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DOES GENDER MATTER?

A Case Study of the Lack of Female Sport Managers in the
Football Associations of Finland and Norway

ABSTRACT

Mikkonen, Marjukka: Does Gender Matter? - A Case Study of the Lack of Female Sport Managers in the Football Associations of Finland and Norway

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The aim of this research is to address why there are fewer female leaders in the football associations of Finland and Norway and what are the underlying factors influencing the phenomenon. The research problem is approached with a multiple case study method, the object of research being the factors influencing women's careers in the football associations.

The empirical material of this qualitative research consists of interviews of three female and two male leaders from the football association of Finland and two female and two male leaders from the football association of Norway. The interview data are analyzed with abductive content analysis and the theoretical lens is basing on women's career research and sport management. The focus of the empirical material is on the obstacles of individual and organizational levels.

The results of this research suggest that the position of women and their careers are rather similar in both case organizations. The hindrances of women's leadership careers in football governance emerge from three levels: societal, organizational and individual levels. The traditional perception of the masculinity of football and leadership seem to have a strong influence that impacts factors on individual and organizational level. Gendering and traditional gender roles are still visible. Women often lack the football competence required for many positions in the associations. In addition, women are not applying for leading positions on the same volume as men. Both organizations have challenges in communicating their more equal environment of today and thus attracting competent female leaders. Another organizational level factor is women directing towards expert positions as HR manager that do not further career towards the top management. Modern leadership style that bases on more feminine characteristics as empathy, discussion and listening skills is appreciated in both organizations that creates demand for female leaders. However, also men have adopted this more feminine approach, which may decrease the need for furthering the careers of female leaders.

Sport management and female leadership is rarely studied. The results of this research are a good base for further research in this topic. The resemblance of the results of these two cases suggest that the same kind of study done in a similar context would presumably give similar results. However, more research is needed on different context for more generalizable results. An interesting direction for further research is to compare the factors influencing women's leadership careers in football and in a more feminine sport.

Keywords: women's careers, sport management, football governance, female leader, leadership, gender equality

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a football player in Finland and in Norway, I have noticed the lack of women managers in clubs and umbrella organizations in the sport of football. The lack of female sport managers has also been noted in research (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2018; Burton, 2015; Hovden, 2000, 2010 & 2012; Laakso, 2016; Ottesen, Skirstad, Pfister & Habermann, 2010; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Finland and Norway are Nordic welfare states and top countries in work-life equality compared to rest of the world. However, labor markets are still segmented vertically and horizontally by gender also in these countries (Statistics Finland, 2018; Statistics Norway, 2017). Norway is only a small step ahead when looking at the numbers of female leaders in general (OECD, 2018) and overall gender equality (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2018). Today, women have a higher educational background than men in these countries and the number of women leaders has increased in general over the years (Statistics Finland, 2019; Statistics Norway, 2018; OECD, 2018). 34% of Finnish managers and 38% of Norwegian managers are women (OECD average 32%, OECD, 2018). However, this increase of female managers and leaders cannot be seen in sport organizations. Women leaders are still a rarity in sport (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2018; Hovden, 2010 & 2012).

Women's football has elevated rapidly recent years. The appreciation of the sport, the number of people following the sport and the number of women and girls playing the sport has increased. Football is the largest organized female sport in Finland and in Norway (Skogvang & Fasting, 2013; Suomen Palloliitto, 2016 a). The number of female players is high in both countries. In Finland 32 500 players of 140 000 are female (Suomen Palloliitto, 2016 a). In Norway 96 000 out of 241 000 players are women and girls (UEFA). Women players of these countries have succeeded well and for many years the Finnish and Norwegian women's national teams have hold a higher FIFA ranking than men. However, the increased number of women managers in general, the increased number of girls and women associating with football or women's success on the football pitch are not in relation with the number of women leaders in the national umbrella organizations, NFF and SPL. There are no female top managers in SPL. Furthermore, there are only two female middle managers and four women have chief positions and are part of the extended operational committee. (Suomen Palloliitto, 2019) In NFF there are two women in the operational committee of which one is a top leader in sport department. Four women have employee responsibility (Norges Fotballforbund, n.d). This contradiction of increased number of female leaders in general and increased number of female actors within football, which have not converted into football governance is why I got interested to study the football associations of Finland and Norway (SPL &

NFF) and to research what are the factors influencing the small number of female leaders in these associations. Furthermore, the similarity of these two countries and contexts offers a great possibility for a multiple case study to provide insights in the Nordic environment.

Sport acts as an interesting context in this study about women's leadership careers. Sport has its own institutional culture, values, norms, practices, and game specific characteristics. This offers a unique environment for management and leadership research that validates research on this field (Laakso 2016, 12). Sport organizations of today have significant power. In addition to ever increasing symbolic power of institutionalized sport, sport organizations are important activity arenas for all citizens and for their well-being and social integration. A large number of people, both men and women, are associated with different clubs and sport organizations every day. (Hovden & Pfister, 2006) Equal opportunities for men and women on the decision-making level ensure that all the potential available is used in these nationally important institutions. Women taking part into the society and work life has been a central actor in the economic growth in the Nordic countries.

According to OECD (2018), if the number of women working would be on the level of the 1960s, GDP per capita in Finland would be roughly 1500\$ (1252€) less than it is now. In the same situation in Norway, the GDP per capita would be 9000\$ (7500€) less. Besides fiscal point of view, equal opportunities for men and women in sport leadership are important considering equality, social responsibility and the potentially varied and contradicting interests of men and women (Aalto, 2003, Starkey, 2010). These justify the lack of female leaders in SPL and NFF important to research. Both countries are pursuing towards gender equality, football should not be an exception.

Often women's careers, glass ceiling and women's leadership have been researched from women's perspective, studying only female leaders and their perspectives. My view is that in order to get a holistic image of the phenomenon and the factors influencing the number of female leaders in an organization, the perspectives and thoughts of both men and women have to be included. Therefore, both men and women leaders are interviewed from the football associations of Finland and Norway in this research.

This introductory chapter continues by introducing the research aim, questions and the methodological approach. Next, the central concepts are defined that is followed by a literature review of previous research on sport, management and women. The second main chapter is dedicated to background and context description that includes introductions of the case organizations NFF and SPL. In the third chapter, the two-fold theoretical lens basing on sport management and women's career research is discussed and the conceptual model steering the

research is introduced. In the fourth chapter the methodological choices and the research principles for this study are discussed in depth. Following, in chapter five the empirical findings and data are introduced, which are analyzed and discussed in the sixth chapter. Lastly, in the final chapter, the main findings, conclusions and suggestions for future research are introduced. The paper ends with the list of references and appendices.

1.1 Research Aim & Methods

Equal opportunities for men and women in football leadership are important considering equality, finance, social responsibility and the possibly varied and contradicting interests of men and women (Aalto, 2003, Starkey, 2010). Both NFF and SPL show that there is a lack of female leaders. This circumstance has various impacts externally as well as internally. This research will address as to why this occur. The aim is to find new explanatory and comparative data about the factors underlying the lack of women in leadership positions in the football associations of Norway and Finland. The research object is the factors influencing the number of women in NFF and SPL. In addition, I try to find possible connections and differences between these two cases especially from gender point of view. My research is limited to cover only employed leadership and management positions in these two organizations. Leadership positions in boards and in other confidential posts are not included in the research. Furthermore, the research is limited to consider only the national central organizations of NFF and SPL. The regional organizations are independent employers and organizations, and therefore excluded from the research. To tackle the research problem, the following research questions are formed:

What are the factors that affect the small number of women leaders in NFF and SPL?

sub questions:

How does gender affect reaching a leading position in NFF/SPL?

How does the organizational culture & structure affect women reaching for a leading position?

How does the football context affect women reaching for a leading position?

What kind of leadership capabilities/attributes managers need in NFF/SPL?

In addition to the research aim, there are also other interesting issues related to explore. How leaders see the state of equality and its influence on the number of women leaders in NFF and SPL? Is it important to have also women in leading positions and why? Are there differences in the development of leadership expertise, education and other field specific experience between men and women sport managers in SPL an NFF?

Multiple case study that approach that bases on literature and interviews was seen as the most appropriate approach for the research aim. Men and women leaders and chiefs of the case organizations are interviewed to get a holistic perspective about the phenomenon. The interview data consists of interviews of three male and two female interviewees in the Football Association of Finland and two female and two male interviewees in the Football Association of Norway. The interview data is analyzed on two levels, on organizational and individual level by an abductive content analysis. The literature review includes previous research and articles about sport management and women leaders' careers and position in sport.

1.2 Central Concepts

Next, the central concepts of this research are defined. According to Hall (1982) defined concepts provide a starting point for understanding the elements of interest.

Sport is the hypernym in this research that includes all sport activities as competitive sport, elite sport, and other physical activities in addition to all sport related concepts as sport management, sport law et cetera.

Sport Organization. According to Slack & Parent (2006) sport organization is “a social entity involved in the sport industry; it is goal-directed, with a consciously structured activity system and a relatively identifiable boundary.” In this research the sport organizations studied are the national football associations of Finland (SPL) and Norway (NFF).

Sport manager/leader is an individual who is employed by a sports organization to a management/leading position and has decision-making power. In this research the examined sport managers are employed by NFF and SPL.

Gender emphasizes a socially constructed, learned and reproduced image of feminine and masculine traits and characteristics that create the image of a man and a woman. The World Health Organization (2018) defines it as “*Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.*” Traditionally gender is perceived as feminine (women) or masculine (men) (Vecchio, 2002, 646). This classification is used also in this research.

Gender equality. Gender equality refers to equal opportunities, rights and duties for all men and women to live, be and act. In this research, gender equality is especially considered as equal opportunities for men and women to achieve leading positions in NFF and SPL.

1.3 Literature Review

The following chapter introduces previous research relevant for this research. The focus of the articles on sport management and women, especially from gender perspective. The aim of the literature review is to prove the research gap and to present societal level factors that are otherwise left for minor exploration in this research. Next, research on sport leaders and women are presented on a global level, secondly the research done in Finland is elaborated and lastly research done in Norway.

1.3.1 Research on Sport, Management & Women

Sartore & Cunningham (2007) studied the reasons behind underrepresentation of women leaders in sport organizations from symbolic interactionist perspective. The findings proposed that stereotypes and meanings of gender-roles associated with sport may limit the capacity of women in the sport context. This can lead into self-limiting behavior of women. Women may not regard themselves as competent or act as proper leaders because of the lower societal power and status afforded to them. The organizational power and status are often in relation to the general status and power in the society. Women may not look for advancement and higher positions because they identify with the lack of qualifications, with the expectations of failure and reflective appraisals.

Ottesen et al. (2010) studied in their comparative study gender relations in sport organizations in three Nordic countries: Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The aim of the study was to find out reasons for underrepresentation of women in executive boards of sport organizations in addition to discovering similarities and differences in these three countries from societal gender policy perspective. The research indicated that men and women have different attitudes towards equal opportunities for men and women in sport organizations. 89% of women leaders and 78% of men leaders in Norway thought it is important for sport as a whole to have equal opportunities for both genders. The researchers interpreted as one of the factors behind the relatively high equality between men and women leaders and board members in Norwegian sport organizations the legislation about gender distribution in organization boards (quota schemes). In addition, initiatives (e.g. gender quotas in Norway) may have a positive effect on the attitudes and perceptions towards equal opportunities in sport organizations, not just on the gender ratios. Other interesting results were that 51% of female and 44% of male sport leaders in Norway thought that the two most significant individual reasons for the lack of female sport managers are family and that women do not want to become leaders. From structural reasons, men not wanting to give up their position was highlighted. 39% of women and 27% of men agreed with the statement. Furthermore, especially

women felt the lack of women's own suitable networks being a hindrance on their career. 33% of women and 25% of men felt that women are not being encouraged to become leaders. 80% of Norwegian female managers and 57% of male agreed with the statement "*men have the most power within sport*" (Ottesen et al., 2010).

Burton (2015) reviewed on a multilevel analysis research contributing to understand the reasons influencing the small number of women in sport leadership positions. On macro-level, research on institutionalized practices of gender in sports was included. It was noted that sport is a gendered institution and that hegemonic masculinity was a norm in all processes in sport. Agreed ways to work may become institutionalized and accepted over time. The study suggested that masculinity has been institutionalized in sport organizations. Another highlighted notion was that people may assume work and organizational practices being gender neutral, even if they are not, which can reinforce the dominance of hegemonic masculinity in sport. (Burton, 2015)

On meso-level, the focus was on studies concerning stereotyping of leaders, discrimination and gendered organizational cultures. Burton (2015) emphasized Acker's (1990) findings of gender inequality being embedded in all levels of organizational practices. Furthermore, it was noted that even if gendering has been recognized in organizations, it is also a changing and moving phenomenon. One must understand how gender is practiced in an organization to be able to understand the influence of organizational processes on gender inequality. (Burton, 2015; Martin, 2003, 351)

On micro-level, research on women's expectations about leadership, the effect of symbolic interactionism on women's career progression and occupational turnover intentions were included. It was highlighted that in senior management and leadership roles discourses of masculinity were dominating. Positions below those in sport organizations were associated with discourses of femininity. (Burton, 2015)

1.3.2 Research on Management and Sport in Finland

In Finland, sport management has not been studied widely from gender perspective. Mostly research focuses on the characteristics of sport leaders, their career paths and their backgrounds. Heinilä and Kiviaho (1968; 1970) studied the portrait of a Finnish sport manager by a two-phase study. In the first phase they studied the structure of leaders in sport associations by a questionnaire study. They defined Finnish sport leader as an influential person working in a sport organization. (Heinilä & Kiviaho, 1968, 1-4) The definition is rather general when reflected on to the perspectives of today. The results indicated that sport managers come from various social groups

and occupations. Sport managers are not afraid of management and leadership duties and are taking care of them till they retire. On average, sport managers had studied more than the compulsory education in Finland, and they had the status and income in relation to modern education. Sport manager men were still experiencing enthusiasm from success, more interested in politics and economy and more active in societal activities than their women colleagues. Sport manager women were more interested in culture, art and education and did not feel the need to memorize former sport accomplishments. (Heinilä, 1979 & 1998; Heinilä & Kiviaho, 1968) In the second phase of the research the aim was to map and describe the attitudes and opinions of sport managers about goals and responsibilities of sport and sport organizations in the society. The study indicated that taking care of sport and leisure habits of the whole nation or of their own organization was the main goal of sport for the managers. (Heinilä & Kiviaho, 1970)

Koski & Heikkala (2006) studied Finnish sport organizations from leadership and management point of view by a quantitative questionnaire study. The aim was to study the backgrounds of leaders and their organizations in addition to the competences of leaders. The focus group consisted of chairmen and employed leaders of national and regional sport organizations in Finland. The study indicated that Finnish sport managers are mainly middle aged or older men. In addition, it was noted that many of the employed managers had educational background in sport. One leadership competence, supporter, was highlighted in the study. The researchers understood it as a natural result since the focus group consisted mainly of third sector organizations, which base strongly on volunteer work. (Koski & Heikkala, 2006, 52-54 in Laakso, 2016 and Aalto-Nevalainen 2018)

Laakso (2016) studied 16 Finnish sport managers and their paths into sport management with narrative methods in her dissertation. The study illustrated that becoming an elite sport manager is a multi-faceted path and different actors influence the path. Amongst others the study indicated that having a role within sports is an asset and politics either helped or hindered the path. Management and leadership expertise were seen important, but only a few of the interviewees admitted that the expertise had actually helped during the way. Women brought up gender: it had either worked for or worked against their careers. The study demonstrated that often management and leadership experience or education is not that important amongst elite sport managers in Finland, rather the position is legitimized through a background in sports. Laakso (2016, 175) mentions also the need for more research-based information about the specific characteristics of sport management in Finland. The field is going through change, many of the present managers are about to retire and the tacit knowledge of these managers is needed in the future.

Aalto-Nevalainen (2018) studied in her dissertation the career success of men and women sport managers in Finland with quantitative methods. Several differences were found in career success, career success factors and their relations. Thus, gender is an important factor in career studies. Female sport managers were paid less and benefited less of their working hours compared to men. The study also indicated that there are gender equality challenges in career possibilities and in career success. On average women managers are more educated than their men colleagues, nevertheless women are paid less. (ibid.) On the other hand men have more field related experience (former players for instance) than women. The study also indicated and strengthened previous studies that sport organizations would benefit from more educated managers and that the field is lacking leadership expertise (Koski & Heikkala, 2006; Laakso, 2016; Lipponen, 2017; Smith & Washington, 2014; Vuolle, 2010 & 2013; Zeigler, 1987). The lack of expertise is visible especially amongst men sport managers as the studies have indicated the higher education of women leaders (Nenonen, 2013). Another insight was that the number of women sport managers in Finland has increased in the last 20 years. However, the increase has been marginal and when considering the highest leadership positions in sport there are only a few women amongst men. In addition, the number of women sport managers is not in relation with the number of girls and women participating in sport in general (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2011 & 2018) The number of women sport managers is also smaller than the number of women managers in general (Aalto, 2003, 151,161; Heinilä, 1979).

Leadership and management studies in football context or in any game/single sport specific context lacks research. Nenonen (2013) mentions the need for leadership research limited on a single sport or even on a single club level to get deeper information about the topic in different contexts. Sport management in football context is rarely studied in Finland. Only a few master theses can be found (see Laaksonen, 2013; Miettinen, 2017; Mönkkönen, 2011). However, the point of view was not on association level and the focus was more on strategic challenges of football clubs and how to lead a football club. Gender was not addressed or seen as an important factor, possibly because all the club managers in Finland have been men. This strengthens the need for research in football context from gender and equality point of view.

1.3.3 Research on Management and Sport in Norway

In Norway, especially Hovden and Skirstad have researched sport managers and their careers from gender perspective. Hovden (2000) researched the leadership selection process in the Norwegian Confederation of Sports (NCS) that is the umbrella organization for Norwegian sport organizations.

The research had gender perspective and the main focus was to find out “*how meanings of gender are made relevant and how these processes may contribute to build and rebuild organizational gender structures*” (Hovden, 2000, 1). The main findings were that in the selection of leaders, the most important abilities were corporate leadership skills i.e. heroic and masculine traits. However, these traits were seen as gender neutral. Most of the women candidates were not seen to have these skills. Only a few of the women candidates were seen as possessing these “heroic” skills. Hovden (2000) also mentions the use of personal and male dominant networks when selecting new leaders, which makes the selection process androcentric. In addition, positive feedback from sponsors and private investors were seen more important than obeying organizational policies. The researcher interpreted that the selection process indicated gender equality being rather subordinated compared to overall organizational objectives of NCS.

Hovden (2010) studied the hindrances for female sport managers in Norway by qualitative methods. As in her earlier research, the study indicated that the general organizational perception of “good” leadership is associated with masculine traits and stereotypical gender notions. Gender classification was also seen as a hindering factor: on one hand women are expected to have equal opportunities but on the other hand they are seen as a group that does not have the preferred leadership skills. It was discovered that natural women-specific skills were perceived helpful as long as they stay subsidiary to the dominant androcentric ideals. Hovden also argues that one of the largest obstacles for women’s careers is not having open political discussions about genders and not framing men as a gender category on equal terms with women. “*To generate more gender-balanced leadership realities in sport, it is thus first and foremost necessary to transform men in leadership positions from naturalized heroic individuals and organizational symbols into gendered persons and a political category.*” (Hovden, 2010)

Hovden (2012) studied the influence of different gender policies in Norway on Norwegian sport organizations. During the 1970s the gender split of sport organizations was noted. After that the political emphasis was largely on formal equality and on equal access into sport organizations. Women’s policy claims triggered political changes that successfully integrated women formally into sport organizations. The participation of Norwegian women in sport and sport organizations increased significantly as they gained equal formal access into sport and sport organizations. During the 1980s justice-oriented discourses and strategies took place to correct the weaknesses of 70s formal equality policies. The new focus was to acknowledge the different starting points of women and men related to power and resources. These resulted in women gaining more organizational power and women’s position developing into a large minority from the 70’s specious position. In

the 90's the dominance of new liberal and market liberal discourses exhibited the outcomes of gender split as market value and possible income. The gender split was perceived as natural and essential. Women's features and erotic characteristics were marketed as a positive variance. This increased the value of female athletes in many sport associations but also caused gendering in the sponsor markets that reinforced the gendering of sports. In recent years, the gender political initiatives in Norway have had a new perspective in which women have been perceived as a minority category equal to other minorities as disabled, ethnic and religious minorities. New policies are not just considering gender split but are also trying to address multiple inequalities. Hovden (2012) emphasizes that even though gender split is seen as an important policy issue amongst sport leaders of today, in the policy-making environment there are still male dominant power structures. Hovden (2012) suggests that the political focus should be shifted from the margins to the center, and to focus more on the position of powerful men and the power play instead of the marginal and understated groups. This would change the perception of men being the neutral and normal gender category into a similar specific gendered category as women are. (Hovden, 2012)

Strittmatter & Skirstad (2017) studied the representation of women in the executive committees of national football associations in Germany and in Norway and their international influence in UEFA and FIFA. The study focused on the changes in Norwegian and German gender politics and how sport and football had adapted into these changes. Two nationally and internationally major persons for the development of women's football, Ratzeburg and Espelund, were interviewed for the study. It was noted that having powerful mentors with also legitimate power in their organizations had a positive impact on Ratzeburg's and Espelund's success. Another emphasized factor was the success of the national teams in Norway and in Germany. As the women's teams started to achieve success, also the interest towards women within decision-making boards increased. Both the interviewed women had played football previously, which they saw important for their personal progress. They were familiar with the football context, they knew what should be developed, how to act and how to talk about football. They felt this experience gave authority that was valuable in their work.

In Norway, there is also a lack in management and leadership research in the football context. The research found were master theses that considered club level and strategic leadership or player development (See Bråthen, 2015; Edvardsen, 2011; Hauken, 2014). There is a lack of research from gender point of view considering women as football leaders.

In Norway, as globally and also in Finland, the focus of research has been in sport in general. There is a gap in research on female sport managers' careers in a single sport context. As argued earlier

sport is a gendered and segmented space. Women leaders are better presented in sport that are traditionally feminine and not visible in masculine ball games. Treating sport as a single entity does not consider the special characteristics of different sports and the segmentation of sport. For these reasons, more research is needed in different game specific contexts.

2 BACKGROUND & CONTEXT DESCRIPTION

In this chapter, the background and context of this research are introduced. Context is an important factor in sport related research that must be considered. How the context is understood influences fundamentally the interpretations made of the empirical material. (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2018; Slack, 1998) Underestimating the meaning of context may lead to misunderstandings and to decreased validity of research. In the next chapter women's present position in sport and football is described that is followed by a discussion of the specific factors of sport and football context. As argued previously, women's position in football or football as a context has rarely been researched. Sport in general offers the closest context possible. Therefore, the following chapters are mainly on sport level and complemented with football specific knowledge. After the description of women's position and contextual factors of sport, the third and fourth sub chapter introduces the case organizations SPL and NFF.

