

Research about equality in Finnish ski clubs

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Abstract



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**Number of pages
and appendices**
35 + 2

This thesis is a research about how equality and parity are treated in Finnish ski clubs and it was made for the mandator, Finnish Ski Association (Suomen Hiihtoliitto). The main goal for this thesis was to collect information about Finnish ski clubs' perceptions towards equality. The results will be used as a part of the Finnish Ski Association's new strategy.

In this study both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. The main weight was on the qualitative part and the data for that was collected by interviews from four different Finnish ski club's managers and representatives. The interviews were performed via Zoom online meeting, personal meeting and telephone conversations. The role of the quantitative part of the study was to support information about equality in Finnish ski clubs. Quantitative data was collected via questionnaire made with Webropol.

Finnish ski clubs are divided into three different categories in the results: Starclubs, Starclub prospects and basic-level clubs. Categorization is based on presumed quality of the clubs. Three main findings were found. There are only few concrete actions that are being carried out about equality in Finnish ski clubs, more open discussion is needed between Finnish Ski Association and the clubs, and high-quality clubs are also better in terms of equality and parity matters.

On the base of the main findings three suggestions for the Finnish Ski Association were presented: Finnish Ski Association needs to make a guideline for the clubs which directs how equality needs to be treated, the clubs need to choose a representative who is in charge of equality matters in the club, and a follow-up research needs to take place in a few years time.

Key words

Research, equality, Finnish Ski Association

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1 Introduction

The first of January 2015 there was a new law set in Finland on equality and parity (Suomen Hiihtoliitto 2016, 3). The law extends to all grounds of discrimination and requires an equality plan from every organization, public officer and employer with 30 or more employees. Furthermore, every employer in public and private sector is required to help the progress of equality in practice. The means the need to improve equality is not specifically defined by law, so employers should be able to consider convenient ways to do this by themselves. Discrimination is forbidden for all employers in all sectors. (Suomen Hiihtoliitto 2016, 5.) According to Finlex (2014) there are seven different ways that discrimination may occur in: Direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, guideline or compulsion to discriminate, denial of reasonable conformation, discriminatory job advertising and discrimination based on counteraction.

Equality means that everyone is treated equal no matter of their gender, age, origin, nationality, religion, belief, view, political or trade union work, family relations, disability, state of health, sexual orientation or any other thing connected to the person. (Finlex, 2014.) In Finland the first equality law came into effect 1987 and was rewritten in 2005. It consists of bringing more equality between genders and advancing women's rights. Its purpose is also to stop gender discrimination. (Sosiaali -ja terveysministeriö, 2020.)

In the world of sports equality has been tackled from different points of view and now the International Olympic Committee has launched a new plan to bring gender equality into sports. The project was first launched in 2017 and its aim was to globally push gender equality. (International Olympic Committee 2020, 4-29.) Also, European Union and Council of Europe has announced that bringing gender equality into sports is one of its main objects. (Opetus -ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019b.)

In ski sports gender equality has been variable between the three different sports that Finnish Ski Association represents (cross country skiing, ski jumping, and Nordic combined). For cross country skiing both men and women have been able to compete in elite level since the winter Olympics in Norway 1952. (Sveriges Olympiska Kommitte, 2015.) For ski jumping and Nordic combined the road to gender equality has not been as simple. Ski jumping permitted women to compete in Olympics only in Sochi Olympics in 2014, however, whilst men can compete in three different events, women only have one, normal hill. (Women's Ski Jumping USA, 2014.) In Nordic combined the situation is even worse, women have not been able to compete in Olympics yet. However, in the Youth Olympic

Games in Lausanne 2020 girl's Nordic combined was first introduced to the Olympic program. (International Ski Federation 2020a.)

How equality is being treated in Finnish ski clubs has been researched by FSA before and the results were analyzed and transformed into concrete actions. These actions were commencing an ethical board, advancing accessibility, advancing the possibilities for poorer families to join the hobby and getting more women into positions of responsibility. The goal after this study was to recreate it in 2018. (Suomen Hiihtoliitto, 2016, 3.)

Finnish Ski Association performed a research about equality in Finnish ski clubs as a part of a bigger equality plan organized by Finnish Ski Association. The plan was first launched in 2016 (Suomen Hiihtoliitto 2016, 3.) A new equality plan is based on Finnish Olympic committee's new definition of policy in which the Finnish Olympic committee wants to set an example as an organization where everyone is equal. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018, 5). New research will be used as a foundation in the Finnish Ski Association strategy update considering equality matters.

The aim of this study is to find out how equality and parity are treated in Finnish ski clubs. The results will be analyzed and used as a guideline to help Finnish Ski Association in their equality implementation to the clubs. In the pre-work of this thesis it was clear to see that equality even in the bigger picture in sports is still building. To research it in the clubs and starting to build it from the grass roots can make a big difference, since the children are then learning the ways from the beginning of their hobby.

2 Equality

Equality means that everyone is equal regardless of their gender, age, origin, nationality, religion, belief, view, political or trade union work, family relations, disability, state of health, sexual orientation or any other thing connected to the person. (Finlex 2014.)

1. Equality in Finland

Finland is considered to be a pioneer in equality. Finland was the first country in the world who gave equal political rights to women in 1906. Already in the late 19th century the first Finnish female did the matriculation examination. Another big steps in Finland's equality was the first female minister in 1926 and free school lunch in 1948. (Sosiaali -ja terveystieteiden ministeriö. 2020.) Seta, which is the organization in charge of sexual equality in Finland, was founded in 1974. Three years before that homosexuality was decriminalized. (Seta. 2020.) In 1971 labour agreement law forbid discrimination in work relationships (Sosiaali -ja terveystieteiden ministeriö, 2020).

The first Finnish equality law came into effect in 1987. It was re-written in 2005 and nowadays the conversation around equality has opened more. The view of equality is not just between the genders but about sexual orientation, which gender the person identifies (or if a person identifies any gender) and it covers education. However, it does not cover equal care rights between the parents as well as equal payment for different sex. (Sosiaali -ja terveystieteiden ministeriö, 2020.)

The Finnish parity law states that all forms of discrimination are forbidden. It applies to all organizers and employers. Also, harassment is forbidden. In a working environment the employer needs to interfere if he/she notices any kind of harassment or discrimination. A plan to advance equality is required in a working place with more than 30 people. (Valtionneuvosto, 2015.)

Racism means that a person or a group puts a lower value to someone based on their ethnic background, colour of their skin, nationality, culture, native language or religion. It is dehumanizing and it causes inequality. It can be used as a source of power. However, it is hard to put a pin on what is racism but if a certain action is disrespectful or dehumanizing it can be considered as racist act. (Punainen risti. 2020.) In a study made by European Commission 38% of Finns believed that the acts towards discrimination are very effective (European Commission, 2019).

In a study made by FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) 63% of people who answered in Finland had an experience of racist harassment. In the five years before the study the highest rates in violent racism within EU were in Finland (14%). However, when considering the police activity towards people with African background (as a motivation to do a pullover) the lowest percentage was in Finland (18%). This results in the highest trust to the police in Finland within EU. Also, the highest rate of reported racist discriminations were in Finland with EU. Also, the number of men having an education in Finland is higher than in most Eu countries (39%). (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018.)

In another research made by the European Commission in published in 2019 65% of the interviewees felt like it was common to be discriminated in Finland because of their ethnic background or because of their skin colour. Only 23% believed that it is common to be discriminated whether you are a female or male. What rose from the study was the discrimination towards gypsies. 74% believed that if a company was hiring between two different persons and the other was gypsy, they would not hire him/her. But also 88% thought that school should educate more on the gypsy culture. (European Commission, 2019.)

2. Equality in sports community

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has progressed a lot in gender equality matters such as total number of participants at the Olympic games from both genders. The IOC has also arranged advocacy and awareness campaigns, offered leadership development and got more women into leadership roles in the administration and governance of Olympic Committee. Nevertheless, there are yet some challenges to be faced in the field of gender equality in sports. IOC states that some progress has been made, but: "The pace of progress is slow, particularly in this fast-paced environment." (International Olympic Committee 2020, 4.)

Responding to these challenges, the IOC launched review study on gender equality on 16 March 2017. The aim of the review project was to globally push gender equality. During the study there was over 40 interviews conducted to personnel from the IOC, other International Sports Federations, National Olympic Committees and members of the working group. There were also some experts of related topics such as gender equality and sports leadership involved in the study. (International Olympic Committee 2020, 4-29.)

