

Leadership and gender equality

**An investigation of gender balance among leaders in the
Norwegian maritime industry**

Candidate name: Sigrid Tranaas

University of South-Eastern Norway
Faculty of Technology, Natural Sciences and Maritime Sciences

MASTER THESIS

May 2022

Abstract

The purpose of this master thesis is to investigate the gender balance among leaders in the Norwegian maritime industry. The investigation was conducted by a qualitative research method, were semi-structured interviews of participants holding leadership positions within the maritime industry was carried out, to collect the primary data. The thesis considered leadership, personality and organizational culture as the factors that influences gender equality.

On a national basis, the Norwegian society promotes an engagement for gender equality, were everyone has been given the same rights and opportunities. However, there are significant inequalities within smaller groups and segments. By focusing on leadership within the maritime industry, the female representation is per today 15%. The findings in the thesis indicates the importance of locating the challenges the maritime industry is facing to be able to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions. To increase the proportion, specific measures such as facilitating for the employees to create their own career path and establishing diverse teams at the workplace are important. Additionally, the findings underline how the company within the maritime industry holds a responsibility to attract potentially employees, a responsibility that must be initiated by the management.

The thesis presents how gender equality is experienced by selected actors within the maritime industry, to establish a knowledge basis that can contribute to a greater commitment to gender equality. This includes theoretical and practical implications, as well as recommendations for further research.

Keywords: Gender equality, leadership, maritime industry, personality, organizational culture

Acknowledgements

Dear reader,

This master thesis is the final piece of work and sets the ending mark after many years with the title “student”. It is with mixed feelings I resign from this title but at the same time, I feel ready for new experiences and adventures. During the years as a student, friendships for life has been established, there has been ups and downs, but most of all it has been a fantastic journey full of memories that I will keep with me for the rest of my life. This adventure has come to an end, and I will always be grateful for this period of my life.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Halvor Schøyen. You have always shown commitment to my work, challenged me to ensure that I performed my best and guided me through the whole process with your valuable feedback and positive attitude. I will also give a big thank you to my participants who contributed with their experiences and knowledge. I am also very grateful for my family, friends and fellow students who has been there for me during my ups and downs by always cheering me up and give me good advises. Their encouragement has been truly appreciated and deserve a big thank you.

I hope you find this thesis interesting and inspiring!

Göteborg, May 14th 2022

Sigrid Tranaas

List of Figures

Figure 1: Financial Performance and Companies with three or more Women Board Directors (WBD) vs those with zero WBD (The Catalyst, 2011).....15

Figure 2: Masculine and feminine leadership (Loden, 1987) Translated by the author..... 16

Figure 3: The five-factor model (Tranaas, 2022).....18

Figure 4: Gender distribution among leaders (age 20-66) 2020 (Statistics Norway, 2022)....42

List of Tables

Table 1: The proportion of women in management and board among the members of The Norwegian Shipowners` Association (Johannessen, 2022).....7

Table 2: Participants (Tranaas, 2022).....27

Table 3: Summary of findings (Tranaas, 2022).....34

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
List of Figures.....	4
List of Tables.....	4
1.0 Introduction.....	6
1.1 Background.....	8
1.2 Research problem.....	9
1.2.1 Research questions.....	10
1.3 Purpose.....	10
1.4 Delimitations.....	10
1.5 Structure.....	11
2.0 Literature review.....	12
2.1 Method for the literature review.....	12
2.3 Gender equality.....	13
2.3.1 Development of gender equality in Norway.....	13
2.4 Leadership.....	15
2.4.1 Leadership & Gender.....	16
2.5 Personality.....	17
2.6 Organizational culture.....	20
3.0 Research method.....	21
3.1 Research strategy.....	21
3.1.1 Quantitative research.....	22
3.1.2 Qualitative research.....	22
3.2 Research design.....	23
3.3 Qualitative interview.....	25
3.2.3 Semi-structured interview.....	25
3.3.3 Email Interview.....	26
3.4 Weaknesses.....	28
3.5 Sampling.....	29
3.6 Data analysis.....	30
3.7 Validity & Reliability.....	30
3.8 Ethical considerations.....	32
4.0 Findings.....	33
4.1 Gender equality.....	34
4.2 Leadership.....	36
4.3 Personality.....	38
4.4 Organizational culture.....	39
5.0 Discussion.....	40
5.1 RQ 1: <i>Why are the maritime industry facing challenges related to gender equality?</i>	40
5.2 RQ 2: <i>How can gender be a factor that influence the process of becoming a leader?</i>	44
5.3 RQ 3: <i>How does the organizational culture affect gender balance?</i>	47
5.4 Limitations.....	51
6.0 Conclusion.....	52
6.1 Recommendations for further research.....	53
Reference list.....	54
Appendix 1: Interview guide.....	62

1.0 Introduction

“With great power comes great responsibility”

- Uncle Ben

The maritime industry is one of the most important industries within the Norwegian borders and holds hundreds of years with maritime traditions. In 2021, values worth nearly 155 billion kroner was created and approximately 90 000 people were employed spread over the whole country. The maritime industry has achieved a prominent position in the global market by owning a fleet containing of 2824 vessels, which ranks Norway as the fifth largest shipping nation measured by fleet value (Norwegian Shipowner Association, 2022).

The maritime industry is experiencing a digitalization and a sustainable change that develops in a furious pace. This is reflected by for instance the first zero emission autonomous container vessel, Yara Birkeland that was launched in April 2021 and SEAFAR that manage vessels remotely by a centralized operation hub. The digital developments are to a great extent a result of the sustainable transformation that takes place within the industry. The sustainable transformation refers to a process of change in the society that involves increased value creation with less overall environment impact and low climate emissions (NHO, n.d). In relation to the sustainable development, the industry has taken a responsibility for contribution to reach the Paris Agreement temperature target by establishing the goal of decarbonize the industry by 2050. By holding the position as one of the leading nations within the industry, this entails a great responsibility for Norway for contributing towards the goal.

To reach the zero-emission goal that forces a digital development, this creates a significant need of knowledge and competence. Hence, the employees are crucial for the companies to keep on track with the development and retain their competitiveness. Among the total 90 000 employees, the proportion of women are low. Focusing on the leadership positions, only 15% of the positions are hold by women (WISTA n.d). The following table present the percentage of women holding leadership positions in different segments within the members of the Norwegian Shipowner Association. The table were not translated from Norwegian, since the language differences were considered as not significant. This table does not represent the maritime industry, but gives an indication of the gender balance within these segments:

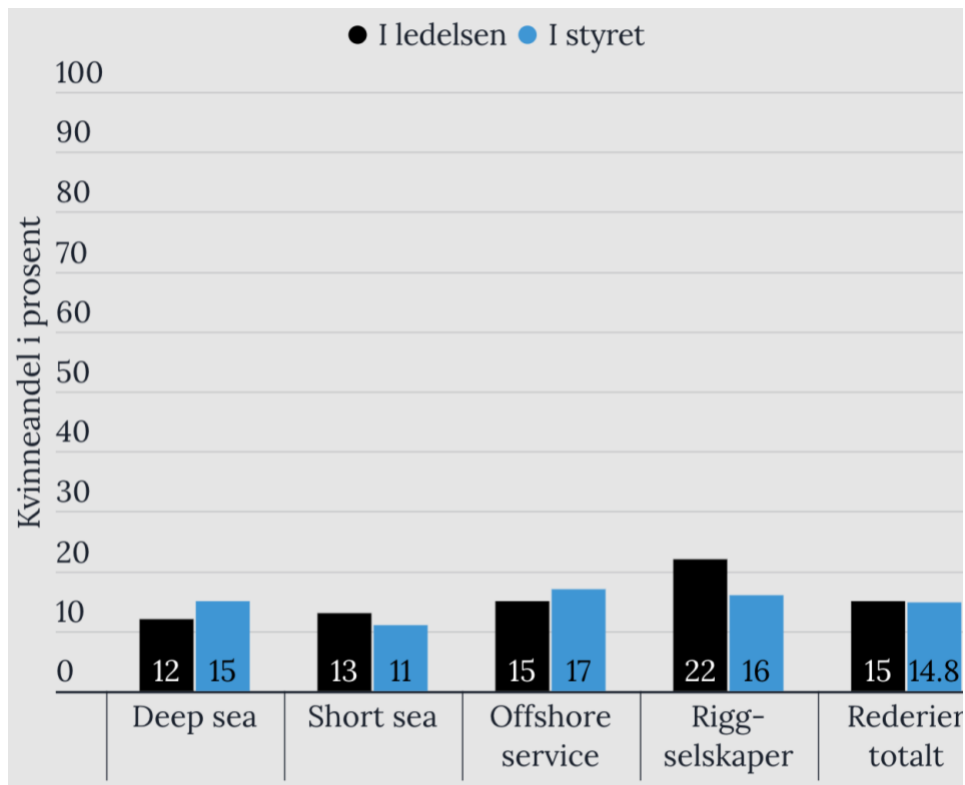


Table 1: *The proportion of women in management and board among the members of The Norwegian Shipowners` Association (Obtained from Johannessen, 2020)*

To indicate gender equality is on a national basis, the World Economic Forums yearly published gender gap report gives an indication. The report presented that Norway had closed the gender gap with 84,9% by 2021. This result ranks Norway as the third most gender equal country worldwide based on this report. The results are calculated on the basis of four dimensions: Economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and economic power (World economic forum, 2021, p.6). Comparing the table with the results from the gender gap report, this is a poor reflection of each other. The maritime industry does not indicate to have a nearly closed gender gap and the question concerning what is causing the inequality is being raised.

1.1 Background

The background for the thesis is a result of an own interest that originated during the first semester of the master program “Master of Science in Maritime Management” with commercial specialization. In the course “Organization and Leadership” an assignment related to women and leadership in the maritime industry were handed out. The subject of the assignment was an exploration of why there are so few female leaders in the maritime industry. One of the findings were the power of basic assumptions caused by an organizational culture that was outdated, were the result showed how old traditions prevented development of an organization. Another finding from the assignment was the importance of companies facilitates for women to be able to combine family life with a working career. This can be beneficial for the employees in the company to have this opportunity. At the same time, it can attract young people to apply for a job within the maritime industry. The third finding was how leaders can take a progressive role and implement gender equality measurements on all levels in the company. This requires open communication and an implementation of a diverse organizational culture (Tranaas, 2020). The assignment was completed and handed in, but the interest and curiosity for the subject remained throughout the following semesters in the master program.

Gender equality is not separately an own interest, it is a current topic with a worldwide commitment. Within the Norwegian borders gender equality has maintained a significant focus over the years where the Government pursues an offensive gender policy with the following purpose:

“Everyone that lives in Norway should have the same opportunities to contribute and to participate in the community, regardless of gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation and disability” (Regjeringen, n.d)

Focusing on gender equality by giving everyone the same opportunities to participate in the community is reflected by figures obtained from Norwegian statistics. In 1970 the percentage of men in labor force were 78,1% while the percentage of women was 44,7%. In contrast, the percentage of men in labor force in 2022 were 75% and the percentage of women had increased to 69,5% (Statistics Norway, n.d).

There is no clear conclusion of what factors that have caused this development, but one factor to shed light over is higher education. In the years between 2012-2022 the proportion of men and women taking higher education has been stable (HKDIR, 2022). Kept in mind that both genders take high education and qualifies for the same positions, this leads to the following consideration: why are the percentage of women holding leadership positions in the maritime industry so low? This question has already been assigned by the Government that has decided to prepare a gender equality strategy. The decisions were determined after processing the “Meld. St. 10 (2020-2021): Greener and smarter – tomorrows maritime industry”. Additionally, to create a knowledge basis for the gender strategy, the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries announced a general announcement on Doffin with the title: Mapping of the diversity and gender equality situation in the maritime industry (Doffin, 2021).

By combining the digital development in the maritime industry with the figures of people taking higher education, the assessment is that the industry is missing out on important competence, if only half of the population holds the leadership positions. This master thesis, from this point referred to as the thesis, were conducted at the same time as the gender strategy is being prepared. Hence, it will be interesting to compare the findings from the thesis with the strategy.

To summarize the background for the thesis, the research problem to investigated were also relevant for the courses conducted during the master program completed at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) and Chalmers University of Technology (Chalmers). Therefore, the subject for the thesis were a naturally decision.

