organizational skills, efficiency, openness, and faith in the future. (Jabe 2007, 155.) This significant experience received generally by women from home should be valued more when it comes to women's careers.

### **3.4 Gender equality**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) works towards better working and living conditions of women and men, and equality in workplaces for all workers bringing together governments, employers, and workers to make these happen. The agency highlights the

importance of spreading information on the legal aspects of gender equality in the business world. Finland has been a member state since 1920. Since World War II, gender discrimination has been experienced, which is why the theme has also been in the spotlight internationally. Increasingly, from the 1960s onwards the idea was created that equality would increase if family responsibilities were shared equally between both parents. Several countries have enacted laws to prevent discrimination and to support equality in employment. To ensure that equality legislation is properly followed, many countries have the labour inspectorate monitoring this. ILO has an important role when it comes to equality matters as it sets the minimum standards internationally. Despite the standards generally being for both women and men, many of them cover the rights of women's work and the rights of gender equality. To promote gender equality or gender equity, it is necessary to understand the roles, positions and needs of both women and men as these differ from one another. (ILO 2007, 7, 9, 12–13.)

ILO has four Conventions that are considered particularly important for supporting gender equality. Those are Equal Remuneration Convention introduced in 1951 (No. 100), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention in 1958 (No.111), Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention in 1981 (No. 156) and Maternity Protection Convention introduced in 2000 (No. 183). The Convention No. 183 states that pregnancy or being a mother should not be an obstacle for employment. On the contrary, companies need to support women by taking motherhood into account in their work policies and conditions, right from recruitment. All employees regardless of gender should be given equal opportunities for career development. Any new positions that open in the company should be equally available to all employees as a job advertisement or a promotion opportunity. Also, training and mobility opportunities should be available and encouraged for all employees. In the name of equality, every worker should have the opportunity to reconcile family responsibilities and work. To support this, workplaces should increasingly show that these matters have been considered. (ILO 2007, 6, 15, 30, 35.)

In the enterprise survey conducted by ILO in 2018, the results show that two thirds of companies investigated considered their actions towards gender balance in the workplace improved their business outcomes. The research shows that organizations with gender-balanced management are more likely to have better creativity, innovation, and transparency, increased profitability, and productivity, better reputation, and an assurance that the talented employees will stay in the company. Today more than ever, to have gender diversity in a company's management is a crucial factor for competitive business. (International Labour Organization 2019.)



## **4 Female leadership in male-dominated industry**

In this chapter the method used in this research will be explained. The thesis is research-oriented and conducted as qualitative research. The method chosen to collect data is an individual semi-structured interview. The perspective for this thesis is the lack of women especially in male-dominated industries' upper management. The author chose to interview six women operating in these fields to compare the insights and outcome of each interview with the years of experience each participant has in leadership. For confidential reasons the author agreed with the participants that their workplaces and identities will stay completely anonymous throughout the whole research.

### **4.1 Research method and data**

#### **4.1.1 Semi-structured interviews**

This thesis uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is generally chosen when people are the centre of the research. This particular research method is based on interpretations as the phenomenon is described through people's feelings, expressions, opinions, and experiences. In other words, the key in this method is the information that is expressed in words. Qualitative research is used to investigate areas such as development of expertise, competence, sense of community in workplaces, community values, studying, and leadership. Using this method, it is important to remember that people's experiences and their significance are subjective and can be interpreted in various ways. Experiences are formed in individuals' lives and perceived reality, where the experiences become subjectively understood and personally significant. In a research situation, meanings are related to the human mind and associated with personal values, perceptions, ideals, beliefs, opinions, and feelings. (Walliman, 129; Vilkkä 2021a, chapter 1.)

Interviewing is a practical method when the aim of the research is to produce information that concerns, for example, opinions, experiences, values, observations, or perceptions of people. In this method the data is produced as a result of interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. The interviews can be either unstructured, semi-structured or structured. The different forms of qualitative research interviews are for instance, a group interview, an expert interview, a theme interview, or a form interview. The number of people interviewed at the same time depends on the objectives of the research. The most common one is theme interviews conducted individually. (Vilkkä 2021b, chapter 5; Jyväskylän yliopisto 2020.)

As this research is investigating the personal experiences and opinions of each interviewee on a topic that is vast, a semi-structured or theme interview was chosen to get

enough information out of the interactions. Theme interviews usually include those themes and questions that are mandatory to answer the research problem (Vilkka 2021b, chapter 5). Semi-structured interviews normally contain both structured and unstructured parts (Walliman, 92). For this interview method, the author has created a structured question guide, see appendix 1 and 2. The interview guide is divided into four different themes most essential to explain the research problem. These themes are career, leadership, career development and equality. The first topic aims to find out the leadership background of the participants and how they have ended up in their current positions. The following topic covers the discussion of the interviewees' experiences and opinions on female leadership from the perspective of operating in a male dominated field where each of these women work. The third topic has its focus on career development and equal opportunities in comparison with men. Finally, the last topic is about possible equality programs for employees.