The study also comprehended a vast literature review over reports, publications and management studies. Based on the research made via interviews and literature reviews, IOC

listed 25 recommendations to improve gender equality. The recommendations are presented as concrete actions that are to be launched or are already in progress. Recommendations are categorized under five themes:

- Sport
- Portrayal
- Governance
- Funding
- HR, monitoring and communications.

(International Olympic Committee 2020, 4-29.)

The European Union alongside with Council of Europe has announced that achieving gender equality in sports is one of their main objects. In a project made in 2019 the result was that there are a lot of differences between different countries and associations, but the main outcome was that men are the dominative gender in sports, both in organizations as well as coaches. The researchers rose football as a positive example. In Finland most of the associations announced that they have decided to make actions to work more equally in decision making, coaching, increasing the participation of females, supporting women's elite level requirements and fight against gender violence. (Opetus -ja kulttuuri-ministeriö, 2019b.)

In national level the Finnish Olympic Committee has made Fair Game Rules (Reilun Pelin säännöt) which should be followed in sports in order to make them fair and equal for everyone. The basic rule is that you should treat everyone the way you want to be treated. The Finnish Olympic committee is the head organization that has made these rules for its member organizations. Finnish Ski Association then is accountable to transfer these rules for the clubs working under it. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018b, 2.)

Finnish Olympic committee highlights in the Fair Game rules the influence on the fact that the resources used for sports and exercise are being divided rightfully both regionally and between different groups. One should be able to do sports no matter of the income level. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018b, 3.)

In a research made by national sport and exercise organization (VALO) the results showed that the main media in Finland only brings awareness in success, results and big sports. Especially women's team sports are not highlighted as much in media. (Turtiainen 2018, 111-113.) A study made in the United States showed that 40 % of all participating in sports are women but the press coverage is only 4 % in all sports coverage. (University of Minnesota, 2013.)

Athletes, coaches, hobbyists and PE teachers who belong in a sexual minority suffer from individual discrimination and the effects that it brings. Discrimination that focuses especially on sexual minorities is based on the fear, disgust, distrust or hatred and it is called homophobia (Hemphill & Symons 2009, in the work of Kokkonen 2018, 141.) Professional athletes are fearful and have anxiety because of this (Gough 2007; Symons ym. 2010, in the work of Kokkonen 2018, 141). Some sport clubs have fired coaches because of their sexual orientation (Davison & Frank 2006 in the work of Berg 2018, 141). In individual sports discrimination is not as common as in team sports (Dennison & Kitchen 2015; Hekma 1998; Hemphill & Symons 2009; Le Blanc & Jackson 2010, in the work of Kokkonen 2018, 141). However, there is very little research about the subject (Kokkonen 2018, 141-142.)

3. Equality within ski sports

In this research we will focus on cross country skiing, ski jumping, and Nordic combined. Men's Nordic combined has been an event in the Olympic games since the very first Olympic Games in 1924 (International Olympic Committee 2020). Women's Nordic combined is not yet an Olympic event. In 2020 it was first introduced to the Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne, Switzerland. (International Ski Federation 2020a.) In the highest level the female athletes have been able to compete since 2016. (International Ski Federation 2020b.)

Ski jumping was also introduced in the first Olympic Games in 1924, however only for men. In 1991 The International Olympic Committee decided that all the sports should include both genders in the program, anyhow this excluded the sports that were present in the first Olympics. Only in 2014 in Sochi was the women's ski jumping a part of the program. On the contrary, while men have three events, women only have one. (Women's Ski Jumping USA, 2014.)

Cross country skiing was first introduced in the Olympics in 1924 for men and 1952 the women could also compete. (Sveriges Olympiska Kommitte, 2015.) In cross country one can also compete in para-sports. Para Nordic skiing appeared first in the 1976 Paralympics in Örnsköldsvik in Sweden. The competition is open for athletes with impairment. There is also a World Cup for para skiers. (Paralympic, 2020.) All of the three sports have also competitions for masters. (Winter World Masters Games 2020, 2020.)

International Ski Federation FIS has come up with guidelines to prevent harassment in ski sports. This program is called Snow Safe. Its purpose is that all athletes, volunteers and staff have the right to participate in a safe environment without any discrimination. The FIS Snow Safe policy sets out the FIS policies and provides guidelines to define various forms of abuse. It defines areas of responsibility between FIS and the national ski associations (in Finland this would be Finnish Ski Association) and the organisers of major FIS events and staff / volunteers appointed by FIS. The Snow Safe policy contains guidance for national ski associations. It also discusses the impact that harassment and abuse have for a person. (International Ski Federation, 2018.)

The aims of the FIS Snow Safe program is to promote good practices, provide athletes appropriate safety and protection and allow staff to make informed responses in safeguarding and athlete or a child protection issues. FIS encourages all national ski associations as well as all competition organizers to use these policies as well as incorporate them into their own policies. (International Ski Federation, 2018.)

Finnish Ski Association has made their own regulations based on the FIS Snow Safe policies. According to these the club should name a repository with who anyone can feel safe to discuss harassment they are experiencing. There should be one of both genders. Everyone's background who is working with underage kids should be checked and they should be familiar with Finnish Ski Associations policies. All the clubs should have a custom how a harassment or abuse situation should be handled. If a case comes up both the club's repository as well as FSA's repository need to be informed of it. If the victim is underaged also the parents need to be notified. (Suomen Hiihtoliitto, 2020b.)

3 Sport clubs in Finland

Sport clubs are the fundamental units for sport actions. They collect private persons to go in for those sports that the club offers. The juridical structure that clubs follow is unincorporated associations. In Finland there are almost 8000 sport clubs. They have only private persons as members. The club can have different divisions for different sports. The juridical structure for them is non-registered associations. (Hallila 2017, 70.)

It depends on the sport whether an athlete needs to be a member of a club to compete (Hallila 2017, 70). In cross country skiing, Nordic combined and ski jumping this holds true. If you are between ages 13 to 64 and want to compete from national level to higher level competitions, you also need a license from the Finnish Ski Association. (Hiihtoliitto 2019c)

3.1 Tähtiseura

Tähtiseura is a program planned by Finnish Olympic Committee, sport governing bodies and regional organizations. It develops and supports the club work in Finland. A club can receive a badge of merit called "Tähtimerkki" which is an indication of the quality of the club. To get this, the club needs to have clear plans and indications in the following quality operations fields:

- Management (management, marketing and communications)
- Sporting actions (athlete's path and coaching policy)
- People in the club (communality and resources)
- Tangible resources (finance and conditions).

The club also needs to show the following division operations:

- Children and youth exercise quality operations
- Adult exercise quality operations
- Elite level quality operations.

By making these the club has had to make a questionnaire to the children, youth, coaches and adults in the club. The club also needs to follow the overall exercise the kid has and move from more open to systematic training. The club needs to offer different level of practices (elite, hobby, kids, adults, disabled...). Everyone should be able to participate in a competition and it should be fun. (Suomen Olympiakomitea, 2018c.)

Tähtimerkki -badges are divided into three different sectors: children and youth, adults, and elite athletes. A club can earn tähtiseura -badge from each of the three sectors. The requirements are different for each badge, but there are also some common criterions that a club must meet in order to achieve any of the badges. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018c, 2-25.) In the moment of writing this, there were 13 cross country skiing clubs and one ski jumping and Nordic combined club with this indicator (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2019).

The criteria of receiving Tähtiseura status has also specified how equality should be considered in the club. The club should further equal opportunities to participate no matter of the wealth, ethnic background, sex, disabilities or any other thing connected to the person. They should have a guideline of how the club works if, for example, a disabled person wants to join the club and what is being offered to that person. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018c, 4.) Also, the youth should have equal opportunities of effect on the club actions as the adults. The club should have a plan of how the youngster's opinions are taken into account. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018c, 6.)

A club with Tähtiseura status should also follow the Fair Play rules mentioned before. The club should offer different options for different level of hobbyist. The club can only have competitive or hobby-based sport club, but this needs to be clearly pointed out in their communications. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018c, 16.) What also needs to be considered is that everyone who wants to join can do it. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018c, 18.)

3.2 Club support

Club support is meant for a club to advance their children and youth department and their opportunities within the club as well as advance versatile organized sports (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019). It can also be used for strengthening the quality of action in a club, supporting volunteer work and establishing stronger community (Suomen Hiihtoliitto, 2019b). This support can be applied by local registered organizations that offer exercise and sports. It is discretionary special support. The club support is handed out by Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019.)