1.2 Research problem

Within the maritime industry 15% of the leadership positions are hold by women, which reflects a significant inequality (WISTA, n.d). At the same time, measures to equal the gender balance are taken seriously by organizations such as IMO and WISTA Norway with support by the Government, the Norwegian Maritime Authority, and the actors within the maritime industry. To be able to increase the proportion of females in leadership positions, it is crucial to know what factors that is causing the inequality. This will be investigated with the following research questions:

1.2.1 Research questions

The research questions provide an explicit statement of what the writer wants to know about (Bryman, 2016). To answer the research problem, three explanatory research question were prepared. Explanatory research question gives the opportunity to answer *why* questions to develop explanations of for instance, why the gender balance among leaders in the maritime industry are unequal (De Vaus, 2001). To achieve an understanding of the subject, the research problem is answered with an open approach, which can potentially provide a wide perspective of the investigation and create a basis for future research. The three research questions are the following:

Research question 1: *Why are the maritime industry facing challenges related to gender equality?*

Research question 2: *How can gender be a factor that influence the process of becoming a leader?*

Research question 3: *How does the organizational culture affect gender balance?*

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the thesis is to investigate the gender balance among leaders in the Norwegian maritime industry. The investigation aims to obtain knowledge and explore how the gender equality situation is per today. Further, the findings and results from the thesis can establish a knowledge basis and be an important source for future research conducted on similar subjects. The goal is to contribute to a greater commitment to gender equality in the maritime industry.

1.4 Delimitations

Considering limited time and resources for conducting the thesis, some delimitations were decided in advance. The subjects gender equality, the maritime industry and leadership are broad fields to investigate. Hence, to create an in-depth understanding of the research problem the delimitations were important. The delimitations are the following:

Firstly, “The maritime industry” were defined. The thesis follows the Governments definition that defines the maritime industry as shipping companies, equipment suppliers, service providers and shipyards (Regjeringen, 2021). This means that research, publications, figures, and tables presented in the thesis are concerning this cluster. Further, the thesis is based on the Norwegian maritime industry, which will from this point be referred to as “the maritime industry”. At the same time is inevitable to not include international perspectives since the industry is highly global and there are several similarities. Another delimitation is that the thesis investigates gender balance on the leadership level and not the industry as a whole.

Secondly, it was important to define the term gender. Gender is a complex term because it can be defined based on a subjective perception of own gender identity or by the biological gender that is decided by what gender the individual are born as (Heiberg, 2021). With truly respect to how each person desire to define gender, this thesis divides the term gender into men and women.

1.5 Structure

The structure of the thesis follows the IMRAD structure. This is a standard format for scientific journals and divides the research into four main parts. The IMRAD structure contains of Introduction, Methodology, Results and Discussion (Hem, 2020). The structure creates a systematical guidance for the reader through the conducted investigation in an ideal order. The structure of the thesis is the following:

Chapter 1 introduces and presents the purpose of the thesis to describe why the investigation were conducted. The following chapter includes the literature review that created the theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter 3 describes the data collection process and how it was proceeded by a qualitative research method. The following chapter presents the results from the data collection, by dividing the findings into four categories: Gender equality, leadership, personality and organizational culture. Chapter 5 puts the findings in context with the theoretical framework by conducting an academic discussion. Additionally, there is a sixth chapter, where the reliability of the thesis will be discussed, recommendations for future research will be mentioned and finally the conclusion of the thesis.

2.0 Literature review

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. The theoretical framework was created by performing a review of existing literature obtained from digital search engines, the university's library and literature from the syllabus presented during the master program (e.g., organization and leadership and project management). Conducting a literature review is an essential element to get an overview of current knowledge and existing research on a subject (Bryman, 2016). Additionally, own assumptions and ideas can be confirmed or denied by the excising literature. The goal for the literature review was to create a theoretical framework to be able to arrive at a conclusion of the thesis. At the same time, the review revealed gaps in the literature that will be recommended as further research in chapter 6.1.

To be able to arrive at a conclusion, the theoretical framework had to be established to create a fundamental basis for the following method- and discussion chapters. Based on the research problem, the chapter was divided into four categories: Gender equality, leadership, personality, and organizational culture. These are four separate categories that also intertwines in many ways. By focusing on the decided categories, this created the limitations for the literature review. Therefore, it is important to mention that a different choice of literature could resulted in other findings and results for the thesis.

2.1 Method for the literature review

It was important to prepare a structured plan for the literature review to stick to the categories and not lose control in the middle of the existing literature that could be obtained. At first the literature search started wide range. The goal was to find literature to get an indication of what had been investigated before, but also explore interesting topics within the categories. It was determined early in the process that both existing research on the topics and historical occasion related to the subject was desirable to obtain. Then, the literature search became increasingly specific. This was a result of a deeper knowledge about the categories and a limitation of keywords to find suitable literature to create the theoretical framework. The majority of the reviewed literature was obtained from USN and Chalmers library databases. Other methods such as digital search engines like google scholar and web of science were also important searching tools. During the searching process the following keywords was used:

Keywords: *Maritime industry, maritime cluster, gender equality, leadership, personality, organizational culture*

It was important to evaluate the sources that was used to ensure credibility (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The sources were evaluated by considering the author, the publisher and when the source was published. At the same time, a sample of the sources are obtained from published reports and online articles. Thus, there is a risk that the reliability is being affected negatively. These choices will therefore be justified in chapter 5.4.

2.3 Gender equality

To get a fundamental understanding, an elaboration of the concept gender equality is essential. What is gender equality? UNICEF (n.d) defines gender equality as “The concept that women and men, girls and boys have the equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing (and benefitting from) economic, social, cultural and political development”. Gender equality does not mean that men and women should become the same, but emphasizes equally prioritizing of rights, responsibilities, needs and opportunities for both genders. The concept commits social actors and companies to eliminate stereotypes and attitudes that leads to inequalities when distributing resources between the men and women. One specific measure is erasure social norms that gives men and women unequal personal value (Subrahmanian, 2005). At the workplace, gender equality reflects a non-discrimination environment where both genders get the opportunity to reach their full potential (Olgiaiti & Shapiro, 2002).

2.3.1 Development of gender equality in Norway

During the historical timeline, gender equality has developed significant within the Norwegian borders. Taking the timeline back to the late 19th century, one occasion that was of great importance for gender equality found place when the discussion regarding women having the same opportunity to vote like men arose. At this time, inequality related to the social and economic rights in the society were significant. The discussion achieved great engagement when the Constitution Committee members concluded that women`s

participation in the public life was not recommended. This resulted in a long battle for The National Women`s Voting Rights Association, before the constitutional proposal on universal suffrage for women was approved by the Parliament June 11th in 1913 (Stortinget, 2021).

In the following years, important measures for development of gender equality have been taken. In the introduction chapter, the Norwegian gender equality policy was presented. In addition to the policy, the “Act relating to equality and prohibition against discrimination: The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act” entered into force in 2018. The objective of the Act is to improve the position of women and minorities, by erasure barriers in the society and preventing new barriers to be established (Lovdata, 2022). Additionally, in accordance with the government`s regulations, the Norwegian companies and public authorities are forced to engage active measures and act towards gender equality (Regjeringen, 2020). One example is that private and public enterprises with more than fifty employees has a duty to report the gender balance and the measures that is taken in relation to gender equality every second year.

Related to the development of gender equality, the Norwegian Government stands out as a great example. For a time period of eight years until 2021, the position as the Norwegian Prime Minister was owned by a women named Erna Solberg. After the election in 2021 the position as Prime Minister was handed over to Jonas Gahr Støre. Even if the Prime Minister position were handed over to a man, his government reflects a gender equal group were nine of total eighteen minister positions are owned by women. Hence, the Norwegian politics and power positions are characterized by a strong representation of both genders (Regjeringen, n.d).

Exploring gender equality with a general and international approach, the study “The bottom line: Corporate Performance and Women`s representation on boards” conducted by the Catalyst are commonly referred to. The study investigated if there is a link between gender diversity and financial performance, based on companies that was listed in the Fortune 500 for a specific time span. To investigate if there is a connection, the study used three measures: Return on sales (ROS), Return on invested capital (ROIC) and Return on equity (ROE). The study has been conducted several times, investigating different time spans. The latest study concerned the time span between 2004-2008. The result of all the investigations gave similar conclusions and showed that there is a connection between gender diversity on corporate boards and the company`s financial performance. Compared to other companies, the companies that achieve diversity and manage the diversity well, tended to have better

financial performance on average. Figure 1 is obtained from the study and shows an example from the report conducted in the time span 2004-2008 (Catalyst, 2011).

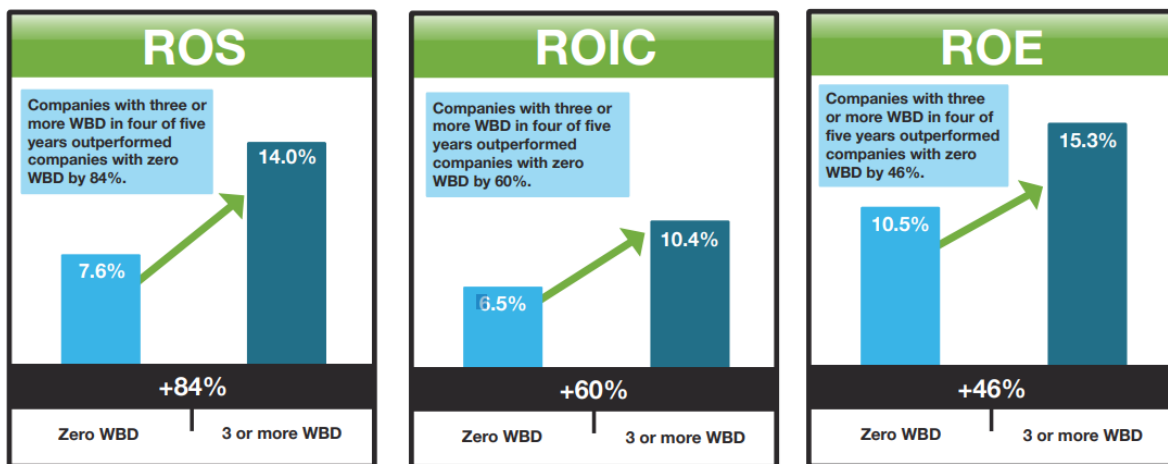


Figure 1: *Financial Performance and Companies with three or more Women Board Directors (WBD) vs those with zero WBD (Catalyst, 2011).*

2.4 Leadership

The purpose of the thesis was to investigate the gender balance among leaders in the maritime industry, thus the term leadership had to be defined. Leadership is the process of directing, controlling, motivating and inspiring staff towards the realization of stated organizational goals (Clegg et al., 2019, p.108). To understand the term, Alvesson (2002) describes that leadership is a complex subject that must be sat in the social context in which process of leadership takes place. The term can not only be understood trough the definition, but additionally as a complex social process where meanings and the interpretations of what is said and done is crucial.

Each leader has a unique leadership style that is characterized by traits, personality and behaviors that can be changed and developed over the years. When leadership is performed, this is described as leadership skills. The leadership skills involve how leaders understands the organization and their place in it, in form of how the leader takes the leadership role and how the leader perform leadership (Mumford et al., 2000). Hence, there is a significant variety in the way leadership is exercised. Both leadership style and leadership skills differ across the hierarchical levels in a company and are a function of experience in organizational leadership roles.

2.4.1 Leadership & Gender

There are several studies related to leadership and gender in the literature. Among the studies there are different approaches to the subject. Two approaches that will be presented in this sub-chapter is concerning how feminine- and masculine leadership style differ from each other and how females and males evaluate themselves as leaders. A study conducted by Loden (1987) indicates a distinction between the feminine- and masculine leadership style. The masculine leadership style is characterized by qualities such as analytical, strategic, strong and independent, while the feminine leadership style is characterized by a high extend of emotions and less independence. Loden underlines that the feminine leadership style does not generalize all women but are representative because the qualities fit a dominant proportion of the women. Masculine leadership style is described as the traditional leadership style that women have been forced to adapt during the years. The result is that women experiences losing their identity and efficient in relation to the time used on adapting the role and will not explore their innate abilities. The following figure present Lodens distinction between the feminine- and masculine leadership style:

Masculine leadership	Feminine leadership
Focus on competition Full control Strategical Unsentimental Analytical	Focus on collaboration Less control Empathy Collaboration High performance requirements

Figure 2: *Masculine and feminine leadership* (Loden, 1987). *Note: Translated by the author*

Lodens approach emphasizes a biological basis such as personal qualities to describe the difference between how men and women exercising leadership. Other studies emphasize stereotypes causing the differences. From its origin, the maritime industry has been a male dominant and implies a masculine environment that can have been developed by stereotypes.