Having a question guide as a base for the interviews makes the analysis and comparison of each interview outcome more convenient as this way it is guaranteed that the same themes or topics will be covered in each interaction situation. At the same time a semi-structured interview leaves opportunity for additional questions that might arise during the interaction depending on the answers of each interviewee. The question guide has been sent to each participant with the invitation for the interview. This way the participants are aware which themes will be discussed during the interaction and they are able to prepare. Sending the interview questions beforehand is also important to avoid any unnecessary stress that an interview situation might cause in some people.

#### **4.1.2 Participants**

The participants for the interviews were selected according to their medium level leadership positions and the field they work in. The aim was to select women with different years of experience as forepersons and this way to get the most comprehensive data out of the interviews. The interviewees were chosen from male-dominated fields with the objective to hear their opinions and experiences of leadership and opportunities for career development. In 2020 the most male-dominated industries in Finland were construction with 90 percent of the employees being men, transportation, and storage, with 79 percent men and manufacturing; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning and water supply; sewerage and waste management, where 74 percent were men (Statistics Finland 2021a). Each woman interviewed works in one of the male-majority industries; mentioned above. As they work in companies that operate in male dominated industries, the author thought that it is a good example to investigate and find out these women's opinions and thoughts

concerning their medium level leadership positions and possibilities for moving onto the top management.

The women interviewed have between nine months and twenty-five years of experience in leadership positions. The positions they work in include production supervisors, business unit and department heads, team leaders, and senior managers amongst others. Most of the women interviewed work in support functions. Here, support functions refer roughly to all functions that are not directly considered as core functions of the business. All the interviewees have gotten their managerial experiences in the companies they are currently working in. Except for one, none of them have directly started as foreperson in their actual workplace but have climbed up in their careers each in their own ways. Roughly speaking, the women interviewed are between the ages of twenty and sixty. Each of them works in a company that operates in a male dominated industry. The participants of the research will be kept completely anonymous, and only their experiences and thoughts will be shared in a way that their responses cannot be linked to their identities. The participants are listed in the figure 4 below according to their years of managerial experience.



Figure 4. Introduction of the interviewees

#### 4.1.3 Data collection

The interviewing has been conducted individually with one participant at a time on Microsoft Teams. All interviews were in Finnish except for one in English. To have the interaction in an online meeting service, it gives flexibility for the participant but also allows the interviewer to choose an environment where they feel more comfortable and are able to concentrate better (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1979, 85). To comply with the Covid-19 pandemic and remote work regulations in Finland, the possibility of face-to-face interviews was ruled out at an early stage of the research. Microsoft Teams was chosen because the author had experience using it and had found it practical, as well as easy to use. All interviews were audio-recorded, for which the chosen platform worked particularly well. By audio-recording the author made sure all information that could serve in the research would be available word by word when analysing and comparing the interview data. This way during the interaction the researcher could concentrate on the questions and answers rather than

taking notes. Each interview took around thirty minutes. After each interview the most useful sections and topics discussed were transcribed to have better use of the data when analysing it. Out of other options for recording the interviews such as taking notes, filling out a form, or videotaping, the author felt that the most practical way was to audio-record. All interviews were conducted between 29 September and 8 October 2021.

A dated and signed consent form was a condition for participation in the interview in order to agree on the terms of the implementations and responsibilities. By signing the consent form, the participant agreed to have gotten relevant information about the research and its objectives and the practical implementation of the interview as well as the topics to be covered. The interviewee agreed to have received information about the processing of personal data in the research – personal information will be treated confidentially and securely and will not be passed on to outsiders. The researcher promised that the companies nor the fields where the participants work as well as their identities will not be revealed and will remain completely anonymous throughout the whole research process. In the consent form the interviewee agrees to the interview being audio-recorded. The researcher promises that the interview recording, and transcription will be stored confidentially and removed right after the completion of the thesis. The consent form also stated that the participation in the interview is voluntary, and the interviewee may choose not to answer some questions, may interrupt the interview, or cancel the participation in the research if so desired. Both the researcher as well as the interviewee have a copy of the consent form signed by both parties.

## **4.2 Results of the research**

In this chapter the outcome of the empirical data is introduced. The data is analysed by themes that are part of the question guide. The themes include working as a female leader in male-majority industry, opportunities for career advancement and thoughts on their companies' top management and how to get more women to the top as well as insight on equality in the workplace. The aim of the data analysis is to find out if differences arise due to the years of experience that the interviewees have in leadership positions. Each interviewee answered the questions from their own perspective and based on their own experiences and opinions. For the purpose of this thesis all direct quotations are translated by the author into English. It is worth noting that the results represent the experiences of the six women interviewed and not every woman may agree with all the findings. Opinions and views may differ depending on many factors such as size of the company, the industry, one's personality and work experience of each individual.