A club can apply for club support via Suomisport website. For the year 2020 the support needed to be applied by 17th of December 2019. The club applies the support one year at a time, but it can be for a two-year project. If a club has received two-year-support, they need to fill a follow-up application through the same place. In that application they need to give a short report about the on-goings of the project. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019.)

The smallest amount of money a club can apply is 2500 euros and the biggest is 15 000 euros. For the two-year projects it needs to be taken into account that the club's own funding has to grow the second year. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019.)

When deciding which club receive the support the following subjects are being discussed: joint projects, liaison networks and establishing different partnerships, offering high quality, supervised action and versatile exercise more than once a week, adding new groups, getting new hobbyists, creating innovative club action, practices for kids are during appropriate hours as well as close to residence, developing volunteer work and supporting community, taking gender equality into consideration; there are groups for girls in male dominated sports and vice versa. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019.)

Club support can be applied for a single division inside the club (for example Lahti ski club can apply it only for their ski jumping and Nordic combined division) but it still needs to be applied by the entire club. More than one club can apply for the support but then they need to name one club who is in charge. The project requires that the club management is committed to it. The project needs to have a person who oversees it, clear plan of execution as well as clear and realistic goals. Moreover, the development project's solidifying needs to be presented. The project needs to have at least 25 % of other financing in order to receive the support. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019.)

The support can be used either for functional projects or for hiring new staff. If new staff is being hired, they need to work within kids and youth exercise. If the club hires a new person, it cannot rise the fee taken from the members. The member fee for "basic-level" cannot be more than 50 euros in a month. In the application it needs to be specified from what the fee consists of. Competitions, camps and trips are not considered to be "basic-level". The club can have competition groups, but the support needs to be directed to the base level actions. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019.)

After the application is done, Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö contacts the sport governing body (in this case Finnish Ski Association) and regional attestation. The ministry sees it as a plus if the following strategies and obligations that it has approved are found in the proposal:

- promoting multicultural, community and involvement
- promoting equality
- promoting sustainable development
- equal rights to take part, highlighting the economical aspect.

The support cannot be used in the following:

- building or sustaining sporting areas
- the rent of the club's business premises
- membership and licence fee
- insurances
- judge rewards
- competition fees
- clothing for teams and coaches
- field trips, trips abroad or training camps
- food
- prices for competitions
- business expenses

The support can only be used for the purpose it was granted and it cannot be shared. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019.)

The following ski clubs received club support in 2019:

- Juvan Urheilijat
- Pakilan Veto
- Voimistelu ja urheiluseura Taivalkosken Kuohu ry
- Jokilaakson Mäkiseura
- Haukiputaan Veikot ry
- Ikaalisten Urheilijat
- Taivalkosken Metsä-Veikot 85 ry
- Inarin Yritys

3.3 Ski clubs in Finland

The ski and ski jumping clubs working under the Finnish Ski Association are the foundation for doing ski sports. Finnish Ski Association supports ski club actions variously and offers the clubs opportunities to develop through different events and meetings. (Hiihtoliitto 2019a.) In order to make sure that everyone follows the guidelines, Finnish Ski Association organizes HiihtoSuomi event as well as Seuraneuvottelupäivät. In the season 2019-2020 there will be four Seurawebinaari, which is an online meeting where current issues are being discussed. (Hiihtoliitto 2019b.)

The International Ski Federation has a program called Snow Safe. Its goal is to prevent harassment in snow sports. Finnish Ski Association, Ski Sport Finland and Finnish Snow-

board Association has made in co-operation directives for the clubs. They help the clubs to prevent, recognize and solve possible harassment cases. (Hiihtoliitto 2019b.)

Finnish Ski Association uses club classification with which it evaluates the clubs and districts work. Cross country skiing has different classifications from ski jumping and Nordic combined. In cross country skiing a club gets points from the following classifications: youth activities (50%), elite sports (25%) and recreational activities (25%). (Hiihtoliitto 2019b.)

Ski jumping and Nordic combined club classifications come from eight different divisions and they are all equal. The following eight are the classifications: open for all Finnish Championships, youth Finnish Championships, Master Finnish Championships, Hopeasompa, number of licences, number of ski jumping juniors, education (coaches, instructor, judges and technical delegates) as well as clubs with Tähtiseura -status and Snow Move -project events. (Hiihtoliitto 2019b.)

The results are being collected from each season. According to the points a club gets from each sport they are ranked in an order and the best clubs as well as the clubs that have improved the most are being awarded. (Hiihtoliitto 2019b.)

4 Finnish Ski Association

Finnish Ski Association (Suomen Hiihtoliitto) operates in Finland as an ideological and functional bond and governmental body between the ski operations. Its goal is to further ski sports among Finnish people. Cross country skiing, ski jumping, Nordic combined and Alpine skiing as well as other sports taking place in snow as well as their summer formats are considered ski sports. Finnish Ski Association is a member of International Ski Federation (FIS). (Hiihtoliitto 2019a.)

Once a year the general assembly will have a meeting where a central council will be voted. The central council then votes for the president and the board. The board has two members from cross country skiing, two from ski jumping and Nordic combined and two from alpine skiing. Two members are elected by their honors in the field of skiing sports. The head of the central council at the moment of writing this is Heikki Hämäläinen. (Hiihtoliitto 2019a.)

Under the central council operates the board. The members of the board are voted by the members of the central council. The board has eight members. Two of them are representing alpine disciplines, two ski jumping & Nordic combined, and two representing cross-country skiing. Two of the members are elected on the grounds of their competence in the field of ski sport. The board's term of office is two years, but half of the members retire annually in rotation. The head of the board is Markku Haapasalmi. (Hiihtoliitto 2019a.)

Operative personnel consist of the daily staff that works for Finnish Ski Association. These are divided into three different areas of expertise: sports, finance and administration, and commercial functions. Executive director of Finnish Ski Association is Ismo Hämäläinen. (Hiihtoliitto 2019a.)

Finnish Ski Association wants to bring more awareness to equality. This will be a part of their new strategy. In the strategy they bring out the values, which are co-operation, daring, know-how and accountability. (Tiira 2018.) Research about current equality in the clubs goes under the accountability. Knowing how the clubs treat equality and whether they find it important makes it easier to make the strategic plans. (Valtasola 13.11.2019.)

In 2016 Finnish Ski Association made a research about equality in their clubs. The questionnaire was sent to 90 people and only 25 answered. This makes the results implausible thus the need for a new, bigger study. Here are the findings from the previous study:

- The current atmosphere is bracing, pluralistic, open and the subjects find the association equal and they want make developments
- Associations business premises are unobstructed
- Communication is open and reaches everyone (this, however, is hard to analyze)
- It is easy to attend the events even if you do not use alcohol or you have a partner with same sex
- Availability for para sports are found good in cross country skiing
- Employees and board both feel very connected to advance equality
- More women in the board and position of responsibility (question of this is more the women's own activity rather than discrimination)
- No notes of equality in the strategy or plan of Finnish Ski Association
- No clear guideline of how to work if someone is experiencing discrimination
- More focus on the euphemism of poor and their possibilities of doing the sport

(Suomen Hiihtoliitto 2016, 6-7.)

Based on the study, Finnish Ski Association decided that the following actions needed to take place:

- Starting an ethical committee
- Advancing accessibility
- Supporting the hobbies of euphemism of poor
- Adding more female in the board and responsibility positions

5 The aims and research questions

The aim of the study was to find out how equality is treated in ski clubs in Finland. We also wanted to find out how Finnish Ski Association can help or was there any need for help and guidelines in equality matters. In Finland there are different size of clubs as well as different quality level of clubs. In this research we considered all of these and studied if there was a difference between the clubs. It should be noted that some of the clubs only had one sport (such as cross-country skiing) and other had all the sports Finnish Ski Association represents. These sports are cross-country skiing, Nordic combined and ski jumping. Some clubs also offered a great variety of other sports in their activity. In this study the focus was in the divisions consisting of sports under Finnish Ski Association.

The research questions of this study were:

- How are equality matters seen in Finnish ski clubs?
- How topical is equality as a subject in Finnish ski clubs currently?
- What kind of actions/assistance ski clubs in Finland hopes FSA to implement in order to improve equality?