2.1 Women's Position in Football & Sport

Sport is a gendered space and the sport culture is heavily dependent on its operational environment. Football culture is traditionally perceived as a masculine field, men play, watch and manage sports. Traits as power, resilience, persistence, aggressiveness and perseverance are considered as the traits for success, whereas more feminine characteristics as empathy and care are considered as weaknesses. (Heinilä, 1977, 21) Sport and football are argued to reproduce and define hegemonic masculinity. The overly heterosexual and physically dominant masculinity dominates and defeats other forms of masculinity and represses women (Anderson, 2009, 4; Clark, 2011; Connell, 1995). Hall (1990) as cited in Hovden & Pfister (2006) argues that "*sport today represents not only a global movement but also a highly institutionalized cultural practice that helps to maintain male hegemony in our societies.*" Research on football has shown that amongst other sport, also football is a strong platform for producing and reproducing symbolic and social gender order. These shape the gender relations in football. (Clark, 2011; Hjelseth & Hovden, 2014) From the early years, women were not seen capable of doing sports, for instance women's football was not allowed as part of NFF until in 1976 after struggles of acceptance (Goksøyr & Olstad, 2002). Nevertheless, women have fought and attained a new position in this culture. They are playing and doing sports closer to men than ever before in the most varied range of sports (IOC). However, gender still influences different sectors of sport. Women are often better represented in sport organizations

traditionally perceived feminine as gymnastics but are invisible in traditionally masculine sports as football. (Fasting, 2005, 57; Clark, 2011) Segmentation and gendering of sport is not only visible amongst athletes, but also amongst sport leaders. Women have not been included into coaching or leading by the same volume as men and it is more difficult for women to create a career within sport, especially within masculine sports. (Fasting, 2005, 57; Pfister, Habermann & Ottesen, 2004; Turpeinen & Hakamäki 2018) Especially the highest leadership positions are steered to men (Fasting, 2005, 57; Pfister, Habermann & Ottesen, 2004, 12; Turpeinen & Hakamäki, 2018). Similar findings have been found in football context (Clark, 2011; Welford, 2011). Thus, female sport leaders may be referred as tokens (see Kanter, 1977). Being a woman and a leader in a masculine activity as football, has traditionally been perceived as improper behavior for a woman. (Fasting, 2005, 57; Welford, 2011.) Women are also less visible in the sport culture and on the sport media. The lack of visibility is one factor explaining the lack of women leaders in sport. Vice versa, the lack of women leaders affects the acknowledgement and attention women's sport receives. (Aalto, 2013) As women are the minority and often perceived as "other" in the social institution of sport and football, it is important to acknowledge that women in sport as athletes, coaches or managers are under heavy inspection (Kane, 1995; Welford, 2011).

According to Turpeinen & Hakamäki's (2018, 4) *Sport and Equality Report* for the Finnish Ministry of Culture and Education, gender equality and knowledge of gender equality have increased in sport in recent years. The number of women in leadership and decision-making positions has grown in sports during this decade. 16% of chairmen and 34% of executive managers in different sport associations and organizations are women (Turpeinen & Hakamäki, 2018). In Norway the trend has been similar. 31% of executive board leaders in sport organizations are women (Ottesen, Skirstad, Pfister & Habermann, 2010). In Finland and in Norway several projects, as mentoring, educational and network programs, have been launched to increase women's possibilities in sport associations (For instance, see The Finnish Olympic Committee, 2017 Johtaa kuin nainen/Lead like a woman; Norges Idrettsforbund, 2018 Mentorprogram for kvinnelige ledere/Mentor program for female leaders). In Norway, gender quotas have had a positive effect on the number of women in executive boards, also in sport organizations. (Pfister et al., 2004, 12) However, research suggests that still, when women enter sport organizations, the organizations are formed by men to men and masculine values and habits still dominate (Ottesen et al. 2010).

Sport governance is a fundamental part constructing the sport culture. Currently the authority on both association and public level is mainly in men's hands. Sport governance steers the direction of sport culture and influences the direction sport culture is developing. Women's football has raised

its profile. Women have succeeded in international championship games in Finland and in Norway, which has increased the appreciation of women's sport. For instance, NFF started to pay equal pay for women's and men's national team players and in Finland the salary gap between men and women national teams narrowed in 2018. However, researchers (Aalto, 2001; Heinilä, 1977) have interpreted that women's sport does not receive as much attention and support as men's sport due to the lack of women leaders and decision makers and vice versa the lack of support and attention of women's sport influences the small number of female leaders.

Women's position and gender equality has also been noted in national and international legislations. Sport organizations amongst others must comply with the regulations and work towards equality and non-discrimination (see act on Equality Between Women and Men, 915/2016; Non-Discrimination act 1325/2014; The Act relating to Gender Equality; United Nations, 1948) Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity takes a robust stand against discrimination in sports. According to the act the extent to which the organization enhances equality and non-discrimination is considered when deciding on government grants. In addition, Norway has introduced gender quotas, which state that there must be at least 40% of both sexes in company boards. (Gender in Norway)

The number of women in decision-making positions in sport has increased in Finland and in Norway during the last 40 years. (Aalto, 2013; Hovden, 2010 & 2012; Ottesen et al., 2010) Nevertheless, women are still a large minority as leaders, especially in top management positions. The unwritten rule of sport seems to be, the more appreciated and the higher on the hierarchy a position is, the less there are women. (Aalto, 2013; Hovden, 2010 & 2012; Ottesen et al., 2010) Sport organizations are some of the largest and most influential societal institutions in the Nordic countries (Hovden & Pfister, 2006). For these above argued reasons, research on equality and equal opportunities for men and women in this field is important.

2.2 Sport as a Context

Football is the most popular sport in the world (Siukonen & Rantala, 2006). It is also the largest organized sport for both men and women in Finland and in Norway (Skogvang & Fasting, 2013; Suomen Palloliitto, 2016b). Sport is a unique context that has characteristics not visible, or not visible on the same level, in any other context (Slack, 1998). Sport management requires variety of skills and knowledge from substance and management & leadership points of view. To study sport field, one must be familiar with the field to understand its unique effects on studies and results. (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2018; Nenonen, 2013) Sport consumers are emotionally involved. Athletes are

idols for many and success in sports brings cohesion and joy for people. (Walker & Kent, 2009). People are passionate about sports, it creates feelings and emotions that are not comparable to other services or products (Stewart & Smith, 1999). European commission has paid attention to sport and its status as a valuable cultural institution that benefits the economic and social development of nations and regional communities. In addition, sport has cultural and health value for nations and local communities. (European Commission 2000 & 2007) Compared to other organizations, sport has diverse goals, not just maximizing profits. The quality of the sport product/service may vary unexpectedly: even if a football team played well yesterday it does not mean they will be successful tomorrow. Another interesting issue is the needed balance of cooperation and competition. If there is a team that is overly superior to others, it will decrease the attractiveness of the league. (Stewart & Smith, 1999)

Sport must enjoy trust of the wide audience also from the fiscal point of view. Social responsibility has become a factor steering decision making in many companies. Companies are ready to take actions if their partner organization breaks their ethical values or if the decision making and actions of the partner even seem vague. (e.g. Fifa corruption scandal in 2015, Lahti doping scandal in 2001 to mention a few). In addition, sport is often partly funded by public funds with the aim of improving the local community. This creates even deeper requirements of trust, transparency and inclusion. The extent of athletes, teams, leagues and organizations being under the public eye is greater than in other organizations. The stakeholders of sports organizations (sponsors, fans, other sport organizations to mention a few) are unique compared to other organizations. (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009) Sport management requires both management and leadership skills. Sport organizations have often volunteers besides hired staff. It requires special characteristics of leading. It is not possible to use all the carrots and sticks that are normally for use in management and leadership. (Nenonen, 2013, 36)

Often the popularity of athletes and national teams is related to the success of sporting results. Skiers as Krista Pärmäkoski and Therese Johaug are amongst the most popular athletes in Finland and in Norway. In ball games, the successful women's national handball team in Norway enjoys great popularity. In football, the sporting results do not seem to have the same influence. (Hjelseth & Hovden, 2014) The women's football national teams of Finland and Norway have succeeded better internationally and are higher on the FIFA ranking than their men colleagues. Nevertheless, they are left with little media coverage and popularity no matter the success.

However, it can be questioned how unique these features are. For instance, Steve Jobs and Apple have their own fan base. Silicon Valley and San José are an example of organization's connections

to a local community and Volkswagen with their emission cheat case showed how transparency is demanded from all organizations today. Most of the above argued unique features of sport can be found to some extent also in other than sports organizations of today. However, as elaborated above, it is the extent of which these features are found in sports that make this field unique and justify research in this field.

2.3 The Football Association of Finland

Suomen Palloliitto ry (SPL) was founded in 1907. It joined FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) in 1908 and UEFA (The Union of European Football Associations) in 1954. SPL has nearly 1000 member clubs and the member clubs have over 140 000 registered players, of which girls and women are about 32 500. Approximately about 500 000 (9%) Finns are playing or interacting with football associated things every week. SPL is the largest sport governing body in Finland by the number of registered members. SPL is divided in Finland into 11 SPL regions that are responsible for football and futsal actions in their own regions. (Suomen Palloliitto, a)

SPL is a football specified association that as a member of FIFA is responsible for all football and futsal related actions and their development. The work on education and amateur activities, and on competitive and professional sports is based on human and customer-oriented points of views. The mission of SPL is "Football for everyone". That represents the aim of football and futsal being available for everyone every single day of the year. The mission stresses the variety of SPL actions and societal mission. The values of SPL include happiness, reliability, success and communality. (Suomen Palloliitto, b) The 2016-2020 strategy of SPL has four focus points: (1) quality in the everyday lives of players, (2) vigorous club, (3) interesting competitions, (4) active communication and effectiveness in the football family. (Suomen Palloliitto, a) The requirements for operational environment of SPL base on good governance, strategic management, SPL's own principles of transparency, the principles of umbrella organizations, and requirements and principles of the Ministry of Education and Culture. (Suomen Palloliitto, 2016 b, 8) There are three focus points in Finnish sport strategy (international success, increasing skills and increasing the appreciation of sport) that also SPL tries to develop in cooperation with the Finnish Olympic Committee. (Suomen Palloliitto, 2016 b)

In the central organization of SPL there are 63 employees, of which 44 (70%) are men and 19 (30%) are women. The average age of the employees in the central organization is 44 years (men 42, women 47). (Suomen Palloliitto, 2016 a, 15) Women are underrepresented especially in middle

manager and leading positions. According to SPL's equality plan there were no women leaders in 2016 and only one woman as a middle manager. In the SPL strategy for 2016-2020 it is stated that *"when deciding on actions, attention should be given to means that can increase the number of women in different football actions, especially in coaching and leading positions"*. Salary mapping in 2016 revealed that the average salary of men was 15% higher than women. SPL argues that the salary gap is explained by the higher number of men in leading and management positions. (Suomen Palloliitto, 2016 a, 15) Possibilities for women to take part in football actions have increased as the result of different actions, for instance SPL has established/cooperated in coaching courses (Valmentaa kuin nainen, eng. Coaches like a woman) and leadership education for women (Naiset Jalkapallojohtajina, Women as Football managers – educational program).

2.4 The Football Association of Norway

Norges Fotballforbund (NFF) was founded in 1902 and became a member of FIFA in 1908. In 1954 it joined UEFA. At the moment NFF has almost 1800 member clubs and over 337 000 registered players, of which 96 000 (29%) are girl and women players, and 241 000 boys and men. NFF is one of the biggest sport associations by the number of registered players in Norway (UEFA, NFF). NFF has been divided into 18 NFF regional associations. (UEFA)

One of the central tasks of the Norwegian Football Association is to represent, manage and further develop the basic structures of Norwegian football. NFF aims at ensuring good management and competition structures with the base values of fair play and transparency. NFF operates under the regulations of Norges Idrettsforbund (NIF), UEFA and FIFA. The main goals of NFF are to (1) ensure that the revenue from the sale of rights is maintained, (2) maintain a good distribution of funds, (3) ensure that the national sport regulations protect NFF's rights and (4) facilitate good value creation in the top football. In addition, NFF pursues to work with NIF and other special federations to ensure satisfactory national laws that serve the interests of sport in Norway. (Norges Fotballforbund, 2016, 38)

Internally NFF intends to be a safe and secure workplace with the fundamental values of security, equality, joy, respect and publicity. The focus areas of NFF's action plan for 2016-2019 are leadership, staffing, recruitment and strategic competence development. In the action plan NFF mentions increasing the number of women coaches and leaders in Norwegian football and hiring more women and people with minority backgrounds as one of the main goals of NFF. (Norges Fotballforbund, 2016, 46, 51)

In the central organization of NFF there are seven employees with a leading position and 16 with a middle management/decision making position. Altogether there are 23 employees in the central organization of NFF with decision making power. Within the seven leading positions there is one woman leader, the head of HR, the rest of the leaders are men. The organization is divided into six departments. In the sport department there are five employees that have managerial position of which one is a woman (Leder kvinnefotball). Top football section has been drawn under the sports section in the organization graph (2.1.2018). The three leaders, top football chef and the head coaches of women and men's national teams are all men. Under the competition department there are eight managers of which all are men. Under the economy and finance department there are two managers of which one is a woman. (Norges Fotballforbund, 2018) Altogether there are three women within the 23 managers/leaders in NFF. However, NFF has gone through a change recently in which a new elite football department was formed and Lise Klaveness a former elite player was chosen as the leader of that department. The national team chains of women and men were moved under the new elite football department. (Norges Fotballforbund, 2018) NFF has had a female general secretary, Karen Espelund, for 10 years between 1999 and 2009 (Lersveen, 2009).

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this research is two-fold. The main concepts and theories are (1) sport management, which is strongly linked to leadership and management and (2) women's careers and factors hindering and promoting those. The following chapter includes definitions of these concepts, the theoretical lens and background guiding the research. At the end of this chapter the conceptual framework based on this theory basis is introduced. The conceptual framework folds the theories together and acts as a tool in the interview and analyze phases.

3.1 Sport Management

Sport management as a concept is rather complex and debated. There are still discussions of whether it is just management or is it a separate scientific field within management and leadership studies (see Stewart and Smith, 1999; Smith & Stewart, 2010). Sport management has a long history. It was already needed in the ancient Greece when arranging the Olympics, but as a scientific discipline sport management is rather young. It was defined as a field of research in the mid-1980s (Costa, 2005). However, no extensive research has been done to discover the academic roots, or to find answers on fundamental questions as: how old is the discipline, what is the status of the discipline, what is the direction of the discipline or what is the relation of quality and quantity in research. (Costa, 2005) The young age of the discipline can be perceived as an advancing but also as a hindering actor. On one hand, the base and the future of the field can be actively influenced but on the other hand the field has some typical identity challenges, even on the level of challenging the existence of sport management as a discipline (Chalip, 2006). In general, it is unclear what is the added value sport context gives to leadership studies and how leadership and management studies in sport context increase understanding about leadership and organizations. (Laakso, 2016, 24) Researchers offer their own, different perceptions of the definition and boundaries of the discipline. As sport management is a hybrid of sport and management, the impact of these two disciplines is visible in the diverse definitions of researchers. (Chalip, 2006). There are two main scholars defining what sport management is. The other argues that sport management is just managing sports, whereas the other that sport management is management in all of the sport. As sport management is a young discipline the definition will evolve and change during time as the research deepens and the discipline expands. (Pitts, 2001, 3) Costa (2005, 117-118) argues that the fundamental questions defining the discipline, and which are also the ones dividing researchers'

opinions are: “*What is unique about the field of sport management, what sets it apart from other academic disciplines?*” and “*What justifies the development of sport management as a distinct discipline?*” Moreover, Pitts (2001) raises two other fundamental questions that have no general agreement within the discipline: *How is sport management defined? How is the definition used and applied?* Even though sport management has challenges with evolving as a discipline, sport and leisure is one of the fastest growing fields in the world (Gillentine, Crow & Harris, 2009). This has increased and still is increasing the need for wider and deeper sport management research.

Defining the effects of context is central when discussing sport management from leadership and management perspective. Does sport influence the nature of leadership and management, and if so, how? Does sport management differ from other fields of management and leadership? According to researchers (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2018; Nenonen, 2013; Slack, 1998) leadership and management are culture and context related, which argues sport having an effect. However, it is still not empirically proven or defined what the exact effect or effects are sport has on leadership and management (Slack, 1998; Costa, 2005). In this study the fundamental thought is that leadership and management is dependent on the context (Seeck, 2008, 18, 326). Sport has its own institutional culture, values, norms, practices, and game specific characteristics that are discussed earlier in this paper. These characteristics offer a unique environment for this career & leadership study about women, which justifies research on this field (Laakso, 2016, 12).

The methodological tradition of sport management is mainly based on quantitative research (Edwards & Skinner, 2009, 3-5). This has increased the need for wider use of research methods in order to expand and deepen the knowledge within the discipline. One reason for a rather narrow use of research methods may be institutional pressure that steers researchers towards quantitative methods to gain and maintain academic appreciation (Edwards & Skinner, 2009, 3-5). Many of the central researchers within the discipline demand for variety of approaches in research for the knowledge to grow and expand in sport management (Edwards & Skinner, 2009, 3-5; Amis & Silk, 2005; Olafson, 1990). Slack (1996) and Olafson (1990) argue for more qualitative and empiric research as the discipline is lacking in deeper, qualitative knowledge. This research answers on its part to the need for variation in the methodological approaches and brings new deeper knowledge into the discipline.

3.1.1 Leadership & Management

Definitions of leadership are varied and there are no generally agreed definitions of the concepts in the leadership and management literature. However, many similarities can be found in definitions.

Bass (1990, 20) defines leadership as “*interaction among members of a group that initiates and maintains improved expectations and the competence of the group to solve problems or to attain goals*”. Honkanen (2006, 185-186) outlines leadership consisting of two main tasks: (1) setting goals and organizing tasks and (2) facilitating people to accomplish the tasks designed to them. Northouse (2010, 3) argues that no matter how leadership is defined, the following components are always included: (1) leadership is a process, (2) leadership involves influence, (3) leadership emerges when in groups and (4) leadership involves a specific common goal. According to these components Northouse (2010, 3) defines leadership as a “*process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal*”. As seen in these definitions, leadership has always two actors, the leader and the followers. Thus, leadership is more of a relationship between the leader and the followers than an individual attribute of the leader. Leadership is often described as a service occupation and as a meaning maker (Juuti, 2006). Leadership provides a perspective and guidance that steers the actions of employees (Lämsä & Hautala, 2005, 206). Without leadership the employees would act coincidentally. A leader is needed for the organization to function rationally and controlled.

In literature the concepts of management and leadership are often distinguished. Management is managing and administrating things whereas leadership is related to leading people. The fundamental difference between the two concepts is that leadership is about diverse interaction process between the leader and followers that focuses on human action, cooperation and processes, whereas management is about controlling and decision making related to functions, action processes and structures. (Kotter, 1990, 4-5; Mattila, 2007, 222-223; Northouse, 2010, 10; Reynolds & Warfield, 2010)

Leadership and management are culture- and context-bound. Leadership styles are closely related to the operational environment and culture in which leadership takes place. The effects of this bond are two-way: leaders are affecting their leadership environment but simultaneously they are under the influence of the environment. (Nivala, 2006) As argued earlier, context and culture are central when leading sport. These are given weight in practical actions and in research. In this research the football context and culture are closely bound as the operational environment of the two case organizations. The research shows how the specific characteristics of football influence leaders and leadership in football organizations.

3.2 Women, Career & Leadership

Gender equality discussions have been diverse in recent years. There is a general aspiration towards gender equality, which is visible for instance in different guidelines from state governments, on concrete objectives to increase the number of female leaders in all sectors and on voluminous public discussions on the media. The number of women managers, especially amongst immediate and middle managers, has increased globally and nationally in Finland and in Norway. However, an increase cannot be seen amongst top managers. (Statistics Finland, 2018; Statistics Norway, 2017). This contradiction has increased the interest of researchers towards the careers and career development of women nationally and globally (Lämsä, 2012). Leadership positions, as the labor markets, are segmented vertically and horizontally by gender. Women are leading lower in the hierarchy and are a majority in woman dominant service businesses, whereas men lead in man dominant industries and construction businesses and on higher-authority positions. (Kartovaara, 2003; Powell & Graves, 2003) Women in Finland have the highest level of education amongst all men and women in Europe, but still there are only a few women working in the top management of large organizations (Lehto, 2009; Statistics Finland, 2019; OECD, 2018). The same applies for Norway. Women are a rarity in top management positions, even though Norwegian women are higher educated than men (Statistics Norway, 2018; OECD, 2018b). This phenomenon is known as the glass ceiling. Glass ceiling refers to the level of hierarchical structures in work life that is hard for women to pass and to which women's career development easily collapses (Carli & Eagly, 2001, 631). Recently in global discussions about women management a new metaphor, glass labyrinth, has been introduced. (Eagly & Carli, 2007) It aims to overcome the limitations of the previous metaphor, glass ceiling. Glass labyrinth refers to women having possibilities to go forward on their management careers, but the path is slower and more complicated than men's. It acknowledges that women may have challenges also in the beginning of career, not just before the top management level, when "hitting the ceiling". Furthermore, the glass labyrinth can and has already been successfully navigated by women, but only by a few. (Eagly & Carli, 2007)

At the moment both top male and female leaders fit into a stereotype of so-called masculine leader prototype with competitive, effective, aggressive, self-confident, strong, independent and good decision-making characteristics (Cheng, 1996, 177-200). Men and women in top management are more similar than different from each other. Women's socialization into the masculine leader role and also the recruitment process of leaders, which are discussed more in detail further on in this chapter, have influenced the homogeneity of men and women leaders. However, as team-based leadership, in which learning is more important than organizational control, is taking over the fact

oriented hierarchical management, traditionally feminine characteristics as ability to listen, empathize and give emotional support are becoming important. (Hiillos, 2013)

At first, research on women's careers was heavily related on men's careers because the traditional career theories were based on research about men (Levinson, 1978; Schein, 1978). It was supposed that theories based on men's careers would be applicable to women as well. This assumption resulted in the conclusion that women's careers are problematic as they do not proceed the same way as men's careers. (Powell & Mainiero, 1992) The careers of female leaders started to increase interest amongst researchers during the 1970s, and after the 1980s research on women started to emerge. In the 80s most of the studies were glass ceiling research, in which the researchers tried to find explaining factors for the phenomenon. (Powell & Graves, 2003) The focus of research has continued to be on finding obstacles for women's career development. Reasons have been searched from different actors, as from organizations, society and women themselves. Research on promoting actors for women's careers is narrower. (Puttonen, 2006). Despite women's careers are a widely studied field today, (see e.g. Liff & Ward, 2001; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Marshall, 1995; Oakley; O'Neil & Bilmoria, 2005; Wirth, 2001) there is still a gap in having models with which women could build up their careers. Furthermore, the discussion about factors affecting the career development of women managers is shattered and unstable. On one hand women managers are kept as the victims of the circumstances (Liff & Ward, 2001, 20). The other perspective argues that a woman dedicated to her career will accomplish her goals, and a woman not proceeding on her career can blame herself (Hakim, 1996, 119). Researchers have argued that a woman can have a successful career if she is willing to adapt to existing rules (White, 1992). In addition to theories explaining glass ceiling (see Hakim, 1996; Kauppinen & Veikkola, 1997; Liff & Ward, 2001), another way to explain the phenomenon is a four-level grouping in Puttonen (2012), that argues factors affecting women's career development emerge from **societal, organizational, relationship and individual** levels (Hall 1987; Powell & Mainiero, 1992; Ragins & Sundström 1989).