The masculine environments are described by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a result of masculine dominance in the society. The masculine dominance is caused by historical favoritism of men in the division of labor between men and women (Bourdieu, 2001). When women operate in masculine environments, they tend to underestimate their performance. The motivation and self-confidence are weakened, which can compromise the career progress of the women (Beyer, 2002).

Stereotypes at the workplace have *descriptive* and *perspective* properties that creates expectations that a person should live up to. The descriptive properties refer to what men and females *are* like, while the perspective properties refer to how men and females *should* be like. The expectations are divided into two sets of attributes, the female attributes called communal, and the masculine attributes called agentic. The communal attributes involve characteristics like kind, respectful, democratically and emotional sensitive, while the agentic attributes are characterized by competent, task-focused, dominant and independent (Heilman, 2012).

The power of the stereotypes can be substantiated by the role congruity theory that was developed by prejudice toward female leaders. The theory explains how gender and leadership meet prejudice that women are less likely to become leaders when the expectations for the leader role are not matching with the gender stereotypes (Ritter & Yoder, 2004) The prejudice leads to expectations that forms a basis of biased competence judgements and evaluative decisions of the women (Heilman 2012). In relation to the power of stereotypes, a study that explored the ability of self-assessment of own leadership skills between females and males reflected that woman tends to underestimate own performance. The result from the study showed that female leaders underestimated their own leadership skills, while their co-workers rated them significant higher. In contrast, the men tended to overrate their own skills while the co-workers rated them lower compared to the female leaders (Ortega et al., 2015).

2.5 Personality

The leadership style is characterized by traits, personality and behavior, which creates a connection between leadership and personality. Within the field of psychology, defining the term personality are described as a challenging task. Shiraev (2016) explains that personality has a diverse view for the psychologists based on their main theoretical position held within the discipline. As a result, there are no unanimous definition of the term personality. Thereby,

the following definition are used in the thesis: Personality is a stable set of behavioral and experimental characteristics of an individual (American Psychological Association, 2014, referred in Shiraev, 2016). To explore personality, the theoretical approach is the five-factor model.

The five-factor model also termed as “The big five” is a psychological theory that use five dimensions to describe and understand the personality of an individual (McCrae, 2010). These five dimensions are: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Judge et al, 2002). To create an understanding of the model, the dimensions will briefly be presented:



Figure 3: The five-factor model (Tranaas, 2020)

Neuroticism:

Neuroticism is an indicator for emotional stability, this includes poor emotional adjustments and sensitivity to depression and anxiety (Judge et al., 2002). People with a personality characterized by a great extent of neuroticism tends to experience higher surrounding of problems and negative moods with a sense of uncontrollability of impulses (Barlow et al., 2014). At the same time, Rosander and Backström conducted a study that indicated that these people tend to accomplish higher academic performance as a result of the fear of failing (Rosander & Backström, 2011). In the same study, Rosander and Backström

refers to other research reflecting that the girls tend to be more neurotic, compared to the boys (Chamorro-Premuzic & Arteché, 2008, referred in Rosander & Backström, 2011).

Extraversion:

The personality dimension extraversion represents the ableness to experience positive affects and to be sociable (Judge et al., 2002). People with a great extent of extraversion tends to be more active, impulsive and experience positive emotions. They are more likely to take leader positions and have a big network (Watson and Clark, 1997, referred in Judge et al., 2002).

Openness to experience:

Openness to experience describes how open the person is to new ideas and concepts, this also includes the need of variation. People that have a high extent this dimension is characterized by creativity, philosophizing and curiosity (Judge et al., 2002). These people are described as original, independent and intellectual. Additionally, they are more likely to contribute to innovation at the workplace and dealing with changes (Barrik, 2005).

Agreeableness:

The dimension agreeableness is the tendency to be trustiness, caring and gentle (Judge et al., 2002). This includes how the person cooperate with others and how they create social harmony around them. Hence, agreeableness is referred to as a beneficial trait at the workplace. However, the trait only matters when interpersonal interaction involves, helping, cooperating or support others (Barrik, 2005).

Conscientiousness:

Conscientiousness can be described by three facets: Achievement orientation, dependability and orderliness (Judge et al., 2002). This dimension is used as a predictor for achievement success and reflects persons that is more engaged in the situation, rather than being impulsive. For academic success such as organizational ability, hard work and motivation, this is the strongest personality predictor (Costa & McCrae, 1992, referred in

Rosander & Backström, 2011). Conscientiousness was mentioned together with neuroticism and extraversion as the most relevant dimension for career success, based on result from a study that investigated the relationship between the five-factor model and general mental ability with career success (Judge, 1999).

2.6 Organizational culture

Organizational culture is the third considered factor for influencing the gender balance among the leaders in the maritime industry. The term culture is defined as “The totality of everyday knowledge that people use habitually to make sense of the world around them through pattern of shared meanings and understandings passed down through language, symbols and artefacts” (Clegg et al., 2019, p.108). Further, culture has an impact on behavior, decision making and thinking. Alvesson (2002) refers to culture as complex because it can be used to cover everything and consequently nothing. Culture influences how people understand the world around them based on shared meanings and understandings. At the same time, culture cannot be substantiated by research or facts, because there is no right or wrong.

The organizational culture is defined by Schein as “A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2010, p.18). In relation to organizational culture, Professor Geert Hofstede’s research is often referred to, where culture is described as “Unwritten rules of how we do things differs from one human group to another. Culture is how we call these unwritten rules about how to be a good member of the group”.

Hofstede divides between the masculine and feminine culture. The masculine culture is characterized by values such as achievements and power, mostly found in countries such as Italy and Japan. In a masculine culture, men and women have separate roles in the society where the males are expected to focus on career and material things, while the women are expected to be family oriented. In contrast, the feminine culture is described as fluid and flexible. Hofstede described the feminine culture in context with the Scandinavian countries. Within the feminine culture the roles in the society are not set to a specific gender, which means that both men and women can prioritize the family life and a working career (Geert Hofstede, n.d).

3.0 Research method

The method chapter describes how the data collection was conducted through an empirical and structured method. The term method can be defined as “Following a specific path towards a goal” (Johannessen et al., 2010, p.29). In this thesis, the path is created by combining the reviewed literature from chapter two with the collected data from this chapter, towards the goal which is the conclusion. Mason (2017) emphasizes the word *generating* data, rather than *collecting* data. The term method must be understood as something more than implying a specific technique for collecting data. Further explained, method includes a data-generation and engagement process, where the activities that is conducted are described as intellectual, analytical and interpretive. Masons’ description reflects the process of obtaining data for this thesis as well, however, due to personal preference the process will further be referred to as data *collection*.

The data collection process consisted of several important considerations, decisions and choice of limitations. Hence, the structure of the method chapter was important to provide a systematic description of *how* and *why* the data was collected. Therefore, the chapter includes a description of the data collection process, a consideration of weaknesses and a discussion of the accuracy of the collected data. Additionally, challenges that arose during the process, limitations and the ethical considerations will be presented. The literature concerning research methods are broad, thus there is several interesting and relevant sources included in the thesis.

3.1 Research Strategy

The research strategy decides the direction of the research process towards the goal. The strategy involves decisions making about every aspect of the research, where the research problem and the purpose of the study is the starting point (Mason, 2017). The distinction of research strategy is between quantitative and qualitative research, where the differences are recognized by three aspects: The nature of data analyzed, the principles and assumptions about social life and the role of theory in relation to the research (Bryman, 2016). Thus, the research strategy had to be determined in conjunction with the purpose of the thesis

The starting point when the research strategy was decided was the prepared research questions presented in chapter 1.2.1. The research questions were prepared to substantiate the

conclusion of the research problem and it was crucial to collect data in relation to these. Based on the research questions it was important to obtain data about how gender balance among leaders in the maritime industry are experienced. The goal with the data collection was to achieve an in-depth understanding of the subject rather than generalize the findings. With a desire to obtain an in-depth understanding, a qualitative research method was used in this thesis. To underline the decision of research method, quantitative and qualitative research will briefly be described in the two following sub-chapters.

3.1.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research is characterized by collecting data in form of numbers or quantities that is analyzed by a statistical analysis. The results are often in terms of percentage or averages. Qualitative research is used when the researcher wants to confirm or test something, for instance a theory or a hypothesis (Johannesen et al., 2010). This strategy is suitable if the aim is to generalize the findings, rather than creating an in-depth understanding. One quantitative research method that is commonly used is questionnaire surveys, which gives the possibility to obtain data from a large sample and achieve results that can be generalized for the sample. By conducting quantitative research, it requires that the researcher have pre-knowledge about the subject to be able to prepare well designed questions. This can prevent that the participants misinterpreting of the questions that could lead to low reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.1.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research emphasizes words rather than quantification, thereby it gives the opportunity to establish an in-depth understanding of the subject. When conducting qualitative research, the aim is often to obtain an understanding of concepts or assumptions, rather than generalizing the findings. The sample size is often smaller compared to quantitative research, and the relationship between the researcher and the participant(s) are characterized to a greater extent of personal interaction. The relationship involves a two-way communication that can provide different perspectives and knowledge explained by the participant(s). Additionally, the researcher can clarify ambiguities with follow-up questions. Thus, the pre-knowledge is not crucial as it can be created along the data collection process (Bryman, 2016).

3.2 Research design

Bryman (2016) describes research design as the framework for collection and analysis of data within a research project, which in this case is the thesis. The research design must be considered in relation to the strategy to connect design and strategy (Bryman, 2016). Another perspective for deciding research design is the approach to the theory. There are two approaches that reflect the relation between existing literature and the data collection, this is the inductive and deductive approach. The *deductive* approach explores existing theories and a set of general premises. This can be in form of developing and testing hypothesis where the conclusion contains no more information than the general premises. The *inductive* approach aims to analyze observations or findings that further can be connected to existing theories and establish new theories. Although the presented descriptions indicate a clear distinction between the deductive and inductive approach, Bryman underlines that “*As deductive entails an element of induction, the inductive process is likely to entail a degree of deduction*” (Bryman, 2016, p.22). Described with other words, when deductive research is conducted, the starting point is a theory achieved from inductive research.

In this thesis, an inductive approach was followed with the aim to obtain an in-depth understanding of the gender equality among leaders in the maritime industry. On one side the approach facilitated for defining the research design. On the other side, it was challenging to determine one specific design to follow for the thesis. According to Bryman (2016) the research designs can be divided into five groups: Experimental design, longitudinal design, cross sectional design, comparative design and case study. The variations between the designs can be put in relation to what type of research the designs are suitable for. Further, the five groups will be briefly described to create an understanding of the characteristics of each research design and how they could be suitable for the thesis.

The *experimental* design assesses the causal relationship between an independent and dependent variable. The design aims to balance features such as generalizability, validity, practicality and cost (Salkind, 2010). When the features are balanced and the researcher have control over the variables, an experiment can provide evidence that substantiates current knowledge on a specific scientific field. Thereby, a strength with the design is the possibility for achieving causal findings and strong internal validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). At the same time, one risk is not achieving control over the variables, which can lead to errors and low reliability of the result (Seltman, 2012). This thesis could not be conducted with an

experimental research design. The maritime industry is a complex field to investigate, hence it would have been challenging to achieve control over the variables.

The *longitudinal* design use multiple observations that arose before, during and after treatment, where variables such as timing and observations are determined by the hypotheses. Hence, the design is suitable if the goal is to investigate causality of the same case over a time period (Salkind, 2010). Using a longitudinal design could have been relevant if the timeframe for conducting the thesis were extended. One example is that the development of gender equality in the maritime industry could be explored by conducting the same study several times over a time-period.

The *cross-sectional* design, also referred to as social survey design has several similarities to the longitudinal design (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The major difference is that all data is collected at the same time, to describe patterns of variables within a population (Salkind, 2010). The variables can be found within for instance organizations, people, or nations. This design is often used in relation to quantitative research, for instance in form of a survey. Thereby, the thesis could follow a cross-sectional design by investigating patterns and variations within the maritime industry as a whole or among people in a specific maritime company.