6 Methods

6.1 Target group

Target group of this study consisted of every sport club or division of a sport club operating under Finnish Ski Association. More accurately, this means clubs or divisions involved in cross-country skiing, ski jumping, and Nordic combined. Four clubs were interviewed and their representatives discussed about equality and parity matters. In the original plan we had one club from north, one from east, one from south and one from west. Unfortunately, we could not get an interview from the clubs in the west so in the final product we have one from northeast and one from east. The clubs interviewed for this study are introduced below.

6.1.1 Lahden Hiihtoseura

Lahden Hiihtoseura was established in 1922 and its first goal was to organize ski events and competitions in Finland. During its time it has organized seven Nordic Ski World Championships and three biathlon World Championships. It also annually hosts World Cup in cross country skiing, ski jumping, and Nordic combined as well as many other sporting events. LHS has also organized Finland's biggest crowd ski event, Finlandia ski, since 1974. Lahti ski club operates in the Lahti area, which is located in south of Finland.

The chairman of Lahden Hiihtoseura is Juha Kolu. Janne Marvaila works as an executive director. Lahti ski club is divided into four different divisions: cross country skiing, ski jumping, and Nordic combined, Alpine skiing, and biathlon. Chair of cross country skiing division is Janne Metsävuori. Chair of ski jumping and Nordic combined is Matti Tiira, chair of Alpine skiing is Rami Ruuska and chair of biathlon is Matti Haapoja.

The club has around 1500 members and the yearly budget in the time of writing this has been around 500 000 - 700 000 euros.

From Lahden hiihtoseura we interviewed member of the ski jumping and Nordic combined division Soili Hirvonen. Ski jumping and Nordic combined division is applying for the Tähtiseura status and that is the division we focused on in the interview.

6.1.2 Siilinjärven Ponnistus

Siilinjärven Ponnistus was founded in 1907. In 2020 four different divisions work under the club. They are track and field, ski jumping, women's gymnastics as well as Olympic and powerlifting. It operates in Siilinjärvi, which is located in North Savonia.

The chair of Siilinjärven Ponnistus is Jaana Niskanen. The head of ski jumping division is Niina Meis. The ski jumping division has around 60 members.

From this club we interviewed the head of ski jumping division Niina Meis. Ski jumping and Nordic combined division has Tähtiseura-status. That is the division we focused on in the interview.

6.1.3 Lieksan Hiihtoseura

Lieksan Hiihtoseura was first founded during 1960s. It is operating in North Karelia which is located in the east of Finland. The most remarkable competitions the club has organized are two Finnish Championships in cross country skiing.

The chair of the club is Jouni Karppinen. Active sports in the time of writing this are cross country skiing as well as ski jumping, and Nordic combined. The club also offers the possibility to do biathlon. Head of cross country skiing division is Rauno Saastamoinen, head of ski jumping division is Ville Vänskä. Lieksan Hiihtoseura also has a women's division which is in charge of the cafeteria during competition and practices. Head of the women's division is Päivi Saastamoinen. Lieksa ski club has around 110 members.

From the club we interviewed chair of the club Jouni Karppinen.

6.1.4 Taivalkosken Metsä Veikot 85

Taivalkosken Metsä Veikot 85 is a ski club established 1985. It is located in Taivalkoski, North of Finland. Taivalkosken Metsä Veikot 85 has organized one Finnish Ski Championships in 2016 as well as many other competitions. The tracks they use in competitions are FIS-certified.

The chair of the club is Matti Tyni. He has been working in this position since 2006. The club only offers cross country skiing. The club has around 100 to 120 members and its yearly turnover is about 40 000 euros.

From the club we interviewed the chair of the club Matti Tyni. Taivalkosken Metsä Veikot 85 received club support for the year 2019.

6.2 Study design

In this project we worked together with the Finnish Ski Association's head of administration Marleena Valtasola as well as the coordination of ski club operation of Finnish Ski Association Sandra Siren. On the first hand we were charge of making this research. As the coordinator of ski club operations, Sandra Siren recommended us the clubs for the interview. The questions were contemplated with her as well as with Marleena Valtasola.

This study was mainly qualitative but also a limited quantitative questionnaire was used. The qualitative research made does not follow particularly any specific scientific paradigm. In the analysis method there were impulses from phenomenography, because one of our main goals of the study was to find out common understanding and perceptions about equality in Finnish ski clubs. According to Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka (2009, 36-37;73-75) & Jones (2015, 185) phenomenographic approach is relevant when aiming to find out someone's perceptions of a designated topic. However, the analysis procedure does not strictly follow the rules of phenomenography or any other paradigm.

The interviews were the main data source in this study. The interviewees were motivated before and during the interviews to ensure their willingness to dispense information. Motivating the interviewees is important because there might occur a lack of data if the interviewees do not feel comfortable or just want to get the interview over with. There are many ways to motivate the participants and in the end, only the creativity of the interviewer is the limit. Some motivating methods are briefing the respondents about background of the study, making them feel that they really make a difference with their attendance and organizing time and place as suitable as possible for the participants. (Jones 2015, 186-187.) All the previous motivating methods amongst other things were implemented during this study. In the interviews we had a structured a set of questions and the conversations proceeded as respondent's answers raised additional questions. According to Jones (2015, 177) this kind of approach can be referred as a semi-structured interview.

We did also a Webropol questionnaire which to collect data for the quantitative part of this research. The Webropol questionnaire was based on the original set of questions used in the interviews. The questionnaire included also a section for free word. The free word section in the questionnaire was used as a supportive way of getting data for the qualitative research besides the interviews. Since we made an assistant quantitative study out of the

data received from the Webropol questionnaire, so this study can be referred as a “mixed method” research (Jones 2015, 27).

6.3 Measurement methods in the interviews

In order to answer the first research question the following questions were asked:

- How big is your club?
- How many members?
- What percentage of the members are female/male?
- What is your take on equality?
- Do you have someone who oversees equality in your club?

In order to answer the second research question the following questions were asked:

- What do you currently do in order to have equality?
- Are equality matters topical? Do you have them on the table at the moment?

In order to answer the third research question the following questions were asked:

- Do you need / What kind of help you need from the Finnish Ski Association?

6.4 Measurement methods in the questionnaire

In the beginning of the questionnaire three questions were asked to be used as background information

- What is your club?
- Does your club have ‘Tähtiseura’ status?
- Does your club receive club support?

In order to answer the first research question the following questions were asked:

- What, in your opinion, has to do with equality?
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Number of hobbyists per sport
 - Ethnic background
 - Religion
 - Family relations

- Sexual orientation
- Wealth
- Something else, what?
- None of these
- Do you find it important that equality actualize in your club? (Likert scale 1 to 5).
- Is there a person in your club who is in charge of equality?

In order to answer the second research question the following questions were asked:

- Are equality matters current in your club? (Likert scale 1 to 5).

In order to answer the third research question the following questions were asked:

- What kind of help would you like to have / Do you need any help from Finnish Ski Association? (Written answer)

Additionally, there was an “open comment” section in the end of the questionnaire. Answering to open comment was voluntary. All the other questions in the questionnaire were mandatory. In the question: “What, in your opinion, has to do with equality?”, we wanted to know what the subjects found related to equality. In this section you could pick more than one answer, but you had to pick at least one. All of the options are written in the Finnish law as equality matters. (Finlex, 2019.) The questionnaire was made in Finnish, Swedish and English.

6.5 Analyses and statistics

In the study all qualitative data is analysed by retelling paradigm of realism. Realism, as a paradigm means that focus is in content of the material (transcript interviews) and what is said in the material about the topic (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 93-96). Realism, as a paradigm also suggests that everything that is told in the material can be treated as an objective fact regardless of what kind of language or phrasing was used by the sources (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 93-96). This form of realism was also implemented in our study. Only exception were situations in the interviews, when the respondents hesitated with their responses or in other ways indicated that they are uncertain of some matter. Critical take on realistic paradigm was also implemented when the respondents straight forward told that they are not certain of something.

In order to make reliable and valid analyses the interviews were recorded and transcript. According to (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 78-80) the transcription should

be made precisely word-to-word if in the centre of analysis are linguistic matters and interactivity. The transcription in this study was made very precisely, despite that we had no intention focusing on linguistic matters. The pedantic way of transcription was made just in case as the original recordings were destroyed after transcription.

The quantitative data collected via Webropol survey was analyzed using excel. The most important findings from the questions are presented as diagrams in the results. The nominal scale results were presented as relative frequencies. The Likert scale results were presented as mean values as well as relative frequencies.