#### 4.2.1 Aspects on managing in male-majority industry

##### *Working with men is straight forward*

Working with men was perceived as easy and very straight-forward. Few of the interviewees had earlier experiences in female dominated industries and in comparison, men were generally considered clearer, and their feedback to be more direct. There were no cliques the same way as in a workplace with more women. Cliques were perceived negatively. They may also occur in these companies, but the number has been perceived to be smaller when there are more men in the workplace. Some interviewees commented that as women they would get additional tasks that they know would not be given to men. On the other hand, it did not seem to bother the ones who experienced this. Additionally, women were more likely to perform tasks or help others with tasks that do not directly belong to them.

When asked about being a foreperson in a male dominated industry all interviewees said they have been accepted well regardless of their gender.

“I have not particularly strongly experienced gender issues, that it would have an impact, but yes I do remember, of course, that I was really young when I started, an inexperienced young woman.” (Interviewee 3)

She added that at the beginning of her managerial career she had noticed some behaviour due to the attitude of men towards her higher position. Another interviewee who had been a supervisor for nine months said that as a woman you must earn a certain kind of respect. Where a man’s word is a law, as a woman in her twenties, some men have difficulty receiving instructions or commandments from her and thus she feels that respect must be earned by one’s own actions in order to be accepted to the position.

Participants who had been in their fields longer found that gender did not affect how they were accepted. One interviewee said she had not experienced her gender to be either a benefit or a disadvantage. Other interviewee stated that some employees may even be proud to have one of the few female managers in the organization. Few of the interviewees with longer work experience pointed out that in the early days of their careers, it did not even occur for them to think that some behaviour could be due to their being female. Nowadays, however, as these themes have been so present all over, they have also begun to pay more attention to the behaviour of others. One of the interviewees shared an example where she had found herself in situations where she could not link someone’s particular behaviour to anything else so she started to think if it could be because of her gender.

### ***Strengths of female managers***

When asked about the strengths of female leaders, the responses divided into two different perspectives. Others felt that women are perceived to have more capacity for empathy and be more easily approachable which, however, they admit can also be due to personality not just the gender. Women were linked to having more attention to detail as well as being capable of taking their subordinates and different areas into account more broadly than men. One manager had received positive feedback thanks to her ability to listen and be easily approachable. Others felt that it would be too generalizing to say women have more empathy and men are tougher as this does not apply to everyone. One interviewee clarified that she does not see the strengths of being gender specific. Common view was that everyone should be seen as an individual and the attitude is what matters rather than the gender. It was felt that how you act is directly linked to how others will treat and respect you. It was noted that today, everyone should already focus on their abilities and doing instead of gender.

One of the interviewees' believed women are more motivated in her company, as women applying for that particular field usually have to make a clearer decision to step into such male-majority industry. While for men, the field is more of a natural solution if they do not come up with anything else. Some felt that due to their gender they must prove their know-how which was sometimes experienced to be challenging. Two of the interviewees in higher managerial positions told how they have found themselves in a situation where they are the only woman in a room of the management team. At the beginning of their careers or in certain situations, they have wondered whether they have been recruited simply because it can be shown that women are also in management positions.

“I myself have also wondered whether I am just the one to show that hey here we are, that, as I said, I am looking forward to getting more women into that management team.” (Interviewee 2)

“I remember thinking early on in my career that it is kind of risk free for a man to nominate a woman as a manager because if it is a success, he has done something great promoting a woman but if it does not work it is kind of risk free because then you can always say that well it does not work having a female in that position.” (Interviewee 5)

To encourage others, it was added that this feeling will change with years of experience as you get the trust for your own doing. The ones in higher managerial positions had experienced feeling outside as being the only woman in the group. The way of acting “guys let's do that together” was still present in some situations. In Finland many old companies

remain very traditional which means they have saunas in various locations. Sometimes, when in a more laid-back setting all men would go to the sauna together and the only woman of the team would be left outside. In such situations, for example, it is emphasized that there is only one woman on the management team.

### ***Long roots of male leaders***

All six women worked in a company where the top management consisted mostly of men. It could be interpreted from the interviews that even the few women who had surpassed the glass ceiling to the top management received pride and admiration. Although it was also doubted whether these women were selected just to show that the upper management level is not only in the power of men. To the question of why top management is so male dominated, the most common answer was related to the sectors being old-fashioned and having long roots of always having male-majority. When asked about the possible solution one interviewee stated that the old-fashioned way should already be left behind and everyone should be given a chance. One theory was linked to whether men had bigger authority to get things done as they are perceived to have more courage and a stronger voice to express matters more directly.