The *comparative* design uses procedures for drawing out solutions by means of comparison with similar samples in a design space. The aim of the research is to compare phenomena on contrasting cases (Lin & Huang, 2016, p.2). This thesis could be conducted with a comparative design by comparing gender equality in the maritime industry with the aviation industry. In relation to the comparative design, it is important to mention the requirement of a clarification of the compared phenomena. Hence, the timeframe for conducting the thesis and the knowledge to identify phenomena to compare, were not considered as sufficient. However, in chapter 6.1 “Recommendations for further studies” will indicate research that can be carried out with a comparative design.

The last-mentioned research design is the *case study* that is used on a broad field of research, which do it challenging to give the design a clear definition. One definition of the case study is the following “The case study entails the detailed and intensive analysis of one (or multiple) case” (Bryman, 2011, p.62). A strength with the case study is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence, documents, artifacts, interviews and observation (Yin, 2014). The design is suitable when answering “*why*” and “*how*” questions within a real-life context,

which was in consistence with the research questions in this thesis. Additionally, Bryman (2016) describes how the case study have an inductive approach, when the research strategy is qualitative, a description that was in consistence with the data collection process.

With an inductive approach the thesis was characterized by an explanatory case study, which is suitable when the purpose is to extent the understanding of complex social phenomena (Ogawa & Malen, 1991). An explanatory case study is often conducted as preliminary research in advance of wide-scale research. Hence, by establishing a knowledge basis for gender equality in the maritime industry, the thesis could potentially be useful for the Governments gender equality strategy.

3.3 Qualitative interview

The data was collected by qualitative research, were qualitative interview as used as the method. By selecting this method, it gave the possibility to obtain data from the participants own environment and interact with them on their own terms and in their own language. In advance of the interviews an interview guide was prepared (Appendix 1). The four categories from the literature review created the fundamental basis for the questions in the interview guide. Hence, the questions were concerning gender equality, leadership, personality and organizational culture. This was a conscious choice to be able to create a connection between theory and the collected primary data. The questions were well-designed with the aim to explore opinions, experiences and reflections from the participants, which could contribute to answering the research questions. The prepared research questions presented in chapter 1.2.1, were open-ended questions, thereby the interviews were characterized as semi-structured interviews.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection method were the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions (Given, 2008). The questions are prepared in advance to set a direction of the conversation. At the same time, the participants are given the opportunity to answer the questions in an open and personal way. The purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews is to obtain descriptions of the nature the interview and interpret the meanings of the described phenomena (Brinkman & Kvale,

2018). Hence, the participants could decide how to answer the questions and to what extent the participant wanted to disclose own experiences.

3.3.3 Email interview

The semi-structured interviews were conducted through email interviews, a method that has increased in the later years (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018). One specific advantage is the written text that is self-transcribing which means that the collected data can be analyzed as soon as the participants returned with their answers. This was experienced as significant timesaving, since transcription of the answers that tends to be time consuming was not required. Another advantage was how the participant were given the possibility to answer the questions in desired pace and edit the answers if that was needed.

In the literature, the e-mail interview is described as advantageous when the investigated subject is a sensitive or difficult field for the participant. Brinkman & Kvale (2018) refers to the psychiatrist Skårderud, who argued that computer computer-mediated therapy is suitable for people experiencing difficult situations or problems with showing their body language. Another example of how e-mail interview can be beneficial, is explained by McCoy and Karson (2006) who referred to a study that examine the use of e-mail intensive interviewing compared to traditional data collection methods. The sample that was interviewed per e-mail, were women in vulnerable life-situations. The results from the study illustrated how the use of e-mail interview in this situation was a success. On one side the participants got the opportunity to answer the questions in their preferable peace and order. On the other side, the data that was generated by this method was described as credible and trustworthy.

In context with the thesis, it was in advance of the interviews come to light that several of the participants had experienced challenging situations at their workplace. Hence, by conducting the interviews through email, this was considered to make the participants more willing to be open and provide detailed descriptions of the experienced experiences if it was by written communication. By conducting the interviews per e-mail, it also gave the possibility to select a sample that was located on a wide geographical area from north to south in Norway. At the same time, there were no extra cost or time aspect in form of for instance traveling around and visit the participants.

When the process of contacting potential participants for the interview started, one mentionable experience arose. This was the openness the individual showed and the willingness to participate. The requests were met with a reaction describing the subject of the thesis as interesting and relevant. All potential participants that were contacted, voluntary accepted to contribute as participant for the interview. After the confirmation from the participants was obtained, an identical interview guide was sent out to everyone. Adjusting or changing some of the questions were considered as unnecessary based on the sample. Further explained, none of the interview questions was related to significant differences such as gender or workplace. It was desirable to conduct 7-15 interviews, but after searching and contacting potentially participants 10 interviews were conducted. The participants are presented in the following table:

Participant	Title	Worked in the maritime industry for:	Gender
1	Head of shipping	20 years	Female
2	Vice President, Sales & Marketing	20 years	Female
3	Project Manager	6 years	Male
4	Leader Sales Support & Tender Manager Norway	3 years	Female
5	Project Manager	4 years	Male
6	Regional HR and Leadership development Manager	10 years	Male
7	Line Manager	4 years	Female
8	Business Transformation Manager	5 years	Female
9	Global Learning and Development Director	26 years	Male
10	Project Manager	6 years	Female

Table 2: Participants (Tranaas, 2022)

3.4 Weaknesses

During the method chapter there has been mentioned several positive aspects of qualitative research, such as in-depth understanding and the freedom the participants are given for answering the questions. At the same time, qualitative research is also criticized in the literature. One example is related to the freedom the participants are given where there is a risk related to how the interviewer interpret the answer. The interpretation can be influenced by factors such as own interests and previous knowledge about the subject (Bryman, 2016). Misinterpreting of the answers was a risk that was considered both in advance and after the data collection. The risk was managed by informing the participants that follow-up questions could be sent through e-mail after their answers was sent in return. Another mentionable risk was also related to the freedom of answering the questions. Further explained, since the participants were given the thrust of giving correct and trustiness information within their answers, a weakness for the method could been if the participant had experienced a situation that triggered strong emotions and affected the answer. However, the answers did not indicate to be distorted in any way.

Another weakness with the method was the requirement for having good written communication skills. This is to some extent an extension of the previous mentioned weakness. With lack of significant nonverbal communication such as body language, the tone of voice and face expressions, the written skills become crucial for generating rich and detailed descriptions (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018). By not meeting the participants face-to-face it was a risk to miss out important nonverbal signals that could further lead to misinterpretation.

The sample size can also be considered as a weakness because the analyze is based on ten participants. The sample are not representative for the maritime industry as a whole, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings without further investigation and research. At the same time, experiences and opinions are subjective and the purpose was to investigate and create an understanding of the subject. Thus, it can both be considered as a weakness and as a strength.

3.5 Sampling

When deciding the sampling strategy, there were several strategies to consider. Mason (2017) refers to sampling as “Principles and procedures used to identify and gain access to relevant data sources that are potentially generative in relation to a wider universe, and to select from the purposes of gaining meaningful insights into your intellectual puzzle” (Mason, 2017, p. 55). Hence, the aim for the strategy was to collect and analyze data from a representative sample and connect the findings with theory.

The sample was selected from the population, which in this case was the maritime industry. At first, it was challenging to decide the sample for the thesis especially since it was desirable to recruit people in leadership positions. The challenges were related to own personal network in the industry, that was assumed to not be sufficient to get in contact with these people. Thereby, it was considered to recruit a convenience sampling, meaning that the sample size is decided by willing participants (Bryman, 2016). On one side this sample strategy implied to be a good and easy solution. On the other side it was considered to be too risky, in case no relevant person were willing to participate. To reach out to the desirable sample, it was decided that this strategy was not sufficient.

Kept in mind that the own personal network in the maritime industry was of small size, the platform LinkedIn were assumed to be helpful. The desired outcome was that the post reached out to people that was both willing to participate and fulfilled the sample criteria. Since the majority of the connections on LinkedIn are people working in the maritime industry, it was considered as possible to achieve this. In parallel with posting the message on LinkedIn, one person was contacted by email with a request to participate personally and give advice about other participants to contact. From here, the sample strategy was characterized by snowballing. This involves that one participant advises the researcher other participants to contact or personally inform other people to participate in the research (Wohlin, 2014). The person that was contacted on email accepted participation and gave the personalia of people that was recommended to contact. Combining the LinkedIn post and the snowball sampling, the sample for the thesis started to be formed.

To recruit a representative sample, some criteria had to be decided in advance. From the population, the reliable sample was people in leadership positions within the maritime industry that could contribute with knowledge and experience related to gender equality. Years in the industry was also a criterion with the desire to investigate if there could be found

changes that had occurred over the years based on the input from the participants. To reach out to the informants, an email with a presentation of the thesis and an invitation to participate was sent out. All the informants worked in different companies, which gave the possibility to discover geographical variations. By recruiting this sample, the sampling strategy amended from snowballing to what Welch et al., (2002) identify as requiring elite informants. This involves recruitment from top level in the companies. This sample strategy is described as challenging due to the problem of getting in contact with these informants, they have busy schedules, and it can be tough to recruit this sample. In contrast to this description, the response from the people that was contacted was surprisingly positive since everyone accepted participation to the interview.

3.6 Data analysis

To answer the research problem, it was essential to conduct a systematic and critical analysis of the collected data from the interviews, characterized by clarity and structure. To achieve this, the analysis can be divided into three processes: Categorization of data, narrowing down data and presentation of data sequences (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020).

Considering that the interviews were conducted per email, the data were returned from the participants in written form. Therefore, it was not required to transcribe the interviews and the answers could be analyzed directly. When the analyze of the data started, the first mission was to get an understanding and interpret the answers. To clarify the answers that appeared to be unclear, these were handled by following-up questions to avoid errors during the analyze. To analyze the interviews, each interview was printed out on paper to have the possibility to read them in detail and add notes where it was needed. To narrowing down and analyzing the data, the categorization of the findings was decided in advance, based on what answers that could be put in context with the theory. The four categories were: Gender equality, leadership, personality and organizational culture, the table are presented in chapter 4.0.

3.7 Validity & Reliability

The validity and reliability refer to evaluating the quality of the conducted investigation. The evaluation is essential for the thesis because it indicates the trustiness of the collected data to avoid measuring errors and results with low validity and reliability

(Johannessen et al., 2010). Both validity and reliability can be divided into an *external* and *internal* evaluation.

External reliability evaluates the replicability of the investigation. The estimate for the external reliability is created by the correlation between pretest and posttest of the investigation. If the correlation is equal to one, then the different score between the tests is zero and indicates high external reliability (Salkind, 2010). The reliability depend on how the data was collected, what type of data that was collected and how the data was analyzed afterwards (Johannessen et al., 2010). The external reliability is challenging when conducting qualitative research because is impossible to “freeze” the social setting that is investigated (Bryman & Bell, 2011), To estimate the external reliability for the thesis, this could be conducted by repeating the same investigation again. If the results correspondence, it indicates high external reliability.

Internal reliability refers to the agreeableness between two or more researchers on their perceptions and understanding of the investigation (Bryman, 2016). In relation to the thesis, it was challenging to estimate the internal reliability since the investigation were conducted by one person. As an alternative to estimate the internal validity, it could be done by letting other researchers interpret the results in the thesis by following the investigation process in detail. This forces a well-designed method chapter, so the process is described and can be followed in detail.

The *external validity* also referred to as *generalizability* evaluates to which extent the findings can be generalized across social settings (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As mentioned, the aim of qualitative research is in most cases not to generalize the findings but to create an in-depth understanding of the subject. Hence, the alternative criteria for evaluating the investigation *transferability* are more suitable for the thesis (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Transferability is estimated in form of how the findings can apply to other context or in the same context at some other time. In relation to transferability, the method that was used were considered as suitable to transfer the findings to other contexts. One example is that the identical interview guide from this thesis could have been sent out to the Swedish maritime industry without adjustments. Another example is that the findings from this thesis can be transferred to describe the Swedish maritime industry as well, since there is assumed to be several similarities.

Internal validity also named *causality* concerning the relationship between the findings from the investigation and the theories being developed. High internal validity is a strength for qualitative research because it ensures that is a high level of congruence between concepts and observations (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The alternative criteria for evaluating internal validity are *credibility* (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). The credibility estimates how believable the findings are. To ensure credibility for the thesis this forced a collection of high-qualitative data, which is being carefully analyzed. It is significant that the data is carefully analyzed so it can be analyzed by other researchers to confirm that the findings are believable (Patton, 1999).