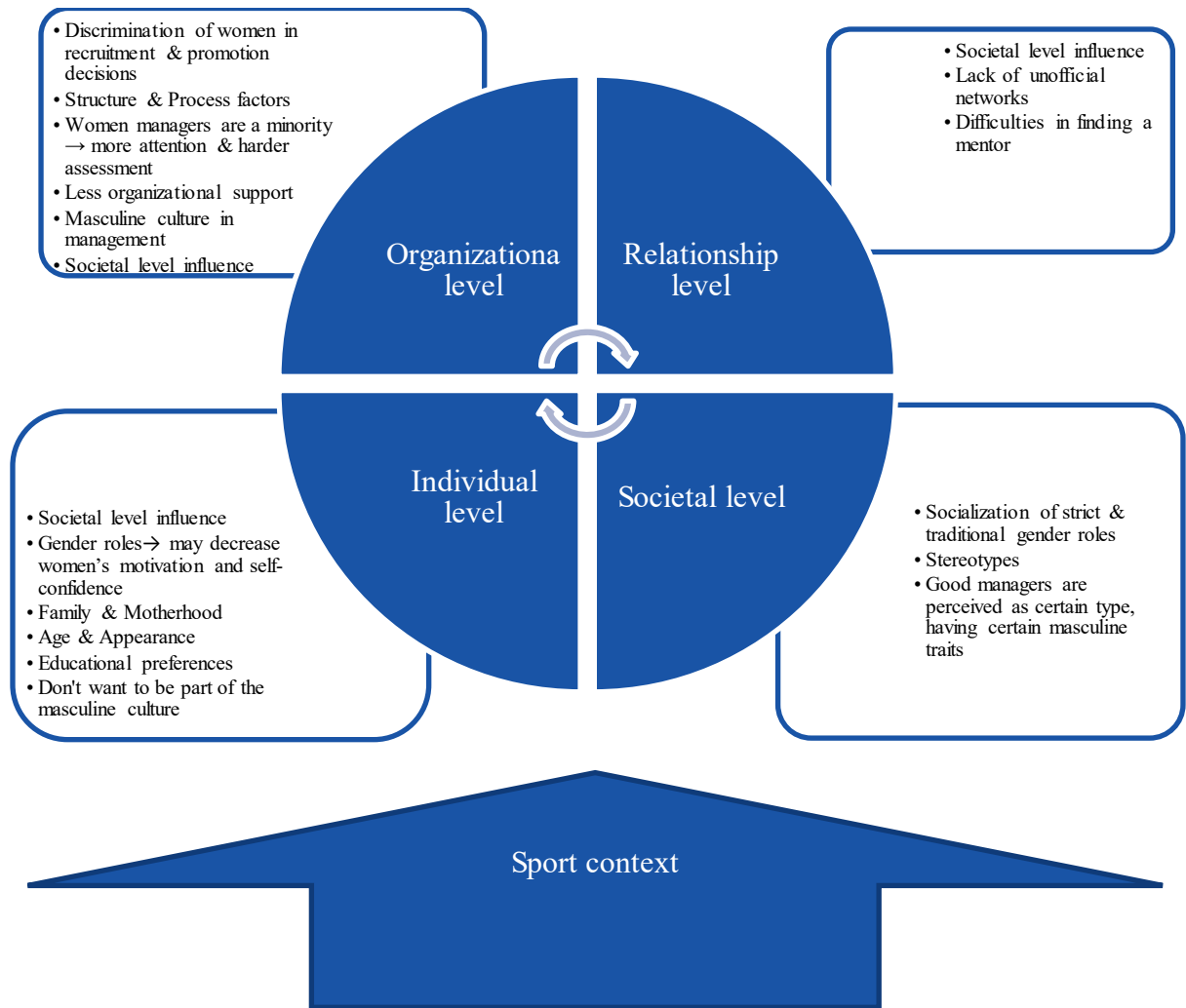


FIGURE 1 Factors hindering women's career development. (Adapted from Puttonen, 2012)

Societal level factors influence women's leadership careers already before women enter the labor markets or an organization. Indirect societal level effects are influencing all levels of the career: the time before entering the labor market, entering the labor market, work in an organization, and promotions. Societal level factors include cultural aspects and are time and place related. (Puttonen, 2012, 60) Culture comprehends the specific values, norms, attitudes, myths, symbols and procedures of a specific area. It affects people's minds and actions on an unconscious level as people are grown within the culture. As the societal values and cultural effects are on an unconscious level, they are difficult to change. (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001) Therefore negative cultural perceptions towards women leaders are fundamental challenges in the development of women's careers. There have not been many women leaders in the history, and women leaders are a rather new phenomenon in many cultures. Researchers argue that there has not been enough time for top leadership to become gender equal. (Piha 2006, 82; Robbins, Bergman & Stagg 1997, 84)

Socialization of strict and traditional gender roles seems to be the most powerful societal level hindrance for the careers of women leaders (Puttonen, 2012, 60). Individuals adopt gender roles from the environment through culture and from different institutions as family and education (Lynn, 1996). Gender stereotypes as beliefs of gendered characteristics, abilities and expectations are typical for gender roles (Doyle & Paludi, 1991). Stereotypes mould along historical and societal changes. Therefore, they are often subconscious, and difficult and slow to change. (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002, 120-130) Stereotypical role models are reproduced through unconscious actions (Hensline, 1996; Lahelma, 1992, 28-31). Socialization of gender roles steers women to behave accordingly to the perceptions of how women should act and what kind of work they should do (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Dichotomy i.e. the opposition of men and women or masculinity and femininity, has a robust position in the thoughts of individuals and cultures. Gender categorization based on dichotomy and “taken for granted” thoughts has affected the generally approved definition of what is “normal” for men and women. (Juutilainen, 2003, 42-43, 47-49) Halko (2010, 36-40) argues that in our culture stereotypes related to men are associated with power whereas stereotypes related to women are associated with subordination. Men and women assess their skills differently. Men are often more self-confident and overestimate their skills and knowledge more often than women, especially during the early phases of career, which may leave women unnoticed (Halko, 2010, 36-40, Lämsä, 2012; Vanhala, 1986). Gender roles are associated with stereotypes that create and reinforce prejudices and negative attitude towards women. Examples of stereotypes associated with women’s gender role are dependency, caring, low career orientation and instability as employees. Because of these women may not be perceived as profitable and plausible human resource investments. (Schreiber, 1998; Wentling, 1996; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) Stereotypes and the prejudices caused by them are one of the most common career obstacles women name themselves (Altman, Simpson, Baruch & Burke, 2005; Burke & McKeen, 1994b; Coe, 1992 in Puttonen, 2012; McCarty Kilian, et al., 2005; McKeen & Burke, 1994; Ragins, Townsend & Mattis, 1998; Wentling, 1996). The prejudices and low expectations towards women may lead to decreased self-confidence, overachieving, and bad leadership actions. These may decrease the expectations of others even lower, which creates a negative reinforcing circle. (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989)

Leadership culture is still a masculine environment (Oakley, 2000). Even if supporting the careers of female leaders has been a widely recognized and discussed topic recent years, the stereotypical images and ideals of leaders are still affecting in the background. Stereotypes according to which women are less competent leaders than men. (Oakley, 2000; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) Men are often perceived as more competent leaders because traits, which are masculine and typical for men

are related to effective leadership (Fagenson, 1990; Heilman, Block, Martell & Simon, 1989; Hovden, 2000 & 2010; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005). This perception of effective leadership is a significant obstacle for women's leadership careers (Heilman et al., 1989; Hovden, 2010; Nieva & Gutek, 1980; Oakley, 2000).

Organizational level obstacles for women's leadership careers influence once women step into the labor market and into the service of a company. The influence of organizational level factors may sometimes be so powerful that women's career development stops. This phenomenon is referred as the glass ceiling (Hakim, 1996; Kauppinen & Veikkola, 1997; Liff & Ward, 2001; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Because men as the majority have shaped the organizational level, they do not often face the same the career obstacles women do and may not be able to understand the career obstacles women face (Ragins et al., 1998). Increasing comprehension of the organizational level obstacles for women's careers is essential as men have better position to remove these obstacles because of their higher power-positions in organizations. The men dominant top leadership can thus be the most significant obstacle for women's leadership careers. (Hall, 1990; Liff et al., 1996)

Recruitment processes and the discriminative customs in those are one of the first organizational level obstacles women may face. Open positions, especially if they are top leadership positions, are not always publicly notified. If open positions are better known amongst men, it is evident that most of the applicants are men. Studies have indicated that recruitment processes include various discriminative actions towards women, as for instance homosociality. (Bartol, 1978; Ragins & Sunstrom, 1989) Top management is often renewing itself by recruiting an individual who is much of the same kind as the top management. As the majority of managers are men the most likely candidate is also a man, not a woman. (Tainio, 1981) Discriminative actions in recruitment may result men being hired into challenging and career furthering positions more often than women, whereas women are hired into positions, from which it is hard to proceed into top management (Coe 1992 in Puttonen 2012, 62; Oakley, 2000). Top management positions require holistic knowledge of the organization and experience from the line management, which women often lack. This can be explained with the individual perspective of women, which argues that women often orient themselves towards expert positions and change from one position to another on the horizontal level of an organization instead of the vertical one. (Powell & Mainiero, 1992; Tharenou, 2005; Vanhala, 2004)

After having stepped into the service of an organization, other organizational level obstacles start to influence women's careers. Values as well as visible and invisible rules of organizations base often on masculine norms. In addition, the general perception of successful leader is often masculine.

(Liff & Ward, 2001) Women may experience it difficult to adapt into an organization and proceed on one's career due to the masculine values and procedures (Liff & Ward, 2001; Mattis, 2001; Mckeen & Burke, 1994; Ragins et al., 1998; Wirth, 2001). Women may feel trapped and as the minority, they cannot change the culture and procedures. Women either have to adapt or not to join. (Liff & Ward, 2001, Puttonen 2012, 70) Liff & Ward (2001) argue that women are not abandoning management per se but do not want be part of masculine management of today.

From women's perspective particularly challenging is the double positioning of women (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002, 120-130). This means that women's actions and demeanors are expected to be feminine but simultaneously as leaders, women are expected to act accordingly to the traditional, masculine leader type. Women leaders, who work on men dominant fields may face negative perceptions (Piitulainen, Rönkkö, Jaakkola & Kuhmonen, 2003, 128). If a woman stays with a more feminine leadership style instead of adapting into the masculine style, she may be seen less competent and less successful. However, women adapting into the masculine leadership style and not having the assumed feminine style may also face negative reactions because they break the gender stereotype. In this case as well women leaders may be seen less competent and less effective than their men colleagues. (Piitulainen et al., 2003, 128; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002, 120-130)

Gender discriminative practices are quite common in promotion procedures and arguments, which on their part explain the small number of women leaders (Liff et al, 1996; Oakley, 2000). The differences between the promotions of men and women are clear. Women may be promoted more often than men, but women's promotions are more minor in the hierarchy. Therefore, men are promoted faster into leadership positions. (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) Gender discrimination linked to promotions is evident in cases where women are transferred into similar but more modest positions to practice before being promoted into higher management positions. This kind of procedure is rarer amongst men and often men are transferred into leading positions from very different positions. (Ruderman, Ohlott & Kramm, 1995). Promotion processes and their obstacles for women's careers are very similar to the those of recruitment processes. The ones responsible of promotion decisions often choose to promote individuals similar to them because similar people are often experienced as more reliable. Since people responsible of promoting decisions are often men, they often promote men. Discrimination of women in promotions results in women having less experience of challenging work duties. (Ruderman et al., 1995)

Long and inflexible work hours are one of the major organizational level obstacles for women and especially for mothers. Challenging work hours complicate the combination of demanding work and family. (Coe, 1992 in Puttonen, 2012, 64; Liff et al., 1996). Being a leader is still defined

strictly as a full-time job that includes overtime work and travelling. However, nowadays leaders are working with many tasks and have a limited amount of time to concentrate on one task before changing into the next one. In a way, leaders are working part-time with several tasks. Nevertheless, women leaders are rarely offered the possibility for flexible hours or part-time. (Coe, 1992 in Puttonen, 2012, 64; Liff et al., 1996) From women's perspective, it is rather challenging that combining family and career is typically seen as a women's problem. Women are said to need flexible solutions for combining these two. Combining family and work is rarely seen to concern men leaders. (Daly, Ashbourne & Hawkins, 2008)

Changing organizational level procedures is not enough to further women's careers as long as the values and attitudes of the society and organizational culture cannot be changed into gender equal state (Oakley, 2000). Fundamental reason for discriminating organizational level factors are the much deeper-rooted values, perceptions and attitudes of more general culture (Puttonen, 2012).

Relationship level factors are affecting on the background of many organizational level factors. For instance, it is beneficial for the applicant if he or she knows the decision maker of recruitment and promotion processes in person. On the other hand, also societal level factors as stereotypes and prejudices have a strong influence on the relationship level factors. (Puttonen, 2012)

On relationship level, lack of suitable mentors and role models is highlighted in several studies (Altman et al., 2005; Burke & McKeen, 1994b; Coe, 1992 in Puttonen, 2012; Davey & Davidson, 1994; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; Wirth, 2001). Mentoring has many benefits: a mentor can protect the mentee from discrimination, guide with organizational procedures and offer information about open positions through unofficial networks (Burke & McKeen, 1994a; Lewis & Fagenson, 1995; McDonald & Hite, 1998; Wentling, 1996). Mentorships are divided into official mentorships organized by organizations and unofficial ones that base on human relations. For women, creating especially unofficial mentorships may be challenging. The number of suitable female mentors available is rather low. On the other hand, men managers may be unwilling to mentor a woman because of the intimacy of a mentorship. (Burke & McKeen, 1994a; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Lewis & Fagenson, 1995; Wells, 2001 in Puttonen, 2012, 65) Research has shown that mentors are especially beneficial for women's career development (Mutanen & Lämsä, 2006; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Influential men mentors that have credibility in their organization and have access into networks further effectively the careers of women leaders. An influential male mentor can protect from the resistant power in the organization and he may know important inside knowledge that is only accessible within an inside network of men. Benefits of a man and a woman mentor differ. Women mentors support women's careers on an emotional level, whereas men

mentors are often furthering career and opening doors. Therefore, it would be important for a woman wishing to proceed on her leadership career to have both. (Mutanen & Lämsä, 2006; Ragins et al., 1998)

Societal level stereotypes and prejudices are some of the main factors for gender discriminative actions on relationship level. Discrimination of women is evident in women's challenges to join unofficial networks of organizations, which are known to be beneficial for leadership careers. (Hovden, 2000; Liff & Ward, 2001; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; Ruderman et al., 1995; Wells, 2001 in Puttonen 2012, 66; Wentling, 1996; Wirth, 2001) Not being a part of these networks hamper women's careers: women do not get all the information regarding open positions, they cannot make themselves visible for the influential individuals in the organization, and they cannot create relationships with the individuals who decide on promotions (Burke & McKeen, 1994a; Liff & Ward, 2001; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Ruderman et al., 1995). Unofficial networks operate within and between organizations. In these networks official power and competitive advantage is transferred to other members through friendships and alliances. (Oakley, 2000)

The factors of other levels have a strong influence on the factors of **individual level**. For instance, socialization of gender roles on societal level has a strong effect on educational choices of women, and choices between family and career. Organizational and relationship level factors are affecting the amount of work experience women have but also the decisions between family and career. (Puttonen, 2012)

One of the earliest and most used argument for women's slower career development is the difference between the characteristics of men and women (Puttonen, 2012, 66). The characteristics influence already before entering the labor market in women's educational decisions, but they have a strong influence also later during career. Men are often seen as more motivated to lead others, more confident, more performance oriented and having more will for power than women. However, research regarding the characteristics of women and leadership has been criticized for not considering the circumstances or the situation as a whole. (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) Women leaders have expressed that the lack of self-confidence has been a major hindrance for their career development (Altman et al., 2005; Coe, 1992 in Puttonen, 2012, 67). Men's stronger motivation to proceed on their career and higher self-confidence is an explanation offered to explain their faster career development (Halko, 2010; Lämsä, 2012). A reason for women's weaker motivation to proceed on their career may be that women have to face more obstacles than men on their careers, which may cause women lowering their goals (Puttonen, 2012, 67).

Women's level of education has risen on the same level and even above the level of men (Statistics Finland, 2019; Statistics Norway, 2018; OECD, 2018). However, higher education has not facilitated women to compete for leadership positions head to head with men (Wirth, 2001). Educational preferences have differentiated strongly between genders (Vanhala, n.d). One explanation for women's weaker progress on their leadership career is the "wrong" kind of education (Liff et al., 1996). Due socialization of gender roles, individuals often choose their educational field according to what is proper for their gender. Wrong kind of education for leadership career results in women being hired into positions that are not perceived challenging enough and are not seen as relevant experience for a leader. (McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; McKeen & Burke, 1994) Gendered specialization into positions typical for women, as HR or communications managers, is another negative factor influencing women's leadership careers. Being promoted into top management from these positions is rather rare as HR management does not directly increase the business competence needed to become a top manager. (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989)

Family and especially kids are often used explanations for women's worse position in work life, worse leadership career development and worse salaries (Burke & McKeen, 1994b; Coe, 1992 in Puttonen 2012; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; McDonald & Hite, 1998; Metz, 2005; Vanhala, 2005; Wirth, 2001). However, not having a family may also hamper the career of a female leader as she may be regarded having children in the near future (Vanhala, n.d.). Women still have the main responsibility of taking care of children and home, which may cause challenges in women's leadership careers. Combining family and career seems to be more challenging for women than for men. Women have a vision that without full commitment to work, they don't have any chance for top management positions in companies. (Burke & McKeen, 1994b; Coe, 1992 in Puttonen 2012; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; McDonald & Hite, 1998; Metz, 2005; Wirth, 2001) Coe (1992) as cited in Puttonen (2012) argued that many female leaders with children feel that motherhood clearly hampers their careers. Moreover, women leaders feel that their organizations are not willing to give support with the demands of combining family and work (Burke, 2001). Becoming a mother is often perceived as a restriction for possibilities to work. Mothers find it often more challenging than fathers to work long days or to have overnight work trips, which are seen typical for leading positions. A major factor for these experiences is the unequal responsibility of taking care of children in families. (Davey & Davidson, 1994; Liff & Ward, 2001)

Stereotypes as weak commitment to the organization and passivity are often linked with motherhood. This creates negative attitudes towards women. The stereotypes can be rather

powerful, and people often have beliefs that a woman cannot effectively combine motherhood and career. (Burke, 2001; Schwartz, 1989) Even if a woman could combine career and motherhood, and even if she was as committed to her career as she was before motherhood, the stereotypes steer the attitude of supervisors and colleagues regardless the real commitment and results of the mother (Davey & Davidson, 1994, Ragins & Sundstrom 1989).

Becoming a mother causes an interruption on a woman's career that decreases work skills at least on a certain level and may also decrease self-confidence (Davey & Davidson, 1994). These family related interruptions on women's careers cause the careers to be shorter and more intermittent than men's (Burke & McKeen 1994b; O'Neil & Bilmoria, 2005; Wirth, 2001). This has been connected to slower promotions and lower wage (Wirth, 2001). Motherhood may also complicate the possibilities to take part into different training programs and seminars. Lack of training and education may forbid or at least hamper career development. (Metz, 2005) Even though family is often perceived as one of the main factors for women's worse position in work life, the results of research are slightly contradicting whether for instance maternity leaves have negative effects on the careers of women or not (Judiesch & Lysness, 1999). The positive effects of family are discussed later in this chapter.

Age is closely related to gender as an obstacle for women's careers. Researchers are rather unified on agreeing that there is no specific age when women are most likely to step into management and leadership positions (Vanhala, n.d). In the beginning of career, women are often perceived as too young and potentially becoming mothers soon. After having children women are seen as closely related to family, and then finally too old for labor market. Stereotypes as decreased efficiency, inflexibility, increased possibility of being sick amongst others are often related to aging. (Still & Timms, 1998) In addition to age, women's appearance influences their leadership careers. Women's appearance has a heavier weight on recruiting situation than men's. For instance, height and thinness are related to the success of women managers, whereas small physical size of a female leader is often perceived suspicious or related to weak will (Kauppinen & Antila, 2005; Lindeman & Sundvik, 1994; Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001). Neotenous appearance is required from women and especially from female leaders to another extent than from their male colleagues (Kauppinen & Antila, 2005). Furthermore, women leaders appear rather implausible (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001). Women's age and appearance revoke certain subconscious images that put women leaders automatically into unfavorable position. Leadership skills of a young woman are being doubted, beautiful appearance is related to "airy" character and fierce external expression to difficult persona.

Researchers argue that this discursive protocol may limit women's possibilities in leadership and thus is an invisible discriminating factor. (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001)

As argued above, many of the actors hampering leadership careers of women emerge outside of the context of the organization and have an indirect effect on the organization's actions. An organization has to recognize and acknowledge how the actors outside of the organization influence the actions inside the organization for it being able to help its female employees and their leadership careers. For instance, organizations must be able to recognize and acknowledge gendered practices and to try to minimize the unfavorable effects of these. (Puttonen, 2012) According to Hiillos (2013) women are still widely unutilized as leader potential. If more women are wanted into top management, a more active approach is needed from the employers. Women must, even today, be found into leadership positions through different channels and procedures than men. The example of top management and their knowledge about the special characteristics of women's careers has been found effective in advancing women's management careers. (Hiillos, 2013).

Puttonen, (2012) argues that even if the leadership careers of women can be enhanced many ways, the following two factors have to be considered for any of the actions to be productive: (1) women are individuals and their progress on management & leadership career cannot be enhanced with one model, (2) if the top management of the organization is not supporting the actions aspiring to advance the careers of women leaders, these actions will most likely not reach good or permanent results.

Receiving challenges, and succeeding in those, already on the early phases of career is an important promoting factor for the leadership careers of women. Women themselves see this even more important than harmonization of family and work. (Lämsä, 2012) A good supervisor that gives responsibilities and feedback of successful work increases the self-confidence of employees. Receiving feedback is generally experienced as an important factor enhancing career. In addition to good supervisors, mentors are valuable. (Lämsä, 2012) The studies have shown that even if family is hampering the careers of women managers, family has also positive influence on women's leadership careers (Ezzedeen & Ritchey, 2008 & 2009; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Rothbard, 2001; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer & King, 2002). Especially in the beginning of career, support from partner or from another close relative has a central role in the success of a woman's career (Heikkinen, Lämsä & Hiillos, 2012). Furthermore, professional competence, diverse work experience, robust educational background and work ethic have a clear positive influence on women's careers. Being brave, "putting oneself out there" and ambition act also as promoting factors. (Lämsä, 2012; Vanhala, 1986)

As argued earlier, women's careers end often at middle management. Understanding how the careers of women are structured, and which factors advance and also hamper the careers are central in supporting women's careers (Hiillos, 2013, Puttonen, 2012). An organization who wants to advance women's careers should give support to combine work and family and appreciate the parenthood of both men and women (Lämsä, 2012). Women reaching powerful leading positions may crack the glass ceiling and provoke changes in gender perception on the organizational level and also more widely in the culture. This could contribute also on the number of women sport managers. (Kerr & Marshall, 2007)

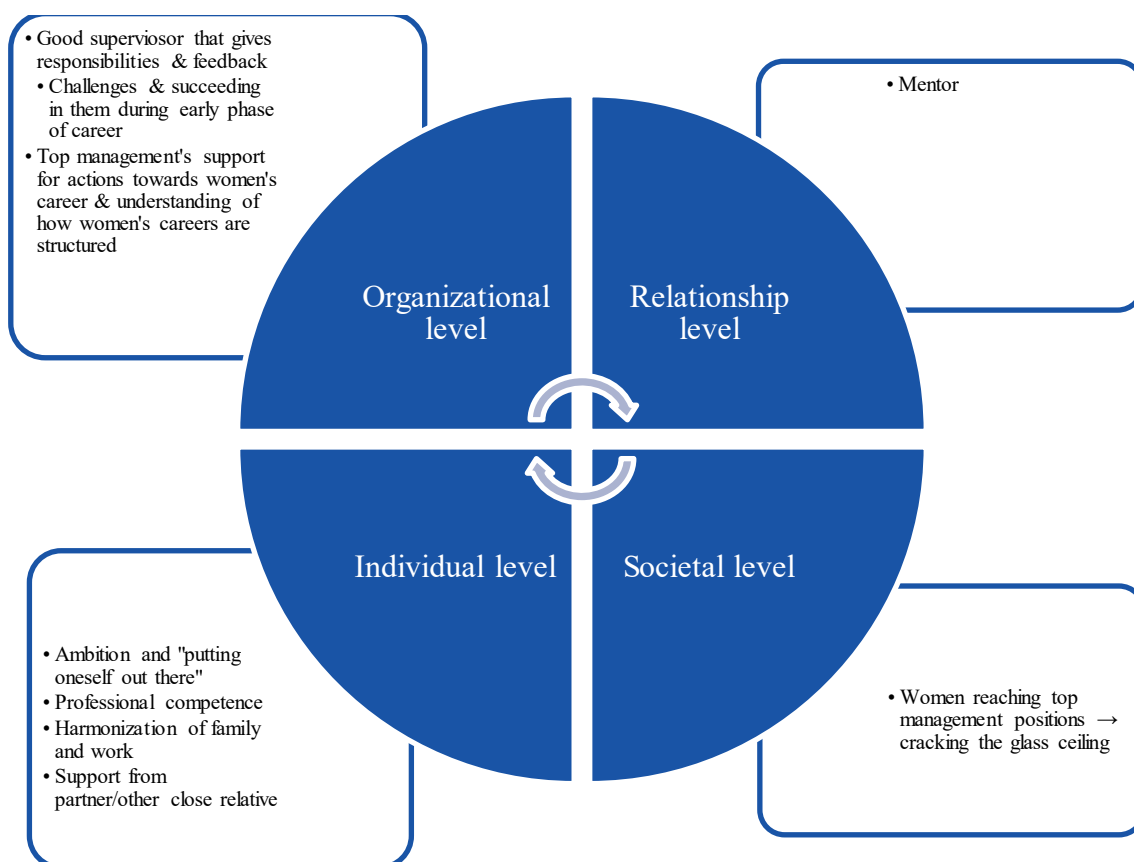


FIGURE 2 Promoting factors for women's careers.