One interviewee mentioned about the commanding and powerful way of leading which previous generations may have imagined to be the best way great performance is achieved. However, she strongly believed that future generations will not accept someone shouting at you in red and this leadership style will no longer work in modern times. Another interviewee is confident in the younger generation of leaders as they have shown to have better vision of the people. She hopes with them the old-fashioned patriarchal way of leading will gradually change. The younger generation is believed to dare to make those decisions needed. Some talented young women had already shown they can perform well in a position and hence have demonstrated these prejudices to be false. However, there are still some old biases that affect. Men are supposed to have more understanding of machines and how these male dominated industries work. One of the women interviewed stated that everyone should already move forward from the thinking that there still are men's and women's sectors.

### **4.2.2 Solutions to get more women to top management**

When asked about the solution to get women to companies' top management, the majority mentioned the need for more examples or role models. Even though it has been noticed that there has been change and that more and more women are starting to operate in these male dominated industries, they are still worried how few girls are interested in

choosing these fields at school. For change to take place, girls should also be encouraged to apply to fields of study that are generally more popular among boys. It was mentioned that more women should be made to set an example for others, so that it would be more natural for girls to apply to these fields when they would see that women can succeed too, for example, in construction, transportation, or technology companies. Now, not all possible know-how is being utilized, as people are not directed to these fields. One interviewee also stated that more examples of advancement opportunities should start to demonstrate that the positions of women do not just remain at the level of specialists or specialist managers. One of the interviewees highlighted through an example that when one woman opens a door and gets in a managerial position it will be easier for others to follow.

“Personally, I have seen that it was a big threshold to take that first female person to a certain position, which might have been thought to be better or somehow more suitable for a man, but then it has been noticed that women do just as well in those positions, that it is not a gender issue but more an attitude issue.” (Interviewee 3)

One of the interviewees expressed that the company she works in is still very conservative in some questions. She had got a feeling that the top leaders do not trust women as much as men and perhaps it is easier for them to choose similar people as the already existing majority. In her opinion the management team still favours like-minded people which shows from there. She added that the top management probably sees that the matters move quicker when there is a man talking to a man. She was happy women have even been able to break the glass ceiling to middle management positions but highlighted that the next step would be ensuring that they are also getting to the next level.

One of the themes brought up was that women are too afraid to apply for higher leadership positions. The reason for the lack of women in top management positions was not only put in the management of the company but also the women themselves must do more. One of the interviewees stated that women have not applied boldly enough for more challenging positions. During one of the interviews, it was pointed out that getting into a certain leadership position within a company might require working in two countries, whether an individual is ready for that. On the other hand, when work requires moving to another country for a certain period, the family questions come up. Some of the women stated that they see it rather as a competence question than gender based dependant on whether there are enough competent people at the time for that position.

One of the interviewees wondered whether it is a tradition that the industry she works in is very male oriented but explained that in her company this argument would only make



sense if the recruitment had been done within the company for the top management positions. Where she works the CEO, for example, had been chosen from outside. She noted that generally people applying to CEO's come from very similar industries and therefore the group to select from probably includes more male than female candidates. She remained confident that change is on the way as more and more women have entered the middle management in the company and if this continues women should also reach the top management. For now, it is understandable why most of the upper management are men as the group to choose from does not yet include enough women who have similar experience. By taking into consideration the actual structure of a company, if there is no quick change and only men remain in the top leadership positions, then something is wrong.

Some of the interviewees brought up quotas. The management of a company needs to have the willingness to make an exception or decide another way to have more women as part of the management team rather than maintaining a quota. Quotas were not considered a solution for promoting women. Many specifically mentioned they would not want to be selected for a position because of a quota as then it would not feel that they were given the job thanks to their competence and abilities.

“Honestly, I would never want to be any quota-woman, that we would have a female quota, that 40% ... of the organization’s management team should be women and then if you get the feeling that I was chosen for this because they had to get a woman, I think that would be absolutely terrible.” (Interviewee 6)

One of the interviewees stated that she wants to believe the most adequate individual is chosen for each position. There are no certain routes to top management, it is through hard work and dedication. Many mentioned that everyone should be given an opportunity. One admitted having changed positions multiple times within the company but never having a female manager above her. Nonetheless, she was truly blessed with her foremen and notes that their support has been a big part in her career development as she has never had to worry about her career even when being on maternity leave.

“I have been very fortunate to have the encouragement and support of my manager even though my manager has been different people throughout my career. I have always felt like I have had the support and encouragement from my manager, and it made no difference if I am a woman or not.” (Interviewee 5)

Other interviewees also mentioned that having the support of the manager is crucial for advancement and self-development as no one is ready for a leadership role directly when graduating from school. Many had encountered great managers throughout their career

who supported them in their career paths. One of the interviewees in a higher position said she tries to support women's career development through her own actions. If she must choose from two equal employees, one being a woman and the other a man she tries to lift the woman up. In her company during recent years more and more women have started in specialist roles, but they still lack from the top management.

#### **4.2.3 Views on advancement**

From the support functions some felt ambitious to advance for a higher managerial position on the operational side. On the other hand, few interviewees who had already progressed from several positions upwards in their career paths felt comfortable in their current position. For them, status was not seen as a value itself, but the meaningfulness of work and challenging enough tasks were considered much more important. Specialist roles were also found to be equally interesting, and it would not necessarily have to be a higher leadership position throughout their entire career.