3.8 Ethical considerations

The ethical principles according to conducting the thesis was contemplated early and throughout the whole writing process. The interviewer determines the structure and conversation when conducting an interview (Kvale & Birkman, 2018). Therefore, the ethical principles are important because there is no complete free reign to do what is necessary to achieve the goal with the thesis (Salanda, 2011). Research ethics refers to the approach of the actions in relation to the norms associated with research. *Honesty, transparency, Orderliness, Consideration* and *Violence* are the words that summarize research ethics (Gustafsson et al., 2005, p. 9). This reflects how the sampling strategy was proceeded, what information the participants were given, how the participants were influenced during the project and how the thesis affect the participants afterwards. This refers to protection of the participants rights and privacy (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006).

When the first inquiry was sent to the participant it was informed that personal and organizational information would be anonymized, and that participation was voluntary. The consent was obtained digitally by written confirmation. Hence, all participants were aware that confidential data would be protected. Thus, the consent of everyone who wanted to participate was obtained and secured.

To ensure that the confidentiality information that could identify the informants was protected, some changes and adjustments was done. At the same time, it was important during the writing process to analyze and correctly reproduce what the participants answered in the interviews. This was considered to ensure that no data was incorrect reproduced which could weakened the reliability and validity of the investigation. After analyzing the confidential

data, it was important to erase the answers from the participants. Since the participants gave their answers through email, all communication with each of the participants was deleted from the email inbox.

4.0 Findings

This chapter presents the findings from analyzing the ten interviews that was conducted. The structure follows a systematic division of the four categories from the literature review in chapter two. The questions from the interview guide were deliberately prepared to cover the subjects in the literature review, hence this structure create a systematic presentation. The participants were highly engaged over the subject of the thesis, therefore it was important to give them freedom to answer with interesting knowledge and experiences in their preferred way. Some participants gave longer describing answers while others gave shorter but more detailed answers.

The following sub-chapters are divided into: Gender equality, leadership, personality and organizational culture. It is important to mention that the reproduction of the answers from the participants are presented directly from their answers. Therefore, it can be some misspelling or oral language. The answers were not edited based on the risk for wrong reproduction that would have affected the data collections validity and reliability. Table 3, presents the key finding from the interviews:

Subject	Findings from the interview
Gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the participants agreed that the definition of gender equality is that male and females get the same opportunities • Gender equality in a company is to a great extent the leaders responsibility • There is a risk that older people feel discriminated • Force action from the leader and the HR department to achieve equality • It is not necessary 50/50 male and females that defines gender equality in a company
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A leader should both supervise and challenge the employees • Should both be humble and distinct • Dare to take action and implement a diverse team • Inspire on individual- and team level • Good leadership is crucial • Dear to deal with challenges and friction in the team
Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some participants divided to a great extent between their private- and leader personality, where the division was between calm and serious • One participant answered that the personality had changed over the years due to the importance of not care what other thinks all the time, but still be a serious leader • Humor is important • The importance of being an initiator was mentioned by several of the participants
Organizational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity is key, there is a need for people with long experience and young people with new and fresh competence • Be open to demographical differences • Create a culture that engages the employees to have own opinions and use their voice • Friction in the team is good, the solution is how it is handled • Emotions and disagreement can lead to something positive • The leader is responsibility for creating a diverse organizational culture

Table 3: Summary of findings (Tranaas, 2022)

4.1 Gender equality

The first question was to define gender equality with own words. When answering this question, none of the participants differed from the others and agreed on how gender equality should be defined. To indicate how the term was defined, one participant gave the following definition *“Gender equality is when people off all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Everyone is affected by gender inequality – women, men, trans and gender diverse people, children and families”*. This definition underlined that everyone in the society

is affected by gender equality by using “*all genders*”, something that indicates that gender contains of several groups than just male and female. Another participant emphasized that the goal should not be to become gender blind, because happiness is not related to that “gender” do not have a value. The importance is that gender do not entail advantage or disadvantage in any way, underlined with the key word: Fairness.

When the participants were asked to describe the challenges that the industry experience related to gender equality, the answers were related to the proportion of men that is significantly larger than the proportion of women. Thus, the women can have a view on the maritime industry as a masculine industry and prefer to apply for other industries. Another input to this question was the challenge to find women for operative, technical leadership roles. Not because there are lack of women that can take this role, but the issue is the companies who do not make the effort to find these women. With the impression that the maritime industry is a male dominant industry, the women need a push to apply for these leadership positions. Therefore, it is crucial that the companies not only promote that they have a focus on diversity, but taking specific measures is also crucial.

It was desired to investigate if the participants had personally experienced challenges related to gender equality during their working career. This question gave several examples of occasions and the factors that had caused the experiences. The influential factors that recurred was “age” and “becoming a parent”. Challenges related to age were lower salary compared to other colleges that could have less education, and the experience of people from other companies that did not want to cooperate because they were a young woman.

The influential factor “becoming a parent” indicated to not separately be related to becoming a mom but also a dad. Some of the female participants described an experience of not being considered as a value employed after becoming a mom. Their colleagues assumed that the mom-role would lead to early pick-up in the kindergarten, absence of participation in social contexts or not being able to contribute to bigger project that would force increased hours of work. For the males that had entered the dad-role, the challenges were related to the feeling of shame for taking parent leave. This feeling was mostly triggered by the older men within the companies, that pointed out the absence from the workplace as well as underlining that parent leave are a task for the mother.

Another challenge that was mentioned were the difficulty to build relations in the same way as men, explained with an input: *If I was in dinner-meetings or something with*

somebody from the opposite sex, I often experienced rumors and a lot of talking around it afterwards". Additionally, the participants were asked if they experienced negative sides with focusing on gender equality in a company. The answers were to a great extent characterized by explaining the risk of missing importance competence or hire the wrong candidate for the position only to fulfill the equality goal.

4.2 Leadership

The purpose of the thesis was to investigate the gender balance among leaders in the maritime industry, therefore it was desirable to know how the participants defined the term leadership. The answers were significant similar among the participants, showed by one example that is representative for all the answers *"A good leader is a person that supervise the employees and at the same time challenge them to perform their best. I'm expecting that a good leader is clear and distinct"*. One participant answered this question in light of own leadership role and described that leadership is not about the leader itself, it is about the people in the team and how the leader can help them to be successful. As a leader it is important to understand the job that is done by all employees and make sure that all is in place and ready for the employees to do their job in the most efficient way. Further, the participant described that the leader should trust the team and give them freedom because it is the employees that knows the details of their job. The leadership role can be characterized by being firm and taking decisions when its needed, but at the same time the leader should be open to learn from own mistakes if the wrong decisions was made.

All participants agreed that the leader is responsible for gender equality in the company, at the same time there were significant variances in the answers to the question *"To what extent is the leader responsible for gender equality in the organization/company?"* One participant explained that gender equality should be in mind of the leader already in the recruiting process. Not in a way that equal amount of the two genders should be hired, but the focus should be on creating a diverse team. On one hand this can lead to a team that is better equipped to execute tasks and develop any department. On the other hand, a diverse team can create frictions. The participant reflected over that in a perfect world we want everyone to have the same opinions as ourselves, but this would most likely stagnate development and progress. The team are depending on friction and different perspectives, additionally it should

be acceptable to show emotions such as irritation and frustration. Hence, friction do not have to be negative, but forces that the leader is able to manage the friction.

Another answer to the same question, one of the participants stated that *“The leader is 100% responsible for gender equality. The initiative must come from the management or the boards, it must start from the top level to get everyone in the company to understand the importance and that this is something they should prioritize. It can't be hand over to a HR department or similar. The leader is only a successful leader if the leader is able to establish a good and diverse team”*. This answer emphasized the importance of management being at the forefront and setting the standards for the other levels in the company. The HR department holds an important role as well, but it is the leader that have the voice both internally and externally of the company to underline the company's focus and values.

When the participants were asked what the most important measure to get more females wanting to become a leader in the maritime industry, action and not just words from the management, were repeated. The participant explained that the management must show that they want to focus on women on the same terms as men. Firstly, the management must act and headhunt qualified females for hiring them to leadership positions. Secondly, it forces that the woman is handed challenging tasks within their position and gets an early intervention in their working career. This was justified with the statement that *“men are often handed challenging task, by giving women the experience of challenge it can lead to personal grow and development over the years”*. Another participant underlined the importance of giving the young women who are already in the industry the opportunity to become a leader and feel that the company is investing in them as a valued employee.

Kept in mind that the percentage of women in leadership positions in the Norwegian maritime industry are 15%, the following question were asked *“Do you have some opinions or considerations of why the number of female leaders in the maritime industry is so low?”* The reflections from the answers were related to biased perceptions like requirement of knowledge from being on sea sailing with cargo ships and understanding the tricks of the trade. These requirements were described to be typical occupation for men and therefore, assumed to be an influential factor causing the low percentage. In contrast, other reflections were related to the importance of promoting that *“The maritime industry is very much more than ship brokerage and the "boys' club thing". It is very much fun and interesting in the industry and an exciting everyday life as you always learn something new”*. The participants appeared optimistic related to making the industry more attractive, justified with this input

“Some companies have already started this journey, and I guess in the future we will see more females working in the industry”. A specific example of how the companies is trying to change the reputation that was earlier mentioned, was how the companies facilitates for the employees to become a parent, both mom and dad. This involves that family life and career can be combined for those who desire that, were one participant used own company as an example *“I experience that the company has focus on increasing the female representation. They facilitate for having kids and become parents”.*

4.3 Personality

All participants hold leadership positions within their company, hence it was interesting to ask a question to get an indication of their personality. The question was two folded and asked the participants to use key words to describe themselves as private persons and as leaders. This was the question with most variation among the answers, therefore some specific examples are pasted in:

“As a private person: Calm and prioritize to use my time with my family and friends, hiking and workout. As a leader: Responsible, structured, committed and willing to work, likes to have an overview of the overall picture”

“Private I`m honest, outgoing and gentle. As a leader I`m understanding, committed and conscientious”

“Private: A bit impatient, motivator, structured, social, headstrong, honest and direct, loyal, creative. Leader: High work ethic, high capacity and energy, clear overview, social and emotional intelligent, stable, high spirits”

“Personality private: Outgoing, energetic, impatient, positive, think that everything will be fine, takes initiative. Personality work: The same as private. But when I was younger, I was much more concerned regarding everyone to like me and be taken seriously. Luckily, the last 10 years I have found out that everything will be fine, and it is not too serious, and we

don't have to worry about what others think all the time. But compared to my private personality, I'm more pedagogic, patients and careful in a work setting"

4.4 Organizational culture

The organizational culture within the company were described to be of great significance among several of the participants. The question *"To what extent and how does organizational culture affect the inclusion of all the employees?"* were answered by opinions that stated the importance of the organizational culture to make all the employees feel included, regardless of position. The participants pointed out that an organizational culture characterized by equality and inclusions makes the company attractive to people who are searching for jobs but also companies that wants to cooperate with the company. Related to this question the keyword that repetitive was "diversity", explained with the following answer *"In our organization gender equality is important, but just as important are diversity. This includes gender, age, cultural background, different mindset and personality"*.

One participant stated that diversity does not correspond to the company presenting an annual report where they present that they have 40% representation of women. Diversity is to a greater extent related to including different demography and being open to other perspectives, *"seeing things with new eyes must not be underestimated"*. Further the participant explained that is harmful if the organizational culture is focusing on *"this is how we do it here"*, because it can affect economic and personal aspects of the company and stagnate the development of the employees.

The importance of the first weeks at the workplace were also mentioned *"the employee must know that there is a room for different demographics and expressing own opinions even if they differ from the others, this is acceptable"*. This forces that the employees are given an opportunity to get an own voice within the company and contribute to form both the organizational culture and the company, which gives the management a great responsibility. At the same time, related to this question, one of the participants underlined that *"The women must be better to raise their hands, but I want to mention that the younger and new employees are getting better to do this. They have an own voice"*, which indicates that the responsibility is to some extent handed to the employees as well.