3.3 Conceptual Model

As argued above women's careers are a unique phenomenon. Gender is a fundamental aspect of organizational and social processes (Burton, 2015). Sport with its field specific factors differentiates sport management from other management and leadership (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Laakso, 2016, 12; Slack, 1998; Stewart & Smith, 1999). These factors justify the choice of this combined

theoretical lens in this study. The career of women leaders is a complex phenomenon. The conceptual model has to be as holistic as possible to understand this phenomenon. Basing on the two-fold theoretical framework, the following conceptual model is created to guide the interviews and analysis. Individual factors are on the micro level and the meso level includes the organizational factors affecting women's leadership possibilities in the case organizations. Field (football) is influencing micro and meso levels and the societal (macro) level, which is the third level of the conceptual model. In this research, the interviews will focus on micro, meso and field level factors. However, as argued in chapter 3.2 many societal level phenomena as gender roles and stereotypes influence factors on individual and organizational level and thus were included in the theoretical discussion and are discussed further on along the empirical material.

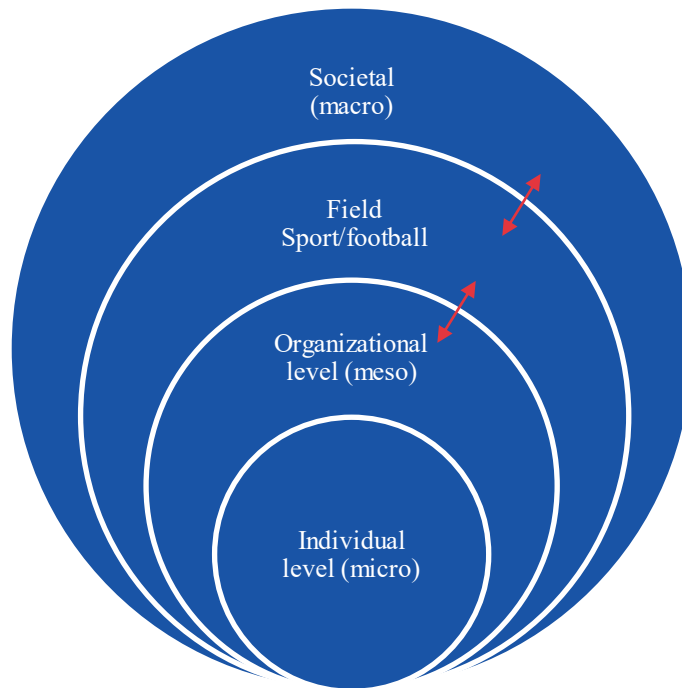


FIGURE 3 Conceptual model.

4 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the methodological choices for this research are argued and discussed. First the characteristics and use of qualitative case study approach are reasoned. Next, the main data gathering method, focused interview, is introduced, which is followed by description of the data analysis process. The second last chapter describes the position of the researcher and lastly research ethics and principles are discussed.

4.1 Qualitative Case Study Research

Qualitative research is subjective, flexible and “soft”. The relation between the researcher and the research object is close, research strategy is unstructured, and the character of data is rich and deep. The basis of qualitative research is to describe real life. The aim is to be able to research the object in genuine situations and to describe it holistically. Qualitative research tries to understand the phenomenon, not just verify already existing claims. The aim is not to test a theory or hypothesis but to consider data from multi-perspective. (Hirsijärvi, Hurme & Sajavaara, 1998, 161, 165) Qualitative research proceeds from individual to general and is interested in several simultaneous actors that influence the outcome (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, 25).

In this research the research problem is approached by a multiple case study method. In case studies a single event, limited object or an individual is studied through diverse methods. In multiple case studies two or more cases are studied in one research. The research method emphasizes what, how and why questions, and through them tries to study, describe and explain the case. (Yin, 1994, 5-13) It is essential that the case studied creates some kind of entity. Because the data gathering and analyzing methods are varied, case study cannot be perceived just as a data gathering method. Case study does not restrict the choice of methods, both quantitative and qualitative methods are valid. (Yin, 1994, 1-3) Often, case study is chosen as the approach when the aim is to deeply understand an object in relation to its context. Another validation for case study is if one or several criteria of the following is met: what, how and why are central; the researcher has only a little control on the case; the topic lacks empirical research; the research objective is a phenomenon of present life. (Eriksson & Koistinen, 2005, 4-5) In this research, the case study method is seen to provide meaningful results as the aim of the research is to address why there are fewer female leaders in NFF and SPL and deeply understand what the underlying factors are. Furthermore, this topic lacks empirical research and the research objective is a phenomenon of present life.

The generalization or transferring results is challenging in case studies. However, it is possible to consider the findings on a larger scale. What can this case give to other similar research processes? How could the findings be adapted to something else or somewhere else? How could the case study findings be used when planning larger studies about the same topic? (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006) The multiple case study approach strengthens the results of this research compared to a single case study and brings wider possibilities for generalizations in similar contexts (Yin, 1994).

In case studies, the importance of context is highlighted. Description of the case within the context is essential as the context is one factor explaining the case and makes it understandable. (Eriksson & Koistinen, 2005, 7) Setting is an important part of the context and must be described. It is the environment in which the case concretely takes place and amongst others defines who are the actors of the case. (Stake, 1995) Choosing the cases is one of the most important phases in a case study. The cases should be chosen because of their uniqueness or theoretical interest (Eriksson & Koistinen, 2005, 6). Eriksson & Koistinen (2005, 6) highlight the criticality of defining the case or the cases studied. It is vital to remember that the researcher himself or herself defines the case and argues why this specific way to define the case is beneficial or rational.

4.2 Focused Interview as Data Gathering Method

Interview is one of the most used data gathering methods. It is a flexible method that is applicable for various types of research. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) The interview method used in this study is semi-structured theme interview (Fin. teemahaastattelu, see. Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, 47). The advantages of interview compared to other methods include flexibility during data gathering and wider possibilities to interpret the results (Hirsjärvi et al., 1998, 210-203). The aim of qualitative interviews is to find new perspectives and perceptions to complement the already existing knowledge (Ruusuvuori, Nikander & Hyvärinen, 2010, 16).

The theme interview method used in this research is based on the focused interview method (see Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990). It highlights the experiences and definitions of subjects as focused interviews. However, in theme interviews a single experimentally tested common experience is not required, it is assumed that all experiences, thoughts, beliefs and feelings of an individual can be studied with theme interview. Semi-structured theme interview fits as the data gathering method when there is only a little research done on the field, or when almost sub-conscious matters, for instance values, ideals and arguments are studied or when the information gathered is intimate or emotional. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 35) Qualitative interviews allow the researcher to steer the

conversation towards the desired goals and ask further questions. In addition, the interviewee can speak in a freer form about their views and thoughts. This enables collecting deep and valuable information. (Ruusuvaori et al., 2010, 16) Detailed questions are not needed, the interview flows with beforehand decided central themes. This positions the voice of the interviewees in the center and stresses the importance of interpretations and meanings the interviewees have on the topic. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, 48) The number of leading positions in the Finnish and Norwegian football associations is rather low and to be able to deeply understand the context, feelings and underlying opinions, quantitative methods are considered inappropriate to deliver meaningful insights. The aim is to collect data about specific themes and to get deeper knowledge than a survey could provide about a topic that is often perceived as intimate. The research problem requires open, multi-level data and interpretation. Furthermore, previous research about the topic is narrow. These justify the use of interviews as the data gathering method in this multiple case study research. Besides interview data I will be using available documents and reports to get a holistic image of the issue and to be better able to find answers for my research questions.

However, as all data gathering methods also interviews have their challenges. Studying knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, values and meanings by interviews is context and occasion related. There is always interpretation in the results. In addition, generalization of the results of qualitative interviews must be soundly considered. Interviewing requires skills and experience from the interviewer. In this research the interviewer is a master student with only a limited amount of experience, so experience has to be compensated with rehearsing. Planning, interviewing and transcribing take time, which is limited in this master's thesis process. Interview data may include errors due to the interviewee and interviewer. The credibility can decrease if interviewees tend to answer what is socially acceptable, not what they really think. Therefore, it is important to observe and to try find out if what is said is in line with what actually happens. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 12, 35)

Discretionary sample is associated with qualitative research. This means that the research bases on a relatively small sample. However, the size of the sample does not have immediate effect or significance on the success of the research. Statistical generalizations are not aspired in qualitative interviews. Instead, the aim is to describe a phenomenon, understand a specific action or to find theoretically meaningful interpretation of a phenomenon. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 61-62) It is essential in qualitative research that the interviewees know as much as possible about the phenomenon studied or that they have experience of the phenomenon. From this point of view, the selection of interviewees should not be random, but considered and meaningful. (Tuomi &

Sarajärvi, 2002, 87-88) For the empirical data, the prior plan was to interview four to five persons, at least two women and two men, with a leader or chief position from both associations. As there are no women with a leader position in SPL, also chief positions were seen relevant for the empirical data. Chiefs have a leading role in both organizations and have decision-making power. In order for the interviewees to have knowledge about the organizational culture and norms, newly hired leaders and chiefs were not chosen as interviewees. The number of interviewees, four in NFF and five in SPL, can be considered as representative enough for this research as the number of leaders and chiefs is naturally rather small in these organizations.

After having chosen appropriate interviewee candidates, I was able to get in contact with the vice president of SPL, who helped me to get in contact with the operational staff. Through a contact person in the operational staff, I was able to come into contact with the interviewees I had chosen based on the organization chart of SPL that had enough experience in the organization and an appropriate position. The interviewees were sent an information letter about the purpose and data protection procedures of this research project in addition to a consent form (see Appendix A). After receiving a positive reply from the interviewees, the date and time for the interviews was agreed and I sent the theme-guide of the interview for the interviewees (see Appendix B). Finding interviewees from NFF was challenging. I approached suitable interviewees by email with reminders, but I was only able to get one reply. The interviewee agreed to participate in the interview in Norwegian. Due to my inability to speak Norwegian the interview was conducted via email, as I can read the language but cannot speak it. As I was not able to get into contact with any other interviewee candidates from NFF, I approached other people having links to NFF for help to reach the leaders and chiefs in NFF for the interviews. After some weeks with the help of the deputy secretary general of SPL I got in touch with a contact person in the operational staff in NFF. With the help of the contact person in NFF I was able to get into contact with three suitable leaders and chiefs in NFF that were willing to be interviewed.

Before the actual interviews two rehearsal interviews were conducted. The aim of the rehearsal interviews was to test the interview guide and to compensate my lack of interview experience as a master student. Before this master's thesis research, I had done three more major interviews in Finnish and five in English for my bachelor's thesis and for other schoolwork. I feel that the previous experience of interviewing in English was a benefit in this process as it decreased the extent of nervousness during the interviews. The rehearsal interviews revealed some shortages in the interview guide, for instance questions that were hard to understand. According to the shortages noted in the test interviews, some changes and clarifying, supportive questions were created. I

interviewed two men and three women leaders in SPL. The interviews of SPL took place between 7th and 19th of March 2019. The time used in one interview varied from 45 minutes to one hour and 20 minutes. The interviews of NFF took place between 2nd and 25th of April 2019. Two of the interviewees were male and one female. One woman was interviewed via email because of language challenges (Appendix C, email interview guide). The three interviews varied from 40 minutes to one hour and five minutes. On average the interviews with NFF informants were shorter and the interviewees were not as talkative as in SPL. Additional questions were needed to get deeper answers in the NFF interviews. An explanation for this may be that the interviews of NFF were conducted in English and therefore the interviewees could not speak with their native language, whereas the SPL interviews were conducted in Finnish, with the native language of the interviewees. Even if the level of English was excellent with the NFF interviewees, they may have felt it more challenging to elaborate and discuss to the same extent as they would have with their native language.

The interviews were conducted via Skype and recorded with an external audio recorder. The interviewees were asked a permit for the audio recording prior to the interview and they all agreed on that. The recorder was tested prior to the interview and I had an extra recorder with me in case of technical problems. Each interview started with a small brief about the aim of the research and about the structure of the interview to create the right mindset for the interview. The interviewees had the possibility to ask questions and discuss about any concerns before and after the interview.

4.3 Data Analysis

Analyzing, interpreting and reporting interview data can be challenging, as there are no widely used analyzing “models” available (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 12, 35). Interpretation in analysis can be either deductive, inductive or abductive. In deductive research the analysis of empirical data bases on already existing model. The analysis is steered by this model and often the aim is to test the model or theory in a new context. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 95-99) In inductive research, theory is constructed based on the empirical data. The aim is not to test an already existing hypothesis or theory and the researcher does not decide what is important or not. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 83) In between deductive and inductive research, there is abductive research. In abductive research the analysis is not entirely based on a theory but there are some connections to it. The theory is used to explain or strengthen the findings, but the researcher may also make notice of the empirical findings that are not in relation with previous research. (Eskola, 2001) In this research the data is analyzed by abductive content analysis.

The analysis process started when I was conducting the interviews. I was already then able to find some themes, repetitions, and variance in the data. After the interviews were conducted, transcriptions were done within the same or next day. The interview data was transcribed word by word, and laughter was marked in the transcription. Pauses in speech were not noted in the transcription as the aim is not to study discourses but meanings. All the nine interviews gave me 91 pages of empirical data written with point size 11 and spacing 1. The audio and transcription files were saved on an encrypted server. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the interviews were anonymized by coding and no names or other qualities of the interviewees that clearly indicate their identity are mentioned in this paper nor in the transcription files.

After transcribing I read the interviews several times one by one from the beginning till the end. This aided me to understand the general view of each interview and to familiarize with the content. After having familiarized myself with the data, I read and highlighted important and relevant parts of the text to my research questions and conceptual model. I focused on finding repetitions and contradictions between the interviews but also on finding similarities and contradictions compared to previous research and theory. As my interviews were rather free focused interviews, they also included some unnecessary themes and discussions for this specific research aim. The conceptual model aided me to stay within the limitations of my research and not to focus on irrelevant data. In addition, I had written down my research questions on post it- notes that were in sight during the analysis so that the theory, conceptual model, analysis and research questions are related and walk hand-in-hand during the whole process.

4.4 Position of the Researcher

As researching women leadership in football associations, my own perspective that is influenced by my background must be noted. I am a student of an interdisciplinary, joint master's degree program within administrative sciences. I am a woman and a young adult. In addition, I am a football player with experience of playing in Finland and in Norway. Thus, I cannot keep myself as an outside researcher in this research. I have previous inside knowledge and experience about the culture, norms, values and other specific characteristics of football. Overall objectivity means that the researcher would look at the research object and phenomenon from outside as a neutral "spectator" (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 17). However, overall objectivity is never possible. No one is able to detach from oneself and block out own thinking entirely. Previous knowledge and experiences are affecting the way researchers interpret the data. The researcher should be transparent, actively acknowledge own attitudes and beliefs and try to act in a way that the own attitudes and beliefs are

not affecting the research too much. (Jukola, 2015; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006) However, having own experiences and knowledge about the specific characteristics and context can be seen also as a benefit in this research. Researchers (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2018; Nenonen, 2013) have argued that the field specific knowledge is needed when studying sport management. However, I have never worked for SPL or NFF so I cannot keep myself entirely as an insider either. In that sense being an outsider of the case organizations can be seen as a benefit decreasing bias. Based on these factors I would position myself in between of an outsider and insider researcher, on the edge of these two positions. I feel that transparency about my background concerning this research increases the reliability and ethicalness of the work as the readers are informed about the issue.

4.5 Assessment of the Soundness & Ethics

In qualitative research assessment of the soundness of the research is always rather challenging. In qualitative research the assessment considers the whole research process. The researcher must give enough information for the reader about how the research is done, so that the readers can assess the results and process in general. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 138)

In method literature the soundness of a research is often assessed with the concepts of validity and reliability. Validity assesses if the research reaches what it was supposed and reliability the repetitiveness of the research. However, the relevancy of validity and reliability have been criticized within qualitative research as the concepts were formed to assess quantitative research. One of the most common critiques is that validity and reliability base on presumption that one objective and concrete reality exists, and that reality is observed and analyzed. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 160-161) Instead, Bengtsson (2016) and Parkkila, Välimäki & Routasalo (2000) suggest using the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability by Lincoln & Guba (1985) when assessing qualitative research that includes qualitative content analysis.

Credibility relates to the extent of the reconstructions of examinees' reality created by the researcher corresponding to the original reconstructions of the examinees (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 212). Parkkila et al. (2000) state that credibility of a research is enhanced by describing the examinees in detail enough and ensuring that the research data is truthful. I have described the case organizations in chapter 2.3 & 2.4 and the interviewees in chapter 4.2 more in detail. In this research the interviewees were chosen based on gender, the relevancy of their position and experience of working in the case organization. Truthfulness of the research data is ensured by using proper methods in the interviews and careful handling of the research data, which are

described in chapter 4.2 (Parkkila et al., 2000). A factor decreasing creditability of this research may be the fact that I was not able to find a third female interviewee from NFF despite my several attempts to contact them. As the time is limited in master's thesis process, I had to settle for the two female and two male interviewees. Even if I was satisfied with the data gathered from NFF, a fifth interviewee might have strengthened the results or revealed new views and factors. An enhancing factor for creditability was the data triangulation (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Empirical data in this research consisted of interviews of both men and women.

The research data is presented in chapter 5 without interpretation or analysis by the researcher so that the reader has clear evidence of how and why interpretations were made. Having enough straight quotes support the reliability of the content analysis. This enables the reader to access the mindset of the interviewee and therefore is an enhancing factor for truthfulness of a research. (Parkkila et al., 2000, 136-137) Chapter 5 includes selected quotes from the interviewees that I felt are describing especially well the mindset and viewpoints of the interviewees. In chapter 6 I refer the findings to the theoretical framework and previous research. Related to credibility, it must be noted that as I had to use contact persons to get enough interviewees for the study, there is one person in both of the organizations that know who are the interviewees from that organization. The topic of this research is generally perceived rather sensitive, especially for women. The number of possible female interviewees in both of the organizations is rather low. This created additional challenges for anonymity that may have had an influence on what the interviewees decide to share. Due the above-mentioned reasons the feeling of safety of the interviewees may have decreased and limited what they felt comfortable to tell. Furthermore, they may have not wanted to share all their experiences, or they may have flattered the situation because of loyalty for their employer or because of fear of having consequences. During the interviews some female interviewees from SPL pondered how to say certain opinions concerning especially gender equality and stereotypic behavior in SPL. This can indicate of some level of concerns or level of loyalty towards their present employer and I as an interviewer got a feeling that the interviewees were not willing to share all their experiences. Even if an interview is a great tool for researching sensitive issues, one has to keep in mind the challenges it creates. All the interviewees in this research took part voluntarily, had the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any time, go over the data concerning them before publishing and require changes.

Transferability relates to the extent the results are transferable to another external context correspondent to the original context (Parkkila et al., 2000, 146-137). Transferability of this research depends on the extent of correspondence of the new context. The theoretical lens,

definitions and methodological choices of this research are logically related. The methodological choices were based on the research questions. A holistic case study method and semi-structured theme interviews were seen as the most proper method to answer what and how questions on this rarely researched topic. The conceptual model based on the theoretical framework of previous research on women's leadership careers and sport management guided the empirical part and analysis phase. However, as argued earlier sport is a unique context that has features that are not present in any other context. In addition, the features vary between different individual sports. In case studies the aim is to study a single organization, with its own organizational culture and to understand the phenomenon in that case. These factors may decrease the extent of transferability.

Dependability of a research refers to the conditions of how the research is conducted and the instructions and protocols that in general steer good and responsible research practice (Parkkila et al., 2000, 136-137). In this research the protocols and instructions given by Norwegian center of research data (NSD), Tampere University, University of Agder and general practices of responsible conduct of research (see Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, n.d.) has steered the research process.

Confirmability relates to the extent of argument behind decisions and choices made in the research process. Decisions made must be presented and argued clearly so that the reader is able to assess the decisions made. (Parkkila et al., 2000, 136-137) In previous chapters as in the empirical part of this paper I have tried to describe the research process openly and my own position as the researcher so that the reader is able to follow the process and has possibility to assess the combination of theoretical lens and defined concepts, analysis, its extent of systematics, soundness and reporting and thus assess the confirmability of this research.

In qualitative research the researcher must also consider research ethics during the process and operate with research integrity. In research interviews an important part of research ethics is confidentiality. It means that the researcher must tell interviewees the aim of the interview, the process and store the interview data confidentially and protect the anonymity of the interviewees. In this research the interviewees were approached by email and sent a formal written information letter about the aim and procedures of this research process and about their rights as an interviewee (see Appendix A). Hallamaa, Launis, Lötjönen & Sorvali (2006, 398) summarized research ethics basing on three moral norms: (1) do not hurt the object of your research, (2) do not lie any matters considering your research and (3) do not steal results or material. These norms were cherished during the research process.

5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this chapter I will introduce the empirical findings of the interviews. The data in this chapter is presented without own interpretation or referring to previous research or theories so that the evidence for my interpretations in the following chapter is clearly visible and also readers themselves have the possibility to make their own interpretations. The empirical data consists of nine interviews, of which five are interviews of leaders/chiefs of the Football Association of Finland and four interviews of leaders/chiefs of the Football Association of Norway. The interviewees are referred to with a number. Interviewees 1,2 and 3 are women interviewees and interviewees 4 and 5 men interviewees from the Football Association of Finland. Interviewees 6 and 7 are women interviewees and interviewees 8 and 9 men interviewees from the Football Association of Norway. The chapter follows the structure of the conceptual framework (FIGURE 3). First individual level data is presented that is followed by organizational level data. The cases are presented separately. Chapter 5.1 focuses on the Football Association of Finland and 5.2 on the Football Association of Norway.