In general, these women had ended up in their managerial positions mostly due to expressing an interest in advancement as opposed to applying through regular channels. Most had embarked on specialist positions and then climbed career ladders up little by little to their current managerial positions. When asking if these women felt they had equal opportunities with men for promotion, the answers were divided into two groups. Participants with most leadership experience believed that regardless of gender everyone had the same opportunities for advancement in their companies. At least, neither of them personally had encountered any obstacles in their careers.

Few of the women currently employed in the support functions said they would like to advance in their careers. However, they felt they did not have the same opportunities coming from the support functions. One participant had applied for a higher managerial position to her actual one for curiosity but also to show that she is willing to accept a more demanding position in the company. The human resources manager of the company started the interview by saying that he was surprised she had applied for the position. When asked he did not give any reasonable explanation on why he was surprised and during the whole interview situation she could feel he was not at all interested in what she had to say. This woman could feel that he had made a prior assessment that she would not be suitable for that position but had to interview her because of her gender.

When the recruiter later called back to give the news that she was not selected for the second round the reason was she was not tough enough. The recruiter even proposed her other positions which were lower managerial positions than her current role. She felt it

was outrageous that he had the right to be surprised at her applying for that position and wondered how the interviewer had been able to analyse her based on a fifteen-minute-interview and assess whether she was dominant enough or not to the position in question. She felt that the person had not even taken the time to check her background as he proposed to her a lower position. In her opinion, the inner circle of upper management is still very masculine, and the company has such deep-rooted mindsets that the head of a production department can only be of a certain kind. She wondered whether the company really does not have enough potential female personnel who would be able to take on this level positions or if it was because they are not supported and mentored so that they one day could have the necessary abilities to take on a higher leadership role. After a negative experience like this it may leave a useless feeling for future job applications.

One of the interviewees interested in advancing to corporate functions explained that in her opinion being in a managerial position should be about taking care of the structure and not necessarily having to be a specialist to get the role. In any case the specialists in the team should be the ones who master or have better understanding of the production. In the company she is currently working at, there has been some change trying to get the message forward that to become a manager it is not required to be a specialist, but the change has been rather slow. Few said they would want to believe that regardless of gender everyone has relatively the same chances to whatever position but admitted that perhaps women must perform a little bit better and do more. One specified that she felt that women were often required to try harder as they are underrepresented in some cases. Sometimes it is felt that for a man to be promoted it is enough he is an average employee, but for a woman she needs an extra push to get the same respect for the same input.

#### **4.2.4 Equality in the workplace**

When asking if equality or inequality appears in the workplace, no one had experienced genders as an issue to being treated differently in everyday working situations. One interviewee stated that for her in working life there are no longer genders, only individuals. Others admitted they had experienced some bad jokes or sayings like “by the way this does not apply to you” but said to have toughen-up to these jokes over the years and have learned not to let these kinds of things bother them. From a manager’s perspective equal treatment was considered a very important subject. It is the foreperson’s responsibility to make sure that everyone will be treated equally, and each employee gets their voice heard. In one company, operational workers were still more valued and better paid than the ones in support functions, especially if it was typically a female-type support function such as cleaning. There remains plenty of work to do for improvement.

One of the interviewees wondered whether an equality plan would make any difference or would it be a risk in a conservative company as hers. Others said their company probably had an equality plan, but it has not been visible, nor did they have more knowledge about it. Whereas others knew that in their workplace the theme of equality had been addressed in the company's operating or ethical principles in the broader context of equality. There was no knowledge of a separate plan focusing solely on gender equality. In one organization the reason for the plan not being visible was linked to the people responsible for these matters being majority men.

## 5 Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the empirical data in relation to the theoretical framework presented in chapter 3 as well as present the conclusions, suggestions for further research and author's own learning during the writing process. The objective of this thesis is to answer the two main research questions: What is holding women back from making it to the leading positions? and How can women get equal career opportunities as men? By interviewing female leaders in middle management in male dominated fields, the author has got some relevant information and important views on the subject and thanks to them can provide answers to the research questions.

### 5.1 Conclusions

#### ***What is holding women back from making it to the leading positions?***

With the first research question, the aim was to find the possible barriers that slow down or, in the worst case, completely prevent women from advancing in their career from middle management positions to the company's top management team. The empirical data showed that the factors slowing down women in these sectors include the following:

- Men tend to select other men
- The image of a leader is too narrow
- Women have to try even harder than men
- There is a lack of encouragement for women's career advancement

Through the interactions, it turned out that in the companies of the interviewees, the positions of the top management were filled mainly by men. Some women felt that this was linked to the industry's old habits or traditions of hiring men as a rule. Others were of the strong opinion that the atmosphere in corporate management of their companies is very masculine and there is no room left for women. In the interviews, it was pointed out that when a new place opens, those in charge are likely to choose the like-minded and similar people to themselves, who now happen to be men. Women are not given as many opportunities. Rhode's theory (2017, 57–58) supports these views that the chances for a woman to be promoted when the selection is between a female and a male are very low. Theory states that still today, word of mouth plays a big part when selecting a candidate for a position (Chamorro-Premuzic 2019). This supports the claim that the interviews revealed that the men in upper management tend to choose only like-minded, good guys who they may even know from outside of work.