5.0 Discussion

In this chapter, the content from the previous chapters will be discussed. The structure of the chapter will systematically address the three research questions from chapter 1.2.1 to discuss the empirical findings in relation to the theoretical framework. The goal of the discussion is to explore whether there are any connections that can be discovered between theory and findings or whether the findings deviate from previous research in order to reach at the conclusion. Based on the purpose of the thesis concerning an investigation of the gender balance among the leaders in the maritime industry, this has proven to be an engaging subject when it was presented to other people. On one side the response was in form of comments such as *“that’s just how it is”* or *“the leader positions in the is not for women, it is not possible to balance work and family life, these positions are only for special people, and it is not many of them”*. On the other side, the response was significant positive in form of comments such as *“what an important and exciting subject, tell me if I can contribute in any way”* or *“I’m already very engaged in this subject and I hope we can see a positive development in the future”*. Even though the response were divided, nine out of ten were positive.

Additionally, the engagement on the subject has been reflected through published articles online, earlier research and annual reports from maritime companies. Hence, it has felt meaningful and exciting to conduct the investigation to contribute establishing a knowledge basis for gender equality in the maritime industry. It is important to mention that the research on the subject is far away from completed. Therefore, sub-chapter 6.1 will be included with recommendations for future research.

5.1 Research question 1: *Why are the maritime industry facing challenges related to gender equality?*

Gender equality within the Norwegian borders has developed significant compared to the years before 1913 when women’s participation in the public life was assumed to not be recommended. Referring the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, who stated in a speech that *“(..) all research and economic studies show that companies that embrace diversity are more successful”*, this indicates that the world has come a long way towards gender equality. Further in the speech, President von der Leyen presented Norway as

one of the two best performances on the Gender Diversity Index within companies, a title that was shared with United Kingdom (European Commission, 2022).

Combining President von der Leyen's presentation of Norway with earlier mentioned content in the thesis, it indicates that Norway is close to achieving the goal of gender equality. On one side, Norway on a national basis has achieved gender equality because all inhabitants have the same rights and opportunities, which corresponds with the presented definition of gender equality (UNICEF, n.d). On the other side, by taking random sampling within various groups located within the Norwegian borders the result does not indicate the same, which further lead to a need for improvement on different areas.

Facing challenges related to gender equality among leaders are not separately related to the maritime industry. Figures obtained from Statistics Norway reflects how the gender distribution among leaders in Norway, concerning all industries. The latest version to obtain is from 2020, but were considered to be representative for 2022 as well, to give an indication:

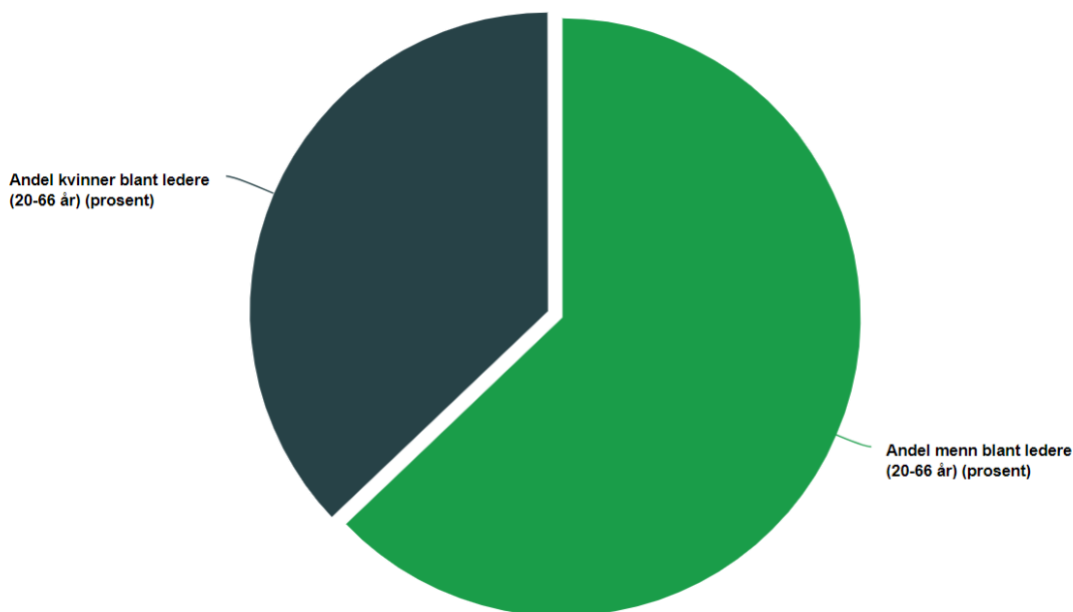


Figure 4: Gender distribution among leaders (age 20-66) 2020 (Statistics Norway, n.d)

The figure shows that the percentage of female representation is 37% and the male representation is 63%, this indicates that there is an unequalness on a national basis. At the same time, the challenge is significant within the maritime industry and the actors has a

responsibility to increase the 15% representation of women in leader positions. Taking the gender policy presented in chapter 1.1 into consideration, this indicates that the Norwegian society are built by contribution from everyone by giving the same rights and opportunities. Hence, it is incomprehensible how the maritime industry is such a poor reflection of the society. At the same time, the impression after investigating the subject is that the maritime industry is aware of the challenges, underlined with an input from one of the participants *“In its transition to a greener and more digital future, the industry has started to welcome good ideas from different sources. The most horrifying #Metoo stories has subsided, but the industry still have other challenges to solve”*.

When the participants where asked if they could describe challenges, the maritime industry are facing related to gender equality, there were various approaches for answering the question. Several participants pointed out that an assumption that describes the maritime industry as consisting of older men and tax evaders, operating in a masculine environment, is a detrimental reputation that exist per today. This shed light over the power of the stereotypes, which establish a picture of what a person should live up to. The description of the assumptions is interpreted to be characterized by the masculine attributes that reflects expectations of being dominant and independent (Heilman, 2012). Hence, it is crucial for the maritime industries' reputation to change these assumptions, to be able to attract future students and young graduates. To solve the mentioned challenge, one participant indicated that the schools and universities has a significant responsibility.

Firstly, an early intervention of the maritime industry is essential to create an understanding of what the maritime industry has to offer from a broad field of career opportunities. Explaining “early intervention” the participant referred to elementary school. Secondly, the universities must take act and ensure that their maritime programs attract both genders. One specific example that was mentioned, was how one of the Norwegian Universities changed the title of the maritime program and the proportion of women increased from 10% to about 35%. Thus, the university attracted future students to a greater extent. In relation to attracting young graduates, especially girls, the importance of the companies taking action to find the best talents and make them apply for a job in the maritime industry was underlined. This will be further explained under research question three, in chapter 5.3.

Another approach for answering the question concerning the challenges, one interesting input were how rumors creates barriers for establishing relationships within own company and with people from other companies. This challenge was described to affect both

genders. On one side the women experienced rumors and talking behind their back after participating in dinner-meetings or similar, with the opposite sex. On the other side, the males tended to be affected by the rumors and reacted by creating own groups with only male participation to avoid the rumors. Hence, the consequence was that women were not included in these groups, referred to as “the right forums” by one of the participants. It can be dramatic to describe this as a form of discrimination of the women, but at the same time it can be a potential factor that prevent women for reaching their full potential at the workplace (Olgiati & Shapiro, 2002). It is important to mention that this is a small selection of challenges the maritime industry is facing related to gender equality. At the same time, these challenges were assumed to be significant.

The common denominator related to the challenges, are the importance of measures to ensure inclusion of women in the maritime industry. One specific measure that embraces the maritime industry on a global basis are the gender program “Women in Maritime”, initiated in 1988 by The International Maritime Organization, hereby referred to as IMO. The gender program is promoted with the following slogan “Training-Visibility-Recognition: Supporting a barrier-free working environment”. IMO works closely with the United Nations by being committed to help their members contributing to achieve the Sustainability Development Goals, hereby referred to as SDG. In context to the gender program, Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” are the most relevant. Further explained, the program aims to support both shore-based and sea-going posts, by enhancing the participation of women in the maritime industry. IMO describes that there is several evidence that reflects how investing in women is the most effective way to lift communities, companies and countries (IMO, n.d). In relation to this statement, three evidence were mentioned, these will further be discussed and connected to the subject of the thesis:

Firstly, IMO refers to the study “The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Woman`s Representation on Boards” that was presented in chapter 2.3. The result from the study underlined the importance of female participation and a diverse management. In context to “Mld St 10 (2020-2021): Greener and smarter – tomorrows maritime industry”, topics such as recovery after Covid-19, establishing good working conditions and the need of competence and knowledge were mentioned. This indicates that is crucial for the maritime industry to attract and recruit the best talents to contribute to a comprehensive adjustment to the digital development and the zero-emission goal. By focusing on a diverse company consisting of the best talents, this can strengthen the competitiveness of the industry.

The second evidence IMO refers to, is that parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination, and child support (IMO, n.d). Considering the gender balance in the Norwegian Government presented in chapter 2.3, Norway can with confidence be described as in a good position related to this evidence. Transferring the evidence over to the maritime industry, a diverse management where the masculine and feminine leadership style are put in relation to each other can be beneficial for the company. Thus, it implies that masculine leadership traits such as strategic, analytical and competition directed are being combined with feminine leadership traits such as collaborative, high-performance requirements and empathy (Loden, 1987). The potential outcome can be a mix of leadership traits that leads to good decisions and other beneficial consequences, as a result of a diverse management team.

The last evidence is that peace agreements that include women are more durable, were the Paris Agreement temperature target can be assumed to be a peace agreement (IMO, n.d). By increasing the female participation and focusing on hire the best talents, it can ensure quality in the measures that is taken towards the zero-emission goal. This forces that the maritime industry establishes strong diverse teams who holds the knowledge and competence that is needed to achieve the goal. The importance of a diverse team was also stated by one of the participants who described that *“Diversity is crucial for the company. In a perfect world we would have been surrounded by people with the same options as ourselves, but this does not lead anywhere. A company need diversity where frictions and disagreements occur to ensure quality and development. The importance is how the frictions is managed.”* To underline the importance of diversity at the workplace, IMO summarize the three presented evidences by the following statement *“The evidence is clear: Equality for women means progress for all”* (IMO, n.d). Therefore, it is important that the industry is locating the challenges that appears within the companies to be able to create diverse environments and equal the gender balance.

5.2 Research question 2: How can gender be a factor that influence the process of becoming a leader?

The reviewed literature presented the role congruity theory developed by prejudice toward female leaders. The theory creates biased competence judgements, both for women as leaders and for women evaluating themselves as leaders, by using gender as the deciding

factor (Ritter & Yoder, 2004). Transferring the role congruity theory to a real-life example, it can extend the mentioned challenge under research question one, concerning the exclusion of women in “the right forums”. The example is not obtained from the maritime industry but was considered as relevant and transferable to similar situations that can occur in the maritime industry as well. To indicate how gender can be a factor that influence the process of becoming a leader, the appointment of Norway`s new Central Bank Governor that found place in 2022 is a relevant example. The appointment maintained great engagement and the gender equality question became central. In advance of the appointment, it had come to light that several informal meetings between the male candidate and a potentially biased person had found place, which created a conflict of interest. From a gender equality perspective, the informal meetings outside office hours were discussed as problematic, underlined with the fact that both candidates were equal qualified for the position, but the informal meeting were subsequently described as an influential factor that weakened the opportunities for the female candidate.

Bourdieu (2001) description of how masculine dominance in the society favorites men to become leaders implies a system that is built by and for men. By connecting Bourdieu's description with the informal meetings, where no formal regulations exist, and the power dynamic have free playroom, this can be considered as problematic. Further explained, when women do not get the possibility to attend and use their voice in “the right forums” it can potentially create an unbalanced power situation where the consequence is that women`s opportunities to become leaders are weakened. This is a consequence of that women do not establish relationships outside office hours which can be assumed to be both important and harmful in an appointment situation.

The informal meetings were also discussed by one of the participants that underlined the importance of how the management must facilitate for creating a work environment that does not expect participation in golf tournaments, going to the pub or similar after work activities, but still be considered as a valuable employee. Further, the participant underlined the power of the stereotypes that creates an expectation of how a person should behave and what role to take in certain situation (Heilman, 2012). Therefore, the management has a responsibility to erasure factors and occasion that can create a bias of how women evaluate themselves as leaders and influence situations of importance for the working career. As results from Ortega et al (2015) showed, the women tend to evaluate them self as a weaker leader than they actually are, hence it is important to erasure these factors.