5.1 The Football Association of Finland

This chapter introduces the empirical findings of the five interviews conducted with the Football Association of Finland. Three women (interviewees 1, 2 &3) and two men (interviewees 4 & 5) were interviewed. First the focus is on individual level, after which the organizational level findings are presented.

5.1.1 Individual Level

Education & work experience. All the interviewees had a robust educational background relevant to their position. Four had a master's degree and one woman had the highest possible football coach education (UEFA PRO). One of the male interviewees had a UEFA A license that was already expired, and both men had complemented their master's degrees with some relevant education, mostly with leadership and management programs. In addition to previous master's degree a male interviewee had completed also a FIFA master program in management, law and humanities of sport. A female interviewee was going to update her education with a bachelor's degree of sport and leisure management, in a UAS program specializing on football coaching. Another female interviewee was going to take part in a UEFA's Certificate in Football Management-program.

All interviewees had a relevant and strong work experience. The backgrounds of female interviewees varied between public and private organizations and associations. Male interviewees had a strong background in sport organizations or with sport related jobs in addition to public and private organization experience. Both male and female interviewees had had middle manager or leadership positions before entering their present position in SPL.

Field specific background. All the interviewees had played football on some level. Two of the female interviewees had played on lower levels and one had experience of playing in the 1st division in Finland and in a youth national team. Besides playing, the female interviewees had experience of refereeing and coaching youth teams, financial administration of a club and being team leaders for a youth team. Many of the female interviewees had decreased their responsibilities with football teams on their free time. One woman and one man had robust backgrounds as coaches as they had coached teams since they were 15 years old. Neither coached on their free time anymore. Another male interviewee was still coaching a junior team and had a long history with football on a club level. Both male and female interviewees were still interested in football and other sports on their free time, whether it was watching football games or being involved with a team of their children for instance.

Competence & putting oneself out there. All of the interviewees stressed that competence, both professional and football specific is important whether you are a man or a woman. In addition to competence, female interviewees mentioned hard work and experience as factors influencing their careers and as the main reasons, they believe they were hired in leading positions in SPL.

Interviewee 2 described her thoughts as: *“I believe that no position should be given because of gender. I have always been really strict about... That if for instance, I am the only woman on a course, I won't be let of any easier (than men) just because I'm a woman. And those courses and events have in a way always been job interviews for me... I have always wanted to deserve the appreciation in their (other colleagues and superiors) eyes, and not just that it should be given just because I'm a woman. And I believe that has increased their appreciation that I have also been ready to work for it”.*

Qualities & skills as a leader. Interviewees referred themselves more as people leaders than managers. Female interviewees emphasized humane approach on even difficult things, discussion and transparency of arguments behind decision-making. Both men and women interviewees emphasized trust and giving responsibilities for employees. They expressed they are working in a knowledge organization and they should not be obstacles for work and development. Everything should not go through their eyes. Employees should have responsibilities and freedom.

Besides leadership skills, also managing skills were seen important by men and women. They argued that both are needed for successful work. Interviewee 2 described her approach as *“I manage things by leading people... I have understood that when I confront people as individuals and different individuals, it is easier for me to get them to do right things in right ways. That is why I first approach the individual.”* The male interviewees described themselves as systematic in work processes and skillful in preparing and implementing projects and processes. In addition to these, female interviewees highlighted being precise and preparing beforehand. Women mentioned that in their positions, they are the ones making final decisions and if needed they can be tough as well. But even in those situations understanding, empathy and people orientation was seen important.

Family & work. All the interviewees had a spouse, and two male and two female interviewees had also children. Family and a relationship were considered as positive and balancing factors for work by all interviewees. The spouses of one female and one male interviewee were staying at or working from home. The female interviewee experienced it as a simplifying factor for the combination of her demanding work and family. It gave her more freedom to focus on her career and she described it almost as a privilege *“I, as a woman in this career situation, can focus on it and I am not the one being home but I get to do this work and this suits me perfectly.”* (Interviewee 1). The male interviewee saw the situation also as positive for the combination of family and his work duties. He described the situation also beneficial for his children and natural as he had experienced the same as a child. His mother had worked from home.

Neither female nor male interviewees felt that having children has affected their careers per se. The female interviewees referred that the challenge has been managing their life as a whole, balancing between family and career. They have had to prioritize and at times make compromises, especially with family. For instance, work calls and other duties must have been taken care of during family time. One male interviewee experienced it also challenging at times to combine time consuming job with family. He stressed that one must prioritize, which work duties are necessary and important, and which can be left for more minor weight. Another male interviewee referred that combining family and work has not caused challenges, even if he and his wife both have time consuming occupations.

Age. Female interviewees were approximately 30 to 45 years old. The age of the male interviewees varied approximately from 50 to 55 years. The female or male interviewees had not experienced age affecting their careers. They had not experienced them being perceived as being too young, too close to family age or too old in job related events or recruitment situations. Some female interviewees felt that earlier they may have had to prove their competence, whereas male

interviewees emphasized strongly that their age had never affected the attitudes towards them or their competence. Interviewee 4 described his experiences as follows “*Always when I have meant and wanted to influence something it has always been possible, already from the first minutes when I’ve been in work life and especially after been working more systematically. With this I refer to that I have had an incredible luck in the sense that I have got to work with smart and clever people.*”

In discussions related to age, both genders related age with increased experience. Female interviewees referred that more responsibilities were given with more experience. Experiences and challenges during their careers had molded their leadership styles and how they act as leaders. Women felt that increased experience influenced positively on their own self-confidence, and how they are treated by other colleagues. Men felt that experience helped with time management and gave skills to prioritize responsibilities and tasks. In addition, they saw experience provides more views and tools to find the best possible solutions into different situations. One female interviewee reflected that once during her career, her relatively young age of the time had been brought forth in a job interview. However, the stress was more on the years of experience point of view rather than on her age per se. Is there enough years of experience and competence for the position? Another experience shared by a female interviewee was some level of challenges faced when starting as a young leader for a team of remarkably older employees in an organization.

Appearance. The interviewees had not experienced that their appearance or how they look like had affected their career, job related events or felt pressure about how they should look like. One female interviewee reflected challenges of appearance related to her height. Being a young leader and being short, which may make you appear young, can cause challenges of appearing competent and experienced.

(Masculine) football culture. Working within football had not caused any doubts or questions amongst the female interviewees when they were applying for SPL. They said that the masculinity had not influenced their consideration whether they should or should not apply for the position. Instead, all women mentioned football as the reason why they applied for SPL. They had will and urge to work for and with football. A female interviewee had work experience from a man dominant environment before this position, another had been part of the football culture all her life. A female interviewee reflected that for her, knowing people and leaders from SPL before stepping into the service of it simplified her adaptation and influenced positively her equal treatment.

Football had been a part of the male interviewees' lives for long. They did not mention football culture and its masculine traits in the discussions. A reflection by a male interviewee was that his balancing attitude towards the competitive side of football and his aim to bring in a softer side as well may be why he was chosen as an employee for SPL earlier. He argued that SPL should not only be about top football but also an important activator for all people.

Mentors & networks. None of the interviewees had had an official mentor. However, having a mentor like person who they have looked up to and who influenced their way to work and lead was emphasized by male and female interviewees. Often the person was a former superior that had had significant influence on the interviewee's thoughts about leadership. The mentor may also have been an experienced colleague that sparred and gave support and opinions. A male interviewee related that having an unofficial mentor has been a conscious process for him. He had a responsible position at a rather young age, and it was noted that he as young and eager could benefit from discussions with an experienced person. He had had these kinds of sparring relationships with people within and out of the sport field through his career. In addition, he felt important to continue this legacy and offer same kind of mentoring for other actors and younger actors. *"I have tried to find the kind of people with which I could have had sparring conversations. Some I have found along the way, not necessary junior-senior setting but maybe more from the club people and from some other people that I have had discussions with". (Interviewee 5)* In addition to these unofficial mentorships, a female interviewee was going to take part in a field specific, international mentoring program, that she felt will be important and beneficial for her as a leader. Another woman had had an opportunity to take part into a mentoring program after graduation, but she felt it unnecessary. The support and sparring network of hers had molded of friends, spouse and former superiors.

All interviewees identified themselves as part of unofficial or more official networks on some level. Two of the female interviewees felt that the peer support of a network of people sharing the same kind of work situation was important. Often the networks of women had emerged from a more official network or project that had continued and molded into a more unofficial network between specific persons. A male interviewee brought up work-related networks between different sport associations, for instance the leaders on UEFA level and regional level of SPL. With some the relationship was more official and with some more relaxed. He regarded the networks as an important part of his work because SPL is the biggest sport governing body in Finland. Another male interviewee saw his networks as more unofficial. His networks had emerged through free-time activities and acquaintances met through work. *"I have a very large network of people that in a way or another work and act actively on different levels of the society. So it is true that I do know a lot*

of people...But my networks are not the kind I would meet up and operate with my colleague in the hockey or handball association or something like that... Of course those colleagues are friends and everything is okay, but that I would go and visit my Swedish colleague to have dinner for fun, no... ”(Interviewee 4)

Situations or events that have helped during career. Both male and female interviewees had experiences of a specific person or people that had influenced positively their career development. Either a supportive former superior had given a lot of responsibility and tasks early on career or there had always been a person that had believed, seen the potential and given an opportunity. A male interviewee also mentions coworkers and connections as furthering factors for his career. *“I have been in a way lucky that I have always had a possibility to work with smart and nice people, as I am now and also before. And I do also think that - well I have a large network of friends and acquaintances...I have always been pretty active, already when I went to study, I was active in my faculty environment, and have always been interested in and eager to do new things... But as single events or situations. Probably the most influencing is that I have been able to do things with smart people and through that hopefully have learned to think about different things.” (Interviewee 4)* In addition, football enthusiasm of a parent had had significant influence on one of the women’s life and furthermore on her choice of work field.

Effects of gender. The interviewees did not feel that gender plays a role in leadership positions or influences who is selected into different positions today. The interviewees felt that how they are perceived by others and how their views and suggestions are considered depended on their competence, professionalism and abilities to argue opinions. However, they speculated that gender may still have influence people’s attitudes in some other positions, especially on men’s sport related positions as national team coaches. A female interviewee considered that women may not be willing to step into these kinds of positions, in which they would be criticized and assessed more as a woman than as a leader. That kind of position would require plenty of non-work-related actions to try to justify one’s competence and skills in a masculine position, interpreted a female interviewee. *“The world is just not ready yet” (Interviewee 2)* to see women as equally skillful leaders in men’s team sports.

A woman reflected that earlier it was more difficult to get one’s voice and arguments heard. A female interviewee felt that work tasks on the media outside her daily job had influenced the attitude of others in SPL. Having proved her knowledge and skills in another, public, environment had brought more appreciation into her day-to-day work. Male interviewees did not mention situations, where they would have needed to get more visibility, their voice heard or the need for

proving abilities. *“Always when I’ve been serious and wanted to influence on something, it’s always been possible. Already from the first minutes I’ve been in work life... And with this I refer to that I’ve been incredibly lucky in the way that I’ve got to always work with smart people” (Interviewee 4)*

A male interviewee assessed that earlier, the possibility of a man being chosen into a position in SPL was higher than a woman. He interpreted that the number of men players and other actors in football was significantly higher back then, whereas women actors and players were more of a rarity. Men’s football has been played since the end of 19th century, SPL was founded in 1907 and the first women’s football game in Finland was played in 1975. He reminded that the history of female football is rather short compared to men’s football. However, he interpreted that as women’s football has been supported and it has raised its profile, also other female actors in football have increased. This has increased the number of competent women for different positions in football associations.

A woman interviewee brought up that women can be more critical about their know-how and less bold to take up challenges compared to men. Even if men were not as competent, they would just go and face the challenges without thinking what other people think or if they’re good enough, described the interviewee.

5.1.2 Organizational Level

Recruitment process. All the interviewees were chosen to their positions through an open recruitment process. During their change process, SPL had decided that all leaders of main operations are selected through an open recruitment and that the recruitment process is run by a recruitment agency. All the recruitment processes were multi-phased and included interviews and an aptitude test. Male interviewees described that strong, proven competence, leadership skills and will to develop SPL were required. Female interviewees reflected that different skills were emphasized depending on the post. However, overall competence related to the position, taking role to fulfill the post, communication skills and skills to lead and help people were emphasized in general in the recruitment processes, reflected the female interviewees. Only one male interviewee was aware of the other applicants for his position. He recalled that both genders had applied for the position. There were over 10 applicants on the first round of the interviews, of which three to five continued to the second round. After the interviews the general secretary made a proposal for the board of SPL and the board made approved the proposal.

The position of women in SPL & gender equality. A female interviewee reflected that earlier a woman may have had to prove her skills, competence and abilities more than men and that her views and opinions may not have always been listened to on the same level as her male colleagues'. However, the female and male interviewees brought up that there have been changes in the organization recently. SPL has had new recruitments and at the moment there are more women in decision-making positions than before. In addition, most of the interviewees felt that women's position has improved compared to previous stage and women do not have to prove their capabilities and skills to any greater extent than men do. A male interviewee reflected that the gender equality feels natural now and for instance there are no arguments as "*oh well here's the woman card again*" in SPL (Interviewee 5). Some of the female interviewees had not faced any sort of gender inequality or discrimination the past few years. Male interviewees as well experienced SPL gender equal and that the position of women is sound and equal compared to men currently. They had not witnessed or experienced gender discrimination. They felt that everyone is assessed due to their work. How a presentation is prepared and argued matters, not who is presenting the idea or work. A male interviewee argued that he does not see any differences between men and women leaders. Gender does not play a role for him when thinking about leading, developing or operating in any ways.

Two of the female interviewees speculated that the changed culture towards gender equality in Finland and the outside pressure by the media and society may have enhanced the changes in the organizational culture of SPL. As some of SPL's operations are publicly funded, ministry level pressures and legislations have also influenced the status of gender equality in the organization. Another view by a female interviewee was that having different kinds of people as leaders, different ages and different genders, may have shaken the old ways of working and operating.

In addition to external pressures, women's work in football and in SPL and their proven competence has influenced positively on women's position, female interviewees argued. The work and example of these vanguards has increased not just their own, but the position of all women. However, feelings of inequality still existed on some level. When asking about equality in SPL, interviewee 2 described the situation as "*We are going to the right direction and a lot of work is done for it... But we are not in ideal world yet and we are behind the associations of Sweden and Norway. However, they have more money and they can spread it out more. So, we do have work left and the association recognizes it and is working more for it than it has ever before.*"

Some interviewees reflected that according to the most recent salary mapping, men have 0,6% higher salary compared to women in SPL, which is in national comparison a very good level in

Finland. The female interviewees felt that being a woman does not play a negative role in recruitment processes today. Gender quotas were not supported by the interviewees. A female interviewee reflected that as SPL is still a men dominant organization but pursuing to have more women, being a competent and skillful woman may in fact be an advantage in some recruitment situations. However, gender never plays a more major role than the competence and skills of a candidate, described male and female interviewees.

Diversity was seen important by both genders, not just between genders but diversity in all actions and operations. A female interviewee described that balance is important. It is not enough if there is one woman or one man. Interviewees reflected that different people work and find solutions in different ways, which brings new viewpoints into leadership and into all levels of football. This enables learning within the organization. “*Conscious strengthening of diversity creates the base for stronger future*” described interviewee 5.

Organization culture & structure. The interviewees were unified that the “glue” keeping the organization together is football, the love for the sport and the will to work for it. A male interviewee reflected that people tend to stay for a long time in the organization, which can indicate that people like to work in SPL. The organizational culture of SPL is described as rather relaxed, communication between different positions and levels is rather free and unofficial. People are interested in each other and sharing on personal level. Interviewees described that the culture had been more hierarchical before, but SPL has tried to work for a flatter structure, which the interviewees felt is the right direction. However, two female interviewees described that within SPL, there are many smaller departments and teams with their own culture and way of working. The perceptions and ‘how things are done here’ may vary from department to department. There were some contradictions between interviewees descriptions. A male interviewee saw SPL as international, traditional and partly also holding on to traditions, even if lately there has been changes into more dynamic way of operating, whereas the female interviewees and a male interviewee saw that SPL is ambitious and has will to renew and be more dynamic but still being partly a victim of its old structure. Interviewee 1 described SPL as follows: “*(it is) pursuing to go forward. I mean that everybody really wants to go forward with many things and issues. But it is not easy, as we also have certain procedures and policies that are fighting against it so we’re not getting (there). We may have certain things in the operational culture that we clearly are trying to get away, trying to fresh up.*”

The official values of SPL, joyfulness, reliability, success and communality, actualize in the operations of the organization at least on some level. Besides these, equality and non-discrimination

were emphasized as important values in the organization by a female interviewee. She described that people are aware that they and their colleagues are treated equally for instance in the change process SPL is going through. Employees are not afraid to come forth with their concerns related to equality. A male interviewee described that loyalty and appreciation of the work of colleagues was essential in SPL. However, he reminded that it is the responsibility of leaders and middle managers that the loyalty and appreciation stay in the organization. The side product of sport culture, a certain level of envy and back talk should not take over. *“In sport world, there is this ache that has to do with all of the sport world, not just with the football association or ice-hockey association. Sport world is a jealous environment to some extent, and it differs in that way quite a lot from a traditional work environment. In sport, and especially in team sports, it is quite difficult to measure the absolute skills and capability of a single player, as those are related to appreciation. Because not everyone appreciates the same things, it brings us the issue of people having the tendency to be in a way disloyal.”* (Interviewee 4)

Football and masculinity are visible to some extent in the organizational culture. Some female interviewees described it as the “locker room” culture that for instance appears as rough and vivid dialog by some people in the organization. These interviewees questioned to what extent the locker room culture is acceptable. The female interviewees reflected that there are many, especially men, in the organization that have a player background, which on its part explains the visibility of the culture. A female interviewee reflected that not everyone in the organization are comfortable with it and it is not proper in a professional environment. Another issue related to football culture reflected by a female interviewee was the lack of transparency and clear processes. Even if it was not the case, the football culture and context may paint a picture that some decisions could be made “off-work” in unofficial groupings. She wished for more transparency, clear procedures and processes related to decision making. Everyone should know how the decisions are made and on what the decisions are based on so that there would be no space for speculations how, why and in which situation a decision was made.

Organization’s attitude towards family & children. All the interviewees emphasized that the attitude of SPL towards families is supportive and flexible. Family is seen as an important part of employees’ lives as a whole. Both men and women brought up modern and flexible ways to work and remote work, which make the combination of family and work easier than 10 years ago. A female interviewee reminded that having a chief position brings also freedom in working hours. As leaders and chiefs do not have controlled working hours, they can divide the work hours more freely during the day. One of the male interviewees reflected flexibility in parental leaves for men

and women and the possibilities for time off or shorter week if needed. He had remarked SPL's equal attitude towards parental leaves and that fathers are using more parental leaves than they did before. *"But these days both fathers and mothers are using parental leaves and we encourage or let's not say that way but in this way: that we are not being an obstacle for using parental leaves in any case."* (Interviewee 5) However, a female interviewee referred that SPL has various leading positions, and some require travelling and many away-days. Combining small children and work in these positions could be challenging, especially for women the interviewee interpreted.

Unofficial groupings. The interviewees did not feel that there was visible gendering in unofficial groupings or daily work. Some gendering may be visible, for instance in lunch groups but not on a clear, significant level. Everyone could join any group and often men and women were mixed. A female interviewee interpreted that women often have prepared lunch for work whereas men more often go out to eat lunch that could explain the slight gendering. Many of the interviewees identified themselves as part of some unofficial group in SPL with which they felt more connected or for instance had lunch with. One female and one male interviewee reflected that due their positions in SPL, they did not want to be identified as part of a single group and they paid attention to vary with whom they spent time with. A notion by a female interviewee was that even if she did not identify herself as a member of any unofficial group, colleagues may have classified her belonging into one.

Gender stereotypes. Gendered stereotypes were experienced, had been seen or heard at some level amongst the female interviewees. For instance, a group of men talking and joking around about women. However, the perception was that these incidents had happened earlier, not in recent years. A female described the situation as considerably better now. The commonness and visibility of these incidents has decreased. However, some women reflected that there may still be some stereotypic behavior related to sexual minorities for instance. A factor influencing these stereotypes may be the "locker room" culture. People have different types of humors and something said as a bad joke can be perceived as a real opinion by someone, described a female interviewee. Two female interviewees reflected that coworkers and people that are more sensitive may get irritated, uncomfortable or start to question their own competence and appreciation in the organization. Another notion related to "locker room" culture was, that men may be more easily forgiven something they've said. *"Like if I as a woman said out loud all the same things, it surely would raise some eyebrows. I guess that this is an issue behind of which it's easy to hide, men are men... or well he's a football player... especially here"* (interviewee 1). The female interviewees described them being strong and standing up for themselves if needed and thus were not offended or affected

negatively by these stereotypes. However, they felt that the organization should be safe and equal for all employees no matter the personal traits.

Male interviewees had not heard or experienced gendered stereotypes recently and felt that gendered stereotypes do not exist in SPL, at least not on any significant level. A male interviewee reflected that before there had been more this kind of behavior in some operations in SPL, for instance towards sexual orientation. Another male interviewee reflected that there may still be some stereotypes but not remarkably. *“But yeah, of course there could be these kinds of things, but I cannot really say that there is or that I would’ve come across with those but then again I am not trying to argue that on an absolute level these things do not ever take place, but I’ve never witnessed those.” (Interviewee 4)*

Leadership skills & qualities that are important in SPL. Both male and female interviewees stressed knowledge of football and its specific characteristics. One must know football and its principles to be able work and lead in the field. The importance of field specific knowledge depends on the position, for instance marketing manager does not need the same level of football knowledge as the leader of club services. However, even then the field specific knowledge and experience is seen positive as a person being interested in football has special motivation. Both men and women saw the right kind of attitude and personality that fits the operational culture of SPL important. Additionally, being able to motivate and help employees was seen essential for a leader.

Female interviewees regarded openness, honesty and trust as qualities important for a leader in SPL. A leader must be able to create an environment where employees and leaders can speak honestly about good and bad. Female interviewees also brought up inspiring and dynamic approach and knowledge of modern ways to work and modern work tools. Male and female interviewees referred that leaders should give responsibility for employees, give them own tasks and projects, and engage them into processes. It was emphasized that SPL is a knowledge organization and the experts should be heard and given possibilities to use their knowledge and expertise. Objectivity and systematic approach were seen important for a leader and as something that should be increased in the future by the interviewees. A female interviewee reflected that some issues receive a better response if another person takes it into discussions instead of another.

Male interviewees emphasized social skills. A leader in SPL must have good interaction skills and must be able to work with different kinds of people, whether it is with own employees or external stakeholders. In addition, they emphasized education, know-how of leading processes and being able to do compromises. A leader must see the big picture and assess the relevancy of new projects

and processes for the strategy. The male interviewees argued that as SPL pursues to go forward and develop, being bold to try new things and a will to develop oneself are essential for a leader.

Both male and female interviewees reflected that the leadership styles of leaders in SPL vary from person to person, depending on their background, skills and experience. The interviewees had not recognized a difference between the leadership styles of men and women in SPL. However, a female interviewee reflected that in general women may be more empathic as leaders, even if there can be exceptions. *This is again a generalization, but I don't really see that much men asking each other that hey you just became dad how're you sleeping the nights.* “(Interviewee 2) Some of the female interviewees saw that empathy is often visible in the organization's leadership amongst both, men and women leaders. A female interviewee reflected that “traditional” leadership styles are still visible in some departments. The leading positions in SPL vary and have different operations on their responsibility. Every leadership position may not even be suitable for a more modern style that bases on engaging and flat hierarchy interpreted the female interviewee. A male and a female interviewee argued that a more unified way to lead is needed in the organization. The basic processes and principles should be in-line with all the leaders and managers. Personal traits and characteristics should be just the extra “spice” for leadership.