The theory supports the empirical findings that there is a deep-rooted picture of what kind of person is seen for a leadership position. Many times, this individual fits the criteria:

white, middle class, heterosexual, masculine male. (Nickisch 3.3.2020, 5–20 min.) Based on the interviews, this is still the case in the most male dominated sectors where women remain underrepresented in positions of power.

“It may be because the women we have do not dare to apply for those positions and are not encouraged to take those leadership positions and then it is so deep the way of thinking that what kind of the leader should be and only one exemplary achievement is seen that it is a young man, tough kind.” (Interviewee 4)

Theory states that in Finland the leadership image is still too narrow to this day and should be challenged. Companies should invest in diversity as now the country is stuck with the idea that all managers need to be engineers. (Leiviskä 2018.) One of the interviewees made a good observation that to become a manager one should not be required to have a specialist background. Leadership positions should be more about taking care of the structure and having the specialists of different areas part of the team, she highlighted. Theory suggests as well that companies should be more open to employ leaders from different fields of education and emphasize that there is no single route to reach managerial positions. If more women are to lead a company, the standards need to be changed, not the way these women act or lead. (Leiviskä 2018.)

From several interviews, it emerged that women felt they needed to do a little more in order for their work input to receive the same appreciation as men’s input. The requirements were set higher for women, and they must prove their competence. This view is also linked to the fact that women felt that their skills were not trusted as much as those of their male counterparts. The theory of Rhode (2017, 57–58) supports this as women are required more often to prove themselves and their standards are set higher. Even women have proved to have qualified better in traits relevant for leadership, they are just not given the opportunities. Sandberg’s theory (2013, 22–25) also agrees with the view that women must prove their abilities much more than men. Women are generally promoted due to their past achievements, while a man can receive a promotion based on his potential alone. One interviewee had noticed that men received a promotion with an average input and result, whereas a woman was required to do much more for an advancement.

The theory indicates that more and more often a woman is seen as a risk choice, while a man is, so to speak, a safe choice for a certain position (Kullas & Myllyoja 2014, chapter 2–5). This statement also came up in one of the interviews. One of the women experienced early in her career that for a man to promote her as a manager it would be kind of risk free as they could put the blame on something else than what probably would have

been the real reason if it ended up not working. It is not enough that one woman is selected for the management team, it must also be ensured that the work environment and culture support her positioning.

***How can women get equal career opportunities as men?***

To answer the second research question, the interviewees were asked what they thought was the solution to get women as well to the top leadership positions of a company in male-majority industry. This question can be viewed from two perspectives: the perspective of the woman and the perspective of the company's management. The most common findings were:

- More role models are needed
- Focus on abilities not gender
- Supportive manager is essential part of the career path
- There are not enough women to choose from
- Women should not be only employed in support functions

When asked about the solution to get more women to companies' top management, the majority mentioned the need for more examples or role models. For each position someone is the first woman to set the example for others. There always has to be the one who proves possible prejudices wrong, and, in the workplace, it has been noticed that women perform tasks just as well as men, this way the change takes place slowly. As there are a low number of female leaders, the generalizations on the basis of a few women as representatives of the entire gender is critical for them (Sandberg 2013, 209). Prejudices often prevent the first woman from being selected for the position. There is a need to get women in top management who could serve as role models for others in the fact that it is also possible for a woman to reach high in their career in a male dominated company.

As one of the interviewees said, the focus should be put to the abilities not the gender and for each position the individual with most suitable competences for the role should be chosen. Some of the interviewed expressed they wanted to believe the most adequate individual is always chosen for each position. Many mentioned that everyone should be given an opportunity. All individuals should be equally supported and mentored in their career paths. One of the most common findings in the empirical data was the importance of a supportive manager. It was highlighted that one's own manager is crucial for career advancement as they set an example and support in the development as a professional but also as a person. Women need to be encouraged more to start applying for more demanding positions. Even more women should be encouraged to apply in fields of study that are generally more popular among men (e.g., construction, transportation, or technology).

From the perspective of a company's management, women do not end up in the top positions as there are too few of them everywhere in the structure of the company. For this reason, when choosing a suitable person for a role, the ratio of applicants to the genders does not go hand in hand. This makes the selection narrow. There was a general consensus in the interviews that both the women themselves and the management of the company need to do better in order for change to be achieved. The literature in the field shows differing opinions as to whose job it is to solve the problem of the lack of women in top management positions. Jabe (2007, 9) states that it is up to women to break the glass ceiling and not others to do it for them. Sandberg (2013, 22–25.) believes that barriers for women are due to both external and internal factors. Internal factors women can themselves influence, such as low self-esteem, compromising career goals with family, or holding back. External factors, on the other hand, relate to whether the culture in the workplace supports the idea of welcoming more women or not.