In addition to the analyses of the whole target group, also subgroup comparisons were made. The subgroups were:

- Clubs with the Finnish Olympic committee's Tähtiseura-status, which were in this study presented as "Starclubs".
- Clubs that are applying to become a Tähtiseura were in this study presented as "Starclub prospects".
- Clubs who received club support in 2019, were in this study presented as "Club support receivers".
- Clubs without any of the previous three attributes, were in this study presented as "Basic level clubs".

Clubs in this research project are divided into four different categories to make it easier to compare results from qualitative and quantitative parts of this mixed method research. The first category is clubs with a Tähtiseura-status. The second category is in this study they will be referred as "Starclub prospects". The third category is They will be in this study referred as "Club support receivers" and the fourth category is, which will be in this study referred as "basic level clubs".

7 Results of the interviews

7.1 How equality matters are seen in Finnish ski clubs

There were three clear alignments in the interviews that followed in each of the clubs. They all have guidelines, that are related to equality. Everyone's first thought when thinking about equality was gender equality. The gender of the people varied between clubs that do only skiing (Lieksan Hiihtoseura and Taivalkosken Metsä Veikot 85) and between clubs that had ski jumping (Lahden Hiihtoseura and Siilinjärven Ponnistus). In the clubs where there was only skiing the gender rate was 50/50. In the ski jumping division there was a clear difference, in Lahden Hiihtoseura's ski jumping and Nordic combined division they have only around 25 percent of females. From this you could assume that cross country skiing is more gender equal sport than ski jumping and Nordic Combined.

In the interviews one thing that popped out from the both Starclub prospect as well as Starclub was that they feel like applying for the Tähtiseura badge has made them think more about equality since it is in the rules and restrictions to become one.

7.2 Equality currently in Finnish Ski Clubs

All the respondents in the interviews had the answer to question five. None of the clubs we interviewed had a person who oversees equality. In Siilinjärven Ponnistus Niina Meis told that they have a Youth Council in the club who is kind of responsible about equality. When we asked do they see it necessary to have someone in the future both Siilinjärven Ponnistus as well as in Lahden Hiihtoseura did think there could be a need for a person who would be in charge of equality. TMV 85 and LiS did not have an opinion about this.

In the interviews everyone found equality important. All the interviewees felt like it is either mentioned in their strategies or some other way discussed. Lahden Hiihtoseura as well as Siilinjärven Ponnistus both brought out other issues than gender equality such as wealth. In their clubs they have different price ranges for the amount of practices you want to have. They both brought out that even though they do not have separate competitive group it is important that everyone can do the hobby on a level they want. In Lahden Hiihtoseura there is also a possibility to have some promotions if you are unable to pay.

When asked about what the clubs do currently for equality there again was a clear distribution between clubs involved in or applying to be involved in Tähtiseura-procedure (Starclubs and Starclub prospects) and other clubs. In Lieksan hiihtoseura (a Basic-level

club) as well as in Taivalkosken Metsä Veikot 85 (a Club support receiver) there are currently no major actions towards the subject. They both pointed out that equality is discussed in their club rules and they bring it up in club meetings yearly. For Lahden Hiihtoseura one concrete action they take is that everyone can use club's equipment for the first year of training. This can bring the price of the hobby down and more accessible to everyone.

Siilinjärven Ponnistus has a few actions they take in order to have equality. They have Youth Council that brings the youth's voice to the governmental body. They also try to have more instructors so that if special need kids come to the practice, they have enough guidance. Lahden Hiihtoseura brings equality in more finance related situations. In both Siilinjärven Ponnistus and Lahden Hiihtoseura boys and girls practice in the same trainings.

Only club that discussed about age equality was Lahden Hiihtoseura. One can do cross country skiing no matter of the age and most clubs have some senior athletes as well. The same cannot be said about ski jumping and Nordic combined, which requires ski jumping skills as well. At the moment of writing this there was no possibility for an adult to start ski jumping as a hobby in any of the interviewed clubs. Lahden Hiihtoseura has taken this into consideration and they want to start an elementary course for adults in the near future. Now it has not been possible because of the resources.

7.3 Actions/assistance ski clubs in Finland hope from Finnish Ski Association to implement in order to improve equality

One of the main things Finnish Ski Association wanted to have from this research was to know what the clubs wish to have from the association in order to put equality more in to affect. The two clubs that has nothing to do with Finnish Olympic Committee's Tähtiseura -badge, Lieksan Hiihtoseura and Taivalkosken Metsä Veikot 85, did not have any requests for this. They said they haven't had any issues in the past and so this is not current for them.

Lahden Hiihtoseura said that in the Tähtiseura-application they need to consider all these questions and equality matters and they recommend having those also for clubs who do not apply. But a request on the association's side was to bring more awareness of what is equality and what are all the things related to it, not just gender equality. And what are the actual steps to achieve equality in the club.

Siilinjärven Ponnistus suggested that there would be a person from Finnish Ski Association who would go to ask and see how the situation is going in the club. Or if this is not possible there would be an annual questionnaire sent out to see how things are going. They also pointed out the fact that with Tähtiseura status they are more involved in the equality work. However, Meis' opinion was that Finnish Ski Association is the one who could use some help in female ski jumper's equality matters. This is something the association should take into some serious consideration.

8 Results of the questionnaire

12 people who answered were from Starclubs and 22 were not, none of the responders were applying to become a Star club, so there were no Starclub prospects. Most of the responders were receiving club support (44,12%), 11,76% were applying for it, 17,65% had received in the past and 26,47% do not receive it nor have they received in the past. From these 4 were Star clubs. Next up they are divided into three different categories based on the research questions.

8.1 How equality matters are seen in Finnish ski clubs

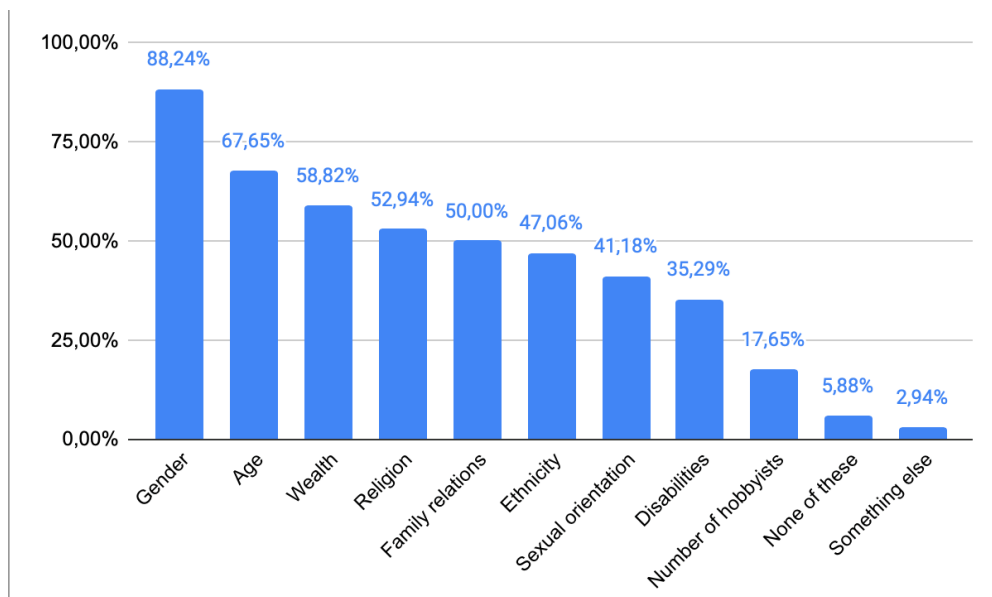


Chart 1. Opinion on which factors have to do with equality in clubs.

As can be seen from the chart 1, gender was the most voted answer. 88,24% found it related to the subject. The second and third most voted were age range and wealth. What is remarkable is that two people found that none of these were related to equality. One person answered something else and specified that to be that everyone has an opportunity to enjoy exercise.

In the Starclubs there were same amount of answers in gender, age and family relations. The fourth highest answer with 66,67 % was wealth. Each of the points (excluding nothing) were chosen at least by one person. From clubs that do not have the Star club status the difference between the different point was remarkably bigger. More than 90 percent (90,91 %) chose gender. The second most chosen was age but that was chosen only by

59,09 %. What differentiates also from Starclubs is that only 31,82 % chose family relations. The difference here is about 35 %.