A male interviewee brought up that passion and emotions are strongly connected with football. Stakeholders as for instance club workers may come strongly forth with all the emotion when interacting with SPL, which appears as unofficial language and strong use of words. A thick skin and a certain level of tolerance is needed to be able to succeed. Another notion related to stakeholders by a male interviewee was that the work in SPL is heavily dependent on the members and stakeholders, who are often volunteers and working in their regular jobs during office hours. Therefore, also leaders must be flexible to work during evenings and weekends.

How should leadership be developed in the future?

In addition to objectivity and systematic approach, female interviewees and a male interviewee brought up people skills: empathy, skills to ask, listen and to discuss with employees, ability to inspire, motivate and engage as important qualities also in the future. Female interviewees stressed that leaders should focus on factors that enable development as taking responsibility of leadership and decision-making, being bold to take forward even difficult things, having confidence to disagree and not being afraid of conflicts inside the organization. A male and a female interviewee brought up better management skills, systematic and consistent ways and processes for leadership. A male interviewee argued that work as a leader in SPL is not easy. The demands of all the football

clubs and players in Finland are varied and the services provided are wide. Competence is needed to be able to lead it in a structured and consistent way. Another view by a male interviewee was the importance of self-leading and adapting skills in the future. The field and operations are growing and professionalizing constantly. He argued that it will be even more necessary in the future to be able to work and interact with different people, but to also be able to lead oneself and see what is relevant and what is not for my work. He saw the ability to assess the impact and outcome of actions instead of output and the quantity of actions important in the future so that actual results can be analyzed.

The number of women leaders in SPL and reasons behind that.

Male interviewees and two female interviewees thought that the balance of men and women leaders is currently rather good. One of the female interviewees saw the number of women leaders far too small. A male interviewee argued that he does not see the reason in having a determined number of men or women as leaders in the organization. His strong view was that competence and persona that fits the organization are the only attributes that should matter, not gender. All the interviewees believed that the operating committee and board are considering the small number of women in recruitment situations, but never on the cost of competence. A male interviewee argued that the direction is correct, and that gender equality and the number of women has been considered in a healthy way in the organization. More women are coming into the organization, even if the decisions regarding new leaders and employees are made by competence, not by gender. The interviewees did not want rules or regulations to determine how many women or men there should be in the operating committee or as leaders. If there are only competent men or competent women for a position, that should be possible. *“I feel that it (gender-equality and women’s position in recruitment decisions) comes rather naturally at the moment and I see that the base is ready for this kind of action to be continued also in the future without it being a big number. However, I see it important through our equality plan and other actions that gender equality is a matter that is written down. So that we don’t think that as it is equal now it will also be in the future. It is not automatic.” (Interviewee 4)*

The small number of female applicants compared to male was considered as one of the main factors for the small number of female managers and leaders in SPL by both female and male interviewees. They argued that women are not applying on the same volume for the open positions as men. In addition, as there are more males playing football and working with football on a club level, there are often more men that have field specific competence for applying. If two candidates have the same education and experience but the other one is enthusiastic about football and understands the

field, often he or she is a better choice for the organization described a female interviewee. Both men and women interviewees argued that the situation has changed and currently also women are applying for football governance. A male interviewee reflected that more and more women are having football related experience in addition to other competence. He believed that as more women with overall competence apply, it will show in the number of women leaders in SPL. However, he reminded that the number of women applying depends heavily on the position. For instance, a woman has never applied for a position as boys or men's national team coach, whereas women do apply for coach positions on women's side. Another view by a male interviewee was that women may have some sort of negative image of football governance that may influence their interest to work for SPL.

On a positive side, a male interviewee interpreted that one explanation for the increased number of female leaders in SPL is that gender equality and women's position has been constantly discussed and given thoughts. He experienced that currently, women and women's football are on the same level with men and men's football in the organization. A female interviewee saw the projects that SPL has created for women important. She felt it vital to educate and prepare also women so that in the future there will be capable and competent female applicants for leaders and coaches in football organizations.

All the interviewees thought that it would be important and beneficial to have both men and women in leading positions in SPL. *“The best teams are built when there are both men and women, and approximately the same number of both.”* (Interviewee 2) They felt it brings diversity, balance and new points of views into the discussions and decision making. A male interviewee stressed also the learning possibilities diversity brings into an organization. A female interviewee saw that having more women leaders decreases the “locker room” culture. Some female and male interviewees reflected that having women in leading positions is important also from the “glass breaker” point of view. A female interviewee reflected that as women leaders have been and still are a rarity in sport leadership, strong women are needed to clear the path and set an example. Example that women can succeed in these kinds of jobs, and that it is not impossible to work as a leader in one of the biggest sport associations in Finland.

5.2 The Football Association of Norway

In this chapter I will present the empirical findings of the four interviews conducted with the Football Association of Norway. Two of the interviewees are women (interviewees 6 and 7) and

two men (interviewees 8 and 9). The structure will also follow the structure of the conceptual model as did the Finnish case presented earlier.

5.2.1 Individual Level

Education & work experience. All the interviewees had a higher education background. Female interviewees had degrees from sports and travel and tourism, the male interviewees had degrees from economics and marketing, military academy and sport governance. Besides their main education, all the interviewees except for one male interviewee had complemented their education with different courses and study modules related to their present position. The interviewees had a robust work experience already before entering NFF. The female interviewees had experience within sales, communication and public relations. Male interviewees had experience of advertising and of leadership in the armed force and in the IT industry. The male interviewees and one female interviewee had been selected for a leadership or middle management position when they first entered the central organization of NFF. One female interviewee had started as a marketing consultant and had been promoted gradually into a leadership position during her time in NFF.

Field specific background. The male interviewees had played football as youngsters and at lower level. A male interviewee had been the president of a Norwegian elite football club for over a decade, had experience as a board member on club and national association levels in addition to coaching experience. The other male interviewee had no other football related background. However, he had sporting background of other sports. One of the female interviewees had not played football nor been otherwise connected to it before joining the NFF. However, she was interested in sport and had national success with other sport. When employed in NFF, she had taken a football leadership course, but that was the only football education she had. Her motivation for work in NFF was not football itself. *“My motivation is not football itself, as it is for many of my colleagues. I like to work in sport environment and with a strong brand, which NFF is.”* (Interviewee 6) The other female interviewee had a very long career at the top level in football, both on a club and national team level. She had also experience as a board member in one of the NFF regions.

Competence & putting oneself out there. Both male and female interviewees stressed professional and football competence, developing oneself and working hard as keys for their career success. Female interviewees did not bring up experiences that they would have had to prove their skills or work more to make themselves visible compared to men during their careers. Male interviewees had not experienced either feelings of distrust or having to prove their capabilities.

Qualities & skills as a leader. All interviewees described them having more people and leadership skills than management skills and qualities. However, a female interviewee emphasized the meaning of both. She thought that the combination is the key to success. Male interviewees emphasized trust in their employees. They felt that instead of controlling people, discussing, giving help if needed and being accessible was important. *“I think people try their best when we set a goal together and they are more or less free to achieve the goal.”* (Interviewee 8) In addition, a male interviewee stressed his focus for results. Results and success together with his team drives him forward. Female interviewees felt that they are inclusive, motivating, fair and good listeners. Interviewee 7 described her qualities as *“I am a leader that is listening, that wants to have the things on the table. I am not the kind of demanding leader who tells people what to do. At some point you need to do that as well... But my job is more to facilitate.”* Female interviewees stressed that even if they are emphatic and inclusive, their position requires them also to be tough if needed. A view by a male and a female interviewee was that they want to create an atmosphere where people can and want to express their opinions and thoughts and want to discuss.

Family & work. All the interviewees had spouses. The male interviewees and one female interviewee also had children. Both female interviewees and one male interviewee referred that having a family, a stable fundament at home has affected positively their work. It gives balance and a place to recover from work. The female and male interviewees had contradictory experiences of parenthood and its influence. Male interviewees did not feel that having children had influenced their careers per se, whereas a female interviewee reflected that when her children were young, she did have less time to work. She felt it challenging to have enough time for her family and time requiring work. A male interviewee described that earlier when he was working, coaching his son and had other confidential posts, it had influences on her family life. *“I have probably worked too much. I was a coach for my son for the seven years he was at the children’s school, at the same time I was a president of an elite football club. So out of the three elements football, family and work I spent too little time with my wife. Enough time with my kids, too much time on work and too little time with my wife.”* (Interviewee 8) The other male interviewee referred that his present job at NFF requires being present and reachable nearly 24/7, especially during tournaments and competitions. He felt he had spoiled family weekends and holidays because of his work. A view of a female interviewee was that combining a relationship and work had been easy, especially because of flexibility of modern ways to work and understanding of her spouse. Her spouse had played football earlier and understood the demands of the work. Sometimes it is necessary to be a weekend away or sometimes several weeks due to championship games for instance. All interviewees felt that their

spouses were supportive and understanding towards their job. The interviewees experienced this as a simplifying factor for their careers.

Age. The age of the male and female interviewees varied approximately from 50 to 55 years. The interviewees did not feel that age had had any influence on their career or other work-related events. One male and a female interviewee reflected that age and experience give more self-confidence, which is positive in work. The male interviewee described that the experience and self-confidence he has gathered through years has calmed him down. When younger, he was more aggressive and wanted to win every debate and discussion, but now as more matured he described that his perception has changed. It is not necessary to win every debate, that is not the right way to lead stated the interviewee. Even if the interviewees had not experienced their age as a negative factor during their careers, a female interviewee reflected that people may look seniors with more respect and juniors a bit differently. However, more influence is on what an individual can deliver and what he or she can give for the association. Moreover, the culture has changed in NFF, and the junior-senior setting is not as clear as it used to be, described the female interviewee.

Both male interviewees reflected that it is not always easy to be an older man when discussing about women, men and women's football in NFF. They felt that because of their age and gender, their motives are sometimes questioned, and opinions underrated. *"I think that in debates between women and men and when we discuss topics regarding that, it is easy to be described as an old man with old or old-fashioned statements and thoughts. So people having the opposite view, they try to brand people and use it against. We are not experienced when it comes to that topic, then we are just old."* (Interviewee 8)

Appearance. A female and a male interviewee felt that their appearance and how they look like had influenced one way or another their career and work. *"It is never negative to dress up properly and look professional"* described interviewee 6. The other male and female interviewee did not feel that their appearance had had any influence on their careers. However, related to appearance the female interviewee described that proper behavior and the first impression given is important, but not the way one looks like per se.

(Masculine) football culture. Neither of the female interviewees had thought about masculinity and football culture when they applied for or were asked to join the association. The other female interviewee had a long background in football, and she knew what football organizations are like. The other interviewee reflected that she knew she would be working in a man dominance in NFF but addressed that she rather works in a man dominant organization than a woman dominant

organization because she felt that there are fewer conflicts and less jealousy amongst men. She felt that women may be more insidious and unpredictable, whereas men are more real and straightforward. The male interviewees did not feel either that football and its special characteristics had raised any questions or thoughts before entering the organization. A male interviewee reflected that his background from advertising was also a competitive field with energy and debates so the change into football did not seem that big of a change.

Mentors & networks. One female and one male interviewee identified themselves as part of some networks. The networks of the female interviewee consisted of professional networks relevant for her position as other sport leaders and other people having similar position to hers. The networks of the male interviewee consisted of colleagues from his former workplaces and university alumni. The male and the female interviewee who did not identify themselves as part of any network, described that in general they do know a lot of people within Norwegian football, already because of their former positions as a club president and as a player. The female interviewee saw it as a helping factor for her career in NFF, whereas the male interviewee described that he uses the friends and networks in football more for talking about football, not for his professional work as a department leader. The female interviewee who did not feel as part of any networks had been asked to join a network previously, but she did not feel the need for it. She felt that the network of friends and family she already had around her was good enough for her and there is no need for a huge network.

All interviewees saw mentorship, official or unofficial, as positive and beneficial for careers. One male interviewee had had an official mentor earlier on his career, with whom he met two to three times a year. He saw he had gained new skills and new points of views for how he approaches leadership and management. One male and one female interviewee described having had unofficial mentors during their careers. Either the mentor was a former boss or a competent coworker that they looked up to, had discussions with and got support from when needed. A female interviewee had not had a mentor. She referred that if there had been a possibility for mentorship when she was younger, she would have wanted to have a mentor. However, at that time there were no suitable persons available.

Situations or events that have helped during career. The interviewees had varying experiences of situations they felt are important for their careers. A female interviewee described the possibilities she had received in NFF as enhancing for her career. She was given responsibilities, different tasks and possibilities to educate herself besides work. *“I have got possibilities to step gradually higher and higher from the different general secretaries in NFF. It has never been a goal*

for me to be in the operating committee, but now I am. It has been the leaders above me that have encouraged me to take a new step.” (Interviewee 6) In addition, she believed that the support and dialogs with other leaders in NFF and in other sport associations have encouraged her in her career. The other female interviewee believed that her passion for football and for its development is the biggest factor for her career success. Football motivates her to work more and do her best at all times. Male interviewees referred to their earlier careers and what they’ve learned there. One had a leading position and a lot of responsibilities already early on during his career, the other was establishing a successful company. The responsibilities and work with different people had brought understanding of what is important in leadership and what to focus on.

Effects of gender. The interviewees felt that in general gender does not currently have any effect on leadership careers in NFF. A male interviewee reflected that it may have been harder for a woman to be in a leading position for 10 years ago. However, the perceptions have changed, and he felt that today the situation is the same for men and women. Women interviewees felt that gender had not influenced their careers. They did not mention situations where they had had to prove their skills into any more extent than men, nor situations in which they would have felt it harder or on the other hand easier to be a woman in a leadership career. If an individual is good and competent, gender does not play a role reflected the female interviewees. However, they saw that in some positions, for example leaders of sport departments it may still be more challenging for a woman to be chosen and succeed in the position. Similarly, men felt that being a man had not influenced their career development per se nor that their gender had ever been a promoting or hindering factor in their careers.

5.2.2 Organizational Level

Recruitment process. None of the interviewees had had an open recruitment process for their present leading position in NFF. They had been chosen and offered the position internally either from the central organization or from a daughter company of NFF, Ullevaal Arena. The interviewees had different backgrounds related to how they joined NFF. A female interviewee was asked to join NFF by the then general secretary and offered a middle management position. Her position changed within different management and leadership positions along the structural changes of NFF. A friend of a male interviewee, who had a management position in NFF called the interviewee and told about a need for an administrator in NFF and advised him to apply. The interviewee applied and got the position after which he was promoted into a higher position. The other female interviewee had first applied for NFF as a marketing consult through an open

recruitment process. After a few years, the leader of one department quit and she was asked to take over the responsibilities of the previous leader as a consultant. She did not have the experience or education for the position, no one in NFF had. However, she accepted the new responsibility, succeeded in it and gradually was promoted into a leading position. One male interviewee had a leadership position at the daughter company, Ullevaal Arena, and was offered a new leading position in NFF because of his performance in the daughter company and football knowledge.

The position of women in NFF & gender equality. The female interviewees reflected that women leaders are respected in the organization and that they had not experienced gender discrimination. They argued that women are not treated equally and with respect just because they are women, but because the women in NFF are good and deserve it. A female interviewee reflected that as competent women have been chosen into leadership positions in the organization and succeeded in those, it has had a positive effect on the organization. Both men and women are seen as competent possibilities today. A male and a female interviewee reflected that women leaders in certain positions, especially in leading football positions, get more attention than men. *“A female top leader in the FA will get more attention if the position is at the sport itself. A female leader of communication or commercial wouldn’t probably raise an eyebrow. But now we have Lise Klaveness, who’s the head of elite football and that draws special attention to her. There is no question about it.”* (Interviewee 8)

A male interviewee reflected that a possible problem related to gender equality is when a woman thinks that being a woman is a competence or a positive thing itself. *“To me that’s (if being a woman is seen as a competence/positive) totally unprofessional. When you do professional work, it is not about sex, it’s about are you good or are you not”* (Interviewee 8) The female interviewees reflected that in general they do not see any difference in how men and women are treated in the organization. People are assessed through their work, not through their gender *“It’s the thing that you bring with you: the kind of statements, the work you do, the quality of what you do, your way of thinking”* (Interviewee 7) Both male and female interviewees felt that the organization has tried to increase the number of women in the organization by having the challenge stated on their agenda and giving special attention to it. The board, general secretary, president and executive committee has given special attention to recruiting competent women. The number of women and women managers has increased in recent years. Still less women than men are applying for the positions in NFF, described the interviewees. A female interviewee noted that without the support of top management, this situation would be difficult and slow to change. However, she felt that there are still some steps to take. *“I think NFF is gonna hopefully be in the future like the rest of the*

Norwegian society, with both men and women. And some positions, like the coaches I hope we're gonna be there that we have women in high positions when it comes to men's football but it's gonna take time. When are we gonna have our first female coach in a men's team in the elite men's league? I don't know. But I think we're gonna be there, just not tomorrow. (Interviewee 7) Related to gender equality, a female interviewee reflected that in general women may get slightly smaller wages in similar positions than men do. Both female and male interviewees reflected that most of the positions can be held by both genders. However, they reminded that for instance men's national team coach has never been a woman. A male and a female interviewee interpreted that there are not many suitable women for the position. Women even today often lack the required experience and competence. On the positive side, a female interviewee mentions NFF's work to get more educated and experienced women in the football side of the organization as well, so that also women would fill the requirements for those positions in the future.

Organization culture & structure. The five official values of NFF, approachability, joy, respect, equality and safety, were not seen as active guidelines in day to day work in the central organization. A female interviewee referred that there is a plan to go through the values in the spring 2019 and discuss what do the values mean today and in the present way of working. Apart from the values, the interviewees described the organizational culture as caring, fair, flexible and rather flat. However, a male interviewee stated that the structure of NFF is hierarchical and for instance the general secretary has a lot of power. He continued that in different departments the structure may be flat but as a whole unit, NFF is a hierarchy. The relationships between employees were described as relaxed and private life was shared with co-workers.

Two male and one female interviewee reflected that football culture is traditional and the traditionalism and football are visible in the organization. Furthermore, they reflected that people tend to stay in NFF for a long time. A female and a male interviewee stated that these two issues cause some challenges in the organization because also new ways of thinking are needed, and everything should not be based on football tradition. Therefore, people with football background and people from outside football are needed in the organization, described the female interviewee. However, the view of the male interviewee was that football is about traditions and all new ideas that come around should not be integrated. Related to football culture, a female interviewee saw some masculine characteristics in the organizational culture. At times the communication can be harsh and the limit of what is acceptable to say and what is not is rather tolerant.

The interviewees agreed that football was the glue keeping the organization together, the passion, will and dedication to work for it. They argued that football is visible in the everyday culture as the

aim of NFF is to develop and benefit the sport. Even if football is visible in everyday work, a female interviewee reflected that the everyday work, culture and behavior does not actually differ from her earlier workplaces that were not sport organizations. *“It’s (the organizational culture) not that different. People think it is different, but it’s not.” (Interviewee 7)*

A male interviewee reflected that earlier there had been a state within a state dilemma in NFF. Decisions were made between a small group of people and people were trying to protect their area by not bringing everything up on the table. This made it difficult for NFF to work as a board led association and hampered the cooperation of leaders because everything was not transparent. However, he felt that as the issue had been taken into consideration on the agenda of NFF, the situation had improved in the recent years.

The attitude of NFF towards families and children. The interviewees described the attitude of NFF towards families rather flexible. Female interviewees reflected that there are no timecards and there are possibilities for remote work that gives opportunities to divide the work hours. The most important thing is to deliver the work with quality in time, reflected the female interviewees. However, all the interviewees stressed that a lot of the work is done outside the regular office hours, during evenings, weekends and holidays. Especially during international games and tournaments the work requires flexibility and dedication from the employee’s side. *“You have to be aware of that (a lot of work is done on weekends, evenings and during summer) when you apply for a job like this. Especially if you have children in school age.” (Interviewee 9)* A male interviewee reflected that NFF is trying to create an atmosphere in which taking care of the family is seen as positive and one does not have to be reachable 24/7. Nevertheless, all interviewees emphasized that as leaders they must be reachable nearly all the time.

Unofficial groupings. All the interviewees felt that there are some unofficial groups in the organization. However, they had not recognized gender gap in the groupings, both men and women were mixed. They felt that the grouping was similar to every other workplace. For instance, a female interviewee reflected she is having often lunch with the same group of people. *“People who like to eat at 11 tend to sit together, some eat at 11.30 so they tend to eat together” (Interviewee 7)* The groupings were not any strong alliances, more like soft edged lunch groups or for instance younger employees enjoying coffee together. Related to groupings, a female interviewee reflected of a change in people’s perceptions when a woman enters the operational committee. There is a change, especially amongst women, how others see and treat the person entering the operational committee. The one entering the operational committee is in a way excluded from the rest of the colleagues and not seen as the person and the coworker she was before, reflected the interviewee.

Gender stereotypes. The male interviewees had not faced or recognized gendered stereotypes in NFF. They had not witnessed gender being used as an explanation for something or any other behavior related to gendered stereotypes. One of the female interviewees reflected that some stereotypical behavior is visible in NFF. She mentioned a case that had happened earlier during her time in NFF. She had asked if she could join in and learn about organizing national team games from a person responsible of organizing the game events. She was offered a task serving coffee for the media in the media room. She interpreted that if she had been a male the task of serving coffee would not have been offered. The interviewee stated that there is still some stereotypical behavior in NFF. However not to as visible or strong extent as earlier.

Leadership skills & qualities that are important in NFF. All the interviewees emphasized that leadership and people skills are important for a leader in NFF. In addition, professional competence, results and a personality that fits the organization were highlighted in the interviews. In most of the positions also football knowledge is essential. *“We have seen examples of people, older women, that are well-educated with a good resume, good reputation coming in here and not being able to function because they didn’t understand football. They didn’t understand how people think in a football club or in a football organization. In this case you’re not suited and then it doesn’t matter if you’re a man or a woman.”* (Interviewee 8) However, a female interviewee reflected that as football has commercialized, the field specific knowledge is not seen as important in NFF as it was for 15-20 years ago. For instance, in positions as marketing or commercial manager, football knowledge is not necessary, but it helps, stated the female interviewee. Being accessible, clear and having good communication skills was seen essential by both women and men interviewees. A leader has to be able to give feedback in good and bad and also to motivate. A female interviewee emphasized empathy and understanding. A leader must understand the employees and show compassion if needed. Male interviewees emphasized trust in people and trust that as a leader one has been able to pick the right people in the department. *“I think one of the most important things you do as a leader is actually to pick the team around you. And trust in your advisors and section’s commanders and department leaders around you.”* (Interviewee 9) A view by a male interviewee was that a certain level of humbleness is needed. NFF is a knowledge organization with well-educated experts. Different departments in NFF require different qualities so a leader must accept that people have different opinions and people know more about different topics than the leader does him or herself.

All the interviewees thought that leadership styles vary between different leaders. However, three interviewees had not identified any significant difference between the ways men and women lead.