The empirical findings show that women are still largely in charge of support functions in a company. According to the International Labour Organization, the roles considered support management functions tend to have less power for decision-making or supporting the company strategically. The positions women are usually found working at, have a reflection on their advancement within the company. As men are mostly employed in strategic management positions like general management, operations, corporate social responsibility, research, and development as well as profit and loss. All of them are positions considered to have more strategic input and lead to decision-making roles at higher levels. (International Labour Organization 2019.) It would be essential to focus on supporting women positioning to all levels and areas in a company as it should guarantee them better possibilities for career prospects.

Among the interviewees, quota was not considered as a right solution as it forcibly raises the question as to whether a person was elected only because of the female quota and not because of her competences. The theory of Kullas (2021) supports the empirical research as the importance should be put to the women's career advancement which guarantees experience in leading a business and thereafter moving up to the top leadership positions. The quota does not guarantee long-term employment, but rather temporarily gets a woman in a certain position, but this alone is not enough. The culture of upper management must support the selection of women so that they also get into the feeling of being part of the team.



Overall, the empirical data showed that interviewees had adapted well to a male dominated field and that no differentiative behaviour was experienced in daily work. Nonetheless, some expressed that the basis for career advancement is not the most equal in male dominated fields as the requirements were not always the same for both genders. Results of the empirical data demonstrated that perceptions through years of managerial experience and age play a role in the responses. Compared the interviewees' years of experience, the ones with the most experience found stronger the view that everyone was seen as an individual and they did not pay attention to one's gender. On the other hand, the ones with less experience had noticed more the different behaviours in the workplace and believed certain matters were due to gender.

According to the research findings, the biggest slowdown in women's career development is unconscious attitudes and culture of the upper management. Men and also women often unconsciously favour men and as a result women are left out. The research aims to encourage companies to observe how they could benefit from more employee diversity. Today, old-fashioned models and molds of what type of person should fit a certain position or a task needs to be left behind and instead concentrate on having all possible potential. The more diverse team, the better the input as people from similar backgrounds are more likely to have similar perspectives, resulting in only limited new ideas and innovations for a business.

The focus should be put on how to end the segregation of the fields or professions of men and women. To enable equal career prospect for women, new attitudes and more role models should be introduced, girls should be encouraged to study male majority fields and women should be supported to apply for more challenging positions. Additionally, the employer should pay attention to the recruiting and make sure no certain type of person is being favoured. Instead of focusing solely on how many women work in the top management of Finnish companies, more resources should be put into what functions women manage, as managers from support functions less often move into the company's top management. To get started, the upper management needs to find out whether the company has internal glass ceilings and decide to promote and support female leadership in the company with practical actions.

## **5.2 Validity and reliability of the research**

The validity of a research refers to how well the chosen research method succeeds in measuring what is intended to find out from the research (Vilkka 2021b, chapter 7). The chosen research method for this thesis supported the implementation of the research and

helped to provide answers to the research questions. The author believes that the interviewees were chosen correctly as they were able to answer the interview questions through their work experiences and due to their current positions in the middle management and thus help to provide information to resolve the research problems. In terms of the research, it can be assumed that there was no reason for the interviewees to give misleading answers or false information in the interviews as each of the participants seemed sincerely interested in the topic and therefore wanted to contribute to its implementation.

The reliability of a research, on the other hand, refers to how accurate the results of the research are and whether the conclusions drawn correspond to the reality from which they were obtained. The reliability of a research can be undermined, for example, by a misunderstanding of the interview questions or by the researcher's mistakes in saving the answers. (Vilkka 2021b, chapter 7.) When considering the reliability of the empirical data, the author trusts the truth of the research findings. However, it is important to note that only a limited number of interviews were conducted for the research. The results of the study are based on the interviewees' own experiences and views. The researcher sought to be as neutral as possible in the interview situations so that her own opinions or observations did not in any way affect the interviewees' responses. The author was careful not to misinterpret the empirical data in the research and by recording the interviews the author ensured that all information was available word for word even after the interactions.

### **5.3 Recommendations for further research**

Female leadership, as well as leadership in general, are interesting themes and there still remain plenty of perspectives that could be further researched. To gain a broader understanding and to be able to better compare the experiences of the female managers, the research could be re-conducted, and more women interviewed. Given that this thesis focused on the advancement of women in male dominated sectors conversely it would be important that the advancement of men in female dominated fields be also developed and supported. If men are the subject that want to be researched, one suggestion would be to study the barriers of men who do not fit the leadership prototype: white, middle class, heterosexual, masculine male. Diversity is another very current topic and Finland has recently been widely criticized for discrimination against people with a foreign background when it comes to applying for a job and recruiting. From the perspective of leadership, it would be important and interesting to find out how equal opportunities could be achieved between both native Finns and people with a foreign background.