As mentioned, there were different approaches for answering the question concerning how gender can be a factor that influence the process of becoming a leader. Referring to how the leadership role are characterized by traits, personality and behavior, one approach was how personality are an influential factor. Presumed formations indicates that personality is significant connected to gender, however this was disapproved by the findings from the interviews. Further explained, the participants were asked to describe their personality as a private person and as a leader with key words. Based on the presented findings in chapter 4.3, these indicates that gender is not a factor that influence the ability to become a leader, it is rather individual differences that is the influential factor. By analyzing the answers from the participants, none of the participants described themselves with traits that indicated a need of power or other dominant traits.

All the participant where humble when they described their own personalities. Additionally, there was no significant difference between how the male participants described their personality, compared to the female participants, either as a private person or in the leader position. The sample were characterized by personalities that emphasized cooperation, clarity, justice and determination. The majority of the sample can be linked to the following dimensions from the five-factor model: Extraversion, agreeableness, open to experience and conscientiousness. Where some of these dimensions were described as beneficial at the workplace by Judge (1999). Additionally, none of the participants were assumed to be significant characterized by the dimension neuroticism. At the same time, one of the participants underlined that they were aware that they could do mistakes as leaders. The importance was how to learn from them and not let it be a negative emotional experience that could trigger the neuroticism traits as presented in chapter 2.5.

Taking into consideration that gender can be a potential factor that influence the process of becoming a leader, several of the participants pointed out WISTA Norway's initiative 40 by 30, with the purpose of increasing the female participation in leadership positions. The goal for the initiative is that 40% of the management positions within the Norwegian maritime industry should be represented by women by 2030 (WISTA, n.d). The initiative has created a great engagement to several of the big actors in the maritime industry who has signed for contributing to the goal. The 40 by 30 initiative are described as "waves of change" by making diversity a part of the solution to drive the maritime digitalization and decarbonization process. To clarify the importance of the initiative the Norwegian Director General of Shipping and Navigation, Knut Arild Hareide has stated the following "*If Norway*

shall continue to be the big shipping nation we are today, every actor in the industry should sign 40 by 30 to ensure that the best minds apply for a maritime career are included and remain in the industry” (Maritimt Forum, 2022).

It is unavoidable to mention “combining a career in a leadership position with the family life” perspective when discussing this research question. However, this perspective is a significant part of research question three, where different aspects is being shed light on. Therefore, it was considered to not be included in research question two.

5.3 Research question 3: *How does the organizational culture affect gender balance?*

As mentioned in the thesis, the term gender equality and diversity are often used in the same context. The connection between the terms can be underlined with a statement from one of the participants *“Due to the low numbers of female representation in leadership positions in the maritime industry, gender equality must be described as the goal. In reality the desire is to achieve diversity within the companies, but the term diversity tends to be too vague for the actors to act”*. Thus, to answer how the organizational culture affect the gender balance, the term diversity is considered to be suitable.

The definition of organizational culture describes how the culture contains of shared assumptions that leads to a direction of what is the correct way to act (Clegg et al., 2019, p.108). In addition, the definition presented by Hofstede presents to a greater extent a real-life description of how organizational culture can be understood as unwritten rules within the group. The unwritten rules can further be described as *“This is how we do it here”* (Hofstede, n.d). To underline that organizational culture is a responsibility that needs to be prioritized by the management, President von der Leyen states the following *“(..)whether diversity is reflected in companies and institution is an active choice”* (European Commission, 2022).

“The active choice” President von der Leyen refers to, is assumed to be the managements responsibility, as one of the participants described *“I mean that the leader is 100% responsible for gender equality within the company. Gender equality is not achieved by presenting in the annual report that the company contains of 40% women, it forces action in form of facilitating for different perspectives, friction and life situation. This requires an established organizational culture, where the focus must be on demographical differences”*.

The same participant mentioned that within professional environments both genders entry from graduation with similar competence and ambitions. Then, along the way from graduating towards the top, something tends to change, the males continue to the top while the females stagnate. The influential factor causing this, was mentioned by the participant to be the organizational culture.

Based on findings during the investigation, the goal of gender equality within an organization seems to indicate that the aim should not be characterized by a sign of equals. Perhaps the opposite, differences can be considered as skills and strengths, where the optimal composition of a company not necessary is a 50/50 proportion of men and women. Thus, it is crucial to realize that treating people equal can mean that the people are threatened differently. By nature, all individuals are different, with different needs to different times, this relates both to the personal life and the professional life. The two topics that were repeated when discussing the organizational culture were the hiring process and facilitating for different career paths.

Firstly, the hiring process were pointed out by the participants as highly important. With the desire to hire the right person, this involves a responsibility for the management to act. As mentioned in chapter 4.2, one participant underlined that the initiative to establish diversity at the workplace must come from the management, to get everyone in the company to understand the importance of diverse teams. Some of the participants described how they had changed their job advertisements by making them attractive for both men and women. Specific measures that were taken was describing the position in detail and emphasize words such as teamwork, development and diversity at the workplace.

Further, it was mentioned how the companies must act to find the right candidates for the leadership positions. Especially young women that do not have the knowledge of what the maritime industry can offer of career opportunities, which forces that the management makes an effort to find these candidates and not wait for them to apply. Another approach was how the management must dear to prioritize young women. In relation to this, one participant states how social norms prevent companies from hiring young women. The social norms indicates that a woman in her early twenties probably will become a mother very soon, therefore it is safer to hire a man, because he wants to be in the position for a longer time. The importance of erasure social norms that gives men and women different values were also supported by Subrahmanian (2005).

Additionally, the participants underlined the importance of an employee's first weeks, where the organizational culture was described as an influential factor. To ensure that a person retain in the company, it is crucial that the employee feel appreciated and included. This forces an organizational culture where it is room for different opinions and to have an own voice. In relation to this, one participant connected the need of feeling appreciated with a personality aspect *"girls tend to be affected by neuroticism characteristics, in the way that they wait for being recognized, thereby it forces a culture where the women are being cheered up and forward, to experience the feeling of being a valued employee"*.

At the same time, the importance of challenging the employees early in the working career were mentioned. This was especially related to the females, to let them experience to be successful outside of the comfort-zone. This was an experience that was described to further lead to development to of the employee. In relation to pushing the employees outside the comfort-zone, the participant underlined that well-established diverse teams that emphasizes cooperation together with moving the focus on *"help me because I am a woman"* and replace it with *"help me because I am good"*, could give positive outcomes. On one side, this indicates Hofstede`s feminine culture, but on the other side this has some characteristics from the masculine culture as well, where achievements are one of the main values (Hofstede, n.d).

The second topic that was mentioned was how the organizational culture should be characterized by accepting that the employees go through the companies' hierarchical levels in different ways. In relation to this topic, combing a work career with the family life were highly relevant. Further explained, if an employee is having three children, this involves three rounds of parent leave, and the measure that must be taken is to break the bias from describing parent leave as negative. The females who participated in the interviews were all mothers and could relate to how the parent role affected their working career, underlined with one input *"When I decided to be a mother, I experienced that I was not appreciated as an employee that the company gave their trust to and wanted to develop"*. This indicates an organizational culture where parent leave is assumed to be described as negative, but that do not have to be the case. On one side the employee will be away for a time period and will not develop as an employee. On the other side, the female participants mentioned how the mother role had made them to a stronger person as a result of new insights and life experience. Thus, the parent leave is put in a positive perspective.

In context of becoming a parent, the solution was as mentioned to facilitate for various forms of career paths. Further explained, if an employee decides to have a child it may take longer to become a leader in the company, but the opportunity is there. Hence, it should not be considered as a mistake or lead to a feeling of embarrassment for not following a straightforward career path. A possible consequence if the company do not facilitate for combining a working career with the family life, is a creation of limitations for not using the entire talent based, since one group of the population naturally absent. As one of the participants stated *“The focus does not have to be equality, but rather focusing on the different perspectives that each individual brings in ant the competence they have with them as the company needs to achieve the United Nations sustainability goals by 2030. This depends on a mix of skills and competence and a range in a different way than before”*.

When the management are focusing on establishing diverse teams, this increases the need for facilitating. Specific examples that were mentioned by the participants were flexible office hours, the possibility for working from home and well-established teams were the employees support and help each other. At the same time, it is not a matter of course that everyone wants to become a parent. Therefore, it should be facilitated for these also, by accepting that some takes the straightforward career path and may be handed a leadership position early in the working career.

By facilitating for the employees to create their own career paths, this reflects what Hofstede describes as a feminine culture, were the culture are characterized as flexible and gives the opportunity to combine a working career with family life. Additionally, since the feminine culture emphasize that men and women do not have specific roles in the society, this reflects an organizational culture where parent leave are accepted both for the mom and for the dad (Hofstede, n.d). The unspecified roles are mentioned because the findings from the interview indicated that the men experienced challenges related to parent leave, this will be further explained in chapter 6.1.

One interesting aspect related to the discussion under this research question is how the masculine and feminine organizational culture that Hofstede divides between, indicates to be an advantageous combination. Further explained, masculine values such as achievement orientated, and power seems to be in good company with feminine values such as flexibility and fluid. The importance is how the management handle the combination of these values to ensure that the employees feel appreciated and facilitates for a work environment where everyone can perform at their best.

5.4 Limitations

After conducting the investigation, it was important to consider if the research problem has been addressed. From a personal opinion, the thesis consists of some limitations. Firstly, the thesis considered leadership, personality and organizational culture as the factors that influence the gender balance within a company. Thus, the findings were characterized by opinions and experiences, which can be assumed to be a limitation that made it challenging to locate spurious causalities. Further explained, by addressing the research problem with a different approach it could be interesting to investigate if there are any causalities between gender equality and company performance. This could lead to findings that showed to what extent gender equality influence the economic aspect of a company's performance.

The theoretical framework is also considered as a limitation for the thesis. Further explained, several actors in the maritime industry are highly engaged about gender equality which is also reflected by published articles from online sources and by the Norwegian politics. At the same time, it was challenging to find reports and research conducted on the topic to support the findings. Hence, the report "The bottom line: Corporate Performance and Women's representation on boards" presented in 2.3.1 were included to indicate how women representation in boards can influence the economic performance of a company. This report does not reflect the maritime industry or give an overview over Norwegian companies. Hence, this is a source that only indicates the relationship between gender equality and economic performance, without being theoretical justified. However, during the investigation process, this report has been referred to in several articles and publications, which was the underlying factor for including the report in this thesis. By mentioning that the report is referred to by several articles and people that is engaged in the gender equality discussion, it can indicate a lack of research conducted on gender equality among leaders within the maritime industry. Hence, this will further be mentioned in chapter 6.1 as a recommendation for further research.

The presented limitations can be considered as potentially weakness for the thesis and the results presented from the investigation. At the same time, the purpose was to contribute to a greater commitment to the subject and establishing a knowledge basis for further research, a goal that is considered as accomplished.

6.0 Conclusion

The purpose of the thesis was to investigate the gender balance among leaders in the maritime industry. A qualitative research method was carried out to obtain experiences and knowledge from actors within the maritime industry to create a basis for answering the three prepared research questions. The thesis considered leadership, personality and organizational culture as the factors that influence gender equality. Hence, the theoretical framework consisting of earlier research, historical occasions and other publications were based on these factors.

In the introduction of the thesis, the sustainable transformation and need for new knowledge and competence was mentioned. In relation to the development, the employees were described as crucial for the companies. With an 15% female representation of women in leadership positions, it indicated that the maritime industry strives to attract both genders. Hence, research question one discussed “*Why are the maritime industry facing challenges related to gender equality?*”. The findings reflected how the assumption of the maritime industry consisting of older men and a masculine environment is harmful. The results showed the importance both universities and companies to take measures to attract both men and women, to be able to hire the best talents.

Further, research question two discussed “*How can gender be a factor that influences the process of becoming a leader?*”. The discussion under this research question was significant characterized by how informal meetings can weaken the opportunities for the women to become leaders within the maritime industry. These meetings are considered to create an uneven power dynamic between the genders, which forces that the company establishes an organizational culture where informal meetings does not influence the employee’s opportunity to achieve promotions or positions on a higher hierarchical level.

To underline the importance of the organizational culture, research question three discussed “*How does the organizational culture affect gender balance?*”. When discussing the organizational culture, the term diversity was central. The findings indicated that the optimal composition of a team is not a 50/50 proportion of men and women, but rather a composition of demographical differences. Even if diverse teams can lead to friction between the members, the findings underlined the importance of letting the employees express their own feelings and opinions since it can lead to a feeling of being a valuable employee. This

was described as a significant factor to ensure that the females stay in a company and want to climb the career ladder. Additionally, facilitating for creating own career paths was central were central under this research question. By accepting that the employees want to combine the family life with a working career, it can be an influential factor for women to become leaders. This gives the opportunity to choose a career path that is not straightforward but still leads the women up to the leader positions.