They argued that the leadership style depends on the personality and personal characteristics of the leader. A female interviewee had a contradicting reflection. She felt that women are often more concerned with softer values and follow the structures and guidelines given by the organization more strictly than their male colleagues. However, she reminded that exceptions occur and there are also men in NFF who are emphatic and follow the structures. A female interviewee referred that she had not witnessed old-fashioned, authoritarian kind of leadership in NFF anymore. A male interviewee argued that there are differences between leaders to what extent they interact and involve their employees in decision making.

How should leadership be developed in the future? All interviewees emphasized the meaning of leadership skills in the future. Creating an atmosphere where ideas are flowing, people trust each other, and people feel as an important part of the organization were seen important. Mentoring and guiding instead of being suppressive or detail oriented regarding the employees' work was seen beneficial in the future. In addition, both female and male interviewees wished for more clarity in leadership, especially in difficult situations. Furthermore, a male interviewee emphasized the meaning of discussion and having different views. *"Yeah, we need to discuss more in order to have greater energy and to find the best solutions. I think in cultures where everybody is thinking or speaking the same... I think that's very dangerous."* (Interviewee 8) A female interviewee reflected that in addition to discussions and emphatic approach, leaders should be also able to take hold of difficult situations earlier. Leaders should get involved with problems faster, have a clear thinking process and communication how to solve the problems and not just hope for the situation to fade away.

The number of women leaders in NFF and reasons behind that. Two female and one male interviewee felt that the number of female leaders and managers in NFF is too small and that having both men and women leaders is important. Currently, there are two women in the operating committee and four have personnel of their own. The three interviewees argued that men and women think slightly differently and having more balanced gender ratio amongst leaders could bring wider views into decision-making. A male interviewee argued that he does not think about gender when looking at leaders. Gender should not be something that has an influence when discussing about leaders and their competence. *"I find it very strange that it is regarded positive that a leader is a woman. I don't accept that. I think that a leader should be a good leader, whether she is a woman or he is a man. I don't accept that being a woman makes you any better or that being a man makes you any better."* (Interviewee 8) The male interviewee reflected that if there are women that have the correct expertise, relevant background and knowledge of football, they could

bring new perspectives into discussions. However, he saw that new perspectives are not enough, the right kind of competence is more important.

All the interviewees thought that one of the main reasons for fewer female leaders is the smaller number of competent female applicants compared to males, especially for leading positions. Women apply less and fewer women in general have the field specific competence. More men are playing football, sitting on club boards and having other positions in football and therefore more men have the relevant football competence needed in many positions in NFF, stated the interviewees. Both male and female interviewees reflected that football and its culture is still seen traditional and rather masculine. The top positions apart from one former female general secretary have always been filled by men in NFF and people may have an image that football administration is ruled by white 50+ year-old men. *“It takes time to change a culture”* reflected interviewee 7. A male interviewee reflected that women may also have insecurities to apply or women may think that NFF can be a difficult place to work when they see the number of men in the organization. However, both male and female interviewees reflected that these images of NFF being a hard place for women are not true. They experienced NFF as a good place to work for both genders. The female interviewees enjoyed working in NFF, they felt women are respected and that there are women in high positions.

A male and a female interviewee reminded that the culture and the images are changing. More girls and women are interested in football, playing football and otherwise connected with football. In addition, more and more competent women are applying and recruited for NFF. *“It is getting better. I see now that we are recruiting and for more junior positions quite a lot of women are applying and that is good. In order to become a top manager, you need to start somewhere.”* (Interviewee 9)

6. DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

In this chapter the interview data presented in chapter five are analyzed and related to the theories and previous research about women's careers and sport management. In this phase the cases are brought together, and the analysis of SPL and NFF is presented simultaneously in the same chapter. The analysis focuses on individual and organizational level factors in addition to field specific factors. However, it must be noted that the factors influencing the number of female leaders are interrelated. Societal level factors as culture and gender roles exert an influence also on the individual and organizational level. For this reason, societal level factors must be included in the analysis to some extent.

6.1 Individual Level

On individual level a background in football was seen necessary for most of the positions in both associations. Both men and women interviewees agreed that one must understand football and football context to be able to work in most of the positions in SPL and NFF. There are fewer female players and other female actors than male within football in Finland and Norway (UEFA, NFF, Suomen Palloliitto, a). This explains why there are often more male applicants with the needed football competence and also with the professional competence than there are women applying for leadership positions and other positions in SPL and NFF. Female football is rather young compared to male football, as is the concept of female leaders compared to men leaders (Piha, 2006, 82; Robbins et al., 1997, 84). Changing the perception of who is capable of leading in a football organization is a slow process as two traditionally men-dominant fields are influencing on the background (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001; Piha, 2006, 82; Robbins et al., 1997, 84). However, women have activated in sport. Female football has raised its profile, and more and more girls and women are playing the sport. In addition, the number of other female actors as coaches, referees and club members has increased in football. According to the interviewees, the increasing trend is visible also in football governance: the number of female employees and the number of women applying for leadership positions has increased and shows positive signs for the future. In general, the number of women leaders in different organizations has increased in Finland and in Norway (OECD, 2018; Statistics Finland, 2019). This may have had a positive influence also on sport. The image of a proper leader is changing and also women are seen as a competent possibility for leadership positions. Women interviewees in SPL stated that they are though or that they are used to working in a men dominant field and because of these, they are personally not influenced negatively

by the locker-room culture. Even if SPL is more equal now than it was 20 years ago, a certain level of thick skin and good self-confidence seems still to be required for being able to work as a woman leader in SPL.

Often female actors are taking part within female football rather than in male football. Gendering is visible on club levels, women are coaching and acting within women's clubs and leagues.

Furthermore, socialization of gender roles is visible in SPL and NFF for instance in the positions women are not applying for. A woman has never even applied for a boys' or men's coach in SPL. In NFF there has not ever been a female head coach on men's side. A woman as a men's national team coach is still seen, if not impossible but at least very challenging by women themselves and possibly by the rest of the society as it breaks the gender role. Women may feel that they would be more likely judged by their gender than by their skills in these kinds of positions. Instead of working, women would have to use time to prove their competence and capability to people because they are women and are breaking their gender role. Same kind of interpretations may be referred to other leading positions. A woman may not apply for the general secretary of SPL because of she is afraid of gendered judgement unrelated to her true actions and work in a man dominant field. Same kind of role models and vanguards are needed to break the norms and prejudices about top football leaders and men's coaches as there have been in other positions in football: women have refereed men's games, female football players have cleared the path for younger players, women have commentated on men's championship games, to mention a few.

Educational background or work experience did not seem to differ between the male and female interviewees in NFF and SPL and thus cannot explain the difference of men having higher leadership positions and being the majority within the leadership positions. Previous research has indicated that men with lesser education reach top leadership, whereas women with higher education stay as middle managers (Koski & Heikkala, 2006; Laakso, 2016; Lipponen, 2017; Smith & Washington, 2014; Vuolle, 2010 & 2013; Zeigler, 1987). However, the empirical material of this research indicates that in NFF and SPL the level of education is parallel between the male and female leaders and chiefs. Some of the male interviewees had even more robust educational background than women. Therefore, from educational point of view women's position and possibilities do not seem unequal in NFF or SPL.

Another interesting remark contradicting to previous research was that the interviewees, apart from one female interviewee in NFF, had not identified any difference in the leadership styles of women and men. However, the interviewees did not find the leadership styles of men and women to be similar either. They argued that leadership styles vary rather considerably between leaders in SPL

and NFF depending on the persona not on gender. The finding is rather contradictory to previous research (Piitulainen et al., 2003, 128; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002, 120-130) that indicates the double positioning of women as one of the major obstacles for women's careers. According to Piitulainen et al. (2003, 128) and Vinnicombe & Singh (2002, 120-130) women leaders should adapt into the masculine leadership role but still should not break their feminine gender role. Adaptation, but also choosing not to adapt hinders women's careers and decreases their credibility in the eyes of others. It may be that the gender roles are not as strong as they have been before or that gendered leadership styles are outdated in 2019. On the other hand, football culture may attract naturally more masculine women. Another explanation for this is that as modern leadership styles that were cherished in NFF and SPL often base on more feminine characteristics as discussion skills and empathy. Therefore, women do not have to adapt as the appreciated leadership style is more feminine (Hiillos, 2013).

On individual level, all interviewees saw family and a relationship as a positive factor for their careers. It gives balance and support for demanding work. The results are similar to prior studies that indicate women benefiting of family and especially of the sparring and support of the spouse (Rothbard, 2001; Ruderman et al., 2002; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Ezzedeen & Ritchey, 2008 & 2009) The interviewees felt that having children had not influenced negatively their careers. Only one woman in NFF admitted that even if she has always worked a lot, when the children were younger, she felt she had less time for work. Female interviewees in SPL felt that they had been away a rather short period of time, they had a permanent position during maternity leave and felt that it was easy to come back to work. None of the interviewees felt that being a mother had affected any recruitment or promotion processes nor their work. Rather, the influence of family had been in managing life as a whole and having to make compromises. The female interviewees felt that the compromises were made more often with family than with work. These results are similar to Judiesch & Lysness (1999) who proposed that research is contradictory whether maternity and for instance maternity leaves actually influence women's careers. However, the results are contradictory to other major previous studies (McCarty Kilian, et al., 2005; Metz, 2005; Wirth, 2001), in which family and children are seen as major hindrances for women's leadership careers. The studies (Burke & McKeen, 1994b; Coe, 1992 in Puttonen, 2012; Davey & Davidson, 1994; Liff & Ward, 2001; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; McDonald & Hite, 1998; Metz, 2005; Vanhala, 2005) have indicated that mothers are not perceived as committed and competent workers, women have the main responsibility of home, maternity leaves cause breaks on women's careers, and that in general, women feel having children hampers their leadership careers more often than men do.

What is interesting is that the empirical material indicated also men experiencing challenges in combining work and family. A male interviewee in SPL felt the need to prioritize and make compromises when combining family and work. In addition, a male interviewee in NFF described feelings of disappointment, when not being able to take part in family activities due work restrictions. These can point for instance to a changed culture, in which men are becoming more family oriented, family duties are equalizing or that the interviewed men are more family oriented than in men general. However, within the male interviewees the compromises were made with work, whereas female interviewees stated that they made compromises with family. A female interviewee in SPL brought up that positions, which require a lot of travelling could be very challenging for a mother with young children. Even if the responsibility of home and family is equalizing, it seems that women still feel and are more connected with and more responsible for home and children than men. Another evidence for gender roles and women being perceived as the ones taking care of family is how a woman and a man interviewee described a similar family situation in SPL. A female interviewee, whose husband stayed at home described the situation as rather abnormal and almost as a privilege because she as a woman gets to focus on career. Contradictory an interviewed man, whose wife worked from home, described the situation as normal and reflected how his mother had also worked from home. He stressed it being beneficial for his children that their mother is available at home.

Two of the interviewed women in SPL and one in NFF stated that they were part of one unofficial network. However, the numbers of individuals within the networks were often rather small and the interviewees saw the benefits of a network more from a sparring point of view rather than as a factor benefiting their career development. Men interviewees had larger networks, which based on previous research (Hovden, 2000; Liff & Ward, 2001; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; Ruderman et al., 1995; Wentling, 1996; Wirth, 2001) can be seen as an advantage for men's careers. Men are more visible in the work environment and for instance, hear about open positions through networks. Even if a male interviewee in NFF and SPL and a female interviewee in NFF did not identify as part of any unofficial network, they admitted knowing a lot of people within football or having a lot of acquaintances in different levels of society, which can be seen as a favorable factor for careers.

Only one interviewee from NFF had had an official mentor, which he felt beneficial for his career. All of the rest emphasized the meaning of an influential person or persons in their careers. These mentors have offered new points of view and support. A mentor often seems to be a former superior or a co-worker. A female interviewee in NFF referred that she would have wanted a mentor when she first stepped into a leadership position. However, there were no suitable mentors available that

time. This finding is supported by previous research (Wells, 2001 in Puttonen, 2012, 65; Burke & McKeen, 1994a; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Hiillos, 2013; Lewis & Fagenson, 1995) that suggests women finding a suitable female or male mentor challenging. This may be a hampering factor for women's careers. According to prior research women mentors are often seen as giving emotional support, whereas men mentors advance career (Ragins et al., 1998; Mutanen & Lämsä, 2006). A female interviewee in SPL reflected on her unofficial mentorship with her former superior. In addition to emotional support, the supervisor was supporting the career by opening doors and giving responsibility. In this case, the female mentor of the interviewee seems to have been influencing in both aspects.

Prior research has pointed that often women are first seen too young and as possible mothers, later too close to family and finally too old for labor market (Still & Timms, 1998). Thus, age related judgement creates challenges for women's leadership careers. Most of the interviewees did not feel that their appearance or age per se had influenced any ways on their careers. Therefore, these cases suggest that the perception of women and age may have changed. However, some female leaders especially in SPL felt that they had had to work more to prove their competence when they were younger and less experienced, whereas men in general had not found appearance or age to have any impact on their careers. These hint that women and especially younger women may have a more difficult path to leading positions as men. In prior research the appearance of female leaders has been found to have stronger influence on women's career development than on their male colleagues' (Kauppinen & Antila, 2005; Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001). However, only one female interviewee from NFF admitted that she pays attention on her looks. The rest felt that appearance had never influenced in any job-related events. An explanation for this can be the football culture and its unofficial approach to looks. Dress code is more relaxed than official. Related to appearance, a female interviewee in SPL brought up her small physical size, which can create challenges in appearing competent and experienced. The finding is supported by Lämsä & Sintonen's (2001) findings where small physical size of a female leader is often perceived as suspicious.

6.2 Organizational Level

An interesting organizational level viewpoint is the value of football competence gained through women's and men's football in SPL and NFF. Women may have a more difficult path to football governance than men. First, for a man it is easier to pave one's way in men's football and gather experience, whereas a woman in a men's club may face the need to prove her capabilities or may receive more attention because of her gender role breaking position. Extra challenges caused by

gender decrease the amount of time available for real work, which can influence the work results. In addition, women may not even want to use their time for fighting against gendered stereotypes. They choose to stay on women's football, so that they can focus on their real work. Liff & Ward (2001) argued about management that women are not abandoning management per se but do not want to be part of masculine management of today. The same phenomenon may be applicable to football. Women do not want to be part of the excessive masculinity of male football and rather choose women's football. Women's football competence is often from female football. Even if in the interviews a male interviewee from SPL argued women's and men's football being on the same line in the organization, the actions are contradicting. Women are said not having the right kind of competence for all leading positions that men have. This hints that competence gathered from men's football is more valuable than the competence from female football in recruitment situations.

Second, as argued earlier, football culture is in general still seen rather masculine. SPL and NFF as publicly visible organizations must try to answer the demands of equality given by the media, public and state level. However, smaller organizations as small football clubs are not under the public eye to the same extent as a large umbrella organization. Male-dominance and gender discrimination may be more visible in those smaller organizations, especially on male football side due to the tradition of football being a men's world. Women may not feel comfortable or want to work in that environment. This can be seen as a major obstacle for women's careers in football governance. If experience gathered from women's and men's football are not valued to the same extent in recruitment processes in SPL, the above discussed issues put women automatically behind men applicants regarding leadership positions, in which football competence has a major influence.

Both men and women interviewees argued strongly that competence is the most important factor in recruitment processes and when their work is assessed. They argued that gender and being a woman does not have an influence on recruitment processes, nor on the assessment of their work or results. The Finnish interviewees and a male interviewee from NFF did not support gender quotas and argued that leadership and work in general should not be transferred into a gender question. However, the question of the equality of assessment of football competence between male and female football seems relevant here. Gender may still be affecting assessment, if not visibly - on a more hidden level.

A view of a female interviewee in SPL was that recruitment processes should be truly equal and there should not be for instance a regulation for having both genders in the interview phases of a recruitment process if the prior assessment has been objective. According to previous research (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002) gender roles, stereotypes and perception of a competent leader affect

often on an unconscious level. These stereotypes and prejudices have passed on from generation to generation and are still a part of our culture. Objectivity in recruitment processes may be contradictory (Jukola, 2015; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002). If the recruiters believe they are being objective and do not consider their bias or the present gender roles, which still influence in the society, women may have an unequal position in recruitment processes in SPL. In Norway the gender quotas have influenced positively not just the number of women in boards but also the perception of women and women leaders in boards (Hovden, 2012). Slowly, as different characteristics, and different genders become normal in sport leadership positions, the influence of traditional gender roles decreases. However, as the gender quotas in Norway have indicated, conscious actions may be needed to support the change.

Gendering was visible regarding the different positions in NFF and SPL. In both organizations the traditionally more feminine positions, for instance HR manager were women whereas operational leaders were men. Besides men being hired more often to challenging and career furthering positions, women often orient towards expert positions from which it is hard to proceed into top management. The experience gathered from these positions does not directly increase knowledge and know-how needed in the top management and therefore influences the number of women in top leadership. (Coe 1992 in Puttonen 2012, 62; Oakley, 2000; Powell & Mainiero, 1992; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Tharenou, 2005; Vanhala, 2004)

All interviewees in SPL and three in NFF supported variety and thought it is important to have both men and women as leaders, as it may bring wider viewpoints into discussions and decision-making. It also enables more learning within the organization. A male interviewee in NFF described that having women as leaders is not important per se. The most important thing is to have good and competent leaders. Previous research (Ragins & Sunstrom, 1989; Tainio, 1981) has shown that top management often renews itself when recruiting new leaders. Because top leaders are often men, the person closest to the recruiters is most likely going to be a man. In addition, subconscious level images of masculine characteristics may be related to good leadership, which decreases the possibilities of a woman being perceived as a competent leader (Fagenson 1990; Heilman et al., 1989; Hovden, 2000 & 2010; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; McKeen & Burke, 1995). If a person in a leading position is not aware of these factors, and not taking gender and its influence into account when considering leader candidates, promotions and responsibilities, women may have a more difficult path to reach the leadership and top leader positions in NFF.

However, SPL and NFF are going into more equal direction. The interviewees described the organizations as more equal than they were before and that more women are being recruited in the

organizations. Outside pressure, changed culture towards gender equality in the Nordic countries, discussions, having equality as a challenge written down in the agenda and having more women in decision-making positions seem to have influenced positively the organizations. The interviews of NFF and SPL indicated that the top management in these organizations acknowledges the challenge and has made actions to improve women's position and to create a more equal organization. For instance, in recruitment processes the women-men ratio is considered if possible and if there are as competent men and women applicants. The support and acknowledgement of top management on its part supports women's careers in SPL and NFF (Puttonen, 2012). Masculine "locker room" culture has decreased in SPL. Nevertheless, the interviews of women indicated that experiences of masculine football culture still exist on a certain level and there are still some gendered stereotypes in the organization. Also men interviewees stated that there may still be some gendered stereotypes in SPL. For instance, "bad humor", stereotypic talks of some and rough way of communicating exist inside SPL as well as with some stakeholders. The masculine culture may influence negatively the self-confidence of some women and their will to take up challenges, which would proceed their careers. The Interviews indicated some level of gendered stereotypes taking place also in NFF. What is challenging from the organizational perspective, is that only women interviewees had identified those. If men do not recognize the same stereotypic behavior as women, it is more difficult to change the behavior. The reflection of gendered behavior by a female interviewee getting a task as a coffee server, a traditionally feminine task is supported by previous research (Doyle & Paludi, 1991, Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002, 120-130). Women may not be given responsibilities and tasks that further their career to the same extent as their male colleagues (Coe, 1992 in Puttonen 2012, 62; Oakley, 2000). An interesting notion was that not only women were experiencing gender discriminating behavior in NFF. The male interviewees reflected that as women, men and women's football are discussed in the organization, their opinions and views are often questioned or set aside by categorizing them as old men, who do not know or care for women's football. This may be a sign that equality regarding gender and age does not fully actualize in NFF. People still at least experience that gender and age affect opinions and motives of individuals. As men and women feel that there is some gendered behavior in the organization, it seems important to have both men and women in the top management to assure equal opportunities for both genders. Another explanation for men's experiences of gender discrimination in NFF may be that women's position is more powerful in NFF than in SPL. Women have enough power to be able to discriminate, whereas if women were subordinating, they would be likely to act in a more subtle way.

The interviewees in NFF and SPL stated that people tend to stay in the organizations for a long time. This can be regarded as positive and negative. Both men and women in general enjoy and like to stay in the organizations. The organizational culture and behavior must be at least on a satisfying level or otherwise the employee turnover would be greater. On the negative side, as the employees and leaders, who are mainly men in these organizations, tend to stay till they retire, women's possibilities to end up in these leading positions come seldom.

Another explanation for the small number of women applicants and thus women leaders may be that the perception of possible women applicants differs from reality regarding the organizational culture, environment and for instance the leadership characteristics that suit a football association. As football in general is seen masculine, SPL and NFF may not have been effective enough in communicating the more equal environment of today for the public and possible female applicants. Even if there are women in rather high positions in both organizations, the public perception often is that football is governed by older men. On individual level an explanation may be that as SPL and NFF still are man-dominant organizations, some women may not want to be part of the possibly masculine culture of the organization (Liff & Ward, 2001). These prejudices and images of football governance, whether they are true or not, may decrease the number of competent women applying for SPL and NFF.

An interesting finding contradicting to previous research (Fagenson 1990; Heilman et al., 1989; Hovden, 2000 & 2010; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; McKeen & Burke, 1995) was that the traditional masculine and heroic leadership traits were not experienced as important in SPL or NFF and none of the interviewees seemed to present that type. Rather, more feminine characteristics as empathy, listening and discussion skills were seen important. Hiillos (2013) argued that as team-based leadership is taking over, in which learning is more important than organizational control, traditionally feminine characteristics, as ability to listen, empathize and give emotional support are becoming important instead of fact oriented, hierarchical management. This seems to be in line with SPL and NFF. However, some interviewees in SPL and NFF reflected having noticed also more authoritarian and traditional leadership styles in the organizations. The emphasis and demand for softer values and qualities for the future may indicate that these are important for the interviewees and that the masculine and feminine characteristics in the organization may be unbalanced. What is interesting to notice is that even if softer qualities are valued in leadership, women are still a minority within the top leadership positions and as middle managers. It may be that in general today the leadership style that bases on discussion, empathy, inclusion and other more feminine characteristics is more appreciated in knowledge organizations like SPL and NFF and thus male

interviewees have adopted a softer leadership style. The reasons for men's adaptation may include for instance social pressure, men have noted it to be more effective or manifestation of popular, modern leadership theories. Another explanation for men's adaptation may be that men do not want to give away power (Ottesen et al., 2010). As softer leadership styles and feminine characteristics in leadership are becoming popular men have had to adapt or at least seem like having adapted to keep their power positions and thus decrease the need for women leaders.

In addition to these feminine characteristics, objectivity, transparency, being systematic and decision-making skills were emphasized within the SPL interviews as the skills leaders would need in the future. The qualities interviewees wished for leaders in the future may indicate that there have been some equality challenges in the organization. Interviewees argue a need for clear, systematic, objective and transparent processes for leadership and decision-making, which can express that there is some level of shadiness in the present procedures or at least people see a possibility for shadiness as the procedures are not transparent and clear for everyone. These above-mentioned issues in leadership and decision-making may influence on their part women's possibilities to receive job offers and challenging tasks, to show their competence and be visible. Previous research (Wells, 2001 in Puttonen 2012, 66; Hovden, 2000; Liff & Ward, 2001; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; Ruderman et al., 1995; Wentling, 1996; Wirth, 2001) has shown that women are not included in the internal networks of an organization to the same extent as men. If women are not part of the networks, in which the decisions are discussed and made, and if the decision making and other organizational processes are not systematic and objective, women do not have the possibility to influence and make themselves visible to the same extent as men. A similar situation was reflected also by a male interviewee of NFF. NFF had struggled with a state within a state situation earlier, which may have similarly affected the decision making and the number of women being recruited and promoted. However, the situation has been improved and a more transparent approach has been implemented in NFF. This on its part improves the possibilities of women in the organization.