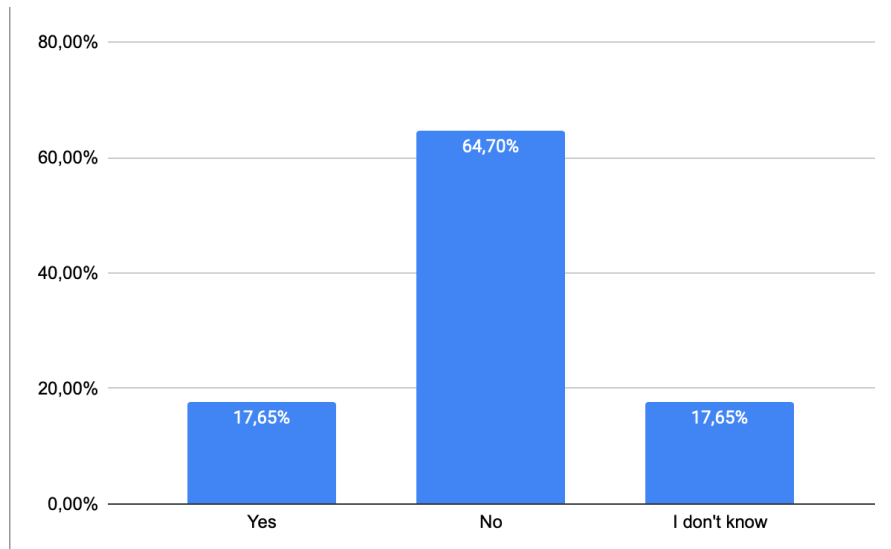


Chart 2. Percentage whether clubs has a person in charge of equality matters.

What we also were interested in the quantitative research was whether clubs have a person who oversees the equality matters. Six of the subjects did not know and 22 did not have a person in charge of equality. From two of the Starclubs there was a person who is in charge of equality.

8.2 Equality currently in Finnish Ski Clubs

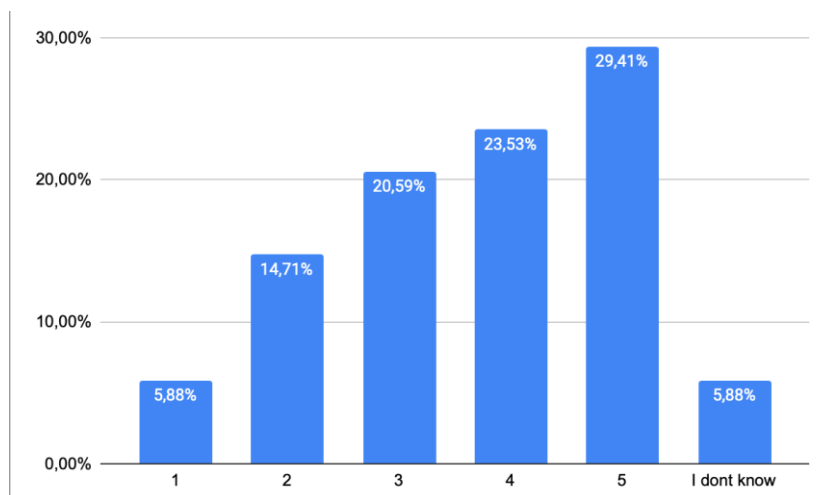


Chart 3. Topicality of equality and parity matters in clubs. (n=4)

When asked about whether equality matters are current in the club 29,41% of the responders found them to be very current. The average of the answers (on Likert scale of 1-5) was 3,7 which indicates that most clubs have equality on the table at the moment. In

Star clubs most (58,33%) answered that equality matters are very current in their clubs. No one said that they are not current at all nor that they do not know.

For non-Star clubs there was not as clear indications in this question. Whereas 13,64 % found the equality matters very current, the same amount also found that they are not current. 9,09 % found that they are not current at all and the same number of responders did not know. The highest rate of non-Starclub responses (31,82 %) found this average, whereas answers to average option amongst all responses was 20,59%.

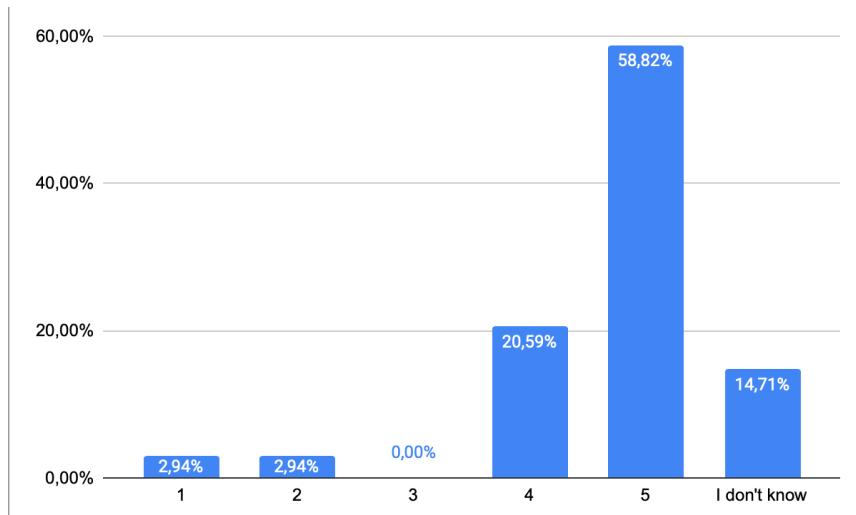


Chart 4. The importance of equality being actualized in clubs. (n=5)

In the question whether it is important that equality actualizes in a club more than half of the people who answered found it very important. What is interesting here is that no one found it average. With Star clubs 50 % found that equality actualize very much in their club. No one said that that it doesn't actualize at all, but one said that it does not actualize. 16,67 % from Starclubs did not know whether it actualizes.

63,64% of non-Starclub respondents thought that it is very important that equality actualizes in the club. One thought that it is not important at all and 13,64 % did not know.

8.3 Actions/assistance ski clubs in Finland hope from Finnish Ski Association to implement in order to improve equality

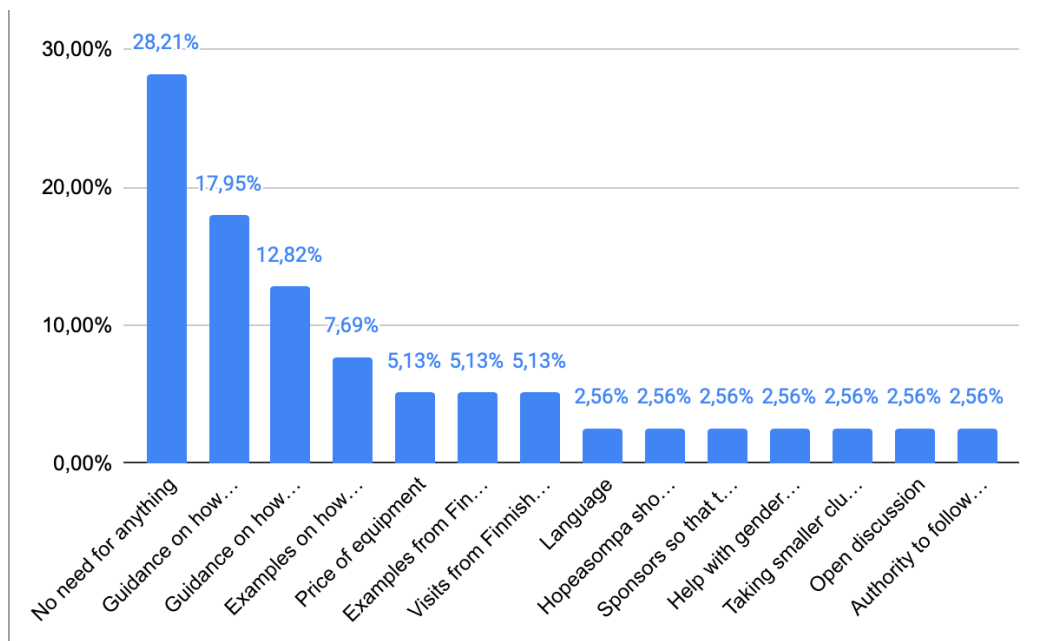


Chart 5. Requests from Finnish Ski Association in order to help to improve equality.