6.1 Recommendations for further research

By investigating the gender balance among leaders in the maritime industry, this turned out to be a broad field to study. Based on time and resources, this was not sufficient to cover the subject in entirety. Thus, with a goal to contribute to a greater engagement on gender equality in the maritime industry, it is important that the engagement is kept alive. Hence, this thesis can be used as a knowledge basis for the following recommended further research:

* The focus for this thesis was gender equality in from of increasing the female representation in the maritime industry. However, findings indicated that gender equality challenges are equally applicable to men. In contrast, the challenges were not related to leadership, but related to two specific examples. The first example was the experience of taking parent leave, this tended to be degraded by older colleagues and led to a feeling of embarrassment for being away from the workplace for a time period. The second example was how older men feel discriminated and left out when the focus is to attract and recruit young women. Therefore, is recommended to conduct a study that investigate gender equality from a male's perspective. With a goal to establish diverse companies, it is important that the challenges are addresses from both genders' perspectives.

* The thesis has mentioned challenges and opportunities in relation to gender equality. In relation to opportunities, a recommendation for further research is to investigate how companies can facilitate for the employees to combine the family life with a working career. The companies can take great advantage of the adaption the whole country had to make during Covid-19 when everyone had to work from home. Hence, the study could examine how an implementing of flexible office hours and the possibility for working from home, in the organizational culture affects the company's performance. This can be an interesting study

for the shipping companies where the companies collaborate over the whole world and in different time-zone, which will force practical facilitations.

* In chapter 5.4 it was mentioned the lack of research showing the relationship between gender equality and a company's performance. A recommendation for further research is therefore to establish a big research team that can conduct a study over a longer time period to address the following research question "*How can gender equality affect the economic performance?*" with a focus on the Norwegian maritime industry.

* As presented in chapter 5.1, the gender balance among leaders on a national basis are unequal. Hence, a recommendation is to conduct one or several studies with a comparative research design to investigate if there is any similarities or findings from other industries that can be transferred to the maritime industry. Examples of industries that is relevant for comparison is aviation, construction and the military. By addressing similarities from the industries, it can lead to development towards gender equality within the maritime industry by learning from other industries.

Reference list

- Alvesson, M. (2002). *Understanding organizational culture*. SAGE.
- Barlow, D. H., Sauer-Zavala, S., Carl, J. R., Bullis, J. R., & Ellard, K. K. (2014). The Nature, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Neuroticism: Back to the Future. *Clinical Psychological Science*. 2(3), 344-365 <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702613505532>
- Barrick, M. R. (2005) Yes, Personality Matters: Moving on to More Important Matters, *Human Performance*, 18:4, 359-372, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327043hup1804_3
- Beyer, S. (January, 2002). *The Effects of Gender, Dysphoria, and Performance Feedback on the Accuracy of Self Evaluation*. *Sex roles* 47 (9): 453-464. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021600510857>
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2018). *Doing interviews* (Vol. 2). SAGE
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (Fifth edition). Oxford University Press
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011). *Business research methods* (Third edition). Oxford University Press
- Catalyst. (2011). *The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Woman`s representation on Boards*. https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/the_bottom_line_corporate_performance_and_womens_representation_on_boards_2004-2008.pdf
- Clegg, S. R., Kornberger, M., Pitsis, T. S. & Mount, M. (2019). *Managing & Organizations. An Introduction on Theory and Practice* (Fifth Edition). SAGE
- De Vaus, D. (2001). *Research design in social research*. SAGE
- Doffin (November 11th, 2021) *Alminnelig kunngjøring av konkurranse*. Direktoratet for fovaltning og økonomistyring. <https://www.doffin.no/Notice/Details/2021-360533>

- European Commission (January 20th, 2022). *Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Women on Boards` Gender Diversity Award*
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_22_404
- Given, L. M. (2008). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, California. SAGE
- Gustaffson, B., Hermerèn, G., & Petersson, B. (2005). *Vad är god forskningsred? Synpunkter, riktlinjer och exempel*. Vetenskapsrådet. <http://liu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:255775/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Heiberg, A., (December 7th, 2021). *Kjønn*. Store medisinske leksikon.
https://sml.snl.no/kj%C3%B8nn_-_menneske
- Heilman, M. E. (2012). Gender stereotypes and workplace bias. *Research in organizational Behavior*, 32, 113-135.
- Hem, E. (May 19th, 2020) *IMRAD*. Store medisinske leksikon. <https://sml.snl.no/IMRAD>
- HKDIR (May 9th, 2022). *Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning 2022*. Direktoratet for høyere utdanning og kompetanse. <https://hkdir.no/rapportar/tilstandsrapport-for-hoeyere-utdanning-2022>
- Hofstede, G. (n.d). 6-D model of national culture
<https://geerthofstede.com/culture-geert-hofstede-gert-jan-hofstede/6d-model-of-national-culture/>
- IMO (n.d) Women in maritime.
<https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime.aspx>
- Johannessen, A., Tufte, P.A., Cristoffersen, L. (2010) *Introduksjon til samfunnsvitenskapelig metode*. 4.utgave. Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag AS
- Johannessen, T. S. (March 8th, 2020) *Ny undersøkelse: Kun 15% av lederne i maritim nærings er kvinner* [Table]. Teknisk ukeblad. <https://www.tu.no/artikler/ny-undersokelse-kun-15-prosent-av-lederne-i-maritim-naering-er-kvinner/486710>

- Judge, T. A., Higgins, C. A., & Thoresen, C.J. (1999). The big five personality traits, general mental ability, and career success across the life span. *Personnel Psychology*, Vol 52, Issue 3. 621-652 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1999.tb00174.x>
- Judge, T. A., Bono, J.E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W. (2002). Personality and Leadership: A Qualitative and Quantitative Review. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2002, Vol 87, No.4, 765-780 <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.765>
- Järvinen, M., & Mik-Meyer, N. (2020) *Qualitative analysis: Eight approaches for the social sciences*. Los Angeles. SAGE.
- Lin, & Huang, Z. (2016). *Comparative Design of Structures: Concepts and Methodologies* (1st edition). Springer Berlin Heidelberg
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications Inc
- Loden, M. (1987). *How to Succeed in business without being one of the boys*.
https://www.nb.no/items/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2013110508218?page=5
- Lovdata. (January 17th, 2022). *Act relating to equality and a prohibition against discrimination (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act)*.
<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2017-06-16-51>
- Mason, J. (2017). *Qualitative researching*. SAGE
- Maritimt Forum (March 9th, 2022) *Noe å strekke seg etter*.
<https://www.maritimt-forum.no/sentralt/nyheter/2022/noe-a-strekke-seg-etter>
- McCoyd, J. L. M., & Kerson, T. S. (2006). Conducting Intensive Interviews Using Email: A Serendipitous Comparative Opportunity. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(3), 389–406.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325006067367>
- McCrae, R.R (2010) The Place of the FFM in Personality Psychology, *Psychological Inquiry*, 21:1, 57-64, DOI: 10.1080/10478401003648773

Meld.St.10 (2020-2021) *Greener and smarter – tomorrows maritime industry*.

Ministry of Trade, Industries and Fisheries

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-10-20202021/id2788786/?ch=1>

Mumford, Marks, M. A., Connelly, M. S., Zaccaro, S. J., & Reiter-Palmon, R. (2000).

Development of leadership skills: Experience and timing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 87–114. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(99\)00044-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00044-2)

NHO. (n.d). *Grønt skifte: Begreper du må kunne*.

<https://www.nho.no/tema/energi-miljo-og-klima/artikler/gront-skifte-10-begreper-du-ma-kunne/>

Norwegian Shipowner Association, *Maritime Outlook 2022*.

<https://maritimpolitikk.no/en/2022/fleet-in-figures>

Ogawa, R. T., & Malen, B. (1991). Towards Rigor in Reviews of Multivocal Literatures:

Applying the Exploratory Case Study Method. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(3), 265–286. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543061003265>

Olgianti, E., Shapiro, G., Bodlin, R. P., & Verborgh, E. (2002). *Promoting gender equality in the workplace*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Ortega, O.D., Øvergård, K.I., Henden, V. (2015) Women Are Better Leaders

Than They Think: Gender Differences in the Self-Assessment of Leadership Skills in the Maritime Industry. *WMU Studies in Maritime Affairs*, vol 3.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-45385-8_15

Patton M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health services research*, 34(5 Pt 2), 1189–1208.

Regjeringen (n.d.). *Equality and diversity*.

<https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/equality-and-diversity/id922/>

Regjeringen (n.d.) *Members of the Government*.

<https://www.regjeringen.no/en/the-government/solberg/members-of-the-government-2/id543170/>

Regjeringen (October 14th, 2021). *Maritim næring*.

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/naringsliv/maritim-naring/ny-temaside/forste-kolonne/maritime-naringer/id2589227/>

Ritter, B. A., & Yoder, J. D. (2004). Gender Differences in Leader Emergence Persist Even for Dominant Women: An Updated Confirmation of Role Congruity Theory. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28(3), 187–193. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2004.00135.x>

Rosander, Bäckström, M., & Stenberg, G. (2011). Personality traits and general intelligence as predictors of academic performance: A structural equation modelling approach. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 21(5), 590–596. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2011.04.00>

Saldana, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated.

Salkind, N. J. (Ed.). (2010). *Encyclopedia of research design* (Vol. 1). SAGE.

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (Vol. 2). John Wiley & Sons.

Seltman, H. J. (2012). *Experimental design and analysis*. Carnegie Mellon University 2012.

Shirayev, E. (2016). *Personality theories: A global view*. SAGE Publications.

Statistics Norway. (n.d). *Fakta om likestilling*.

<https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/faktaside/likestilling>

Stortinget. (November 24th, 2021) *Stemmerettskampen 1890-1913*.

<https://www.stortinget.no/no/Stortinget-og-demokratiet/Historikk/kvinnestemmerett/stemmerettskampen-18901913/>

Subrahmanian, R. (2005). Gender equality in education: Definitions and measurements.

International Journal of Educational Development 25, 395-407

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2005.04.003>

Tranaas, S. (2020). Assignment: Organization and leadership. Produced 1st semester of the master program. USN

UNICEF. (n.d).

<https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Gender%20glossary%20of%20terms%20and%20concepts%20.pdf>

World Economic (March, 2021). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021 (Insight report)*.

https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

Welch, C., Marschan-Piekkari, R., Penttinen, H., & Tahvanainen, M. (2002). Corporate elites as informants in qualitative international business research. *International Business Review* 11(5), 611-628 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0969-5931\(02\)00039-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0969-5931(02)00039-2)

WISTA. (n.d). *WISTA Norway “40 by 30” pledge*. WISTA Norway.

<https://wistanorway.no/wista-norway-40-by-30-pledge/>

Wohlin, C. (2014). Guidelines for snowballing in systematic literature studies and a replication in software engineering. *In Proceedings of the 18th international conference on evaluation and assessment in software engineering (pp. 1-10)*. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/2601248.2601268>

Yin, R. K., (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* 5th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Interview guide

Introduction questions

1. What is your job title?
2. How long have you been in the maritime industry?
3. With some key words, how would you describe your personality:
 - As a private person
 - As a leader/ in the work environment

Gender equality in the maritime industry

4. How do you define gender equality?
5. What is leadership for you?
6. To what extent is the leader responsible for gender equality in the organization/company?
7. To what extent and how does organization culture affect the inclusion of all the employees?
8. Have you personally experienced some challenges related to gender equality in your working career? If yes, can you briefly describe?
9. In general: Can you describe some challenges that the industry experience/ are facing related to gender equality?
10. In your organization, do you make any specific measures related to gender equality? If yes, why and what? If no, why?
11. Do you consider gender equality as important for the industry. If yes/no, can you briefly describe?

12. Do you have some opinions or considerations of why the number of female leaders in the maritime industry is so low?

13. Do you see any negative sides related to focus on gender equality in an organization/company?

14. What do you mean is the most important measure to get more females wanting to **work** in the maritime industry?

15. What do you mean is the most important measure to get more females wanting to become a **leader** in the maritime industry?

16. Is it something else you want to add to this interview?