On organizational level, the attitude of SPL towards families was seen supportive and flexible. Parental leaves are seen natural and the attitude of SPL is equal towards parental leaves for mothers and fathers. In addition, flexible hours and possibilities for time off or a shorter week are offered for both genders. Even if both male and female interviewees worked long days and weeks, the flexibility in their work hours was seen as the key for combining family and demanding work. In previous research inflexibility and challenging work hours have been regarded especially challenging for female leaders with children as women often have the major responsibility of children in families (Coe, 1992 in Puttonen, 2012, 64; Liff et al, 1996). The attitude of SPL seems

to differ from the general attitude of organizations in prior studies (Coe, 1992 in Puttonen, 2012, 64; Daly, Ashbourne & Hawkins, 2008 in Puttonen 2012, 64; Liff et al., 1996). NFF was also seen rather flexible and understanding towards families. However, all interviewees emphasized that they do work a lot, working hours include weekends and evenings. Especially during the international games, one must prioritize work. Male interviewees argued that this is something people must consider before they apply, especially if they have small children. Interviewees did not put emphasis on the possibilities NFF offers for leaders and employees to combine work and family, rather the emphasis was on the demanding work hours. This identifies more with prior research (Coe, 1992 in Puttonen 2012; Daly, Ashbourne & Hawkins, 2008 in Puttonen 2012, 64). Work orientation and prioritizing work is more present in NFF than in SPL.

None of the interviewees had been promoted into their present position in SPL. Selection for these positions had been made by open recruitments including two interviews and an aptitude test. In the highest leadership positions for main operations, a recruitment agency was used in the recruitments. This kind of action can be perceived as an increasing factor for equality and neutrality in recruitment. The networks or friends of an applicant are not influencing the recruitment process. In NFF all the interviewees had been selected into their present leadership positions from the organization or from NFF's daughter company Ullevaal Arena. There had not been publicly notified, open recruitment processes, which in previous research has been found as a hindrance for women's careers. (Bartol, 1978; Ragins & Sunstrom, 1989). In addition, both genders had experiences of them being asked to work in NFF by a friend or acquaintance. It seems like in NFF networks and knowing people is more important than in SPL, which on its part decreases the possibilities of women. It may be harder for women to become visible for the decision makers and to hear about new positions, recruitments and promotions as women are not often included into unofficial groups and networks to the same extent as men (Wells, 2001 in Puttonen 2012, 66; Hovden, 2000; Liff & Ward, 2001; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; Ruderman et al., 1995; Wentling, 1996; Wirth, 2001). In addition, as women are a minority in NFF and if new leaders are selected within the organization's employee base, there are automatically fewer women as possible choices than there are men.

All the five top managers, who are the members of the operating committee are men in SPL. Women are appointed as chiefs and middle managers. Four of the female chiefs are part of the extended operating committee of 12 individuals. In NFF there are only two female leaders in the operating committee and four women have personnel they are responsible of. In both organizations there are fewer women with a decision-making position compared to men. The results are similar to

previous research (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2018; Burton, 2015; Hovden, 2000, 2010 & 2012; Kartovaara, 2003; Laakso, 2016; Ottesen et al., 2010; Powell & Graves, 2003; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Women are leading lower in the hierarchy, whereas men have the highest leading positions. An interesting notion is that in NFF, there has already been a female general secretary. Furthermore, there is a female top leader in the elite football department. In SPL, women still have not had top management positions, especially when looking at positions related to sport. An explanation may be that in SPL both men and women interviewees were satisfied with the present situation. Only one female interviewee addressed that the number of women with a decision-making position is low. Thus, in SPL one of the core obstacles for women's leadership careers may be the satisfaction with the present situation, in which the top leaders are men and women lead lower in the hierarchy as middle managers or chiefs. According to Hiillos (2013) an active approach is needed, and women still have to be found into leadership positions through different channels compared to men. If the organization is already satisfied with the current situation, it may be that the approach to find top female leaders is not active enough to attract and find competent women. In NFF there was only one male interviewee, who was satisfied with the present ratio. Dissatisfaction may pursue NFF to be active and to find ways to attract highly competent women. An example of this may be the recently recruited Director of Elite Football, Lise Klaveness.

7. MAIN RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter offers conclusions and discusses the main results of the research. Additionally, the value, limitations and critique regarding this research are discussed. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

As argued in previous chapters female leaders and women's position in sport are current topics. The public and the research community have raised interest in inequality of female sport to male sport and noted a lack of female leaders in sport associations. However, there is a need for a game specific, qualitative research in this area in order to get deep knowledge of the phenomenon in different contexts. This research answers on its part the need by researching factors influencing the number of female leaders in the football associations of Finland and Norway by a multiple case study method. In addition, this research offers a new context for women leaders' career research. Football is a unique context that offers an interesting environment to study women leaders and their careers.

The aim of this research was to address why there are fewer female leaders in the football associations of Finland and Norway and what are the underlying factors influencing the phenomenon. To complete the research aim, a research question *What are the factors that affect the small number of women leaders in NFF and SPL?* was formed. In addition, four sub questions were formed to confirm a holistic approach: *how does gender affect reaching a leading position in NFF/SPL, how does the organizational culture & structure affect women reaching for a leading position, how does the football context affect women reaching for a leading position and what kind of leadership capabilities/attributes managers need in NFF/SPL.* The empirical material to answer these research questions included five interviews with the chiefs and leaders of SPL and four with NFF. The theoretical framework consisted of women's career research and sport management. The empirical data was analyzed by abductive content analysis leaning on the theoretical frame.

7.1 Conclusions

This chapter follows the structure of the research questions through which the main findings and conclusions are introduced. First, the sub questions are answered, which provides a holistic perspective and approach answering the main research question: *What are the factors that affect the small number of women leaders in NFF and SPL?*

7.1.1 How Does Gender Affect Reaching a Leading Position in NFF/SPL?

Gender is still one main influencer considering women's possibilities in the football associations of Norway and Finland. The effects of gender are still visible in both of the associations and socialization of gender roles is underlying behind many of these factors. Women do not apply for SPL or NFF on the same volume as men. There are more men who want to work with football. Furthermore, women may perceive football governance as masculine and do not want to be part of the masculinity. In addition, women in general have less football specific experience than men, which is needed in many of the leading positions. An explanation for the lack of football competence of women may be that women's football is rather new compared to men's football and the number of women as players and other actors inside football is more minor compared to men. Additionally, women's football competence is often from female football that this research hinted is not being valued to the same extent in SPL or NFF as competence from male football. Challenges of football related competence actualize especially in leading positions within football related departments in the organizations. In NFF both genders had experienced stereotypic behavior towards their gender. In addition, men had experienced questioning of their motives. Therefore, it would be important to have both genders in decision making positions to assure that the views and objectives of both genders are considered and heard.

The general approach in SPL and NFF towards men and women leaders is that they are alike, which may hinder women leader's careers. Gender isn't seen to influence how someone leads; leadership style depends on the persona. However, previous research has shown that some masculine traits are perceived as a norm of a good leader (Fagenson 1990; Heilman et al., 1989; Hovden, 2000 & 2010; McCarty Kilian et al., 2005; McKeen & Burke, 1995). If this masculine perception of a good leader is subconsciously affecting in decision-making in SPL and NFF, the view of men and women being alike and possessing same characteristics turns against it (Hovden, 2000). The perception of men and women leading in a similar way can lead into false judgement and barriers for women's leadership careers in these organizations.

7.1.2 How Does the Organizational Culture & Structure Affect Women Reaching for a Leading Position?

Organizational level factors as the culture and structure influence negatively on women's careers. However, the both organizations are pursuing towards better gender equality and positive changes have happened. The women leaders of SPL and NFF feel that the organizations are gender equal and good places to work even if men are the majority in both organizations. Women are appreciated

and heard. Both organizations have challenges in communicating their changed environment and the current position of women into the public. This decreases the number of women wanting to work for the association. Gendering was visible also on different positions in both organizations. Women in NFF and SPL had traditionally more feminine expert positions as HR manager, from which it is hard to proceed into top management. These positions do not exactly prepare and give wide organizational perspectives that are needed in the top management. Thus, women's careers often stop in middle management in these organizations. Another influencing factor is that people tend to stay in both organizations for quite a long time. On one hand this is a sign of good a organizational culture and that the women who are employed enjoy working in the associations. On the other hand, the employee turnover is slow. Even if more women were wanted in the leading positions, the process is very slow when the positions do not open until the old leaders retire.

In NFF, the selection process of leaders can decrease women's leadership possibilities. The research indicated that many of the leadership positions are filled without an open recruitment process. As women are not often included to the important unofficial networks of organizations to the same extent as men, they may not hear about new positions or are not able to make themselves visible in the eyes of the decision makers to the same extent as men. This puts women automatically behind men regarding career development. In SPL leadership positions were often filled with open recruitment that offers more equal opportunities for men and women.

In SPL satisfaction may be one of the core obstacles for female leaders. In NFF the number of women leaders was seen too low, whereas in SPL both male and female interviewees were satisfied with the current male-female ratio amongst leaders. If the top management of SPL is satisfied with having some women as chiefs and middle managers but none as top leaders, the active approach needed to find and attract competent women leaders may not be active enough.

7.1.3 How Does the Football Context Affect Women Reaching for a Leading Position?

Football and its tradition as a masculine sport influences on many levels. It influences the number of women applying for SPL and NFF and the number of women having football competence and being interested in football. The tradition of men playing, watching and governing football is still alive. The image of football being governed by older white men may influence on women's willingness to apply for NFF and SPL. Women may not want to be part of the masculine culture of football and traditionally masculine leadership culture. Female leaders as all female actors in football are a new phenomenon compared to the history of male leaders and male actors within

football. It takes time to change culture. Especially when two traditionally masculine fields are influencing.

7.1.4 What Kind of Leadership Capabilities/Attributes Managers Need in NFF/SPL?

Softer values and traditionally feminine characteristics as empathy, discussion and listening skills and inclusiveness are seen important for leaders in both organizations. Both men and women in the organizations seem to present this type. Men adapting the more feminine leadership style may indicate a change in the popular leadership styles. A more humane leadership style is in general more appreciated than authoritarian style. On the other hand, it may indicate that men do not want to give away power. As men are adapting into the more modern leadership style with traditionally more feminine characteristics, feminine female leaders are not needed in the organizations.

Transparency and objectivity have been challenges in both organizations, which can influence on women's leadership possibilities. NFF had struggled earlier with a state within a state situation, in which decisions were made and information was shared within a small number of people. This may have had an influence on the number of women been promoted and recruited previously.

Transparency, objectivity and systematic approach were hoped from leadership in the future in SPL. This need can indicate of transparency and equality issues that may influence women's possibilities in SPL. Women are not often included in the internal networks to the same extent as men. If the decision-making is not transparent and objective and women are not included into the internal networks, women have automatically a less favorable position regarding career development than men. Women do not have the possibility to influence and may not even hear about all possibilities.

7.2 What Are the Factors That Affect the Small Number of Women Leaders in NFF and SPL?

This research indicates that in NFF and SPL the football context has a strong influence on female leaders' possibilities. The effects of football influence all three levels of factors, individual, organizational and societal level. In addition, the societal level factors as gender roles are strongly influencing the factors of individual and organizational level. The results of these cases are interesting as all the individual and organizational level factors do not apply to the same extent as in previous research that is presented in chapter three. Especially on organizational level both organizations have acknowledged the lack of women leaders and are considering possibilities to increase the number of women. On individual level motherhood that is often seen one of the major hindrances, did not seem to influence negatively on women's careers. Even if not all the factors of previous research were present in these cases, the outcome in SPL and NFF is similar to those:

women lead lower in the hierarchy and women are a minority amongst leaders (Aalto-Nevalainen, 2018; Burton, 2015; Hovden, 2000, 2010 & 2012; Kartovaara, 2003; Laakso, 2016; Ottesen et al., 2010; Powell & Graves, 2003; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). No woman has achieved a top-management position in SPL. In NFF, there are only two female leaders in the operating committee.

It is interesting to notice that the results of the two cases are rather similar. The same factors influence women's leadership possibilities in NFF and SPL. Most significant differences between the two case organizations were on organizational level. In SPL the attitude of the organization towards employees' families and other life was more flexible and the combination of family and demanding work was made as easy as possible. In NFF the perception was understanding but not to the same extent as in SPL. Work must be prioritized from time to time and the work is done often on weekends, evenings and holidays. However, on individual level the leaders of NFF or SPL did not feel that children and family had had any influence on their career development, they were devoted for their work. Secondly, the recruitment processes differed in the two case organizations. In SPL leadership and chief positions were filled by open recruitment process whereas in NFF promotions within the organization was more common. As NFF is a man dominant organization, promotions within the house decreases the possibilities of women being selected already because there are fewer female employees. Additionally, internal networks and the visibility in the eyes of top leaders have a greater influence in NFF, this may hamper women's leadership possibilities as often women are not included to the internal networks to the same extent to men. Thirdly, in NFF also men had experienced gender discrimination related to their age and gender, whereas in SPL men had no experiences of that. This can indicate of a more powerful position of women in NFF compared to SPL. Lastly, the satisfaction of SPL with the present gender ratio regarding leaders may influence negatively on their willingness and activity to recruit female leaders. In NFF, the interviewees experienced the number of female leaders too small that can pursue NFF to more actively seek ways and opportunities to equalize the gender ratio within the leadership positions.

7.3 Evaluation & Suggestions for Future Research

This research acts as a base for further research regarding this female leadership in football. It gives further knowledge on the specific factors that influence female leaders' careers in football governance in two of the Nordic countries, Finland and Norway. Besides answering the need of single sport specific knowledge about women leaders in sport management and giving further information about women's careers in sport context, the results are beneficial for the Finnish and Norwegian Football Associations in their actions becoming more gender equal.

Generalization of case studies is challenging as the aim is to deeply understand a phenomenon within its context rather than to create generalizations. However, the results of this multiple case study on the two case organizations were rather parallel, which strengthens the results of this research. This can be seen to increase transferability of the results. Same factors influence the possibilities of female leaders in the football associations of two Nordic countries. Therefore, it is presumable that a similar research conducted in another Nordic country, for instance in Sweden or in Denmark, can deliver similar results. In addition, similar results may be found on other masculine sport fields as in ice-hockey or on other masculine fields as in the metal industry. The obstacles women face in these masculine fields are presumably at least to some extent similar to those in this research. However further research is needed to make any greater generalizations or transferring of results.

This research was limited to consider only employed leaders and chiefs in NFF and SPL because of time and resource limitations. Interviews of employees who are not on the leading level but pursuing to go forward on their careers may have delivered different views and more opinions regarding the factors hindering women's careers. In addition, with a quantitative research method the informants could have felt more anonymous and freer to address their opinions and experiences. However, as the number of leading level positions is low in both organizations the sample size may have been too small to deliver meaningful results.

The research process itself was challenging but educating. I as a rather novice researcher felt narrowing down the topic and theoretical framework especially challenging. In addition, interviewing and succeeding to receive relevant and deep information in the interviews requires experience and skills that I as a master student have only a limited amount. However, I feel that the interviews were successful, and I was able to create the needed trust between the interviewees and myself. All in all, I feel that I was able to stick with my research plan, conduct the research with good research integrity and deliver meaningful results for my research questions and thus experience the research process not only educating but also successful.

The topic of this research rarely studied, and more research is needed to study the specific characteristics of football and to study women's leadership career in football context to deliver stronger and more generalizable results. An interesting field for further research is the football club level in both countries. This research indicated that women lack the right kind of football experience from club level. Research is needed to see if the possibilities of women are equal to men on club levels. Another interesting direction for further research would be to study and compare the careers of female leaders in a traditionally feminine sport as gymnastics to football to see

differences and similarities with these two different contexts. What is the extent of influence of a traditionally masculine sport compared to a more feminine sport?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

INFORMATION LETTER FOR THE INTERVIEWEES

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

” Case Study about the Small Number of Women Sport Managers in the Football Associations of Finland and Norway” ?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to find new explanatory and comparative data about the factors affecting on the number of women in the football associations of Finland and Norway. In addition, an interesting issue is to see if there are connections and differences between these two cases are. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The project is a master’s thesis for NORDIG master programme (<https://nordig.eu/>), a joint master programme with Tampere University (FIN), University of Agder (NOR) and the Royal Institute of Technology (SWE). The case study focuses on discovering factors that influence the number of women sport managers in the Football Associations of Finland and Norway. Research questions that are based on the aim, literature and previous research are as follows:

What are the factors influencing the small number of women as managers in NFF and SPL?

sub questions:

How gender affects reaching manager position in NFF/SPL?

How does the organizational culture & structure affect women reaching a leading position?

How does the football context affect women reaching a leading position?

What kind of leadership capabilities/attributes managers need in NFF/SPL?

The project is aimed to be finished in June 2019.

Who is responsible for the research project?

University of Agder is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

To be able to get deeper quantitative data, leaders and managers of the Finnish and the Norwegian football associations are being asked to take part in this research. The preliminary sample size is four of each organization, but the needed number of interviewees may change.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you are being interviewed. It will take approx. 60 minutes. The interview includes discussions on organizational and individual level for instance about work experience & education, organizational culture and structure, leadership and

management and gender effects. Your answers will be recorded, and I may take notes. Data gathered from interviews will be made anonymous in the research paper.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- Me, Marjukka Mikkonen and my supervisor Gro Kvåle are the only ones having access to the personal data.
- I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.

Participants will be anonymous in the publication. Gender, whether the respondent is employed by the Football Association of Finland or Norway and position as a manager/leader will be visible on the publication. As gender is an important factor when studying leadership and management from this point of view and the two organizations (FAF and NFF) are studied as separate cases, this information is necessary in the final report.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end in June 2019. Personal data will be anonymized after the interviews are finished. Personal data will be destroyed at the end of the project.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with University of Agder, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- University of Agder via Gro Kvåle (supervisor) by email: gro.kvale@uia.no or by telephone: +47 38 14 16 32 or Marjukka Mikkonen (master student) by email marjum17@uia.no or by phone +358 44 080 5473.
- Our Data Protection Officer: Ina Danielsen by email: ina.danielsen@uia.no or by telephone: +47 452 54 401
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Gro Kvåle

Marjukka Mikkonen

Project Leader

Student

(Supervisor)

-

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *CASE STUDY ABOUT THE SMALL NUMBER OF WOMEN SPORT MANAGERS IN THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS OF FINLAND AND NORWAY* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

to participate in an interview

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 3.6.2019

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction and permission for audio record.

Explaining the purpose of the study briefly, to what the interview is used for and when the research process is completed.

Interview themes

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

- Earlier work experience & education
- Specific field related experience
- How have the interviewees ended up in the position they are now?
 - o What made to apply?
 - o Why do they think they were hired etc
- Own leadership & management skills
- Gender's effects on management position
- Home, family & work relation
- Age & appearance related effects
- Own thoughts about the rather masculine sport field, does it matter?
- Networks & mentors

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL FACTORS

- Recruitment process
- position of women in the organization
- Organization culture
 - o How would you describe the organizational culture?
 - o How would you describe the values of the organization?
 - o What is perceived important in the organization?
- Gender inequality/equality & to what extent it is visible, what kind of effects it has
 - o Does gender matter
- Leadership skills & attributes needed in NFF/SPL
- Management and/or leadership tasks
- How should leadership be developed in the future in NFF/SPL

OTHER

For men – what kind of effects being a man on this field has had?

- What do you think about the current gender ratio in NFF/SPL?
 - o What do you think are the reasons behind the current gender ratio in NFF/SPL?
 - o Do you think it would be important to have both men and women in leading positions? Why?

Appendix C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE EMAIL INTERVIEW

This interview is a part of a research process for a master thesis. The aim of the research is to find new data about the factors that influence on the number of women leaders in the football associations of Norway and Finland. At least four interviewees are interviewed from both of the association. The data will be anonymized, and no names are visible in the research paper. All the data will be deleted in June 2019, after the thesis process is finished. If you have any questions, please contact me Marjukka Mikkonen, (marjum17@uia.no, +358 44 080 5473) or my supervisor Gro Kvåle (gro.kvale@uia.no). Thank you!

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

- Earlier work experience & education
 - o Can you tell about your educational background?
 - o What kind of work experience do you have?
 - o Do you have some other sport or football related background? (for instance, old player/ coach etc)
 - o Can you name any important/influential situations that have helped you during your career development?
 - o Which factors have been the most important ones for your leadership career success?
- PRESENT JOB IN NFF
 - o How would you describe yourself as a leader?
 - o If you think about yourself and management (managing things) and leadership (leading people), what do you think is more natural for you or more important?
 - o How have you ended up in the present position?
 - What made you interested in and to apply for your job in NFF?
 - Sport and football culture is rather competitive, though and has certain (masculine) characteristics. What kind of thoughts or prejudices those characteristics provoked when you applied for your job in NFF?
 - Why do you think you were hired in this position?
 - o In what ways do you think being a woman effects or has effected on your job as a leader?
- HOME & WORK
 - o What kind of family do you have?
 - o In what ways family and having children have effected on your career?
 - o How do you feel combining home & family work and professional work has worked out?
 - o How would you describe the attitude of your spouse regarding your job?
 - o How would you describe the general attitude of NFF towards families?
- GENERAL
 - o What kind of effects your age has had on your career? (Has there been any changes for instance on your employees & co-workers' attitudes towards you at different ages)
 - o In what ways do you think your appearance has influenced your career? (Or have you ever felt that the way you look matters in some job-related events recruiting etc)?
- RELATIONSHIP
 - o Are you a part of any unofficial network? What kind of? How did you become acquainted with it?

- Have you had a mentor (or a person that has had great influence on you during your career)? If no, why? If yes, how did you get to know the mentor, what kind of benefits has that had?

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

- Can you describe your recruitment process? (open recruitment/promotion, do you know how many applicants were there, what kind of abilities/skills were emphasized, how many men/women were interviewed?)
- Women are a minority on leading level positions in NFF at the moment. What kind of affects you think it has on the organization?
- How would you describe the position of women leaders in NFF?
- Are men and women leaders treated the same way? Does either gender get more attention in good or bad?
- Do you think NFF is gender equal? How does it show in the organization and for instance in daily operations?

- ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- How would you describe the organizational culture? (Hierarchical or flat, relaxed or official, goal oriented, masculine/feminine etc...)
- Can you compare the organizational culture with your previous workplace?
- What do you think are the values of NFF? Do they come true and actualize in the operations?
- Is football and sport culture visible in normal day to day job?
- How would you describe the relationships between the employees in NFF? (Are also private issues shared or just official and work related things?)
- What is the “power” or “the glue” that keeps the organization together?
- Do you feel as part of any unofficial groups in the organization? (as “the people from upstairs”, people with same interests etc...)
- Is there a gender gap visible in practical everyday work or in unofficial groupings? How?
- What kind of gendered stereotypes have you faced in your work?
- What kind of effects those have on the organization?

- LEADERS & MANAGERS IN NFF

- What are the attributes & qualities are important for a leader in NFF or SPL?
- What are the most important tasks for a leader?
- If you think about leaders in your organization, what kind of differences there are in leading styles between men and women leaders?
- would you describe leaders in NFF represent a certain leader type (aka more similar than different) or do their ways to lead vary.
- How should leadership be developed in the future? For instance what kind of skills/qualities are going to be important?
- What do you think about the number of men and women leaders in NFF at the moment?
- What do you think is the reason or reasons behind the current situation?
- Do you think it is important to have both men and women as leaders in NFF? Why?