In the questionnaire we also had an open question where the subjects needed to narrate what they need from Finnish Ski Association in order to better carry out equality. Most common answer was that there is no need for help from the Finnish Ski Association. The second most common was that there would be a need for guidelines that the club could and should then follow. This was especially needed in disabilities and how to include them into the club operations. Also, open discussion and examples on how equality is treated in other clubs was wished. The full list of answers can be found in attachments.

9 Discussion

There are three main findings based on the research questions that can be learned from this study.

1. Equality matters are found important in the Finnish ski clubs but there are mostly not concrete actions to further them.
2. More open discussion between Finnish Ski Association and ski clubs is needed.
3. Equality and parity matters are more considered in Starclubs and Starclub prospects than Club support receivers and basic level clubs due to strict entry requirements to become a Tähtiseura.

Whilst with Starclubs and Starclub prospects it was easy to discuss equality matters and what they are currently doing to enhance them, the other two clubs did not really give any answers. This could lead to an assumption which is connected to point three that by working with the Starclub guidelines you are forced to consider and make real actions about equality. Tähtiseura should further equal opportunities to participate no matter of the wealth, ethnic background, sex, disabilities or any other thing connected to the person. They should have a guideline of how the club works if, for example, a disabled person wants to join the club and what is being offered to that person. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2018c, 4.) Also, in the questionnaires only around 60% found it very likely that equality and parity actualize in their club. What is worrying is that 3% did not think that equality actualize in their club at all.

Looking at the second finding, more open discussion between Finnish Ski Association and the clubs is needed, there was a clear wish for this. In the questionnaire most of the responders said that they need some type of guidelines as well as more discussion between the operative staff of the clubs along with Finnish Ski Association. There was also a wish that someone from the Finnish Ski Association's side would follow that the guidelines are being executed.

It seems that in many ski clubs' views on equality and parity matters are rather narrow. This expression comes up when examining the answers to question: "What in your opinion has to do with equality?" In the questionnaire, this question had multiple options to choose from and a free word section. Over 88% of the responses in questionnaire included gender equality, which makes it the most popular answer by far. All the other options had answers as well, but besides gender equality there were only four answers that had 50 per cent or over answer rate (age, religion, family relations, and wealth). A narrow

stance towards equality might occur from lack of information about equality. On the other hand, many of the clubs that responded are quite small, so it is possible that there are no issues considering for example ethnic background or disabilities. Two basic level clubs answered “nothing”, in the question: “What in your opinion has to do with equality?” In the interviews Basic level club and the club support receiver only could think of gender equality when asking the same question. It goes in line with the conclusion that equality matters are not found so important in non-Starclub related clubs, which was one of the main findings in this research.

In the interviews together with in the questionnaire answers there was a bit of frustration towards Finnish Ski Association and whether they achieve equality in their actions. In the study made by European Union and Council of Europe they pointed out that equality matters are well executed within football. (Opetus -ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2019b.) Maybe different associations should work together and build a bigger network of people who work towards more equal sports. By getting ideas from different sports and how they are tackling the subject, Finnish Ski Association could have better understanding as well as some fresh ideas.

Research is a focused, time-limited project, which leads in discovering something new. It also usually has a written report of the results afterwards. (Hodges & Thomas 2010, 9.) In this study the aim was to reveal how ski clubs in Finland value equality in their own activity and how they implement these values on daily basis. By finding this out, Finnish Ski Association will be able to aim their general guidelines more accurately. According to Hodges & Thomas (2010, 9) this kind of building of knowledge and utilizing it towards some action is a common reason for making a research in the first place.

When doing a research project, it is essential to choose the right research methodology. Before doing this, one should consider the significance of the project, research objectives/questions and research topic. All three of these correlates to each other and should be taken into consideration when making the decision on the topic. After this is done it is reasonable to go and choose the research methodology. It usually requires thinking of the three main areas to define one’s research methodology: data sources, data collection and data analysis. (Hodges & Thomas 2010, 10-25.) In this research, data sources were individual representatives of ski clubs, data collection was made with interviews and a questionnaire and data analysis was unstructured when relating to existing paradigms.

Research methodologies can roughly be divided in quantitative and qualitative methods. (E.g. Hodges & Thomas 2010, 10-25; Jones 2015, 23-26.) There is no need to build up

any confrontation between quantitative and qualitative methods on which one is better or worse than the other. The only important thing is to use the methodology that suits best for solving the research problems one is dealing with. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 13-15.) The solution in this study was to implement both. The research questions were large scaled, because we were not interested only in some particular areas considering equality. The aim was to gather information about general attitudes towards equality and more importantly how does ski clubs comprehend the concept of equality. Due to this, we as researchers felt like we need a lot of data and some “deeper” high-quality data in order to understand club’s relations to equality. According to Jones (2015, 27) choosing both methods, a “mixed method” approach, is an effective way of making vivid research, where the highlights of both methods are represented in the results.

There is no distinct and unanimously accepted determination to quantitative research, Smith & Sparkes (2014, 6-7). However, quantitative research is usually a research method which answers to questions: “How much?” or “How often?” In quantitative studies all the information is accessed in numbers. It gives a general viewpoint of the correlations and differences between the variables in the study. Variable in a quantitative research is any subject that is been studied and is or can be transformed into numeric data. Quantitative research requires a counter which provides the information wanted from the variables. Quantitative research should be completely objective. It is typical for the quantitative research that there are is a lot of data. Recommendable minimum amount of observation units is 100. (Vilkka 2007, 13-17.) According to this, our questionnaire (quantitative part of the research) with 34 answers would need more responses to be completely valid. On the other hand, the answer rate to questionnaires are infamously low even only 5 per cent (Jones 2015, 149). Considering this and remembering that there are less than 300 ski clubs in Finland (the questionnaire was directly sent to 290 emails), we can be satisfied with our response rate being 11,7 per cent.

Quantitative research is highly standardized. This means that there is not a lot of differences to be found when observing a basic structure of a quantitative research in general. Quantitative research requires some hypothesis and data, which usually can be measured numerically. After collecting data there are some statistical methods to choose from. At this point the researcher must consider what are the findings that need to be done in order to answer the original research questions. After that, the researcher has to think which statistical method offers the wanted information. (Jones 2015, 245-247; 274.) The standardizing of the quantitative part in this research was ensured by providing the same questionnaire for all the respondents.

After collecting and analyzing the data, an inference about findings from the statistical test that was chosen must be done. This is an important part of getting any outcome or result from the study since quantitative data is abstract and based on an assumption that the world can be measured in a numeric way. On the other hand, this assumption does not hold true when observing phenomenon in the actual world because mere numbers never tell the whole truth about complex real-life phenomenon. Grounded on this, it could be said that quantitative data does not tell anything just as it is, but it must always be analyzed using some statistical method in order to make inferences and thus get results. Only after this it can be considered how the observations made relates to research questions and whether hypothesis was correct or not. (Jones 2015, 246-247.) In this study, the quantitative data was used alongside with qualitative data and the inference is made based on both results.

Like in quantitative research, it is not easy to make a clear-cut definition of qualitative research. Defining qualitative research is difficult, because it is an umbrella term for a large variety of different research traditions. (Sparkes & Smith 2014, 6-32.) Qualitative research has been commonly associated as a “soft” research. It becomes a problem when people think that qualitative methods are soft also scientifically. On the other hand, qualitative methodology is sometimes associated to be better in terms of quality. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 13-15; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 5-6.) In this research usage of qualitative method was based on the idea that we could get more profound data via qualitative methods and thus better data in terms of quality.

A straightforward determination of qualitative research is simply non-numeral evaluation of data. In practice, it is not always this simple and the boundaries between qualitative and quantitative methodologies are not always clear. Qualitative research has gotten a lot of its propulsion out of its relationship to quantitative studies. The being of quantitative research is often defined by creating a dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research and then comparing them. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 13-15.) According to Sparkes & Smith (2014, 7-32) both qualitative and quantitative are often defined by what they are not, since there is no clear way of saying what they are. Furthermore, Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka (2009, 5-6) recognizes the problem of defining these two paradigms, but also states that sorting out research methods to quantitative and qualitative is necessary in the actual usage of these methods. In this research qualitative and quantitative parts are clearly separated from each other as the results of each are presented in their own main chapter.

Qualitative research usually consists of three elements. Firstly, there are previous theories and studies about the subject in hand. Secondly, there is empirical material which is nor-

mally literary or at least transcript to literary form. Thirdly, the qualitative research consists of researcher's own inference and thinking. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 5-6.) All these elements can be found in this research. The most important study before this was previous study the Finnish Ski Association made in 2016 (Suomen Hiihtoliitto 2016, 3). Design of this study is founded the previous study. The empirical material consisted of four interviews that were transcript.