For the research not to become too extensive, many delimitations on the subject had to be made. Further research could focus more on measures to see how the role of women in

leadership could be better supported in practice. The experiences of managers in the female and male-dominated sectors also probably differ from each other, so it could be one aspect of the investigation. As the interviews showed, there is an equality plan in every company where the participants worked, as it is required of all companies with more than thirty employees. However, an equality plan is useless if it is not properly presented, therefore one suggestion for future research would be to find out how an equality plan could better support each individual's career development.

#### **5.4 Evaluation of thesis process and own learning**

In this section, the implementation of the thesis as well as my own learning and development during the process is reviewed. I had no previous experience of conducting research, but I found writing the thesis an interesting and rewarding process. This thesis was completed during the autumn of 2021. At first, it was challenging to find an interesting topic. When the right topic was found after becoming acquainted with old theses, browsing through business articles online, and reflecting on my own areas of interest with my future career in mind, getting started was easier. The topic is important to me as I have already had few great female managers in my career and as I think it is important to support women's career advancement. The schedule was tight as I worked full time alongside writing the thesis.

For the theoretical part, I gathered the necessary information from various professionally written articles, literature in the field, a few studies on women's leadership, and a podcast. Although there is a huge amount of information available, the compilation of the theoretical framework was time consuming, and I admit having set aside less time for what I used in the end. As I was not in the metropolitan area during the thesis process, I neither had the possibility to go physically to the university's library which would have helped a lot in order to have more literature available. For this reason, most of the references are from online sources.

I'm happy with the research method I chose, and it was great to note that most of the interviewees were equally excited about the topic of my thesis. The decision to keep the results of the interviews completely anonymous was unconditional so that respondents were free to express their honest opinions directly. During the thesis process, I found myself paying more attention in my own workplace to how different people act in different situations. Overall, I am satisfied with the research outcome, as I gained new insights on an important topic and developed my academic writing skills.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview guide

#### Career:

1. What is your current position and when did you start in it?
2. How have you progressed within the company?
3. Did you apply for your current position, or were you asked for it?
  - a. If yes, by who?
4. What kind of position did you have before this company?
  - a. How many years of experience you have as a foreperson?

#### Leadership:

5. What is it like to be a foreperson in a male-dominated field?
  - a. Can you give any concrete positive and negative examples?
  - b. Have you been accepted as a female foreperson?
6. In your opinion, what are the strengths of women leaders?
  - a. Do they somehow differ from those of male leaders?
7. Why do you think most top leaders in your organisation are men?
  - a. How could this be resolved?

#### Career development:

8. Would you like to go further in the company?
9. Do you feel that you and your male colleague have the same opportunities for advancement in your organisation?

#### Equality:

10. How does equality or inequality appear in your workplace?
  - a. Any examples or situations where you have been treated differently?
  - b. Do you know about any equality plan of your employer?

#### Other:

11. Do you have anything to add?

## Appendix 2. Translated interview guide

### Ura:

1. Mikä on tämänhetkinen työtehtäväsi ja milloin aloitit siinä?
2. Miten olet edennyt yrityksessäsi?
3. Haitko tämänhetkiseen tehtävääsi vai kysyttiinkö sinua siihen?
  - a. Jos kyllä, kuka kysyi?
4. Millaisessa työtehtävässä olit ennen kyseiseen yritykseen tuloa?
  - a. Kuinka monta vuotta olet toiminut esihenkilötehtävissä?

### Johtaminen:

5. Millaista on olla esihenkilö miesvaltaisella alalla?
  - a. Voitko antaa konkreettisia positiivisia tai negatiivisia esimerkkejä?
  - b. Miten sinut on hyväksytty naiesihenkilönä?
6. Mitkä ovat mielestäsi naisjohtajien vahvuuksia?
  - a. Eroavatko ne jollakin tapaa miesjohtajien vahvuuksista?
7. Miksi uskot, että suurin osa yrityksesi ylimmästä johdosta on miehiä?
  - a. Miten tätä voitaisiin kehittää?

### Uralla eteneminen:

8. Haluaisitko edetä yrityksessäsi?
9. Tunnetko, että sinulla ja miespuolisella työkaverillasi on samat mahdollisuudet uralla etenemiseen yrityksessäsi?

### Tasa-arvoisuus:

10. Miten tasa-arvoisuus tai epätasa-arvoisuus ilmenee työpaikallasi?
  - a. Esimerkkejä tai tilanteita, joissa sinua on kohdeltu poikkeavasti?
  - b. Tiedätkö työnantajasi mahdollisesta tasa-arvosuunnitelmasta?

### Muuta:

11. Onko sinulla lisättävää?