According to Eskola & Suoranta (2000, 13-24 in work of Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 6-7) the absence of hypothesis characterizes most qualitative research well. Qualitative method was considered the main source of data in this research, because of its mapping nature. Therefore, there were no hypothesis set in this research.

An interview is discussed being the most usual way of collecting qualitative data in a sport's research. Interviews are often contrasted to structured questionnaires. In questionnaires there are very structured questions due to its nature of not having the researcher present. Interviews on the other hand are based on the researcher's ability to control the situation and get relevant qualitative data out of the interviewee. Consequently, interviews tend to produce better data in terms of quality, for example compared to structured questionnaires or other methods with restricted questions and relatively brief answers. (Jones 2015, 175-176.) The interviews made in this study were based on the idea, that we as interviewers tried to get as much reasonable content out of the individual respondents as possible.

According to Jones (2015, 176) using an interview as research method is appropriate and usually the most convenient way of collecting research data if some of these three situations can be found:

1. Where there is only a low population, making quantitative approach of the questionnaire inappropriate.
2. Where the information is expected to vary considerably among respondents, and such information is likely to be complex and thus difficult to measure using other methods.
3. Where the research is exploratory, and interviews may be used to identify information that could be used to refine and develop further investigation. (Jones 2015, 176-177.)

All the three situations that Jones mentioned can somewhat be found in our study. Population was rather low so getting enough responses for an independent quantitative study was difficult (as can be seen from our quantitative part of the study) and information that respondents were to provide was expected to be quite complex. Furthermore, regarding the topic of this research, we hope to see some additional studies and investigation to be done by the Finnish Ski Association in the future.

There are five different categories for interviews. Generally, every interview falls under one of the five categories. The categories are structured interview, semi-structured interview, unstructured interview, narrative interview and focus group (a group interview). (Jones 2015, 177.)

The structured interview is basically a questionnaire. In this type of interview the researcher is present only to read out loud the questions and to aid respondent in the filling of the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview consists of a standard set of questions, but the researcher can use some ancillary questions to fill up the information received. The unstructured interview means that the researcher has a general topic, but the interviewee leads the conversation by telling matters from his/her own perspective. The researcher's job is to react and create additional questions as the process proceeds. The narrative interview is constructed by a story that interviewees tell from their own experiences. The researcher participates very little to conversation in narrative interviews. In the focus group there are usually four to eight participators. In the focus group the interaction between the respondents is a vital part of accumulating data. (Jones 2015, 177-178.) The semi-structured method of doing an interview was chosen to this study, because the aim was to find out different kind of perceptions regarding equality without losing control in the situation.

Based on the most important findings that were presented in the beginning of this chapter, some further suggestions have been made considering the follow-up of this study. Most of the clubs involved in this study had somewhat wide perception about equality. Nevertheless, one distinguishable lack amongst the clubs was discovered when examining the data. The lack was about the club's ability to implement equality in their daily activity. According to that, one follow-up based on this study is that Finnish Ski Association should make a guideline on how to improve equality inside a club and in its daily activity. This guideline should also introduce all the aspects of equality. Something that could also be included in the guide is the inclusion of disabled people to the club's work together with giving advice on how to make skiing or ski jumping as a hobby more affordable.

When we asked from the clubs if they had someone who oversees equality matters in their club, none in the four clubs interviewed had a clearly named specific person for that. One Starclub had a youth council that also oversaw the equality. From questionnaire only six (18%) responded "yes" whilst being asked the same question. In the questionnaire same amount of responses (18%) was "I don't know." This naturally informs us that most of the clubs do not have anybody in charge of equality matters and in some clubs the respondents did not even know whether there is someone overseeing it or not. These re-

sults harshly tell about the indifference towards equality matters in the clubs. Out of all Starclubs including the questionnaire and the interviews, 23% told that they have someone who oversees equality matters. Only 16% of the other clubs had someone overseeing equality. This result is another consolidation to the finding made in this research that clubs with Tähtiseura-badge are more aware of equality and parity matters in their club. Based on these findings we propose following: Finnish Ski Association should make an official definition of policy that every club needs to name one person (or a small group of individuals) overseeing equality and parity matters in their clubs.

If Finnish Ski Association really wants to make a difference in the equality and be sure that their actions are being used a follow-up study is in place. This study could be repeated every few years using the quantitative research. By building a basic structure for the study they could then add a few questions specific for what they want to especially focus on at that time. This way it is easier to see how the guidelines have worked in action and additionally set an example as an association that cares for equality and parity matters. In the questionnaire one response for "What kind of help do you need from Finnish Ski Association?" was that they should have a person who makes sure that the clubs actualize equality guidelines in their work. This is also a great way for that. If there is no big chance between the study now and the new study, it is clear to see that some more sturdy actions need to take place.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The questionnaire sent to the clubs

Finnish Ski Association's equality research

Club?

Does your club have Tähtiseura status?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Does your club receive club support?

- Yes
- No, but we are applying for that
- No, but we have received in the past
- No

What, in your opinion, has to do with equality?

- Sex
- Age
- Number of hobbyists per sport
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Family relations
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Wealth
- Nothing
- Something else, what?

Do you find it important that equality actualizes in you club? (1. not at all ... 5. very much so, 6. I don't know)

Are equality matters current in your club? (1. not at all ... 5. very much so, 6. I don't know)

Is there a person in your club who is in charge of equality?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

What kind of help would you like to receive from Finnish Ski Association to advance your equality better in your club?

Open comment

Appendix 2. Need of assistance from Finnish Ski Association in equality matters

Answers to question “What kind of help would you like to have / Do you need any help from Finnish Ski Association?” in the questionnaire sent out to the clubs

Guidance on the language issues

Finnish Ski Association should market more that the youth skiers' trainings should be fun and not too serious. Joy, play and reasonably priced equipment would create more equal trainings. I believe that this kind of marketing comes from the association's side.

No need at the moment.

Guidance on how to take all of the club workers and athletes into account.

Good materials that help the discussion and briefing inside the club.

I have never heard of these kinds of issues.

We don't have need for any, but good policies are always welcome.

Education on how to move and coach disabled people. The wealth of the family has a saying in the kids' hobby. Would the association have a possibility to find sponsors that would support the kids' hobbies?

Materials

I don't know

Straightforwardness when it comes to gender roles. What to do then the kid feels like she/he is in a “wrong” body? How to involve kids with disabilities? How to support fewer wealthy families?

Guidance on how to develop, support and enable special groups. How the clubs should enable para-sports in their own competitions? Support and guidance on equality matters: expenses, equipment, conditions, club support. Supporting coaching so that also the smaller clubs would have the opportunity to offer the latest trends, quality coaching with reasonable price. Enabling impartial conditions; south of Finland the hobbyist numbers are increasing but the conditions and their developing has huge differences between the towns. Support that doing xc skiing is possible also in the future, for example, when there is no snow one can do roller skiing. Also, the small clubs should be able to discuss with the towns, so supporting that.

Examples on how these issues have been treated in other clubs.

Finnish Ski Association could in their own communications bring out equality issues. The association can with their own action forward these issues.

Open discussion between other ski enthusiasts.

I don't know.

Visits to clubs. With those could equality issues be forwarded.

Vigorous guidance that everyone can use to bring out ideas on this important cause. In clubs they usually just use the old ways and do not even think about this thing.

A para group started in our club; Finnish Ski Association has not taken these into account in their guidance

Common information about the club's work in these issues.

We have so few skiers that we do not need help with this.

Everyone is equal in our club.

Our club strives for equality, so we do not need help from the Finnish Ski Association with this. In other matters yes.

No need at the moment.

Open discussion about the subject. All of the positions should be filled by the right person no matter of the age or gender.

With disabled people we do not have equality yet because we don't have a group for them. But there has not been any demand either. This would be something where we would need help with.

We don't need.

I cannot answer.

What are the findings in this research.

We most likely do not need support.

I don't believe we have issues with this.

An authority on club action to guide the club management.

Creating rules where equality is taken into consideration. Demand on that the rules are being followed. Finnish Ski Association should show in their own actions example on equality. Equality should actualize within the association's own groups. Continuous following of the situation and education to the coaches and club people on the subject. But to have credibility, own issues need to be taken care of first.